

Welcome, and thank you SO much for coming to celebrate the launch of *Why Men Made God!*

Co-authoring this book with a complete stranger on the other side of the planet was unquestionably a **21<sup>st</sup> Century experience!** Without the Internet and modern Social Media, this book would never have happened.

Back in 2007, as my ‘midlife crisis’ adventure, I (as a 58-year-old grandmother with no hiking experience) had impulsively decided to hike the ‘El Camino de Santiago de Compostella’ across the top of Spain. It’s an experience I would highly recommend – once!



Along with forcing me to face challenges I had never dreamed of, those six weeks away from the busy-ness of my life had given me **TIME**. Time to think. Time to think about what I most wanted to tell my grandchildren before I die. When I got home, I considered writing a children’s book, but decided instead to tell the story on a website.



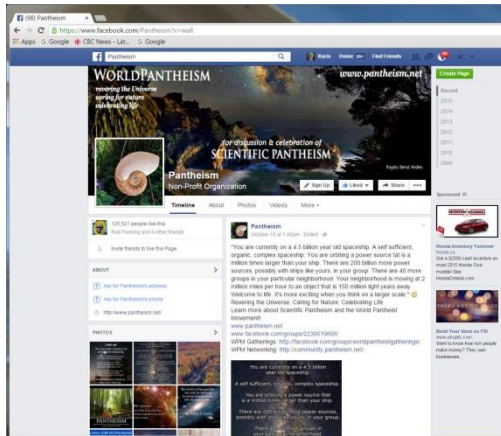
I created a site called Redefining the Sacred. ([www.redefiningthesacred.com](http://www.redefiningthesacred.com)) On it I put one story called “**My Place in the Universe**” for kids, and another called “**What is Sacred?**” for adults. The adult one illustrated how we humans have changed what we consider sacred many times during our evolution. (I even talked about that in a sermon right here at Grand River Unitarian that year.) The main message of the site, the ‘core concept’ if you will, was “**The Biosphere is our true progenitor...Consider it Sacred**”.

A few years later, in 2012, when Jax, Sheila and I (introduce them) were composing the 9 Principles around which to build the Sacred Secular Sanctuary, I got an email from someone in BC, about the World Pantheist Movement, in California. Their web site spoke about **revering Nature** and I was pleased to see that there was an **actual ‘movement’ around this concept!**

We made contact with them, and borrowed some of their language (with their permission, of course).

I started following the Pantheism Facebook Posts,





(along with about 125,000 other people from around the world) and occasionally ‘liking’ posts. I noticed that a handful of people frequently ‘liked’ the same posts, but didn’t think any more about it.

Then, in January of 2014, I got a three-word email via my Redefining the Sacred site. All it said was, “**Is this you?**”

Just as I was about to hit the ‘delete’ button, I recognized the sender’s name, Rod Fleming, as one of the other followers from the World Pantheist Movement’s Facebook page, so I

replied. That’s when I learned that he was writing from France!

Already Ontario, Spain, BC, California and France feature in the story.



Rod said he liked what I had written, but I had a mistake in the section about the rise of the Patriarchy. I suggested he tell me what was wrong so I could fix it, and he said he had a better idea. He had been working on something similar and if I agreed to read it and edit it he would send it to me. That sounded like a lot of work for free but I was curious (and retired) and I tentatively agreed.

He sent the draft of just the Introduction, as a sample. It was feminist diatribe, of the kind I hadn’t seen in decades – not since the 60s and 70s. I showed it to Jax and Sheila, and they thought it had been written by an angry, young, female ‘Women’s Studies’ student.

Meanwhile, Rod sent me an ebook he had written about the challenges of uprooting his family from Scotland and settling in a tiny French village. His quirky sense of humour was reassuring.

Maybe it was just that Introduction that was so passionate. Not that there was anything wrong with being a passionate feminist – I had certainly been one since my adolescence.

So, I rewrote the Introduction and sent it back to him. Each time he sent a section, I rewrote it, with extensive edits, re-workings and additions. After a month or so of this, Rod said this was not ‘editing’, this was ‘co-authoring’ and would I like to co-author the rest of it, which was not yet written.

OMG! (O Mother Gaia) I was *stunned!* Being a writer wasn’t even on my *Bucket List*. But the ideas in this book were things I had been reading about and researching for most of my life. The writing was flowing easily and, most important, **I was enjoying doing it.**



I had never intended to write a book, it just sort of sneaked up on me, and swallowed me whole.

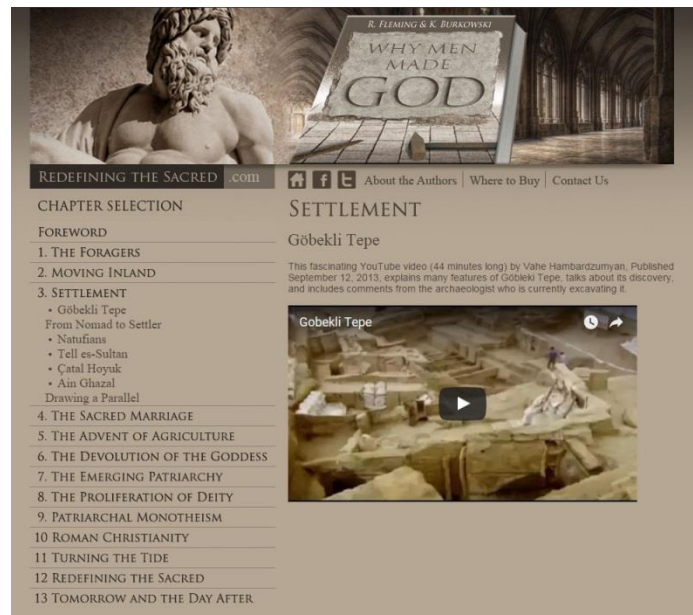
We discarded that original Introduction and **started over**. After that, we were in daily communication for nearly two years, tossing ideas back and forth and frequently disagreeing about sources and details. Around Christmas, Rod went to the Philippines for a couple of months but thanks to the Internet, we didn’t skip a beat.

We both had shelves filled with books about beliefs and mythologies and Rod's alumnus status with the University of Edinburgh also gave us access to the vast Oxford University collections of archaeological and anthropological research.

The sources didn't always agree with each other or with more recent research that shed new light on earlier interpretations. Fortunately, we were both willing to be convinced by evidence and logical argument but there were still times when things got a little intense - although always carefully polite. Email can be a difficult medium for communication sometimes. Since his day was my night, we at least had time to cool down a bit between emails. When you get to the part about Jesus, you will notice that for some things we just had to agree to disagree. Could someone please turn to page 203 and read footnote 276 (aloud)?

Research at some of the archaeological sites is ongoing and new documentary films provide fascinating visual details. Since we couldn't put these in the book, I decided to build a 'companion' website so that our readers could access such information **as they were reading the book.** ([www.whymenmadegod.com](http://www.whymenmadegod.com)) For example, when you read about Gobekli Tepe, in what is now Turkey, you can virtually walk through the dig and listen as archaeologist Dr. Klaus Schmidt talks about it.

The website allows us to **add new information as we find it**, keeping the book current even as we gather details for a possible Second Edition.



We decided to publish under the imprint "Redefining the Sacred", so I rebuilt the Redefining the Sacred web site to reflect that ([www.redefiningthesacred.com/](http://www.redefiningthesacred.com/)). Rod had been right about my error concerning the start of the patriarchy, so that part of the site was removed. The question "What is Sacred?" now leads to our book, where it is all answered fully.

*Why Men Made God* takes us on a long and winding journey, from the time our earliest ancestors left Africa, right up to the development of modern Western culture. It travels through some dark passages in our human history. Nonetheless, the overall message is empowering.

Our past explains our present.

Rod and I hope that *understanding* the history and evolution of our culture, including the evolution of the religions that are a significant part of it, can change the way people think about the status quo.

Knowing how we got to where we are now empowers us to change where we will go in the future.

As we explored the evidence we became increasingly passionate about the urgency for change, and the text builds to a *Call for Action*. We hope it will inspire lots of discussion, maybe even leading to social

revolution – the peaceful kind, of course, through elections and informed choices about where our dollars go. Here in Canada, we saw with the recent election how Social Media and the sharing of information by *individuals*, outside of the mainstream media, can affect the outcome of elections. Change can happen that fast. We *can* DO this. We *must* do this!

Reading this book could be a bumpy ride; it may shake you up, in fact we hope it does, but we also hope you will enjoy the journey.

Thank you.

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Now we will meet my co-author, Rod Fleming. Rod and I have never met, not even spoken on Skype. The video clip that he made for today is the closest we have ever come to meeting.

After that, you will have an opportunity to ask questions, and share your comments. Some of you have picked out passages from the book, and can read those aloud. A few comments have been sent in from people who could not be here today, and we will include those.

Then we will bring out the treats and enjoy some more music from Rob Warburton (sax) and Virginia Matthews (keyboard), so generously provided by Pat Haney, and of course you can purchase books and have them signed if you wish.

So let's meet Rod...