Welcome to hell. It's as good a place as any to start talking horror and spirituality. I'm sure our ongoing conversation will take us to other places as well, but hell…hell is a place that burns up BS. That seems like a good starting point to me.

You see, the idea here is to actually talk, share ideas and experiences and do a little honest self-inventory. Can't do that until we burn up the BS. And the biggest bunch of BS is that horror and spirituality are incompatible.

Now obviously, I have a bias here. That's right—I'm a religious guy. I'm definitely starting from spirituality as base one with horror next in line, meaning the genre is a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there eternally. Eternity? Oh, I believe in it, most certainly. I also believe in heaven and hell and all the other stuff my bio would indicate. You see, I'm that worst sort of spiritual person: I'm a Christian. Talk about horror. I believe all us deserve eternal punishment, but that our debt was erased when God took it upon himself to suffer gory death, as a human sacrifice. I also believe in the Resurrection, which, amongst us horror fans, has often been referred to as the advent of zombie Jesus. And I believe in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Mwah-ha-ha-ha-ha!!!

Mary Shelley herself was never that Gothic. Nope. I believe that when it comes to horror, God has to be part of the picture, at least in the back of our minds, when it comes to understanding what makes it work at all. To paraphrase an old Christian bumper sticker: Know God Know Horror, No God No Horror. If there is no God, we're just stroking ourselves with a lot of nonsense that ultimately boils down to mere biology. If terror, dread, displacement, disgust and irony are simple biological imperatives, then so are love, kindness, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, solace, peace and hope.

In other words, if man is just a mass of chemicals, then to hell with it.

There I go again. We're back in hell.

You see, even though I'm religious, I also absolutely love the horror genre. I always wind up back in the stuff no matter what I do. Somehow, it just seems the most honest place for me to hang. It speaks to the things I'm most haunted by. Things that seem better met head-on, no matter how many questions they leave me with. No other type of filmmaking or storytelling seems as invested in that as horror, even if sometimes I'm not very satisfied with the answers it seems to give.

I figured out a while ago that life isn't about having all the answers to everything, any more than enjoying or getting the most out of a fright film has to do with perfectly understanding the craft of filmmaking. I also believe that horror culture has been demonized, trivialized and commodified in ways that miss the point. Horror works precisely because it is predicated upon that which is compelling, and often that which is true.

And not only does it often tackle the big questions, the inescapables, the things we're haunted by, attacked by, struggle with, threatened by. Those of us with an affinity for the genre can look its staunchest critics in the eye and say with a straight face that it's also about wonder, joy, love, perseverance, cosmic justice, sacrifice and a whole lot of other things that make life worth living. To loosely quote George A. Romero, "If you can't see the humor in dead people eating the living, then I'm afraid I can't help you." Which is a roundabout way of saying, I believe, that horror is like any other storytelling form in that it can be put to almost any kind of use. Including just plain fun.

I fought long and hard with myself about how to introduce this blog, what direction it should take. I talked with friends and colleagues (from many different spiritual and non-spiritual points of view), mostly because I was sweating being misunderstood, or worse, genuinely misrepresenting what I believe in. In the end, I realized it was the mysteries that drove me to both the genre and the spiritual life that made this blog worthwhile.

To clarify, I'm interested in the spiritual aspect of horror in its largest, least defined sense. While I can only bring my own journey to the table, I don't believe spirituality is defined only by that. You'll read about lots of other journeys here as well. Answers? Like most people, I've seen enough hypocrisy and outright evil in the world (amongst everybody, not just religious types),

and in myself, to let me know that any human being who claims to have all the answers to all the million and one questions I have is either self-deluded or lying. I'll certainly suggest some directions for exploration, but your journey is your own. My real job will be to make sure the questions aren't left unasked.

Oh, and you should know I like all kinds of horror, old and new. I'm just as likely to write about CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST as the Universal monsters or some obscure art-house effort. You'll never know what you'll find here, just as you'll never know what you'll find in real life. You might wake up to find a think piece, an interview or a review of a comic, an album, a book or a movie or DVD. Maybe even a collectibles review. Sometimes it will be feather-light, and sometimes pretty heavy.

I guess that's most of what we need to know to start this dance. I'll try to visit the forums as often as I can, but remember, I'm more interested in how you feel horror is a part of your own spiritual journey than I am in getting you to take mine. Let's not argue theology; let's just take a look at what part horror plays in keeping us on the search for what we haven't seen, thinking about the monsters we love and contemplating the face of our fears. Until the next installment, I bid you Godspeed—however you choose to define it.

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