

Who Are You, Lord?

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A Somali Encounters Christ

Paul Thomas



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Nanos gigantium humeris insidentes

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PREFACE

Luke 1:1 ¶ Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

Luke 1:2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

Luke 1:3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

The name Theophilus means “friend of God” or “beloved of God”. It is commonly held that Luke employed it as an honorary title rather than a personal name of an individual. In the spirit of Luke, this book was born out of a desire to reach modern-day “Theophiluses” who are curious to know what One God Apostolics believe. When Jesus stated that the apostles would be His witnesses to the world, one aspect of this witness was the written record that they left behind. Rather than leave it to others to write about their own dearly-held faith, the apostles solemnly undertook the task themselves with tremendous success. Luke accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys and was, as such, well-placed to leave a first-hand account for progeny.

This book is not an attempt at a rigorous theological treatise but, rather, a humble attempt at presenting the Word of God

as an edifying amalgam of a personal testimony coupled with theological reflections interwoven with uplifting testimonies to the glory of God. For a more systematic and rigorous study, I would highly recommend Dr. Teklemariam Gezahagne's Bible Writer's Theology (2007). Any errors, infelicities or limitations in the book are my own. It is my humble hope that you will hold in your hand a book that not only functions as a ready reference expounding on the salvific truths of the word of God, but one that will edify your spirit through the anecdotal testimonies dispersed through its pages.

Paul Thomas

August, 2010. London.

INTRODUCTION

The “experience”

Had someone prophesied to me before 1986 that I would embrace Jesus as Lord and Saviour, I am afraid I would have reacted with the same irreverent incredulity as the lord in Samaria upon whose hand the king of Samaria leaned when Elisha prophesied the end of the famine (2 Kings 7:1). I was born in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islam in 1971 to a Sunni Muslim Somali family. At the tender age of eight, my mother decided to send me and my two sisters to an English boarding school in India. Admittedly, my knowledge of Islam was rudimentary, but my mother profusely warned me to beware of Christians who believed that God had a son.

I vividly remember experiencing a gnawing hunger to know God intimately. In 1986 this quest for God became so intense that I would ostracize myself from the company of my schoolmates and desperately call upon God to make Himself known to me. The 4th century Church Father, Augustine of Hippo, captured the essence of what I felt when he stated: “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.” Little could have prepared me for the events that were to unfold.

One September in 1986, I awoke late at night to go to the toilet when I suddenly felt very light and began floating upwards. Hovering above in total astonishment, I looked down to see my body peacefully sleeping in bed. I was in full possession of my mental faculties and knew this was not a dream at all. Next, I found myself standing on an unbroken chain of clouds with some individuals gathered together at one end. All of a sudden, I stood before a man whom I instantly recognized to be Jesus. He was unassuming but radiated an indescribable love which engulfed me giving me the most beautiful feeling I have ever experienced. Some months later, I read the declaration of John in regards to the nature of God being intrinsically one of love and nodded tearfully:

1Jo 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

1Jo 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

The atoms in the atmosphere were supercharged with this incredible ocean of love. When His eyes locked with mine, I felt He was conducting an X-ray of my soul. I felt very vulnerable yet marvellously safe and secure as nothing could be concealed from His penetrating gaze. Without uttering one audible word, He said “You asked to meet God. I am the God you seek.” Rather than be scandalized by such a statement, given my Muslim background, I found myself accepting this revelation as a matter of fact. He put His arm around me and telepathically spoke in a language that belongs to the heavenly realms. Here, the testimony of the apostle Paul springs to mind when he declared to the

(probably disappointed) Corinthians that he had heard things it is not lawful for a man to declare (2 Cor 12:4).

When I awoke that morning, one of the first tangible results ensuing from this encounter was that I miraculously stopped using obscenities as part of my vocabulary. Anyone who has attended a tough boarding school will understand that this is no mean feat. I awoke feeling the same profound love and peace that I experienced in what I can only describe as the “out-of-body encounter” (henceforth “the experience” for brevity). I am convinced that this was the Lord’s way of reminding me that this encounter did indeed take place when the storms of doubt would later assail my faith. This was my “Road to Damascus” experience, and I have shared this testimony in almost 10 countries ever since. For readers wondering about the reaction of my kith and kin to my conversion, suffice it to say that this caused a fair share of agony for them, but has panned out in an uneasy truce of sorts today.

The powerful impact this testimony has on hearers can be gauged from the story that follows.

In 2008, I preached to a small congregation in a town called Jävla, Sweden. A young woman in the front row shed tears, nodded incessantly, and made notes while I shared “the experience”. I was under the impression that she was making notes of the testimony and subsequent sermon. Discreetly, she stood up, handed me the sheet of paper, and proceeded towards the door before I concluded. The note said that she had decided to commit suicide before the meeting if she did

not find God but was persuaded that God exists and cares for her after hearing of my “experience”.

Professor Richard Dawkins, the famous biologist and avowed atheist from Oxford, is at pains to emphasize that it is an anomaly to speak in terms of “Christian” or “Muslim” children. He assumes that children are too young to reflect on the origins and validity of their inherited faith traditions. Dawkins makes explicit his stated objective to raise consciousness and drive home the point that labelling children “Christian” or “Muslim” is absurd and must be discontinued.

If you feel trapped in the religion of your upbringing, it would be worth asking yourself how this came about. The answer is usually some form of childhood indoctrination. If you are religious at all it is overwhelmingly probable that your religion is that of your parents. If you were born in Arkansas and you think Christianity is true and Islam false, knowing full well that you would think the opposite if you had been born in Afghanistan, you were the victim of childhood indoctrination. Mutatis mutandis if you were born in Afghanistan (Dawkins, 2006:25).

Dawkins has invented a theory to explain why faith persists. Just like genes are passed on and inherited, Dawkins believes “memes” - which basically are “cultural replicators” - are passed on like a virus from brain to brain (Dawkins, 1989). This is not the place to lock horns with Dawkins but suffice it to say that hopefully, Mr. Dawkins will someday read testimonies like mine and refine or reject his elusive “meme” theory.

GOD IS ONE

Obviously, in the aftermath of my experience, I wanted to read as much as possible about Jesus Christ. In those early days of novice excitement, I wrote a letter to my mother in Saudi Arabia bursting with enthusiasm about Jesus. The letter inadvertently turned out to be an invitation for her to book a flight to India and chastise me. I was unceremoniously dragged from the house of one schoolteacher to another with the intent of finding the “culprit” who witnessed to me. Little did I know that this was the Lord’s way of furnishing an opportunity to testify of the things I had experienced. During this turbulent time, a Hindu friend of mine, who for some mysterious reason kept a little blue Gideon’s New Testament, happily gave me his Bible. I voraciously devoured it at the expense of my school lessons. I still remember the English Literature teacher reading from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* in the 9th grade with some gusto while I sat in the back row reading the Gospel of John with undivided attention.

One of the first and most overriding questions I faced was – how can Jesus be God? I knew that God is one and that He alone must be worshipped, but how could I reconcile that with “the experience” I had? I saw Jesus alone. Given my Muslim background, I was conditioned to believe that Jesus was only a prophet – albeit an illustrious one. Prior to my conversion, I had explicitly asked to meet God. It was crystal

clear to me that Jesus claimed to be God in “the experience”. Years later a man I met in India, during a brief evangelistic trip, asked me facetiously if I was “Jesus only”. I gently asked him to open his Bible to the scripture below and I saw his solemn face slowly crack into a smile.

Mat 17:8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Thanks to “the experience”, I had a deep and abiding faith that Jesus is God but it would be some years before I had the theological vocabulary to explain this faith. In what follows, I shall embark upon a Bible study that establishes the concept of God as an indivisible entity without partners or any form of plurality. The One God scriptures that are used in this chapter (and other relevant ones) will be listed at the end of this chapter for the purpose of those who wish to study them in some detail or use them for giving a Bible study.

The power of one

Deut 6:4 ¶ Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] one LORD:

Deut 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Interestingly, the most important revelation that Moses shared with the children of Israel was that God is numerically one before anything else. We must pay heed to this clear emphasis. Indeed, what God is communicating in the declaration above is that before Israel asked about His

attributes (God is eternal, immutable, holy etc), she was to understand and acknowledge that He exists as a numerical one. In this sense, the first revelation for salvation is a mathematical fact – God is one. What I mean by the last statement is that, studied in isolation, Deuteronomy 6:4 is first and foremost a call to acknowledge a mathematical reality that can, and must be, universally acknowledged by all. It is a truth that even a child can grasp which explains the command to teach our children that God is one. Here an interesting contrast can be usefully employed to make a distinction between divine mathematics, which has moral consequences contra the general field of mathematics which is amoral. By amoral, I mean that the field of mathematics is one that is outside the sphere where moral judgements apply. A mathematician can predict, for example, using Newton's inverse square law of gravitational attraction a future solar eclipse without being a theist or born-again Christian. This is not to suggest that mathematics is a science that operates independently of God's authority. On the contrary, as the philosopher, Keith Ward, states:

The continuing conformity of physical particles to precise mathematical relationships is something that is much more likely to exist if there is an ordering cosmic mathematician who sets up the correlation in the requisite way. The existence of laws of physics...strongly implies that there is a God who formulates such laws and ensures that the physical realm conforms to them (Lennox, 2007:61).

In contrast, divine mathematics – the fact that God is singularly one – has cosmic consequences. A verbal

proclamation that God is one sends shockwaves into the demonic strongholds of the enemy. Allow me to expound on the latter with the help of scriptures:

Jam 2:19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Luk 4:33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice,

Luk 4:34 Saying, Let [us] alone; what have we to do with thee, [thou] Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

This passage lends support to the fact that anyone – be they moral or immoral – can acknowledge the facticity of God existing as a single entity. The Devil himself believes wholeheartedly that God is one but such a confession brings no sense of comfort to him for reasons revealed in the scriptures. Significantly, the Devil trembles at the very memory of the one God. Why may we ask does a seemingly innocuous mathematical fact cause so much trepidation to a being as formidable as Satan? The answer is simple yet profoundly thought-provoking: the very affirmation that God is one strikes untold terror into the heart of the Devil because, in the absence of this revelation, the enemy is free to spin a web of lies and deception. The enemy is exposed and rendered powerless where the one God doctrine reigns.

In this sense, declaring that God is one functions as a unique spiritual weapon. That Jesus is the same one true God is abundantly demonstrated in the words of the petrified demon

who trembled (James 2:19) and pleaded with Him not to destroy him in hell. Notice that the demon said *“I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God”* (Luke 4:34). This implies prior acquaintance with Jesus. This was no hesitant and awkward shuffling of feet trying to guess the identity of Jesus; no polite attempt at ascertaining Jesus’ identity in a style reminiscent of Stanley’s famous phrase “Dr Livingstone, I presume.” Rather, the words of the demon were the words of a being that was supernaturally conscious of the fact that he was face to face with the one true God Himself. He addressed Jesus as “the Holy One of God” buttressing the two arguments outlined thus far: God is one without compromise in His being and, two, proclaiming this truth causes demons to suffer a panic-attack.

Humans, from Aristotle to Einstein, have marvelled at the rational intelligibility of the universe which can be precisely expressed in numbers. As mentioned earlier, man has used this knowledge to predict solar eclipses in addition to making super-fast computers and many other inventions indispensable to modern life. Knowledge of numbers has given man unique powers. The Bible is unequivocally inviting us to discover the power of believing in the one God. It is knowledge that, if believed and professed, brings healing from demon possession and other satanically-induced ailments of the mind so common in the West.

In Wolayita, Ethiopia, a woman (Sister Workinesh) who believed in a plurality in the Godhead died of a stomach illness on March 17, 1997. Before she was finally buried, she came back to life to the utter horror of those present. She

spoke of seeing saints in white before the throne and died again. Three hours later, she came back to life and said “Call me the One God preacher Reverend Toma Dona. Jesus Christ who is on His throne told me to call Reverend Toma to pray for me.” The assembled company offered to pray for her as they were Christians too. She replied that she was unacquainted with the denominational differences but was only obeying the instructions of the Lord. Finally, when the one God preacher came, she declared:

While I was dead, I saw Jesus sitting on his throne by himself and he said that there is no other God beside me. I am the only one. Tell everyone what you saw. He is the one who told me your name and that you are the One God preacher of the Apostolic Church. He also said that I have to call you to pray for me and to baptize me in Jesus name for my salvation. Unless I am baptized in Jesus name and filled with the Holy Ghost, I will not go to His kingdom (Gezahagne, 2007:55, 56).

Such is the crucial importance that God attaches to the fact that He is one that He has carefully selected individuals from the dawn of history to be witnesses of this saving truth. Sister Workinesh, in the account above, is just one in a long list of one God witnesses.

IKi 22:19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

*Isa 6:1 ¶ in the year that king Uzziah died I saw also
the Lord sitting upon a throne,
high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
Rev 4:2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and,
behold, a throne was set in heaven,
and [one] sat on the throne.*

Heaven is the place where the veil is lifted on ultimate reality. What God asks us to believe by faith here on earth will be plainly seen in heaven as a vindication of that faith. When Micaiah, Isaiah and John were invited to see things hidden from mere mortals, they saw only one throne in heaven and only one person sitting on the throne. The crux of the matter here is not the appearance and description of the Supreme Being sitting on the throne but, rather, “How many deities occupy the throne?” The answer was plainly staring Sister Workinesh, Micaiah, Isaiah and John in the face – one throne and one person. The prophet Daniel witnessed one throne in heaven. It is very striking that his description of Jehovah, who sat on this one throne, is almost identical to that given by the apostle John in Revelation:

*Dan 7:9 ¶ I beheld till the thrones were cast down,
and the Ancient of days did sit,
whose garment [was] white as snow, and the hair of
his head like the pure wool: his
throne [was like] the fiery flame, [and] his wheels
[as] burning fire.
Rev 1:14 His head and [his] hairs [were] white like
wool, as white as snow; and his
eyes [were] as a flame of fire;*

May the Lord cause the scales to fall from our eyes to the intent that we may understand that Jehovah is none other than Jesus Christ. Isaiah, perhaps more than any other Biblical figure, consistently bore testimony to the truth that God is one.

Isa 43:10 Ye [are] my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I [am] he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

Isa 43:11 I, [even] I, [am] the LORD; and beside me [there is] no saviour.

Isa 42:8 I [am] the LORD: that [is] my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Isa 44:6 ¶ Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I [am] the first, and I [am] the last; and beside me [there is] no God.

Isa 44:8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared [it]? ye [are] even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, [there is] no God; I know not [any].

Satan seeks to distort one

It is a hallmark of false religions to operate with a plurality of gods. Have you noticed that each time the children of Israel backslid from the faith of Jehovah, they inevitably embraced a pantheon of gods rather than just *one false god*? Solomon is a case in point:

1Ki 11:5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

1Ki 11:6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as [did] David his father.

1Ki 11:7 Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that [is] before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

Here we find some clues as to why God created hell for Satan and his fallen angels: they openly conspired to supplant God's deity and receive worship. It is no wonder that Satan works overtime to confer godhood on as many angels and humans as he can. He is consumed with a mad passion to dethrone the one God. What better way to exact revenge on God than to create a multiplicity of deluded beings each expecting to be "God" like Adam and Eve, Nebuchadnezzar and Herod? Daniel lived in a territory where the Prince of Persia held sway. Consistent with the analysis above, the Devil perceived Daniel and his three Hebrew companions as a threat and actively sought to combat them. What method did he employ? He devised ways of coercing them into worshipping king Nebuchadnezzar and Darius later (Daniel 3 & 6). With the help of the Lord, they resisted and overcame his wiles. With such a long CV of "god-making", small wonder the demon in the synagogue screamed at the sight of the one true God Jesus and, curiously, had the nerve to ask for some more grace-time before he was thrown into hell.

Isa 14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

Isa 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Isa 14:15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

The same Isaiah, in chapter 6, was given a glimpse of heaven where he saw only one throne and only one God sitting upon this throne. Again, we must not lose sight of the tremendous import of this truth. Earlier, I demonstrated that the indivisibility of the one God is itself a tenet packed with explosive power sufficient to shake the foundations of hell as James 2:19 declares. It is for this reason that Satan works indefatigably to demolish the concept of the one God. Indeed, this is what we observe in virtually every corner of the world. Even in the polished and sophisticated world of the Greek intelligentsia in the days of the apostle Paul, we find that polytheism was rife.

Act 17:16 ¶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

A composite one?

Deuteronomy 6:4 has been explained away by some as a composite or compound oneness – a oneness similar to a bunch of grapes on *one* branch. They maintain that the word *one* (echad in Hebrew) is not a singular or indivisible one.

Let us explore this Scripture and ascertain the manner in which Jews understood it.

Mar 12:29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments [is], Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

Mar 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment.

Mar 12:31 And the second [is] like, [namely] this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

*Mar 12:32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but **he**:*

The scribe, who was an expert in the Law of Moses, responded by adding “and there is none other but *he*” (Italics mine). This pronoun, *he*, points to a singularity in the Godhead not susceptible to further divisions. Here in a nutshell is the Jewish understanding of the concept of one God. Did this extend to the creation of the universe? The answer is unequivocally yes. Again the Lord Himself best elucidated this.

*Mat 19:4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that **he** which made [them] at the beginning made them male and female,*

Jesus, in addressing the issue of marriage and divorce in the after-life, identifies God as *he* in the creation of male and female. This lends further succour to the argument that there

is no plurality – either in number or essence – in God. The three Cappadocian church fathers, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil the Great, refined the yet incompletely formulated doctrine of the Trinity at Constantinople (AD 381) relying heavily on Greek philosophy as the theologian, Roger E. Olson states:

Gregory spent much of his time reading and studying both Scripture and the writings of the Platonists and Neo-Platonists, those mystical pagan philosophers whose beliefs seemed so compatible with Christianity to many fourth and fifth century church fathers. Gregory soaked in their message about the absolute unity, spirituality and transcendence of God and sought to combine the best of it with his Christian reflections on the Trinity and attributes of God. (Olson, 1999:179).

Basil believed that the three persons of the Trinity shared a common nature (Greek *ousia*) in a manner similar to Peter, James and John sharing the same humanity. However, according to him, just as Peter, James and John could be distinguished according to certain peculiarities (Peter was taller than John, for example), the members of the Trinity could also be distinctly identified because the Father was unbegotten, the Son begotten and the Spirit proceeded from the Father. This distinction he called *hypostases* or substance and was supposed to demarcate the Personhood of each member of the Trinity (Olson, 1999: 184). However, the Bible records no such distinctions and the word “persons” appears to contradict what the Jewish scribe and Jesus, Himself, said. They spoke of God as *he* without any

connotation of a multiplicity of persons or beings whether physical or abstract. Below are additional Biblical texts that underscore God as an indivisible one in creation.

Neh 9:6 Thou, [even] thou, [art] LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all [things] that [are] therein, the seas, and all that [is] therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

2Ki 19:15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest [between] the cherubims, thou art the God, [even] thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

Isa 44:24 ¶ Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I [am] the LORD that maketh all [things]; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Zec 14:9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

Mal 2:10 ¶ Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.

Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions,

or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Rev 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Hezekiah and Isaiah explicitly reveal that God is alone in creation with no co-creators to assist him. I once read the sad story of a Muslim convert to Christianity who reverted to Islam citing the confusion she faced in delegating equal time to each of the three members in the Godhead. Quite the contrary, Jesus Himself emphatically declared that “*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve*” (Matt 4:10). What a blessing is ours to enjoy if only we could take the scriptures at face value! The above scriptures (John 1:3; Col 1:16 & Rev 4:11) make no apologies for identifying Jesus as none other than the one Creator of the universe.

In my own spiritual odyssey, it was four years before I received the above revelation. In 1989, as the clock struck midnight and ushered in the New Year (1990), I landed at Fornebu Airport, Oslo, Norway. I can never forget the freezing cold that “assaulted” me as the temperature dropped below minus 20 Celsius. The nitty-gritty of how my family ended up in Norway is too long to share here but suffice it to say that this was nothing short of a miracle. The Law of Apostasy would have made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for me to continue as a Christian in Saudi Arabia. During the first few months in Norway, I constantly puzzled over why all the Vikings had not settled down

permanently in the more hospitable climes of France or Italy after their rather fear-inspiring forays into other parts of Europe. Understandably, few in southern-Europe would relish the prospect of having a neighbour called “Eric Bloodaxe” or “Thorfinn Skullsplitter”. Despite the unbearable cold, I soon learned to admire the generosity, self-reliance, sense of fairness and industry of the Norwegians. These ideals are reflected in the very colours of the Norwegian flag. The red, white and blue were inspired by the colours of the French flag in the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789 with the accompanying tripartite motto - liberty, equality and fraternity.

My first few years in Norway helped me to appreciate the hard-won values that accrued through decades and even centuries of events that impacted upon a small European country like Norway. Norwegians are in a unique position today to empathize with nations that have been on the receiving end of nation-states with grandiose aspirations. Having been subjugated firstly by the Danes and then the Swedes, Norway was occupied by Nazi Germany for five years. Forces like the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Napoleonic wars and the First & Second World War all played a significant role in distilling the values shared by the citizenry of Norway. Rather sadly I discovered that, whereas the secular heritage of Norway, so prominently evident in the colours of the flag, was something Norwegians cherished, the same could not be said for the Christian Cross that features prominently on the same national flag. When I asked Norwegians about their Christian heritage, I would hear them say things like, “Religion is the source of many

problems in the world” and “Religion is for the poor”. One woman said apologetically: “Can you imagine that Norway used to send out Christian missionaries to so-called heathen nations in the Third World?”

Civil religion versus biblical faith

Regardless of the fact that the Norwegian Lutheran Church is the official State Church, hardly 3% of the population attend services on a regular basis. Religion in modern Norway, and by extension much of Western Europe, has become a sort of “civil religion” quite distinct from a Biblically/theological-based faith. In order to understand the modern malaise of faith in Western Europe, it is crucial to distinguish “civil religion” as advocated by Rousseau, Durkheim and Bellah from “Biblical faith” which the apostles preached. In his classical *The Social Contract*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau coined the term “civil religion” to describe the moral and spiritual values in a modern society that serve as an adhesive. Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of sociology, also believed religion to be an eminently social phenomenon that functions to enhance cohesion and solidarity. Rousseau and Durkheim were not advocating piety (Rousseau denied Original sin in *Emile*) but sought to underscore the role of religion in strengthening communal bonds and foster a sense of nationhood. In this sense, the State de facto assumes the mantle of “Society” promoting religion as a buffer against disorder. Religion is perceived as “a need” the lack of which may trigger immorality and irresponsibility or what can be called *anomie* to borrow from Durkheim’s.

The word *anomie* means literally “without order”. Durkheim applied this concept to social situations in which there was a deregulation of the public conscience because of “society’s insufficient presence in individuals” (Durkheim, 2001:219). “*Anomie* means a crisis in the moral order of a social group” (McGuire, 2002:35). For Durkheim, an extreme consequence of *anomie* is an increase in suicide rates. None of these explanations align with the Biblical understanding of the kingdom of God which, first and foremost, has the eternal salvation of the individual as its chief objective and not social harmony (which is not to deny its desirability). God desires His Spirit to dwell in individuals and unite them in a spiritual community called the Church (1 Cor 12). But in a State that promotes civil religion, the State seeks to usurp this role by inculcating its citizens with values that it deems desirable. These values are often in a state of constant flux as people debate the definition of the good life. Religion is exploited as a sort of inexpensive “police force” that keeps the masses calm and sedated. Understood in this manner, Marx’s “religion as the opium of the people” is fulfilled in civil religion.

The manner in which Robert Bellah applied civil religion to the USA has some commonalities with Norway. For Bellah, civil religion in the USA is characterized by the attribution of a quasi sacredness to civil ceremonies like Memorial Day and Fourth of July. Abraham Lincoln is the quintessential “saint” canonized by civil religion. Furthermore,

Socially important myths include the American Dream – the land of plenty – unlimited social mobility, economic consumption, and achievement.

Although these shrines, saints, and ceremonies are not religious in the same sense as, for example, Greek Orthodox shrines, saints and ceremonies, they are still set apart as special and not to be profaned. They are an important element of nonofficial religion and exist alongside – separate, yet related to – the official church religion (McGuire, 2002:202,203).

Civil religion has been recruited in the service of diluting and eroding the genuine power of God that seeks to overflow the levies of pseudo-religion eagerly propped up by secular politicians fearful of social disorder and disintegration. The Lutheran State Church of Norway is gradually seeing the writing on the wall. It was precisely the elevation of human tradition at the expense of the Word of God that Jesus Himself deplored.

Mark 7:8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

There is a limit as to how long social institutions peddling civil religion can defer the spiritual hunger of an impoverished population fed on a diet of atheism and materialism. A case in point is the Princess of Norway, Martha Louise, who in 2007 made national headlines when she professed to communicate with angels. The Norwegian newspaper *VG* reports that she went on sick leave for two weeks to recuperate from the ensuing media frenzy¹. Later

¹ VG. <http://www.vg.no/rampelys/artikkel.php?artid=174735>
Retrieved 18.09.2010.

she sought and received permission to start an officially recognized institute that teaches students to contact “beings of light” and learn the art of “healing”. A website, promoting her “Angel School” is called “Astarte Education”². Bible students will recognize the name “Astarte” as “Ashtoreth” in Hebrew (the goddess whom Solomon worshipped in his apostate state).

Intriguingly, while most Norwegians have never called for an elimination of the “superstitious” practices of the State Church, the Princess’ unabashed confessions in the public eye raised suspicious eyebrows. Herein lies the paradox of modern societies evincing the strained relations with religion. Civil religion – be it child baptisms, observance of Easter, Saint Lucia, Halloween or Christmas – though qualifying as “superstitious” and anachronistic in the eyes of some – are perceived as useful relics from the past serving to enhance cohesion and communal solidarity. But this acceptance does not extend to aberrant superstitions of the kind expressed by the Princess. In this manner, the State supplants God by according a veneer of respectability on selected “superstitions”.

My hope, along with many other Christians, who love and pray regularly toward this end, is that the West will re-discover the power of the Cross that graces many a flag (England, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, for example) and experience the power of the Spirit of God who promises to satisfy spiritual hunger of the kind expressed by the Norwegian Princess. Theologian Alister McGrath, in his

² <http://www.astarte-education.com/> Retrieved 18.09.2010.

book *The Twilight of Atheism* (2004) raises a fascinating question:

Might atheism have run its course, and now give way to religious renewal? The tides of cultural shift have left atheism beached for the time being on the sands of modernity, while Westerners explore a new postmodern interest in the forbidden fruit of spirituality (McGrath, 2004:279).

This chapter has thus far focused on the first and most paramount truth in the entire Bible: God is one. Although alluded to, I haven't explored more carefully how this one God is Jesus Christ Himself. This will be the task of the next chapter.

List of Scriptures*Deuteronomy 6:4,5.**Isaiah 44:6**James 2:19**Isaiah 44:8**Luke 4:33,34.**Isaiah 44:24**I Kings 22:19**Zech 14:9**Isaiah 6:1**Malachi 2:10**Revelation 4:1,2**Isaiah 44:24**Daniel 7:9**John 1:3**Revelation 1:14**Col 1:16**Isaiah 43:10,11**Rev 4:11**Isaiah 42:8**Matthew 19:4**Mark 12: 29-32*

JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONE TRUE GOD

The power of I AM

John 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am [he], ye shall die in your sins.

The verse above is pregnant with many shades of powerful truths. To begin with Jesus affirms that mankind is doomed to die an eternal death because of sin's dominion. However, and mercifully, Jesus reveals a way out of this conundrum: believe that Jesus is the I AM. In the last chapter, the scriptures clearly demonstrated the importance of acknowledging the fact that God is one without any suggestion of a plurality. To fail to believe this truth sadly cuts one off from eternal life. Now, in the verse above, Jesus proclaims that failure to believe that He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament or what the Jews call the Tanakh (short for *Torah* or the Law, *Nevim* or the prophets and *Ketuvim* or the psalms/proverbs), is tantamount to denying Jehovah Himself. Thus Jesus' latter revelation supersedes and completes the former revelation that God is one.

What precisely does Jesus mean by saying "I am *he*?" Most English Bibles bracket out or italicize the "he" because this pronoun is added for grammatical facilitation. Omitting the

“he”, the sentence actually reads *“If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). The sheer import of these words must have slammed down like a ton of bricks on His Jewish audience. Their devout minds, nurtured and rooted in the Tanakh, must have raced back to the encounter between God and Moses at the burning bush in the Midian desert.

Exd 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

Much ink has flowed and many a pious scribe exercised in the task of expounding on the meaning of this obscure yet majestic revelation. The classical interpretations revolve around God being a self-sufficient, eternally existing God but clearly, just as only a fraction of an iceberg is visible to sailors, the profound secrets of this revelation lies obscured by the opaque waters below. I AM THAT I AM encapsulates the omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of God; God simply exists as an ontological fact that needs no explanation. Thomas Aquinas, in his second argument for the existence of God, declares *“Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God”* (Summa Theologiae). Existence is a consequence of the I AM. Reality is predicated upon this I AM and looks to Him for its sustenance. In response to Moses’ question, *“What [is] his name? what shall I say unto them?”* (Exodus 3:13), the answer was “I AM”. The Hebrew, *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* seems to draw on the properties of air (*ehyeh* or *hawa* which has links to the name *Yahweh*). Air has a semi- mystical quality to it. It is invisible yet tangible

when a cool breeze blows. Besides the upper reaches of the atmosphere, air uniformly and uniquely covers the face of the earth in a manner no other element can. From the standpoint of a layman, no one knows where air begins or ends – air just is. Air is indispensable for all living creatures as it carries life-giving oxygen (about 21% of dry air is oxygen). Jesus Himself drew upon the property of wind as a useful analogy to explain the phenomenon of new birth (John 3:5).

Allow me to digress for a moment to briefly address the atheistic worldview which denies the existence of God. It would be irrational to reject the existence of oxygen just because one cannot see it. In 1667, Johann Becher, forwarded the phlogiston theory which, simply stated, said that all combustible substances contain phlogiston which determines the length of the burning process. Once depleted, it forms a substance called calx. This theory was later debunked when it was discovered that the opposite is true: substances burn in the atmosphere due to the presence of oxygen (which was not known then) and not because they contain phlogiston (oxygen) in their original state. Fortunately, the prevalent ignorance in regards to the existence of oxygen had no dire consequences. Such is the mercy of the Lord that He sustains all life on the earth as Paul told the Athenians despite the altars mankind has erected to “the unknown God” and, in the case of atheists, “the non-existent God”.

The very name of Jesus (*Yeshua*) derives from Jehovah and means “Jehovah is salvation”. When Jesus unapologetically

identified Himself with the “I AM”, He lifted the veil on the final revelation of Jehovah in regards to the ongoing saga of human salvation. In the past, various Jewish patriarchs and prophets got glimpses into the attributes and plan of Jehovah as it unfolded throughout history. This revelation was progressive. Abraham, for instance, only knew God as *El Shaddai* or God Almighty but not as Jehovah.

Exodus 6:3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by [the name of] God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

Now Jesus Himself declares forthrightly that He is the I AM. Jehovah has now become our salvation and it is vital that we believe and understand this for it is an unconditional prerequisite for sins to be absolved. In other words, to overcome sins and pass from death to eternal life, one must believe that Jesus is Jehovah manifested in flesh. It was this revelation which so offended Saul of Tarsus that he embarked on a mission to eliminate its proponents. Though an ardent student of the Word of God, Saul had forgotten that Jesus would become either a sanctuary or a stone of stumbling to both houses of Israel (Isaiah 8:14). On the subsequently famous Road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus was struck by the brilliant light of Jesus Christ. Christ had earlier declared that He had come to give eyesight to the blind (John 9:39) and, in a spiritual sense, this was precisely what transpired with Saul of Tarsus. Upon his knees, blinded by the flash of Christ’s light and quaking, Saul asked Jesus an

all-important question not unlike the one Moses asked at the burning bush:

Act 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Years later, an aging Saul picked up his pen and shared with posterity his understanding of Jesus:

1Ti 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

The revelation on the Road to Damascus was a watershed moment in the life of Saul of Tarsus. It literally turned his life upside down. His mission to hunt down Christians and kill them like some sort of a religious marshal enforcing the jurisdiction of Jehovah was redefined as one that declares Christ is God. His fellow-zealots deserted him but Jesus introduced him to the likes of Ananias, Barnabas, Silas and, of course, the apostles. Humbled and knocked off his horse, he found himself upon his knees believing and confessing that Jesus is Lord and God. Any “truth or philosophy” that denies Jesus is God, will ultimately be dethroned by the sheer power of I AM. Paul borrowed from Isaiah and applied this prophetic utterance to Christ:

Isa 45:23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth [in] righteousness, and shall not

return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Rom 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Rom 14:11 For it is written, [As] I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

Rom 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Phl 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;

Phl 2:11 And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When Jesus proclaimed “*unless you believe I am he, you will die in your sins*” (John 8:24), the scriptures witness that those who attempted to resist this truth were often violently resisted themselves. One can either submit to the revelation of I AM or be violently opposed by it. Moses went armed with the revelation of I AM to Pharaoh, the leader of the principal power of the ancient world. Having resisted the I AM, Pharaoh and Egypt were overthrown violently in the Red Sea. The Bible reveals that wicked forces will gradually wax bolder and bolder in opposing the I AM with the confrontation ultimately culminating in the apocalyptic Armageddon where Christ, as the I AM, destroys the Antichrist and his minions. In addition to Pharaoh and Saul of Tarsus above, the servants of the High Priest, who came

to apprehend Jesus, found themselves violently hurled down to the ground by the power of I AM.

John 18:4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

John 18:5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am [he]. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

John 18:6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am [he], they went backward, and fell to the ground.

The heavenly flesh of Christ

Some may ask, “If Jesus is God manifest in flesh, what kind of flesh was this?” The Bible is not silent on this equally important issue. It would be incongruous with the revelation of I AM that Jehovah revealed Himself in a man of Adamic dust. This view would present Jesus as God dwelling in a body of dust assumed from the virgin Mary. Though this view is widespread what saith the Word of the Lord? Paul states:

1Cr 15:47 The first man [is] of the earth, earthy: the second man [is] the Lord from heaven.

1Cr 15:48 As [is] the earthy, such [are] they also that are earthy: and as [is] the heavenly, such [are] they also that are heavenly.

1Cr 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Gezahagne (2007) expands on this verse and shows that Christ never declared solidarity with the human race in His

flesh. He asserts that no one can demonstrate any link between Christ's flesh and that of the lineage of Adam. Both the genealogies found in Matthew and Luke end with Joseph who did not pass on any seed to Mary and, therefore, the lineages are not to be taken literally but figuratively. In the verses above, Paul makes it abundantly clear that the second man is the Lord from heaven. The emphasis is on *man* or the flesh. The context makes this clear: *the first man is of the earth, earthy* (I Cor 15:47). The plain sense of the Scripture is that Jesus' flesh has its source directly in the Holy Spirit and was not depended on biological or genetic material from the line of Adam. In fact, this question was already posed by Mary herself upon the visitation of Gabriel:

Luke 1:34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Notice that Mary's query pertained to the precise dynamics of the conception of this promised Saviour Jesus. In other words, how could she conceive without male intervention? The answer was that this child would be born of the Holy Ghost and called the Son of God. As Gezahagne (2007) explains, Mary's role can be usefully likened to a surrogate mother in that her blood or genes played no role in the conception of the child. Why is this important and, furthermore, is it a necessary condition of faith? The answer is an unreserved yes. Several scriptural statements adjudicate

in favour of such a perception but time and space will allow me to dwell on a select few.

John 1:1 ¶ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 ¶ And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

In John's soaring revelation above, the clear implication is that the Word was made flesh – a direct process that was not filtered through any human agency. The Word of God was, and has always been unique. The Jews of the Old Testament/Tanakh associated the Word of God with God Himself. The 2nd century church father, Justin Martyr, was one of the first to make a distinction between God and His Word. Justin Martyr, however, held views on Christ that must be declared heretical:

Justin Martyr wrote: Christ is the Logos in whom every race of men shared. Those who lived in accordance with Logos, true reason, are Christians, even though they were regarded as atheists; for example, Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks (Dowley et al. 1990:109).

It will take some strenuous intellectual gymnastics and theological spin-doctoring to designate atheists as Christians just because they live according to *Logos* or reason. Just ask the renowned high-priest of atheism, Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion* (2006). How can Socrates and

Plato be Christians before Christ? What does Justin mean by equating reason with Christ? To understand Justin's philosophy one would need to be familiar with the teachings of the Stoics who confronted Paul at Mars Hill in Athens. Briefly, they believed that the cosmos operated in harmony with the principle of *Logos* – the source of knowledge and order. Aristotle equated *Logos* with reasoned discourse and the Hellenic Jew, Philo, a contemporary of Christ, extrapolated *Logos* to merge it with the Jewish Scriptures and develop a syncretistic theology. It was the reliance on such Hellenistic influences that gradually led Justin and other church fathers to separate Christ, the Word, from God. This process found its apotheosis in Arius who took this heresy to its logical extreme and taught that Jesus was another and lesser god – a forerunner to contemporary Jehovah's Witness theology. However, if we stick with the plain sense of Scripture – a prudent principle in Bible hermeneutics – the Word of God is identified with God Himself. The following references bear witness to this proposition:

Gen 3:8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Deu 4:12 And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only [ye heard] a voice.

1Ki 6:11 ¶ And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying,

Psa 107:20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered [them] from their destructions.

Psa 147:15 He sendeth forth his commandment [upon] earth: his word runneth very swiftly.

Mat 8:8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

Mat 8:9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this [man], Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth [it].

In the above Scriptures, the Word of God is understood to be no different than God Himself – the expression and creative power of the one true God. The Roman centurion earned the praise of Jesus because his words testified that he believed Jesus to be the Word of God. Bearing this in mind, when the Word was made flesh, consistency demands that the flesh is heavenly flesh originating directly with God. To fully appreciate the soul-blessing revelation of the Everlasting Father, we need to understand that Jesus is the eternal Father (whose essence is Spirit) but now indwells His own Word made flesh. The magnitude of this mystery was so great that unless the Holy Spirit illuminated their hearts, even the apostles would have staggered incredulously at its significance.

John 16:25 ¶ These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

John 16:26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

John 14:7 ¶ If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

John 14:8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Shew us the Father?

John 14:10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

John 14:11 Believe me that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

Notice what triggered this seismic disclosure concerning the identity of the Father was Jesus' words, "*If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*" All credit to Philip for daring to ask the question that was burning in everyone's heart – and that of many individuals even 2000 years later: "*Shew us the Father*" Philip seized the bull by the horns and popped the question that must have caused all of heaven and earth to hold its breath. This was the moment of truth. Every other sentence ever uttered was trivial at this

moment. I can imagine that the Seraphim and Cherubim, the angels, archangels, Satan and his minions gasped at the sheer audacity and courage of a mere human to utter the words: *Shew us the Father*. Thank God we do not have to ask this ever again. The answer has been furnished by Jesus Himself.

John 14:9 "...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Shew us the Father?

John 14:10 Believeest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works"

The plain truth is that the Father is not accessible except through the Son. The Father, who created all things and spoke through the prophets, has now made Himself available only through His own flesh and blood.

Like many other well-meaning Christians I too long held that Jesus had a dual nature: God on His Father's side but with an inherited human nature from His mother's side. The church I attended for a number of years in Oslo, Norway, had diligently taught me that the Council of Nicea AD 325 was responsible for engineering the doctrine of Trinity with all its philosophical obfuscations. For this I am still deeply grateful. However, for some reason, we were not made aware of the nexus between the dual nature doctrine of Christology and another landmark church council – the Council of Chalcedon AD 451. Grudem (1994) chronicles the various events that led up to this council. The main bone

of contention was the question: What is the relationship between the divinity of Jesus and His humanity? This subject is referred to as Christology in church-speak.

Nestorius, the 4th century church father, for instance, believed that there existed two loosely united but distinct natures in Christ – one the Son of God and the other the son of Mary. His Christology was condemned at the councils of Ephesus AD 431 and Chalcedon AD 451. On the other extreme, Eutyches, a contemporary of Nestorius, advocated the amalgamation of the two natures in Christ to produce a new nature in which the human was swallowed up by the divine. A common error underlying both speculations is their belief that Jesus, as the second member of the Trinity, came down from heaven and assumed human flesh from Mary. As mentioned earlier, the Bible speaks only of one God with no co-existing Son or partner. In addition, rather than assume flesh from Mary, Scripture declares that the Word was made flesh. God fathered or sired His own flesh without the need of any intermediaries.

Christ the true image of God

In 1999, while reading the book, *Bible Writer's Theology* (Gezahagne 1999) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the powerful rays of God which disperse the cobwebs of confusion illuminated my soul. I was reading the commentary on John 3:16 and came across the part where Gezahagne (1999) explains the meaning of *only begotten Son*. The Greek word *monogenes* carries the connotation of “one stock, race, kind or genes” (James Strong). Jesus as the only begotten Son of

God is the only being whose flesh is directly begotten of the nature, substance or character of God. Just as every living creature was commanded to reproduce after its own kind, when God begat He could only beget of His own nature – a heavenly flesh and blood. That Christ’s flesh is derived directly from God Himself without any filtering agent can be appreciated by briefly probing the meaning of the word “image” in the Bible. Spiros Zodhiates³ states that the word *eikon* (Colossians 1:15), translated as “image” in English means that Christ is derived from the same source as the Father.

In the Old Testament, although Adam is referred to as the image of God, a careful study of “image” as understood in Hebrew reveals it to be very different to the sense in which the apostle Paul used it in Greek. The Hebrew word *tselem*, translated “image” in Genesis 1:26 is in essence “shade or shadow”. Psalm 39:6, has “vain show” for *tselem*. This word is used about 18 times in the OT of which 5 refer to man. *Tselem* is even translated a “dream” in Psalm 73:20. Another similar word *demuth* is translated as “likeness” in Genesis 1:26 and is according to Zodhiates (1986), basically no different from *Tselem*. Ezekiel saw the likeness of God and by that he meant resemblance, shadow, similitude, model, pattern or shape but not God Himself. *Tselem* is not an exact duplicate. As the Reverend Dr. Gezahagne once shared with me, “Adam’s flesh was created from the dust while his spirit was from the breath of God therefore he was

³ *The lexicon to the Old and New Testaments*, edited by Spiros Zodhiates Th.D, 1986.

a mix of the temporal and eternal realms. Adam and his descendents cannot be the image that God is speaking about in Genesis 1:26 because God is not from the dust.

Isa 40:25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One.

So how should we understand Genesis 1:26? The key lies in Romans 5:14 & 8:29

*Rom 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the **figure** of him that was to come.*

Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

When God was creating man, He used Jesus as the prototype. Adam was only a **figure** of Christ – a *tselem* or shadow. Before God's Spirit reached down into the dust to shape form and mould Adam He already had a blueprint – the body that He Himself was going to manifest Himself in. This body would be the *monogenes* (John 3:16) meaning the same race, stock and kind of God. This body would be the *eikon* meaning image derived from the same source as the Father Himself (Colossians 1:15). God knew that Adam and Eve would sin and eventually grow old, suffer and die so why does the Scripture say:

Gen 1:31 And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Could God have been uttering a futuristic vision into the moment He created Adam? Was He actually speaking prophetically of the day He would robe Himself in flesh and send His own image into the world? God was fully aware that the creation He had just called “very good” in Genesis was soon going to be transformed into a world where predators would devour the weaker animals, man would pollute the atmosphere and many plants and animals would become extinct. As Lord Tennyson put it “nature red in tooth and claw”. So why did He say it was very good if sin was soon to distort all things bright and beautiful? In His foreknowledge, God was looking at the real image – His own body Jesus Christ – and knowing that through Jesus, not only man, but the whole creation would be restored as the Apostle Paul reveals:

Rom 8:18 ¶ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time [are] not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Rom 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Rom 8:20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected [the same] in hope,

Rom 8:21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Genesis 1:26 states that man was to have dominion over *everything that creeps upon the earth*. We know, however, that the devil deceived Adam through Eve and, actually, the seed of the serpent – which is sin – has dominion over Adam and his race. So Adam has been overcome by that which he was to have dominion over. Friend, how glorious it is for us to be comforted by the blessed thought today that the real image of God has bruised the head of the serpent – the enemy of Adam and conquered him. As the prophecy said of the real image of God:

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

We will have dominion over sin and our ancient enemy Satan, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Having this understanding, we too can in spite of the apparent chaos in the world today, in spite of our present sufferings, declare together with God “It is very good”.

Rom 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

List of Scriptures

John 8:24

Psalm 107:20

Exodus 3:13,14

Psalm 147:15

Acts 9:5

Matthew 8:8,9

I Tim 3:16

John 16:25,26

Isaiah 45:23

John 14:7-11

Romans 14:10-12

John 3:16

Phil 2:10,11

Colossians 1:15

John 18:4-6

Isaiah 45:25

ICor 15:47-49

John 3:16

Luke 1:34,35

John 6:51

Genesis 3:8

Romans 8:29

Deuteronomy 4:12

Romans 5:14

IKi 6:11

John 8:23

BAPTISM IN JESUS NAME

The power of water

In this chapter, I will investigate one aspect of civil religion which has lost much of its beautiful meaning, even among mainstream denominations – the Christian rite of baptism. Apostolics invest much energy and enthusiasm when expounding on the doctrine of baptism. Rather than present it as an important, but optional rite, the Bible presents it as a core teaching that needs careful study and revelation.

Gen 1:6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

Gen 1:20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl [that] may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

Water appears to be an element shrouded in mystery from the dawn of Biblical history. We know that the Lord created everything visible and invisible (John 1:3), however, we do not find any statement in the creation account that delineates the precise moment God created water. “*Let there be water*” is conspicuous by its absence. It is abundantly clear, nonetheless, that water plays a central role in the primeval stages of creation. The embryonic earth appeared to be

enveloped by water and these same waters were commissioned by God to spawn life "...Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl [that] may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven (Genesis 1:20). Seen in this light, the words of Jesus, where He draws an analogy between the new birth and water, becomes intriguing:

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

In the above verses, Jesus emphasizes the indispensable role of water in the new birth process. In this famous exchange, the Lord gently reprimanded Nicodemus for failing to take cognizance of mundane earthly biological processes before grappling with heavenly meanings. The key to unlocking this discourse is the phrase "born *again*" (emphasis mine). If "born *again*" is a reference to the second birth – a spiritual one – then what is the *first* birth? Obviously, if the second birth is the spiritual equivalent of the first one, then the only plausible explanation is that the first birth is the natural birth we all experience. It can be easily ascertained that without water the first birth would have been rendered impossible. The water in the uterus - amniotic fluid - acts as a shock-absorber protecting the embryo (Kilgour & Riley, 1999:270).

In addition, it serves as a transporting agent carrying vital nutrients through the blood to the embryo and flushes out the system preventing infections in the urinary tract. In other words, the Lord was driving home the point that, just as water is indispensable to the natural birthing process, so too, water is indispensable to the task of transporting individuals from this temporal world into the eternal Kingdom of God. The story of Noah illustrates this potency of water to flush out the polluting effects of sin and save the righteous.

Gen 7:13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

Gen 7:23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained [alive], and they that [were] with him in the ark.

Gen 8:1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that [was] with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged;

The days of Noah were characterized by endemic violence and an unprecedented celebration of evil. Sin is a contagion which, left to its own devices, spreads like a cancer. It seeks nothing short of complete supremacy keeping its subjects revelling in an orgy of utter depravity. It was the mercy of God to deliver the *coup de grace* to Sodom and Gomorrah and deliver righteous Lot from succumbing to the insatiable

demands of perversion. In the text above, it should come as no surprise that God solicited the agency of water to exterminate sin. As mentioned earlier, water has a two-fold role – a facilitator in the process of effectuating new life, and a purifier that attacks the scourge of sin. Noah and his family must have marvelled greatly at the zeal with which water attacked the sin of the pre-deluge world.

Even in our modern world, man can be forgiven for smugly forgetting the cataclysmic effects that water can unleash. The Tsunami that hit Southeast Asia in 2004 left a quarter of a million individuals dead. Although Indonesia bore the brunt of the force, casualties occurred in Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, the Maldives, Myanmar and even Somalia further away. Again, such was the viciousness of “Hurricane Katrina” in Louisiana and Mississippi that close to 2000 individuals were left dead in its wake in 2005. It was heart-rending to watch these victims whose very identity was left vulnerable as they had no way to prove who they were. The hurricane had destroyed their taken-for-granted world and no institution could corroborate their claims. By washing away all records testifying to the identity of these citizens, water left them weak and vulnerable to start from scratch again. The waters became a source of dread and destruction to the rebellious contemporaries of Noah. In Noah’s case, however, water must have been perceived with a new-found respect and awe at its immense power. Indeed, he was saved by water from the old world of sin and delivered into a *new world* free of the familiar wickedness which was so rampant before. In one sense, the Ark can be compared to a coffin which rendered him dead to the sins of the old world, but

alive to a new world with promise and hope embodied in the rainbow. Born-again Christians rejoice at the power inherent in water to blot out the memory of our old, sin-filled lives and procure a new identity in Jesus Christ. In this age of grace, the Lord expects us to voluntarily die to our old lives symbolized by submersion in a watery grave through which the *new world* becomes a reality.

1Peter 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

1Peter 3:21 The like figure whereunto [even] baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

2Cr 5:17 Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Gal 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

There is good news for those who take refuge in baptism in Jesus name. It is important to keep in mind that Noah took refuge in an Ark that God *instructed* him to build and enter. Baptism is an act of faith that derives its saving authority from the words of Jesus Himself and the apostles. We are clearly *instructed* to be baptized in Jesus name. Our faith in

the atoning work of our Lord invests water with life-saving power efficacious for salvation.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Act 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Act 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Act 10:46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

Act 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Act 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Act 19:5 When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The terror of death

How precisely does water assist in transporting us from this world to the next? One key aspect in this process is the shedding of our earthly bodies inherited from Adam and Eve and the donning of the heavenly flesh of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Whatever differences in human cultures

and aspirations, and however congruent or dissonant these cultures may appear, humans share a common destiny – death. Death is indeed the great equalizer or leveller. Humankind has long contemplated and mulled over this very obvious fact that looms large like an ominous cloud with no silver lining. That man yearns for eternal life is captured in the myths and legends spun by every civilization. Greek tragedy portrays the warrior, Achilles, as the apotheosis of Greek bravery and military prowess but the arrow of Paris succeeds in piercing his heel – the only mortal part of his body – fatally wounding him.

Before one can appreciate the message of baptism in Jesus name, it is appropriate to digress and address the Biblical notion of sin which leads to a physical and spiritual death. Baptism is synonymous with death and the two must be studied in conjunction. Indeed, the need for Christ to come and die is a stumbling block of monumental proportions for countless Muslims I have witnessed to through the years. They have often posed the question, “Why did God have to come as a man and die on the cross? He could just verbally forgive sins.” Hopefully, the exegesis that follows will go some way in shedding light on this cornerstone teaching of the Bible.

Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

The thought or idea of death must have been patently novel to the mind of Adam and Eve. Thus far, nothing in their environment had died, and so we can reasonably assume that

this word invoked a serious threat to their hitherto perfect universe. Adam was created to live eternally. The new creation around him was bursting with life and vitality but all this was now overshadowed by the mention of death – a mysterious enemy. In one sense, death has always co-existed with life from the very genesis of life. It wasn't long before death darkened the doors of the first couple's home with the death of Abel. One reason death is so frightening is the knowledge that the separation is permanent. Even Job, who had every reason to celebrate life with some abandon, found himself fearing that perhaps his children had inadvertently sinned. Later he shares the secret cause of his consternation.

Job 3:25 For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

Job was well aware, like every sane adult that death descends swiftly and violently not unlike an unseen sniper stalking his prey. In October 2002, John Allen Muhammad, and a minor, Lee Boyd Malvo, terrorized parts of Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia killing 10 people and injuring 3. Such was the panic the “Beltway Sniper” unleashed that schools were closed down. Many abstained from filling gas in unprotected stations or filled gas at the Naval Base of the National Naval Medical Center. As the heinous actions of these men demonstrated, death is cruel, meaningless and snuffs out precious lives without apology or explanation. Where death works away slowly on its victims, as in the case of cancer, it controls every waking moment of its victim. After days, weeks or even years of excruciating

agony, death finally conquers. Indeed, death is a mocker. Death casts its shadow upon the living too as scripture records.

Gen 50:10 And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which [is] beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

Gen 50:11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This [is] a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abelmizraim, which [is] beyond Jordan.

Death exacts a toll on the living too as in the case of Joseph who mourned profusely for his beloved father, Jacob. It causes daily life to be suspended. Work and leisure, smiles and laughter, business plans and all that pertains to life in general comes to a momentary halt in order to lament and consider the awesome power of this mysterious force. This abhorrent enemy that expunges the candle of life visits many children depriving them of a chance of growing up; death visits us in the form of natural calamities ravaging homes and nations for it respects no boundaries (just think about the international bird flu and mad cow disease). Few are as lucky, if one can use such a word, to be told to prepare for death as was the case with King Hezekiah. President Abraham Lincoln had a very vivid dream foreshadowing his own impending death. The American writer and poet, Carl Sandburg, in his series of biographies on Lincoln, published in 1939, cites Lincoln.

About ten days ago, I retired very late. I had been up waiting for important dispatches from the front. I could not have been long in bed when I fell into a slumber, for I was weary. I soon began to dream. There seemed to be a death-like stillness about me. Then I heard subdued sobs, as if a number of people were weeping. I thought I left my bed and wandered downstairs. There the silence was broken by the same pitiful sobbing, but the mourners were invisible. I went from room to room; no living person was in sight, but the same mournful sounds of distress met me as I passed along. It was light in all the rooms; every object was familiar to me; but where were all the people who were grieving as if their hearts would break? I was puzzled and alarmed. What could be the meaning of all this? Determined to find the cause of a state of things so mysterious and so shocking, I kept on until I arrived at the East Room, which I entered. There I met with a sickening surprise. Before me was a catafalque, on which rested a corpse wrapped in funeral vestments. Around it were stationed soldiers who were acting as guards; and there was a throng of people, some gazing mournfully upon the corpse, whose face was covered, others weeping pitifully. "Who is dead in the White House?" I demanded of one of the soldiers. "The President," was his answer; "he was killed by an assassin!" Then came a loud burst of grief from the crowd, which awoke me from my dream. I slept no more that night; and though it was only a dream, I have been strangely annoyed by it ever since.

In regards to the aforementioned Hezekiah, King of Judah, his response is typical of how many of us would have reacted had we become privy to some supernatural knowledge heralding our demise. The Bible states that he wept and prayed fervently asking God to extend his life and was granted 15 more years (2 Kings 20:1-3).

O grave, I will be thy destruction

Thus far I have reflected upon the formidable power of death so that we can appreciate why God robed Himself in flesh and died on the cross of Calvary for us. The great comforting news for the world today is that God Himself hates death with a vengeance. He has identified death as *His own* enemy. God has registered every death since Abel and it has been a source of great pain for His tender and loving heart.

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.
Psalms 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD [is] the death of his saints.

In answering sceptics who ask, “Why doesn’t God just eliminate death?” the answer is that sin gives power to death. Man has been given a free will moral agency and must choose between right and wrong. Many have regretfully chosen to rebel against the way of God and bolster the power of death and the grave. An obvious example is that of individuals in the grip of drugs and other addictive substances who hasten their own deaths considerably. Now,

however, God has taken up our cause by entering this world with the purpose of destroying death. In fact, right from the outset, Jesus terrified the forces of sin and death. Death was aware that soon its monopoly would cease. Death obeyed Jesus and released many of the prisoners it held in derision over to Christ's liberating power – even before Golgotha. We see this demonstrated amply in the encounter at the tomb of Lazarus which sent shockwaves in Israel (John 11), and the story of Jairus' daughter whom, with the words "*Maid, rise!*" Jesus restored to life (Luke 8:41-56). The apostle Paul waxes lyrical in his joy at the demise of death itself at the hands of Jesus.

1Cr 15:55 O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory?

1Cr 15:56 The sting of death [is] sin; and the strength of sin [is] the law.

1Cr 15:57 But thanks [be] to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1Cr 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

To summarize, death has held absolute sway over humanity since the dawn of creation. It brought untold suffering and misery and is, without a shadow of doubt, the greatest foe facing, not only humans, but all sentient beings. Paul declares that all of creation mourns and groans waiting to be delivered from this present vanity (Romans 8:18-23). The good news is that God Himself has shown solidarity with us

by vanquishing death on the cross. Jesus not only has bound death but will ultimately cast death itself into a Lake of fire.

Eph 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Rev 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Rev 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Blood's beauty and ugliness

Violence and death was visited upon Jesus. The paradox is that He had power over death but submitted Himself to the violence of death on the cross. He did this for our salvation in order to purchase us back from the malevolent grip of death. His vicarious death should lead us to freely repent and rejoice over the profound meaning of Christ's death. In discussions about the necessity of Christ's vicarious death some find the whole notion of a gory blood sacrifice quite distasteful. What seems to be an obsession with blood, guts and burning appears incongruent with a God of love and mercy. This belies a misunderstanding of the very nature and consequences of sin. Actually, the entire saga of the Bible revolves around two paradoxical, yet symbiotic facts which must be given due prominence – the ugliness of sin demonstrated in the blood offerings in the Temple and Golgotha *together* with the beauty of this very act in

restoring righteousness. The next section will attempt to elaborate on the question “Why blood?”

Gen 8:20 ¶ And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Gen 8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart [is] evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done.

Noah had just embarked from the Ark. The surface of the earth was must have been littered with a mishmash of putrefying human and animal carcasses, plants, trees. Even the worst battlefields of WW1 and WW2 could not compare with the indescribable sight that must have met the eyes of Noah after the waters receded. Yet, paradoxically, as if this sight of unspeakable dread and gore wasn't sufficient, Noah came upon one more brilliant idea – the death of some more animals. This, no doubt assaults our modern sensibilities as a needless waste of life; a primitive cult obsessed with “blood and guts”. However, we understand that Noah's animal sacrifice actually pointed ahead to the one death that would deliver all life from the tyranny of sin and eternal death. In faith, he offered a blood sacrifice to God adumbrating the death of God's own flesh that would someday redeem humanity. This would be the death to end all deaths for those willing to accept it. No wonder God was pleased with this voluntary offering of faith. In God's eyes, His own plan to redeem humanity with His own flesh and blood was

something He cherished and looked forward to. It was a sweet smell in His nostrils.

Isa 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither [was any] deceit in his mouth.

Isa 53:10 ¶ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [his] seed, he shall prolong [his] days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Psa 40:7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book [it is] written of me,

Psa 40:8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law [is] within my heart.

During WW2, countless soldiers among allied forces courageously fought the evil that was Nazi Germany. The Nazis were demonically determined to alter the face of the world by eliminating the cherished notions of democracy, respect for national boundaries and other concomitant aspirations of free nations. Soldiers representing the allied forces sacrificed their lives so that we would be free from the tyranny of Hitler and his maniacal agenda. In the words of Winston Churchill, the erstwhile Prime Minister of England, “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few”. The message of Easter is that God was manifest in flesh to destroy the tyranny of sin and death so that we can live joyfully in the presence of God eternally. Caiaphas, the High Priest basically formulated an early version of Winston Churchill’s famous words.

John 11:49 And one of them, [named] Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

John 11:50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

John 11:51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

John 11:52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

The saga of a blood offering to God is as old as humanity itself. Long before the Ten Commandments were inscribed upon the tablets of stone, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than his brother, Cain. We must infer from this that God had communicated the need for a blood sacrifice to Adam. We have no suggestion of blood sacrifice recorded in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. Adam and Eve seemed to enjoy a rather intimate relationship with the animal kingdom that involved the ability to communicate. But sin soon changed that. No shepherd in Israel could have relished the prospect of selecting a lamb from his flock to sacrifice to the Lord. But such was the devastation of the divine order that sin let loose. The sight of the terrified lamb, goat or bull, tied and staring wide-eyed at a glittering sharp knife could not be edifying. This reluctance to die as a scapegoat or lamb was re-enacted by God Himself in the garden of Gethsemane to underscore the horror that accompanies sin. Just as the scapegoat in the OT was petrified and lonely, so Christ voluntarily experienced these

emotions for us. In an interesting parallel, just as lots was cast for the goats, so the Jews were given an option between Jesus and Barabbas.

Lev 16:7 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD [at] the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Lev 16:8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

Lev 16:9 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him [for] a sin offering.

Lev 16:10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, [and] to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

Mat 27:21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

Mar 14:34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

Herein lies the paradox of the death of Christ: it is simultaneously horrible beyond imagination, yet a sweet smelling sacrifice in the nostrils of God almighty. It is indeed an oxymoron that death is sweet-smelling. This is why, although the idea may sound strange to an unregenerate world, the Church is preoccupied with the death of Christ 2000 years later. Such was the effect of Noah's sweet-smelling sacrifice that God promised never to destroy the world by a global flood again. We ought to thank Noah for this promise each time we see the rainbow. Every sacrifice is

rewarded by God. But this is dwarfed by the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. It was no coincidence that Golgotha was the chosen location for the sacrifice of the Son of God. Golgotha means the place of the skull for it resembled a skull. By planting the cross on the skull, the authorities, unbeknownst to them were symbolically driving the cross through the skull, so to speak. Jesus' blood dripped on the skull. Death was plagued and destroyed by the death of Jesus. In the Old Testament, the High Priest would take the blood of the sacrifice and proceed to the Holy of Holies. On the cross, Jesus through the Spirit took His own blood into the Holy of Holies in the Temple which explains why the veil of the Temple was rent in two. But, and more importantly, Christ took His blood to heaven thus sanctifying heaven and earth. Divine order has been restored. What a sweet-smelling sacrifice, indeed!

Hebrews 10:19 ¶ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

Hebrews 10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

Christ's liberating pedagogy

Neo-Marxist theorists have long maintained that the poor masses have been disenfranchised by socio-economic structures that perpetuate inequalities in society. In his ground-breaking book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), the Marxist-Christian educationalist, Paulo Freire, offers this solution to empower the struggling oppressed.

The central problem is this: How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be “hosts” of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy (Freire, 1996:30).

At the risk of simplifying Freire’s philosophy, he identifies the strategy of the oppressor as one where a deliberate attempt is made to *domesticate* the oppressed. The poor are kept in a state of intransigent consciousness where they do not question the circumstances of their misery. He argued that the oppressors would never be able to truly help the oppressed as this would degenerate into a false generosity or selfish charity. It is imperative that the oppressed themselves be *midwives* in their own liberation, as he puts it. The conscience of the oppressed must be awakened from the lethargic slumber so characteristic of this class. Freire uses the Portuguese word, *conscientização* or critical consciousness to encapsulate the process of inculcating a sense of engaging with the forces of oppression in reflection and action - praxis - to ultimately overthrow them.

I have digressed into critical theory only to draw an interesting spiritual parallel, albeit limited. As Freire himself notes, the oppressed themselves often adopt and imitate their oppressors when they wield power. George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945) satirizes this fact with the famous line “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”. Napoleon the pig, together with the other pigs, gradually resembles the hated human beings by walking upright, buying whips and wearing clothes. So much for

sensitizing the oppressed to the intricate socio-economic machinations that disenfranchises them. Christ's message goes beyond the present circumstances of this decaying world. The message of repentance, baptism in Jesus name and receiving the Holy Spirit, central to this book, is radically revolutionary in that it seeks to awaken our consciences to the doomed state of this world in its entirety. Yes, we can be midwives in our own liberation, as Freire so eloquently puts it, but by acknowledging the fact that sin has permeated and infiltrated every iota of this world. The problem is sin which has distorted man and the created order. Christ has taken on and defeated the ultimate enemy - death - but mankind is still living oppressed and domesticated under the yoke of Satan's ideological regime. Mahatma Ghandi once said that humans exchange one bondage for another in a cyclical fashion. Indeed, Jesus, by contrast, offers to break Satan's yoke of oppression in exchange for His yoke which is light and easy to bear.

Here I draw a line under the necessity of the death of Christ for the moment and return to its corollary – baptism in Jesus name. Earlier I made reference to baptism as an arena where the believer puts off the body of Adam and dons the body of Christ by faith. This must be probed further.

Putting off Adam and putting on Christ

If baptism represents death, then it follows logically that the process leads to the atrophy and disintegration of the physical body. With what body, then, do we rise from the waters of baptism that strip us off our terrestrial bodies? The

Biblical record indicates that our spirit beings – breathed into us by God – *must* always be cocooned in a body. We who are descendants of Adam have inherited a material body that can only thrive on this planet. One may take umbrage at the word *thrive* given the manner in which large numbers of our fellow-humans daily succumb to a barrage of diseases and calamities both natural and man-made. Besides, why one may ask, are we limited to this planet alone given the mind-boggling expanse of the universe? Actually, at the heart of the biblical doctrine of baptism lies the idea of preparing for a new universe known in Christian nomenclature as heaven. The body of Jesus, which we “put on” in baptism, is the only body that can thrive in a new universe sanctified by Christ’s redemptive work. The apostle Paul captures the above beautifully:

1Cr 15:50 ¶ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

1Cr 15:51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

1Cr 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1Cr 15:53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality.

1Cr 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

1Cr 15:55 O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory?

1Cr 15:56 The sting of death [is] sin; and the strength of sin [is] the law.

1Cr 15:57 But thanks [be] to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this sense, Jesus' body alone is *native* to the metaphysical realm. This is because the universe is created by the Word of God and the body of Christ, which we put on in baptism, is the Word made flesh. Weird as it may seem, physicists now believe that time-travel may be possible as the "wormhole" theory suggests. The "wormhole", they postulate, can be visualized as an umbilical cord in space-time that connects one universe to another. As the noted Anglican priest, and former Professor of mathematical physics at Cambridge, John Polkinghorne, notes:

Thus a physicist such as Paul Davies, who is notably unsympathetic to conventional religion, can nevertheless write, "It may seem bizarre but in my opinion science offers a surer road to God than religion" (Polkinghorne, 2006:23).

A profound and very edifying mystery lies at the core of the message of "putting on Christ" which justifies some discussion. The mystery of baptism begins with Adam and Eve. Eve, it must be remembered was made from a rib taken from the side of Adam. The Bible records:

Gen 2:21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

Gen 2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

Gen 2:23 And Adam said, This [is] now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Gen 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Eve, then, had no separate existence independent from Adam. This does not mean that she was a clone of Adam, and definitely no subservient puppet as she exercised autonomy of opinion in the encounter with the serpent. Eve's existence was one characterized by a strong bond with Adam by virtue of her biological origin. The perpetuation of this original state of bliss was predicated upon her willingness to maintain a loving and harmonious relationship with Adam – her source, but, at this early stage, not her *ruler*. Later, in Genesis 3:16, we read of the curse that followed her act of disobedience: *and thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee*. I will leave it to more competent exegetes to expound on the precise meaning of *rule over thee* but my focus is on this original pristine relationship before the Fall and demonstrate its link with baptism.

The fulfilment of this mystery is clearly revealed in Jesus Christ. To begin with, His very title, *the last Adam* (1 Corinthians 15:45) speaks volumes. In Biblical typology, Jesus is the original prototype of the eternal spiritual man. Just as Eve was drawn from the very physiology of Adam (his rib), every individual who desires eternal life must be

born again of the very substance of Jesus. The term *born again* encapsulates two complementary aspects: a physical and a spiritual. This chapter concerns itself with the former aspect alone. First and foremost, then, the new physical body is begotten (not created) of Christ's original body. Like Eve, those who have "put on" Christ find themselves uniquely bonded to Him by virtue of this physiological nexus. We truly become bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Again, the apostle Paul reflecting on Christ's role of fathering countless children in His image declares:

Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Hbr 1:6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

For years, I had pondered the sense in which Jesus was *firstborn/firstbegotten*. "How could Jesus be the firstborn when countless individuals had seen the light of day before Him?" I inquired. Aquila and Priscilla were instrumental in prudently taking Apollos aside and expounding the "way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). In my case, the Lord prepared Bishop Teklemariam Gezahagne who in 1999 explained to me that Christ is the firstborn in the sense that His is the only flesh born directly of the Word of God with no biological contribution from the race of the first Adam. Jesus cannot be our "kinsman redeemer" in the common

parlance of many church denominations as the term “kinsman” necessitates a blood relationship. As demonstrated earlier, this mingling of natures was more a promulgation of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) than that of Scriptures. The biogenesis of the human race is entirely different from that of Christ’s. Dr. Gezahagne states unequivocally:

The teaching and doctrine that Jesus is the son of Mary and took on Adamic humanness and yet without sin violates the scriptural teaching of the Bible (John 1:14)...Those who believe that only a true human being could be their kinsman redeemer and substitutionary sacrifice are holding erroneous doctrine. (Gezahagne, 2007:33).

You might be led to protest at this stage and exclaim, “Why should we be so pedantic about the origin of the flesh of Jesus? Is it not sufficient to believe that Jesus is Lord?” I share some sympathy with this view being cognizant of the underpinning sincerity. However, God has not called us to sincerity but truth. Such was Paul’s concern with the flesh of Jesus that, to a large degree, I Corinthians 15 is a *tour de force* intended to convince the readers that there is an all-important distinction between categories of flesh, the highest of which is the flesh of Christ. So why is the source of Christ’s flesh of such pressing concern? In a nutshell because His heavenly flesh is the body which we must “put on” to enter heaven. Thus, for Paul, baptism was more than a symbolic rite – something beyond the visible transpired:

Gal 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Like Eve, who was physiologically related to Adam, born-again Christians are inextricably linked to Jesus through the powerful act of baptism. Again, we see the life-giving and life-sustaining properties of water as a mystical force *par excellence*. In a manner analogous to the days of Noah, water attacks, smashes and sweeps away everything that links us to Adam, physically and spiritually. Just as water in the uterus facilitates birth, water plays a key role in effectuating the second birth as children of Christ.

Eph 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Eph 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Why in the name of Jesus?

This next section will deliberate on the *name* to be administered in baptism. Initially, I had been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost as Jesus' Himself outlined in Matthew 28:19 but certain events soon caused me to take another look at the scriptures. The little church I attended in Oslo in 1990 was led by an American Pastor who took time to explain why he believed baptism was in the name of Jesus alone. Pointing to Matthew 28:19, he said that the word *name* was in the singular and not

plural. Furthermore, “The name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost is *Jesus*”, he said. I have to admit that this sounded quite strange to me to begin with as I had never come across this brand of theology before. Nevertheless, the more I mulled over what he said, the more biblically sound it seemed. In fact, for 4 years I had never been able to explain why the apostles *always* baptized in the name of Jesus alone. Clearly, this seems an aberration when considered in light of Jesus’ straightforward command. I finally asked to be baptized in Jesus name in 1991. The last 20 years have only served to reinforce this soul-blessing truth which I would like to share in the section below. The Lion Handbook’s *The History of Christianity* (1990) makes the following statement:

Although at first people were often baptized in the name of Christ alone, it soon became standard to be baptized in the name of the Trinity (Dowley ed. 1990:116).

Indeed, this is exactly what we find in the pages of the New Testament. The Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, is consensually considered to be the beginning of the church age. On that very day, the apostle Peter, moved by the anointing of the Spirit, preached repentance in Jesus name for the remission of sins. Let us keep in mind that the Spirit of the Lord is none other than the Lord Himself as Paul elucidates:

Gal 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

We understand the Lord Himself enabled the 120 disciples to burst forth into the supernatural phenomenon of speaking in tongues but, and relevant to the subject matter, the Spirit underscored the absolute necessity of baptism in His own name – the name of Jesus. A huge multitude of devout Jews had assembled from every corner of the world to keep this all-important Jewish festival. Little did they know their hunger for God would find them participating in the first “open air” Gospel meeting. Things got even more bizarre as the disciples spoke to them in their own native languages with great unction. Having heard that Jesus was the Messiah eagerly foretold in the hallowed pages of the Law, Prophets and the Psalms, little else was left to do but inquire about the next step.

Act 2:37 Now when they heard [this], they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do?

Act 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

3000 souls were baptized in the soul-saving name of Jesus that day. 3000 times the wonderful name of Jesus was heard mentioned as one soul after another identified with Christ’s death and put on Christ in the waters of cleansing and regeneration. A few weeks prior to this event, the name of Jesus had been dragged in the mud; He had become a laughing stock in Jerusalem and no one wanted to openly associate with this name. The tide had turned now with

thousands attracted to the name of Jesus like bees to honey. Jesus often solemnly protested to His hearers:

Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

The first and most significant demonstration of one's submission to Christ is to be baptized in His own saving name. Baptism profoundly confirms the believer's desire and willingness to publicly make Jesus Lord and God of his/her life. However, I am convinced that potential candidates for baptism should not lightly enter into it without sufficient teaching. Baptism is a confession that Christ cannot be Lord over the sinful, unregenerate nature inherited from Adam. Armed with this conviction, the believer enters into a watery grave to expunge the old nature. In addition, it is a proclamation of faith in the ability of Christ to beget a new child born in His own image. As discussed earlier, the apostles knew that Jesus came in His Father's name (John 5:43) and that the Holy Spirit was the same Spirit indwelling Jesus (Galatians 4:6, John 14:26; Phil 1:19) so they confidently baptized everyone who was obedient in this mighty name. Indeed, the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Jesus (Colossians 2:9). In fact, we do not come across one instance where the apostles baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as the scriptures.

Act 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Act 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Act 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Rom 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Gal 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

In the celebrated Shakespearean tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet questions the whole convention of naming as hollow with the words, “What is in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet” (*Romeo and Juliet* II, ii, 1-2). The two families were locked in a feud that doomed their relationship. She protests that her love is for a person called “Montague” (Romeo’s surname) and does not extend to loving the name “Montague” or the family. Romeo’s passionate love for Juliet leads him to vow to deny his father and be “new baptized” as Juliet’s lover.

Reflect for a moment, if you will, on the whole tradition of naming. From a biblical viewpoint, it had its roots in God’s own act of assigning a name to Adam. Adam means “red earth” which implies that origin or source was the guiding factor in God’s decision to name the first man. Many surnames in Norway give vital clues revealing the hamlet, town or city one hails from. A person called Løvik may trace his lineage to the region of Molde on the north-western coast of Norway. Among the Akan of Ghana, children often adopt

the name of the day they were born. So someone named Kwame was born on a Saturday. Particularly among the ancients, the naming ceremony was often accorded much symbolic significance. Lest we forget, Moses was an Egyptian name – not Hebrew – and meant “drawn from the water”. The act of naming endows individuality while signifying the perpetuation of the family lineage in the surname retained; it embodies a hope or aspiration for individual success with a tacit mutual understanding that the family will bask in this success and reap the benefits collectively. Thus Joseph meant “fruitful or increase” which was so aptly fulfilled when he reached the pinnacle of power in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. His success was shared with his father and family.

What about Jesus? Where does the name come from and why is it so important that *“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth”* (Phil 2:10). Etymologically, the name is derived from the *Yahweh* – *Yasha* or Jehovah saves. The names of God in the Old Testament designated aspects of His attributes or the blessings He sought to bestow on His people. Here is a sampling:

- El Shaddai (Lord God Almighty)
- El Elyon (The Most High God)
- Adonai (Lord, Master)
- Yahweh (Lord, Jehovah)
- Jehovah Nissi (The Lord My Banner)
- Jehovah-Raah (The Lord My Shepherd)
- Jehovah Rapha (The Lord That Heals)
- Jehovah Shammah (The Lord Is There)
- El Olam (The Everlasting God)
- Elohim (God)
- Qanna (Jealous)
- Jehovah Jireh (The Lord Will Provide)
- Jehovah Shalom (The Lord Is Peace)
- Jehovah Sabaoth (The Lord of Hosts)
- Jehovah Tsidkenu (The Lord Our Righteousness)
- Jehovah Mekoddishkem (The Lord Who Sanctifies You)

But in the final saga of redeeming humanity from sin, He chose the name *Yehoshua* or *Yeshua* (Jesus is the anglicized form). The prophet Isaiah actually accurately foretells this name. It is worth reproducing the entire 12th chapter of Isaiah (just 6 verses) to fully appreciate the significance of this.

Isa 12:1 ¶ And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

Isa 12:2 Behold, God [is] my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH [is] my strength and [my] song; he also is become my salvation.

Isa 12:3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Isa 12:4 ¶ And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.

Isa 12:5 Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this [is] known in all the earth. Isa

12:6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great [is] the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

Notice the prophetic drift of this utterance with the opening statement “*And in that day*”. In verse two, we have a thinly veiled reference to the name of God Himself assumed when the word was made flesh. *Behold God* (Jehovah) *is my salvation* (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ yěshuw`ah; Strong’s root 3444). Having lifted the veil on the name of God in *that day*, Isaiah declares in verse 3, “*Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*”. Now compare this prophecy with Christ’s incredible promise to the Samaritan woman:

John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Earlier, I alluded to the fact that name often implies a familial link – a perpetuation of one’s heritage. By taking on the name - Jesus - the Lord made it abundantly clear that His origin was no different from that of the Father Himself. Indeed, a careful student of the Bible cannot fail to note the number of times Jesus identified with the Father Himself. He claimed to be one with the Father (John 10:30); have the same glory of the Father (John 1:14); work with the Father (John 5:17); equal to the Father (John 5:18) and, most shocking of all – He claimed to be the Father (John 14:9). Thus, prior to the word becoming flesh, Gabriel was quickly dispatched to Mary to declare beforehand the name which the Father had chosen for Himself.

Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

It appears that God desired for His name to be revealed with a passion. One God adherents do affirm and rejoice in the fact that Jesus is the name of Jehovah today.

Isa 52:6 Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore [they shall know] in that day that I [am] he that doth speak: behold, [it is] I.

Act 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved

Act 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

I hope the analysis above goes some way in persuading you that baptism, far from being an optional Christian sacrament, is a bedrock teaching of the Bible. Allow me to illustrate the power behind baptism in Jesus name by sharing the story of a beloved Sister from India. I heard this testimony while I was on a brief evangelistic mission to India in the latter part of 2002. This incident occurred some years before I had travelled to India. Sister Martha was plagued by a powerful demon that, at times, caused her to walk on all fours like an animal. Before they approached any pastors, they consulted a number of doctors hoping for a medical solution to her ailment, but the doctors could not do anything to rid her of the evil spirit. Her husband, Bro. Vinod, shared with me that the demon dictated words to him which he was instructed to write in a book. Word was sent to many preachers to come and cast out the demon but they all singularly failed. Bishop Solomon Goddeti was also asked to come and attempt to exorcise this malevolent force which had brought so much misery to the family. Upon entering the house, Sister Martha ran off into another room and hid herself. Encouraged that this was a sign from the Lord, Bishop Solomon prayed and

cast out the demon after which he shared with her the need for baptism in Jesus name. Others were curious as to why they had failed which presented Bishop Solomon a unique opportunity to share the One God doctrine and way of salvation through the name of Jesus.

Unfortunately, the family decided to remain loyal to their Trinitarian tradition rather than submit to the message confirmed with such powerful signs and wonders from the Lord. Upon leaving, the demon returned and stood before Sister Martha menacingly. For daring to call Bishop Solomon, the demon inflicted a burn upon her back with a hot iron rod visible only to her. Her husband could see the flesh peeling off and hear the screaming but failed to see the perpetrator. It didn't take long before they pleaded with Pastor Solomon to return and asked for baptism in Jesus name. This astonishing event triggered a revival of sorts marking the definite beginning of Bishop Solomon Goddeti's ministry. The Lord granted me the privilege of travelling widely with Bishop Solomon Goddeti in India and I rejoiced to see the manner in which the ministry flourished under his wise leadership. Such is the power associated with the name of Jesus in baptism.

Baptism is the precursor to receiving the Holy Spirit of Christ. A body – Adamic or of Christ – is not fashioned to be without God-breathed life like a beautiful work of art designed for exhibition and no more. This thread will be explored in the next chapter.

List of Scriptures

Genesis 1:6

Acts 2:38

Genesis 1:20

Acts 8:16

John 3:3-5

Acts 10:46-48

Genesis 7:13,23

Acts 19:5

Genesis 8:1

I Corinthian 15:50-57

IPeter 3:20,21

Acts 22:16

2Corinthians 5:17

Romans 6:3

Galatians 6:15

Galatians 3:27

Mark 16:16

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

The breath of God.

Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Before man took his first breath, God breathed physical and spiritual life into him. It is apt that God breathed *into his nostrils* as the nasal passage is the conduit through which the vital function of inhaling oxygen and exhaling carbon dioxide takes place. The scripture above serves to remind us that God is more important than the very act of breathing – He started and sustains the whole process. It is of significance that the apostle Paul quoted from a pagan philosopher called Epimenedes, a famous citizen of Paul's own city, Tarsus, to invite his audience at Mar's Hill to acknowledge this truth:

Act 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

It was this very act of breathing physical *and spiritual* life into man which makes him the *only* sentient creature to be referred to as “*The image of God*”. What precisely does this

entail? Much ink has flowed in the quest to do justice to this profound statement. Earlier, I showed that Adam could not be the true image of God because Paul designates him as “*the figure of him who was to come*” (Romans 5:14). Jesus is the true prototype or perfect image of God as He is derived directly of the source of God in body and Spirit whereas Adam’s body was made of the dust which is of the created mundane order and plays no part in God’s being.

Man, nevertheless, has been the recipient of a portion of the Spirit of God. Adam was immediately made conscious of the presence and magnificence of His Creator who sought fellowship with him every evening in the cool of the day. Just as DNA is unequivocal evidence of blood relations, the Spirit of God in Adam was a positive identifier of his relation with God His Creator. Man is the only creature known to pray, perform rituals, build religious buildings and shrines – in general – to seek the transcendent.

Even the non-religious will concede that the act of admiring a work of art such as da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* or Raphael’s *The School of Athens* assumes that humans have that indefinable, ineffable, mysterious and subjective capacity to appreciate this genre. Our innate ability to appreciate beauty is beyond the realm of science. This aesthetic indulgence demonstrates our bond with God, the Master Artist, who Himself revelled in His own creation.

Gen 1:31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, [it was] very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

In the see-saw saga of mankind's relationship with God, our proto-parents darkened the candle of the spirit of God in them by believing the distortion of the devil. Belief in the word of God is akin to an inexhaustible supply of wax that constantly burns the candle. When Adam and Eve entertained the "*Yea, hath God said... Ye shall not surely die... ye shall be as gods...*" (Genesis 3:1-5) of Satan, the candle of God's light was expunged. What was the nature of their death (Adam lived to 930)? They were still breathing undoubtedly but it was a heartbeat without a spiritual pulse. Whereas God's closeness brought joy and fulfilment earlier, His closeness after the Fall was a closeness of terror. Innocence, the absence of fear and perfect bliss were the hallmarks of existence before the Fall. Now, however, their choice opened their eyes to an unknown world marked by the shame of nakedness, fear and a hostile environment.

Did God abandon His prized creation to their own devices? His love would not permit it. In their misery, He taught them how to seek reconciliation with Him. We see Abel bringing a blood sacrifice indicating his hope in the restoration of all things through the futuristic blood sacrifice of Jesus. The dreadful consequences of Eden could not be reversed but, at least, a modicum of reconciliation and restoration of the broken spiritual ties could be rejuvenated, however unstable and intermittent this rejuvenation was. Often, God Himself took the initiative in pleading and striving with the descendants of Adam to live righteously and shun sin.

Gen 6:3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also [is] flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

How, may we ask, did God's Spirit strive with man? The keyword here is conscience. This word is universally referred to in religious and secular circles though few care to engage in a rigorous discussion of what it means. The Bible, on the other hand, takes it as a matter-of-fact that all humans are equipped with a conscience. In lay terms, conscience is the human capacity to distinguish right from wrong. This faculty appears to be present in humans alone who evaluate, deliberate on and share common understandings of acceptable and unacceptable ethical practices. It appears that conscience is hard-wired into human nature with God's Spirit acting as the sensitizing and arbitrating agent.

This aspect is very important since the world, in the pre-Mosaic age, did not have the luxury of possessing the word of God. By extension, this applies to the non-reached peoples of the world (e.g. indigenous tribes in remote regions). Missionaries who first encountered remote tribes, who had never before heard of the Bible, were taken aback to hear that they were familiar with the story of Noah, although they had a different name for him. In my own research, I was quite intrigued to read the following in a secondary school Religious Education text book: in the creation story of African Traditional Religions, God was initially very close to humans but a pestle from the pounding of a woman hit his nostrils leading him to retreat further away. Such residual collective memories, however divergent from the biblical narrative, indicate a shared collective understanding of human origins.

The Spirit of God strives with man to adhere to infinite principles consistent with His holy character. Paul confirms this:

Rom 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Rom 2:15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and [their] thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

When an individual implacably ignores or rejects the gentle prodding and pleading of the Spirit of God, he gradually crosses a threshold of no return. The generation of Noah, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain the fugitive and Judas are just a few who can be subsumed under this category. The denouement of the work of the Spirit of God before the Flood can be summarised as follows: man was spiritually illuminated by the Spirit of the Lord enabling a very profound and intimate fellowship with His maker; man's rebellious self-determination caused this illumination and influence to depart; God, however continued to strive with man to counter his rebellion through the agency of conscience. Before I pick up the next thread in the story of the Holy Spirit's work in the world today, it might be worth the while to ask the question: Can angels be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Hebrews 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Isaiah 6:2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

A study of the nature of angels seems to indicate that they are spirit beings or brands of fire. The *seraphim*, whom Isaiah saw flapping their wings in heaven, are actually bright reddish fiery beings (Isaiah 6:1). They are beings of immense power and beauty faithfully carrying out the orders of God in the universe and ministering to humans. In answer to the question, the plain answer must be *no* - they cannot be filled with Holy Spirit of God. For one, they have been created to be perfect and, secondly, their creation of a different order does not require them to pray, be comforted, witness, know the future, speak in mysterious tongues or any other trait associated with the work of the Spirit. Such matters are associated with the human condition on account of its frailness. This is of relevance in our quest to explore the nature of the Spirit's work.

Why can't they be forgiven or restored an imaginary critic may ask? Precisely because they had the astounding advantage mentioned above. These are beings created with a supernatural powers. Think about it – Lucifer had no one to corrupt him. No offending agent existed to inflame rebellion.

He was fully in possession of his faculties and chose – consciously and deliberately – to covet God’s very throne. He and his fallen minions had none else to blame. Furthermore, to seal their doom, they determined to propagate rebellion, uncleanness, blasphemy, murder, adultery and a plethora of perversions in the world.

Isa 14:12 ¶ How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! [how] art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

Isa 14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

Isa 14:14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Isa 14:15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

Isa 14:16 They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, [and] consider thee, [saying, Is] this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

Moses prays for a worldwide Pentecost

In the next segment, let us look at God’s promise to restore and usher in an era where His Spirit would fill humans once again in a unique manner empowering man to be a part of the Kingdom of God.

Num 11:17 And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which [is] upon thee, and will put [it] upon them; and they shall bear

the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear [it] not thyself alone.

Num 11:29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, [and] that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!

Moses' words "...would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, [and] that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" unbeknownst to him, captured the very desire of God. These words emanated from the deep recesses of a dear man of God who knew the desperate need for humans to be filled with the Spirit of the Almighty. He had led approximately 2 million individuals, warts and all, kicking and screaming for 40 years. His intimate knowledge of human nature made him keenly aware that mankind carries a fatal defect. How successful was he really when, of these 2 million, only 2 made it to Canaan land? God's own indictment of the Israelites is adequately captured in the word "stiff-necked". This term visualizes images of an immobile neck locked firmly in a non-negotiable position. Unfortunately, this position was one contrary to the will of God.

Moses rejoiced with abandon when God poured out his Spirit on 70 elders charged with the task of reducing his burden. Moses' utterance speaks volumes of a man who wished all people could share in the wonderful blessing of receiving the Holy Spirit on a global scale. In this he pre-empted the words of Jesus that unless a man is born again of the water and the *spirit* he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). Why utter such a prayer Moses? Because the

Spirit will be an antidote to idol worship which his own brother, Aaron, had fallen prey to and remind us of the eternal truth, “*Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one*”. In addition, the Spirit, rather than tempt and test God with murmurings and complaints will teach us, in the words of Paul, virtues commensurate with God’s own character.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The Spirit will kindle a bright light of faith which cannot easily be extinguished. For as the word declares:

Habakkuk 2:4 Behold, his soul [which] is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Rom 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Gal 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, [it is] evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if [any man] draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

The list of what the Spirit of God does goes on and on *ad infinitum*. The Holy Spirit and its benefits or what is referred to as “gifts” can only be known by those who are filled with the Spirit. Many people, in our contemporary age, either believe that the outpouring of the Spirit has ceased after the last apostle passed away or that this is intended only for a

select few. Yet others are convinced that the Holy Spirit experience is not one of infilling but a “touch” from God automatically experienced when one receives Jesus. They deny the phenomenon of speaking in other tongues or any physical manifestation period. Notice, though, even in this pre-Pentecost era that all those who received the Spirit prophesied. They actually seemed beside themselves prophesying with some gusto which led Joshua to complain to Moses, “Forbid them”. To this the apostle would respond, “Forbid not to speak in tongues”.

Num 11:28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, [one] of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

1Cr 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

Though the ministry of the Spirit in the Old Testament was clearly truncated in many aspects compared to the Church age, we know that they not only prophesied under the unction of the Spirit, but experienced a change in character, outlook and vision as we read from the story of Saul the son of Kish, Israel’s first king. Samuel instructed Saul:

1Sa 10:6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

We ought to note that Saul was actually quite a humble man when he was chosen by God to be king. However, the natural disposition towards humility ought not to be confused with the humility distilled through years of

submission and dependence on God. Saul, sadly, never learned to submit himself to Samuel and the Spirit of God. His natural humility was no match for the pride that comes with pomp and power. It soon dissipated leaving him conceited, bitter and vengeful. The tragic events of Saul's life serve to remind us of the warning:

Rom 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

Rom 8:6 For to be carnally minded [is] death; but to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace.

Rom 8:7 Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Rom 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

But let me go back to the promise of God trumpeted through the mouth of the prophets of old. Man was not made to live without the indwelling Spirit of God. That is a spiritual desideratum emphasized over and over in the pages of the Bible. God has always desired to tabernacle in us. Not only does He want to be *Immanuel* (God with us), but *God in us*. Prior to Pentecost, only a few select individuals enjoyed this privilege, albeit a privilege with serious responsibilities. Samson was filled with colossal power and strength because he was a vessel for subduing and destroying the Philistines. David, too, was charged with the monumental task of defeating all enemies and uniting Israel from Dan to Beersheba. No human can accomplish these feats alone with human endowments. In fact, God alone accomplishes this

task through His Spirit in his servants like David. What a privilege to be chosen as a vessel through which God subdues kingdoms both physical and spiritual! Basically, in receiving the baptism of the Spirit, an individual makes room in her soul for God to bring His purposes to pass. Thy will be done takes on new meaning in such a submitted life.

The baptism of the 70 elders pales in comparison to what the Lord promised through another prophet down the road:

Joel 2:28 ¶ And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

Joel 2:29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

One can almost hear the sound of gathering clouds slowly building up. A trickle at first but soon a torrential outburst. But notice verse 29 where God deems it fit to mention servants and handmaids among the beneficiaries of this last day spiritual bonanza. Why servants and handmaids? These individuals are traditionally placed in the lowest ranks of human hierarchy. Domestic servants, particularly in those days, were expected to defer, submit and suffer indignity quietly. Social mobility was non-existent and their station in life often passed on to their children perpetuating the cycle. Now God promises to dwell in them; make them His; open their mouths to prophesy; stand with them in their lowly estate and comfort them in their suffering silence. This is indeed liberation theology. The presence of God has always

attracted those whom society's high-minded ways categorizes as simpletons and fools. This shouldn't surprise us for we are forewarned:

1Cr 1:26 ¶ For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, [are called]:

1Cr 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

1Cr 1:28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, [yea], and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

1Cr 1:29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

Early I mentioned Professor Dawkins who denounces religion as a “meme” – an invisible “cultural virus” that leaps from brain to brain inducing religiosity. This book is by no means a polemic against Dawkins for I welcome his challenge. Indeed, all people of faith ought to pay heed as he asks us to question the source of our faith. If you are a Christian because your parents, your community or your tradition expects nothing less, than Dawkins is justified in his critique. But what about the servants and handmaids Christ promised to empower with His Spirit? What about the proud tradition of God calling obscure fishermen, prostitutes, farmers, zealots like Saul and countless millions who were radically reformed and empowered by Christ? For me, Christ's Spirit was not an opiate lulling me into a coma but, rather, the agent through which my critical faculties were

exercised. Rather than disengage from reality, I found myself taking it on headlong; rather than accept conventional wisdom and the all-pervasive and relativistic “whatever goes”, I took a stand for Him. What is more radical than loving one’s enemies? Rather than domesticate, Christ’s Spirit liberated me.

2Cr 3:16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

2Cr 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord [is], there [is] liberty.

The advent of Pentecost

The day finally came. The prophecy, the yearning now was embodied and identified with a man – Jesus Christ. For four hundred years, there was a silence in regards to the prophecy of the Holy Spirit. The clouds were weighing down weary with holding up this immense reservoir of spiritual waters. The day of Pentecost was the day of the explosion. However, before that, the years of silence were broken by a bizarre-looking hermit shouting in the desert of Judea:

Mat 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and [with] fire:

Many who heard this dazzling news must have remembered the prophecy of Joel 2:28, 29. Did they understand the implication of all this? Sadly, most people who followed Jesus were more concerned with the meat which perishes.

Theirs was a utilitarian focus more preoccupied with Jesus the healer and the wonder-worker rather than Jesus the intimate indwelling Spirit. Jesus never tired though of whetting appetites for the Holy Spirit. He always appealed to the deep, God-shaped vacuum that every human carries. The aforementioned Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob illustrates this point well.

John 4:13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 4:15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

John 4:16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

In the exchange above, the Lord appeals to this woman's innate spiritual hunger and then, quite curiously, changes the topic asking her to call her husband. Understood in light of Joel 2:28-29, this does not seem curious at all. Go call thy husband is an injunction seeking to fulfil the promise that God wants to *pour out His Spirit upon all flesh*. This is God's *modus operandi* – whet appetites enough to draw a greater crowd. The more vessels to fill the merrier. Bible students will draw a parallel here with the Day of Pentecost. Note how God waited for this day to arrive before He caused the clouds of prophecy to break forth sending a thunderstorm of rain. Devout Jews had gathered from all over the world.

Like Moses of old, God wants all people to prophesy and be filled with His Spirit. Preparations were completed for the Feast of Harvest or Shavuot (Hebrew) to commemorate 50 days (Pentecost) after the Exodus from Egypt when the Ten Commandments were given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Excitement built up as Jerusalem buzzed with pious activity. Here a type and shadow pattern must be discerned in the events that transpired. On Mt. Sinai, Moses was alone with God fasting and praying when suddenly the finger of God wrote on tablets of stone. The Mt. was ablaze with fire which petrified the Israelites below. On the Day of Pentecost, which is the fulfilment of Shavuot, 120 disciples had been praying (and probably fasting) when a mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire descended into the Upper Room and baptized all of them. This time, however, the finger of God wrote not on tables of stone, but upon their hearts.

Exodus 19:18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

Act 2:1 ¶ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Act 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

Act 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

2Cr 3:3 [Forasmuch as ye are] manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

It was not this act per se which drew the attention of the pilgrims, however. It was the supernatural tongues (glossolalia) which enthralled them. How could these unlearned Jews speak in the languages of the nations represented in Jerusalem? Moses too attracted attention due to the light that radiated from his face. Something delightfully radical and pleasantly transforming occurs when a soul encounters the holy fire of God. Physical manifestations have spanned the gamut of dramatic emotion: clapping, shouting, rolling, jumping, laughing, crying, running and even passing out. The common denominator is joy – an intense, heart-warming joy.

1Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see [him] not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Why tongues?

Why tongues, you may ask? Language is a unique phenomenon. Educational theorists have struggled to understand how children learn language. The old school of behaviourists contended that learning occurs through imitation enforced by the mechanism of stimulus and response. Obviously, students threatened with corporal punishment (as I often was in my old boarding school), would see wisdom in kowtowing to the teacher's strict

regime. Rewards in the form of grades are motivation enough for diligence and good behaviour. So the likes of B.F. Skinner and others believed in the power of operant conditioning where learning takes place as a consequence of reinforcing the desirable behaviour through rewards and eliminating the undesirable behaviour through censure. Along came the M.I.T linguist, Noam Chomsky, and poked a hole through this balloon. Chomsky pointed out that children seem to creatively use language without having learnt this. Children take poetic license in experimenting with language which disproves the theory of learning through imitation. The jury is still out on the issue.

How did Adam and Eve learn to speak a full-fledged language having never warmed a school bench? Apparently, language is a mysterious phenomenon that evades explanation. Take for instance this statement made by the biologist, Jerry A. Coyne of the University of Chicago.

And linguists like Noam Chomsky and Steven Pinker have argued convincingly that the use of symbolic language is likely a genetic adaptation, with aspects of syntax and grammar somehow coded in our brains (Coyne, 2009:250).

How can statements like “likely” and “*somehow* coded in our brains” be “convincing”? Language, like morality, which naturalistic/materialistic scientists fail to explain adequately, can easily be understood from a biblical viewpoint. The ability to learn language/s points to the fact that we are made in God’s image. God is Word which is communication personified. God as Word does not exist in isolated

magnificence but seeks contact and reciprocity. It is Christ Himself indwelling the apostles who spoke in the multitude of languages without having to teach them. Goethe once said that to speak another language is to possess another soul. Literally speaking, the disciples did have another soul indwelling in them that day – Jesus Himself. Isaiah prophesied that God Himself would speak to this people (Israelites).

Isa 28:11 ¶ For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

The question of why the Lord would choose to manifest His presence in believers through the agency of tongues may still seem puzzling to some. Allow me to analyze this through another lens. In the historical trajectory of colonialism, imperial powers like Great Britain and France recognized that the imposition of English and French upon the subjugated peoples was imperative to the mission of colonization. In India, for example, where I grew up, the British used the policy of “Divide and conquer” quite effectively to manage this vast sub-continent with great diversity. One mechanism they employed quite successfully was the promotion of English in the educational system. This produced a class of native bourgeoisie or what writers like Homi Bhabha and Gyan Prakash refer to as the “native elite”.

The native elite were anglophiles who valued their command of English which accorded them new status. They cynically served as a loyal buffer against the hostile and unpredictable masses. After all, to command a language is, in the words of Goethe, to possess a new soul. The outcome of this ingenious move was evident: how can you fight those whose

culture, manners and customs you seek to imitate and whose approval you covet? The colonized native elites were fêted. They called themselves subjects of a Queen who lived in distant England and read the writings of English writers like Wordsworth who romanticized England although they had little or no hope of ever visiting the glory that was England. The Kenyan writer, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, wrote of his ordeal in school during the heyday of colonialism. The Gĩkũyũ he refers to is his mother-tongue.

Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gĩkũyũ in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM A STUPID DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford (Ngũgĩ, 1986:11).

Few would disagree that the subjugation of entire nations with the corollary of imposing a new language all with the aim of exploiting their resources is deplorable. The devious mission of the colonizers was the gradual deprivation and abandonment of the colonized peoples identity and self-worth. As Freire shows, the oppressed become dependent on their oppressors. It is like the oft-told African legend of the baby eagle that landed in a chicken compound and over the years began to behave like a chicken. One day, an old wise eagle sat perched on a tree nearby and spoke to the eagle. The eagle in the compound, now fully grown, ignored the old eagle. Gradually, the old eagle wisely convinced the younger one of its origin and its majestic ability to soar to

the skies. First the belief that it was a chicken had to be eradicated followed by instilling confidence in its destiny to be the king of birds.

My point with the above is as follows. Mankind has since the Fall become estranged from its true source and destiny. We have become domesticated to acquiesce to the Devil's discourse of lies and distortion. Hate-mongering, wars, strife and a host of other vices mark our civilizations. We were not even originally intended to live in this world of sin, misery and death. Eden was the true utopia. *Language* has been the device and the conveyor belt to this subservience. Our own languages must be co-implicated in the process of our own imprisonment. They narrowly constrain the parameters of what is permissible and forbidden. Language is a self-contained universe of concepts and images that fire our imagination. It is with words too that the veil of limitation can be torn away. Fiery rhetoric delivered effectively has overthrown empires, started revolutions and galvanized the world in a show of global solidarity unparalleled – all by the power of language.

Within this framework, it makes excellent sense for the Lord to enable our tongues to speak in the language of heaven. The heavenly language is a catalyst that bursts the banks of human reason and conceptual limits. Reason, in popular usage, refers to the limits of what is demonstrably knowable and enjoys a consensus (scientific demands of being empirical, falsifiable, replicable, valid, peer-reviewed etc). How can reason describe heaven to us? The earth-bound human uses her empirical senses to describe and understand

the mundane world that she finds herself in (how and why she enters the world is another question). Tongues, then, is the link that bridges the chasm between earth and heaven. The Lord, who is a heavenly being, describes and reveals to us the secrets of the celestial realms not accessible to the natural man. As a heavenly man, He alone can speak of heaven and open up a window of new and marvellous horizons to our finite minds. The Bible puts it this way:

Isa 64:4 For since the beginning of the world [men] have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, [what] he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

1Cr 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

1Cr 2:10 But God hath revealed [them] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

Notice that the Spirit reveals the things that God has prepared for them that love Him. Paul himself and countless Christians throughout the centuries have struggled to describe powerful experiences like trips to heaven where angels and the New Jerusalem were seen. Speaking in tongues over time dismantles the former habits and strongholds that was contrary to the will of God. It is a tool in the decolonization of the human psyche so enmeshed in the things of this transient world. This is, in my opinion, a powerful argument to covet the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit-filled Christian finds himself simultaneously

occupying two dimensions of existence – the earthly and the heavenly. He weaves through each dimension without collapsing the two while always privileging the existential superiority of the heavenly. Jesus' exchange with Nicodemus evinces this two-dimensional plane of consciousness:

John 3:9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

John 3:10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

John 3:11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

John 3:12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you [of] heavenly things?

John 3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, [even] the Son of man which is in heaven.

In 1988, I entered into a Christian bookshop in the city of Pune, India. The book, *I Dared to Call him Father*, by the former Muslim, Bilquis Sheikh, a Pakistani, impressed me hugely. As I decided to purchase the book and leave the shop an African man, whom I was certain I knew, entered the shop. I smiled and proceeded to greet him but his facial expression was one big question mark. "I don't believe we have met," he said. "This is weird," I thought, positively certain that we knew each other. "Would you like to join me for a Christian meeting that begins quite soon?" he

responded. Having nothing else planned that evening, I decided to tag along. We navigated through the narrow streets and bazaars and finally pulled up outside a flat. There were a few Kenyan students worshipping and praising God. Suddenly, one of them came up to me and asked “Do you want to receive the Holy Spirit?” Curiously, I had been seeking for the baptism of the Holy Spirit for some months and was surprised that this gentleman sensed this.

All I can recall was opening my eyes speaking in a language that I couldn’t even begin to fathom. I was drenched with sweat and no one seemed to be around. I felt like I was swimming in the very elixir of bliss. “Are you ready to go,” a voice said behind me. Turning to look, I saw my new friend from the bookshop. He told me, to my amazement, that a couple of hours had gone by and, since the occasion was a send off for one of the Kenyan brothers who had completed his studies, the others accompanied him to the station. 24 years later, I still believe in the wonderful phenomenon of receiving the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

The function of the Holy Spirit.

What you may ask are the practical benefits of receiving the Holy Spirit?

- ***Fire prevails:***

Mat 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than

I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and [with] fire:

Mat 3:12 Whose fan [is] in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

The Holy Spirit is compared to fire. The fire of the Spirit of God, in the words of John the Baptist, is unquenchable. Fire keeps burning as long as it is fuelled by sources like dry wood and oxygen. The fire of God is not predicated upon such elements. It burns eternally. The first description of the Spirit as fire has major significance for the Christian. Fire inexorably destroys and *prevails*. We will prevail over sin, temptation, persecution and everything antithetical to our faith. As long as the fire of the Spirit burns with a passion in our souls, we will prevail.

- ***Comforter***

Isa 28:12 To whom he said, This [is] the rest [wherewith] ye may cause the weary to rest; and this [is] the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Isaiah identifies the Holy Spirit as the one who gives rest. The news media abound with studies warning of an exponential rise in stress levels worldwide. Even young children are being diagnosed with unhealthy stress levels. Is it a wonder that some have turned in desperation to narcotics, yoga and even

hypnosis to reduce stress levels? The Christian, in addition to the usual stress generated through the hustle and bustle of this world, is at times also on the receiving end of ridicule and marginalization for her faith. This underscores the need for receiving the Comforter. Rather than come home after a long and arduous day at work and unload the frustration on family members (and the family cat), time would be well-spent in the arms of the great Comforter.

In my own personal life, I have found the Spirit of God to be a tremendous boon in particularly difficult times. There were times I honestly didn't know how to go on but, flat on my face, prostrate before the Lord, I would experience an unmistakable surge of supernatural energy which was soothing yet so exciting that I found myself leaping for joy. It is akin to a majestic eagle taking off and steeply soaring to dizzying heights.

Isaiah 40:29 He giveth power to the faint; and to [them that have] no might he increaseth strength.

Isaiah 40:30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew [their] strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; [and] they shall walk, and not faint.

- ***Teach and remind***

John 14:26 But the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

There is a world of difference between *teach* and *remind*. Unless one has learned something new, it makes no sense to speak of remembrance. Memory is one indicator of intelligence. But what use is hours of studying if memory fails in the exam hall? The two are necessarily complementary and feed off each other. The Holy Spirit teaches believers the true doctrine of salvation and ensures this knowledge will be available when called for. This removes the fear of getting tongue-tied due to a fear of paralysis in the company of perceived superiors. The Lord, familiar with human infirmity promised his disciples supernatural help on occasions when they shall find themselves brought before judges and inquirers.

Luke 21:12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute [you], delivering [you] up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

Luke 21:13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

Luke 21:14 Settle [it] therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

Luke 21:15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

It was for this reason that dignitaries like Felix, Festus and King Agrippa trembled before Paul whose name actually meant “little”.

- ***Intercession***

Rom 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as

we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Rom 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what [is] the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to [the will of] God.

This function of the Spirit may not be discerned *prima facie*. One way to explore the meaning is to ask the question: how do we know what the will of the Lord is and ergo know what to pray for? The answer, according to Paul, is that the Spirit alone knows the will of God and, more importantly, how to pray for this will to come to fruition. In extreme cases, not understanding the will of God can lead to embarrassingly misdirected prayers. When Jesus was spurned by the contentious Samaritans, James and John's Jewish jingoistic pride was aroused and they came upon a brilliant idea:

Luke 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw [this], they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

Luke 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

Luke 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save [them]. And they went to another village.

We can all chime in with an amen to the response of Jesus. Intercession is one of the more advanced phases of the Christian life. One way to enter into effective intercessory prayer is to present oneself as a willing vessel for the Spirit to pray through. Rather than direct and determine the order

of the prayer session, the believer ought to patiently wait for the Spirit to verbalize His own burden, compassion and empathy for souls using our submitted bodies and vocal chords. Notice Paul says *but the Spirit itself maketh intercession*. The Lord Himself, in the days of His earthly ministry, groaned and interceded for humanity. The Garden of Gethsemane was the ideal setting for His intercessory burden. Olive trees were pressed and quashed to obtain their oil. The very trees themselves were ancient and contorted which made for an apt background presaging the crushing of our Lord Himself. He poured out tears that looked like sweat drops because of His great love for us. He is looking for a willing vessel through which He can continue His work of intercession. The aforementioned functions of the Spirit are just a few in a long list.

The identity of the Holy Spirit

Before leaving the subject of the Holy Spirit, I would like to look at who the Holy Spirit is. For most Christians, the Spirit is the third member of the Trinity. But is this borne out by the scriptures? In a previous chapter I discussed the evolution of the doctrine of the Trinity and demonstrated that the finalized form took at least 3 centuries to develop. Church historians are aware that the first Nicene Creed, drafted after the Council of Nicea A.D. 325, made no mention of the status of the Holy Spirit. What precipitated the discussions in the first place was the question of how Jesus relates to the Father. Arius (256-336) believed that Jesus was not co-eternal with the Father but, since He is called the “Son”, had to have a beginning. He is famously quoted as saying:

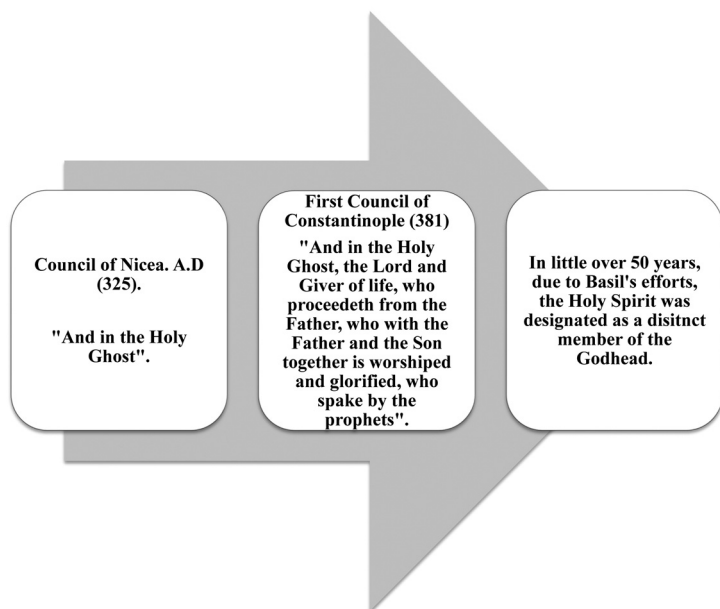
If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows, that he [the Son] had his substance from nothing.

Thus the denouement of Nicea was only preoccupied with this debate which left the status of the Holy Spirit untouched. The task of formulating the status of the by then third member of the Trinity was left to Basil the Great (330-379). It is worth quoting the theologian Roger E. Olson at length.

Basil was concerned that in all the controversy over the relationship of the Son of God to the Father, the Holy Spirit had been ignored if not forgotten by the theologians and bishops involved in the debates over the Trinity. Also certain bishops had adopted a teaching about the Holy Spirit known as pneumatomachianism that denied the equality of the Spirit with the Father and Son. This was a subordinationism of the Spirit and resulted in a “binity” rather than a Trinity for those who adopted it. They worshipped the Father and the Son while rejecting worship of the Spirit as God. For them the Spirit was simply a created force or power of God the Father sent into the world through the Son. By way of response, Basil plumbed the depths of both scripture and worship in order to establish the third distinct person, or hypostasis, of the Godhead as “truly God” and equal with the Father and the Son (Olson, 1999:177).

The last sentence is revealing. Basil, it seems, was intent on getting scripture to align with his presuppositions. He felt it his calling to pigeon-hole the Holy Spirit into a pre-formatted Trinitarian template. Again, Olson's account shows that variant understandings of the status of the Holy Spirit existed during the 4th century A.D. This goes some way in lending credibility to the contention that the doctrine of the Trinity gradually evolved and took the shape of a teaching quite aberrant to what the apostles taught. Diagram (I) demonstrates the discrepancy inherent in the two famous Church Creeds that were drawn up in the aftermath of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381).

Diagram (I): the status of the Holy Spirit in the first two Church Councils.



How did the Bible writer's expound on the status of the Holy Spirit? The Bible speaks in terms of just *one* Spirit alone existing. This one Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Since God is one, there is no distinction to speak of. In the creation, only one Spirit moved on the face of the waters of the deep. Later, Paul tells the Colossians that all things were made by Jesus. This has erroneously led some to conclude that the three members were engaged in a collaborative task of creation in the beginning. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are just titles of the same one God. The essence of God or His natural being is Spirit.

John 4:24 God [is] a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship [him] in spirit and in truth.

When the word was made flesh, God did not send another Spirit to animate the Son. He Himself is the life of the Son. A careful study of the scriptures below supports this claim.

Col 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou [then], Shew us the Father?

John 14:10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

John 14:11 Believe me that I [am] in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

John 6:57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

In the hope of gently destabilizing Trinitarian conceptualizations I have often found it useful to ask the following questions.

- “How many Spirits are there in the Godhead?” Most answer “One”.
- “What is the essence of the Father?” Generally the response is “Spirit”.
- “What is the essence of the Holy Spirit?” Very reluctantly some answer “Spirit” because it dawns on them that there cannot be one Spirit of the Father and another of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:4 emphatically states that there is one Spirit.

What about the Spirit in Jesus? Is it distinct from that of the Father/Holy Spirit? The answer is no. Two scriptures that surprise Christians with a Trinitarian view of the Godhead are the following:

Galatians 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Philippians 1:19 ¶ For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

The reason people are puzzled by the above is because the clear indication is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. Which other Spirit have we received? I, too, like many

others had been taught through the years that the Holy Spirit I received in 1988 was *another* Spirit or the third member of the Godhead. Most Christians base this understanding on a reading of John 14:16 which I will explore now.

John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

However, just two verses later and in the same conversation, the Lord reveals the identity of this apparently *another* Comforter.

John 14:18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

The impossibility of Christ physically entering into every Christian does not need to be laboured. This hurdle posed no problems whatsoever for the Spirit indwelling and animating Jesus. The only way the Lord can be with two or more simultaneously on a global scale is if He is referring to the omnipresence of the Spirit in Him.

Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

In conclusion, the first breath of God was darkened by the Fall. God desired to breathe again into humanity on a worldwide scale. This desire was communicated through the prophets of old. Only God dwelling in us can rejuvenate and empower us to shake off the shackles of sin which is at loggerheads with the will of God. The Spirit operates in a number of ways to achieve this: sanctification, comfort,

teaching and remembrance and intercession. The Bible affirms the existence of just one Holy Spirit. Finally, the Holy Spirit is none other than the same Spirit that indwelt Christ. No wonder we ask for it in Jesus name.

In the last chapter I will explore the teaching of repentance. Often people I have spoken to don't fully comprehend, or don't fully appreciate the need for repentance before they have had some acquaintance with the word of God and the Church. On the Day of Pentecost, the audience were first given a sermon on the identity of Jesus before anything else was recommended. So rather than begin the book with the teaching of repentance – which would be normative – I hope the meditations thus far induce a cry akin to the one heard on the Day of Pentecost “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Peter, of course, began with the word, “Repent” (Acts 2:38).

List of Scriptures*Genesis 2:7**2 Corinthians 3:3**Acts 17:28**I Peter 1:8**Genesis 6:3**Isaiah 28:11-12**Numbers 11:17,28,29**Isaiah 64:4**Galatians 5:22-23**I Corinthians 2:9-10**I Corinthians 14:39**John 14:26**I Samuel 10:6**Isaiah 40:29-3**Romans 8:5-8**Romans 8:26-27**Joel 2:28-29**John 4:24**2 Corinthians 3:16-17**Galatians 4:6**Matthew 3:11-12**Philippians 1:19**John 4:13-16**John 14:16-18**Exodus 19:18**Matthew 18:20**Acts 2:1-4*

REPENTENCE

Inherited sin

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

(New International Version) Psalm 51: 5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Psalm 51 is a heart-rending cry for forgiveness after King David had engineered the murder of Uriah and committed adultery with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. It is a stirring classic lament emanating from the soul of this celebrated warrior-psalmist. Earlier, God Himself had bestowed on him the accolade, "a man after my own heart", exalted him to the throne of a united Israel and subdued all his enemies. In light of the above, we cannot begin to imagine how David must have agonized and felt that he was a colossal failure. Only those who have walked in the resplendent and unadulterated beauty of holiness can appreciate the pangs of guilt David now expressed. Some parallel can be drawn with the abrupt shame of nakedness, sense of fear and vulnerability that Adam and Eve experienced when they sinned. David who often extolled the praises and beauty of God now felt an unbearable weight of darkness; the gladness and joy he used to experience in the Temple gave way to indescribable pangs

of guilt. He must have felt forlorn in the valley of the shadow of death with no solace but gnashing of teeth.

Of major significance in this theological meditation is the statement, *“and in sin did my mother conceive me”*. The NIV states, *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”* Couched in scriptures such as this we find the contours of the doctrine of inherited sin. In this Psalm alone, we can trace the twin-headed conundrum that has plagued humanity ever since the Fall – inherited sin and acted sin. The first sin David attributes to the very act of conception while the second he clearly acknowledges and asks forgiveness for as his own doing. This section focuses on inherited sin after which I shall explore acted sin.

A question that perhaps can help give shape to the discussion is: in what way can sin be characterized as inherited? Admittedly, one would be hard-pressed to locate scriptures in the Bible that explain the technical details of how sin is transmitted. In other words, we would be in speculative territory if we venture into the mechanics of the genetics of sin. We do not entertain any hopes of a geneticist suddenly heralding the discovery of “sinful genes” in the DNA code. What we abundantly find in the pages of the Bible, however, are affirmations of a disposition towards sin in mankind. This disposition or propensity towards sin is embedded in our very make-up as human beings. A distinction must be made between inherited and acted sin at this juncture. Inherited sin, unlike acted sin, lies passive and latent within whereas acted sin, as the name implies, is the manifestation

in deeds of sin. In addition to Psalm 51:5, the following scriptures can be subsumed under inherited sin:

Isa 48:8 Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time [that] thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

Rom 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Rom 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

Rom 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that [it is] good.

Rom 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not.

Rom 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Rom 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Rom 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

Rom 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

In Romans 7:14 the apostle describes the human condition as one where we are *sold under sin*. This rather menacing phrase is germane to our task of ascertaining the manner in which sin is inherited. To help facilitate the exegesis, allow me to borrow an analogy from the world of services. Sin can be usefully compared to laws and regulations that govern the purchase, acquisition and selling of goods and services. Sin, in fact, shares much in common with the manner in which services operate in a market society. Like services, sin is invisible but, nonetheless, very real. A man seeking to hire the services of a plumber, for example, may ring around to a number of plumbing companies before settling on one. Over the phone, a verbal understanding is reached and the plumber arrives at his doorstep at the time appointed. Until the work is accomplished satisfactorily, there is an unspoken understanding that the plumber is under an obligation to make his time and skill available to the contractor. Furthermore, the plumber would feel constrained to conduct himself in a manner agreeable to the contractor as long as he is in the contractor's house.

The day Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of the serpent something quite similar, but on a cosmic scale, transpired. Our first parents actually entered into a verbal contract with the Father of Sin – the Devil. The Devil marketed a service to them – the very tantalizing prospect of making them “gods”. The duped couple were convinced his offer was bona fide and decided to enter into a verbal contract with him. They would eat the fruit and witness their metamorphosis into “gods”. What happened in effect was that, through this act, the Father of Sin injected the “seed of

sin” into them. Through this act, Satan closed their eyes to innocence and initiated them into a world where their eyes were opened to sin. They were sold into sin. This was a legal transaction that even God had to “honour” because He never violates free will human agency.

In capitalism, the market does not adjudicate on the moral dimension of goods and services. In the untrammelled drive for profit and growth, values are often sacrificed. The exploitation of coffee and cocoa farmers in developing nations has led some to talk in terms of “ethical trading”. There appears to be a spiritual dimension to whatever man does. If humans do not bow at the altar of God, they inevitably will be found bowing at the altar of Mammon. Interestingly, Elliott and Atkinson, in their book with the telling title, *The Gods that Failed* (2008), contend that the EU, IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organisation and other entities are responsible for the financial crisis because they had embraced the “12 gods” of globalization: communication, financialization, privatisation, liberalisation, competition, and their partners: speculation, recklessness, greed, arrogance, oligarchy and excess.

Adam and Eve, then, sold themselves to the lie of the Devil having embraced the delusion of “godhood”. This had legal, economic, social and, above all, spiritual ramifications. After the financial crisis in the USA, countless families worldwide lost their houses and jobs. Greed exacts a painful price. The same principle operated in the case of Adam and Eve. Having voluntarily made a “contract” with Satan, they had to accept the painful repercussions. Since Eden was God’s

property, he evicted them from this piece of prime estate. They forfeited the love, protection and care they enjoyed in the presence of God. The first part of the argument thus far focused on establishing the manner in which our parents sold themselves under sin. That, however, does not address the issue of how this sin came to be perpetually *inherited* from generation to generation.

Principle of collective representation

In this regard, the Bible speaks of what theologians often refer to as the principle of collective representation. It appears that God had placed a great and very grave burden of responsibility on the shoulders of Adam and Eve. Let us not hastily forget that our first parents were humans of a more sublime or higher order than what is evident today. They were not encumbered with the sin, frailty and uncertainty that characterize the human condition today. Earlier, I contended that God is justified in penalizing the fallen angels with swift severity He did so because they were creatures of a higher order than humans made. If theologically sound, then the same principle must extend to Adam and Eve. I say this on the basis that God consistently measures out His judgements proportionally. Having created angels, humans and everything, He fully well knows our structural, emotional and cognitive strengths and weaknesses and factors these into the equation.

Luke 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few [stripes]. For unto whomsoever much is given, of

him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Some may find this hard to accept but just think about parents who lost their homes and had to evacuate because of the crisis – their children had no say in the matter. They moved out with the parents. A multitude of scriptures sanction the above reading of inherited sin as representational.

Rom 5:12 ¶ Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Rom 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Rom 5:15 But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

Rom 5:16 And not as [it was] by one that sinned, [so is] the gift: for the judgment [was] by one to condemnation, but the free gift [is] of many offences unto justification.

Rom 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Rom 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation;

even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life.

Rom 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Hebrews 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

Hebrews 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

The principle of representation that the Bible speaks about may be more readily recognized today from the manner in which the science of DNA has revealed hereditary diseases. Mutations are errors that occur on the gene level during the process of copying. The lion's share of these mutations is harmful and can result in a range of diseases which become hereditary. Colour blindness, cystic fibrosis, sickle-cell anaemia and Down's syndrome are a few examples. When the human genome was first mapped out, the media reports warned that a number of insurance companies were eager to acquire this technology so they could monitor the medical history of potential customers.

Within a biblical worldview, why do such mutations occur? If God decreed that the original creation was "very good" why do we see this malfunction on a microscopic level? I cannot but find any other plausible reason for this other than the ravaging effects of that three letter word – sin. Although the very thought of it is revolting, inherited sin is demonstrable from a purely physical aspect in the case of women who abuse alcohol during pregnancy. Studies have demonstrated the following list of effects on the foetus:

higher risk of cerebral palsy, lesions on the foetus and neurological disturbance to name a few. Sin is a transgression or violation of the commands of God. To know the Word of God and deliberately contravene it unleashes havoc. The tentacles and capillaries of sin have left no part of this world untouched as the media headlines scream out daily. Job accurately portrayed this sinful origin of mankind and the frailty of our constitution.

Job 14:1 ¶ Man [that is] born of a woman [is] of few days, and full of trouble.

Job 14:2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

Job 14:3 And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?

Job 14:4 Who can bring a clean [thing] out of an unclean? not one.

Job 25:4 How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean [that is] born of a woman?

Job 25:5 Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight.

Job 25:6 How much less man, [that is] a worm? and the son of man, [which is] a worm?

The sin “meme”?

The biologist, Richard Dawkins wrote a book entitled *The Selfish Gene* (1976) in which he came with up with a bold idea. Finding the notion of God totally absurd and lacking any credibility, Dawkins was looking for a theoretical explanation for the existence of religion at all. He was

preoccupied with the tenacity and persistence of faith. He theorized that there must exist units of cultural replicators that somehow hop from person to person which he called “memes” since they are similar to genes in the way they function. Thus, a meme is “a unit of cultural transmission or as a unit of *imitation*” (Dawkins, 1976:192). In Dawkins’ mind, people who are “infected” with this “God meme” get a false sense of comfort and satisfaction much like a placebo effect but with no real substance behind it. There is a meme for such varying things as ideas, catch-phrases, fashion and ways of making pots. In his mind, the survival of the “God meme” is truly enduring compared to other memes. Yet Dawkins admits:

Another objection is that we don’t know what memes are made of, or where they reside (Dawkins, 2003)

Some zealous disciples of Dawkins (probably infected with his meme) went so far as to suggest that the meme has purposive action (Blackmore). More zealous followers began to speak of a “science of memetics” (Dennett, 1995) where the meme was called upon to explain fields as varied as the evolution of the brain, the emergence of language and altruism and religion. Even a journal of Memetics has been founded. Keep in mind that no one has ever seen a meme. It is quite baffling that these eminent empirical scientists, who rant and rave against religious people demanding evidence for the existence of God, do not feel any scruples about speaking of a meme which has no grounding in reality. As Alister McGrath writes:

The simple fact is that they are, in the first place, hypothetical constructs, inferred from observation rather than observed in themselves; in the second place, unobservable; and in the third place, more or less useless at the explanatory level (McGrath, 2007:129).

How useful is it to employ biological metaphors in studying cultural phenomena?

Cultural anthropologists such as Maurice Bloch (2000) have argued that the gene-meme analogy is fundamentally flawed because ‘culture’ – whatever it is – cannot be conceptualized as discrete bits of information in the same way that genes can and because the transmission processes are sufficiently different to undermine the model. (Walter, 2007:692).

I only digressed into Dawkins’ meme theory to highlight an important point. I find it both amusing and instructive that even hardcore atheists realize that the best scientific methods seem to be limited in explaining certain phenomena like religion. This is the reason he meanders into the territory of the elusive “memetics” to attempt to understand why faith is so infectious and enduring. I am aware that Dawkins’ meme-theory is a poor excuse for a theoretical framework and has no validity whatsoever. Despite this, I find his concept fascinating in this respect: as McGrath argues, memes can only be a “...*hypothetical construct inferred from observation rather than observed themselves...*” (McGrath, 2007:129). The theological concept of sin does seem to fit

this bill in the manner in which it transmits from person to person. In the case of faith, what Dawkins was observing, rather than a placebo effect, was the manner in which the Word seed of God lodged in the hearts and minds of individuals. For the purposes of the current topic of inherited sin, though, we are talking about the seed of the serpent spreading in the manner of memes described by Dawkins. Maybe someday the Lord will show us the “sin meme”.

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Be it as it may, the Bible does assume the inheritance of sin. This is a first step for anyone desiring to repent – there must be an understanding and acknowledgement that acted sin springs from this source. We have all been infected by the seed of sin. In fact, as the whole human gene pool is distorted by mutations, we can conclude that:

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

In what follows, I will put the spotlight on acted sin as the logical outcome of inherited sin.

Acted sin

The nature of sin working in us responds to external stimuli to break the word of God. The collaborative effort of inherited and acted sin combines to fulfil the cravings of sin. Take Cain, the brother of Abel as a case in point. To begin

with, he was just as pious as Abel in that he brought the best produce from the field to offer to God. Farm labour is intensive and strenuous. Obviously, he felt he had good reason to sulk when God rejected his offering. My focus here is not to expound on the reason why God rejected Cain's offering which had to do with the lack of a blood sacrifice. What is relevant is Cain's decision to allow the latent, fomenting nature of sin to well up inside him and seize control of his passions. Cain could have chosen the simple way out – repent. What started out as sulking soon ignited into an inferno of jealousy which culminated in the first fratricide (act of killing one's own brother) in human history. Sin, when not repented of, must find a destructive outlet.

James 1:13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

James 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

James 1:15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

The progressive stages of this repetitive pattern, described by James, can be traced in the lives of myriad Biblical figures. The story of the aforementioned David is instructive. We overlook the fact that David had many wives and concubines when he lusted after Bathsheba. Why, one may ask, was he not content with what he had? This dark incident, in the life of an otherwise illustrious man of God, sheds more light on the nature of lust. It is never satisfied! Sin has no saturation point but each little concession draws the victim slowly but

firmly into the sinking sand. It is intriguing that brain scientists assert that the very function of the brain is altered through compulsive and addictive behaviour. In other words, what starts out as “harmless” little flirtations with sin gradually alters the structure of the brain. The brain interprets these signals to signal a change from the norm and takes action to accommodate this compulsive behaviour. Any form of addiction comes under this heading. No wonder the Bible admonishes us to yield our members to righteousness and not be overcome by corruption.

Rom 6:19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

2Peter 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

John 8:35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: [but] the Son abideth ever.

John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Unseen acted sins

Thus far the discussion has revolved around the manner in which sin is acted out, fed and buoyed by the dormant nature

of sin. But what about unseen sins of the heart like hatred, envy, covetousness and pride? These can be classified under acted sins too as these vices cannot develop without consent or some degree of acquiescence from the individual. Before hidden sins grip the heart, an individual engages in a dialogical or dialectical process with the spirit and mind justifying and rationalizing the sin. In this sense, it is a symbiotic endeavour often mulled over for prolonged periods of time. Just as virtues take time and focus to develop, hidden sins of the heart must be nurtured and attended to. Many people would deny committing murder or robbery but how many can truthfully deny having entertained hatred, envy, pride, covetousness and a host of similar sins? In fact, it is on this basis that the Bible declares all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). An example that elucidates the above is Jesus' encounter with the scribes.

Mat 9:2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

Mat 9:3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This [man] blasphemeth.

Mat 9:4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

The scribes did not utter a word but remained silent. Jesus, though, as God manifested in flesh, read the language of their hearts. He actually accused them of thinking evil in their hearts though their lips were sealed. We can only imagine that the scribes were astounded at Jesus' uncanny

ability to read hearts and decided, prudently, to prolong their silence. Their mouths were shut but Jesus knew they levelled the sin of blasphemy against Him. True Christian repentance is exacting and of an infinitely higher order than what is commonly perceived as repentance. It understands that God weighs the hearts, the mind and the soul together. It is a rigorous form of “stress-test” that renders the individual naked before his Maker.

1Ki 8:39 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, [even] thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)

Jeremiah 17:9 ¶ The heart [is] deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Jeremiah 17:10 I the LORD search the heart, [I] try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, [and] according to the fruit of his doings.

Hebrews 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things [are] naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

I have often asked myself, “Why do many secular people in our modern world reject the Biblical label “sinner”?” It is not uncommon to hear them say, “I give money to charity and do my part for social justice and the environment which makes me a reasonably good person.” The answer is couched in a counter-question: “Who is doing the defining of what is good, bad or sinful?” To borrow from the philosopher Michel Foucault, this is a contention between

“truth regimes”. Foucault postulated that every human society invariably seeks to impose a “regime of truth” on the psyche of its subjects. This regime of truth is culled from a set of beliefs, values and mores deemed appropriate and desirable by the powers that be. In the West, the “regimes of truth” correspond to five traits: truth derived from scientific discourse, accountability of truth to economic and political forces, the diffusion and consumption of truth via societal apparatuses (e.g. media), the control of the distribution of truth by political and economic apparatuses and the fact that it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation (Foucault, 1980).

Simply stated, and from within a Biblical lens, this means that individuals in our modern world have submitted to a definition of good or bad generated by the prevailing view in society. Today, the West jealously guards the walls that separate Church and State. But it is plain to see, as Pope Benedict XVI said on his official State visit to the UK, that there exists an aggressive atheism that seeks to marginalize religion in the UK. Foucault identified scientists as one group in a society who attempt to influence the creation of a “truth regime”. Many scientists have promulgated the belief that science and religion are locked in a conflict with the latter designated as an anachronism to be eradicated. In August, 2010, Stephen Hawking, considered to be perhaps the greatest scientist alive, said that the laws of physics are responsible for the Big Bang which leaves no room for a God hypothesis. Scientific naturalists fail to acknowledge that *belief* is an integral component in their own quest for

truth. Moreover, this belief is often dogmatically clung to. The immunologist George Klein states,

My attitude is not based on science, but rather on faith...The absence of a Creator, the non-existence of God is my childhood faith, my adult belief, unshakable and holy (Lennox, 2007:34).

The Harvard geneticist, Richard Lewontin also makes it unequivocally clear that his materialist convictions are *a priori*:

Moreover that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine foot in the door (Lennox, 2007:35).

This goes some way in explaining the challenge the average westerner faces. Lewontin actually makes it crystal clear that he believes in materialism uncompromisingly because he is determined not to accept the potential existence of God. I am aware that some Christian scientists believe in evolution. As such, it would be incorrect to say that only atheists believe in evolution. However, these Christian scientists will probably concede that the wider public often equates evolution with atheism. Scientists who believe in God have not been silent, fortunately. In an interrogation of the unquestioned status accorded scientific naturalism's trust in cognitional confidence, Haught (2007:49) asks:

Since our minds are said to have evolved gradually from a mindless state of nature, why should we trust these same minds to put us in touch with reality?

What saith the Lord in all of this? True Christian repentance is predicated on complete and voluntary submission to the truth regime of God alone. One reason the Lord plucked Israel out of Egypt and separated them from other nations in the land of Canaan is to shield them from the “truth regimes” prevalent in Egypt. The Christian should not isolate herself in monastic self-indulgence but separation is also an important tenet in victorious Christian living. It is for this reason that God-fearing souls recognize the importance of regular church-attendance. The House of God functions as a welcome refuge where the Word and Spirit of God can freely operate to sensitize us to the presence of sin and induce genuine repentance.

Sackcloth and ashes

Dan 9:3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

Mat 11:21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Jonah 3:6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered [him] with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

In exploring the biblical meaning of repentance, few elements conjure up the utter sense of remorse like sackcloth and ashes. Significantly, even a pagan King in Nineveh employed this powerful symbolism to convey his sorrow. It

seemed a universal symbol for repentance. Sackcloth was often a black coarse material made of goat's hair. The ancients employed black sackcloth for mourning at funerals and similar events. Even in modern times, the practice of wearing black armbands during football matches, for example, is reminiscent of the custom of mourning for the dead or great tragedies. The wearing of black sackcloth contrasted starkly with the dazzling royal robes of the King of Nineveh. Whereas the glittering robes were intended to impress and induce deference, the black sackcloth had the opposite effect – a sense of personal abhorrence and humiliation. We are told in the Bible that King Herod, wearing a majestic robe, was struck down by the angel of the Lord for failing to give glory to God. The Jewish writer, Josephus, appears to confirm this account. He states that Herod wore a silvery robe which - when hit by the sun's rays at a particular angle – shone beautifully.

Act 12:21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

Act 12:22 And the people gave a shout, [saying, It is] the voice of a god, and not of a man.

God requires a radical attitudinal transformation in us if true repentance is to transpire. Other corollaries to repentance include prostrations before God, fasting induced by sorrow and tears. Sackcloth and ashes symbolize the *repulsiveness* of sin. Beautiful external garments do not conceal the ugliness of sin in the sight of God. The ancients often rolled around in the ashes reminding themselves “From dust I am and to dust I shall return”. How incongruent this picture is

from the world we live in? The powers that be are happy to dull our senses with an over-exposure to celebrities, sport and a host of never-ending things that we must have. True repentance is an ever-present continuum in the life of a born-again Christian. We must always ask the question, "How does God perceive the human condition?" His answer may surprise some:

Isaiah 64:6 But we are all as an unclean [thing], and all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

The prophets of old best captured the ethos of repentance. Elijah, John the Baptist and other prophets wore sackcloth *permanently*. This would be hard for our modern sensibilities to understand. These fire-breathing leaders of God wore their message on their bodies, so to speak. If anyone was interested in their company, it would not be due to physical attraction for sure. In another sense, they also stood as representatives of the children of God and, thus, repented on their behalf like Daniel did.

Zechariah 13:4 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

Mat 3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

In the New Testament age, the ugliness of sin is captured in repentance and baptism in Jesus name. Because sin is condemned in the sight of the Lord and its ugliness repulsive, a Christian is enjoined to repent from the depths of his soul and die in the waters of baptism. Do we dare come before God with a garment of dazzling colours? God forbid! Sackcloth and ashes is repentance and baptism in Jesus name today. The heart must be rent asunder and not just the outer garments.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name [is] Holy; I dwell in the high and holy [place], with him also [that is] of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Joel 2:13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he [is] gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

List of Scriptures

Psalms 51:5

Matthew 9:2-4

Isaiah 48:8

I Kings 8:39

Romans 7:14-23

Jeremiah 17:9-10

Luke 12:48

Hebrews 4:13

Romans 5:12-19

Daniel 9:3

Hebrews 7:9-10

Matthew 11:21

Job 14:1-4

Jonah 3:6

Job 25:5-6

Acts 12:21-22

Genesis 3:15

Isaiah 64:6

Romans 3:15

Zechariah 13:4

James 1:13-15

Matthew 3:4

Romans 6:19

Isaiah 57:15

2 Peter 2:19

Joel 2:13

John 8:34-36

CONCLUSION

The American psychologist, Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) believed that human needs followed a hierarchical pattern beginning much like a pyramid (diagram II). Humans tend to dedicate most of their energy to satisfying basic needs such as air, water, food and rest represented by the base of the pyramid which is the broadest. According to Maslow, once the basic needs are met, concerns for safety and security are given more attention. In the next tier, psychologically healthy individuals pay attention to the natural craving for love and a sense of belonging. In the penultimate stage, humans invest time and resources into achieving goals that bestow recognition and enhance reputation. Finally, at the apex of the pyramid, after the lower rungs no longer pose a serious threat, humans reflect on the meaning of truth and life in general.

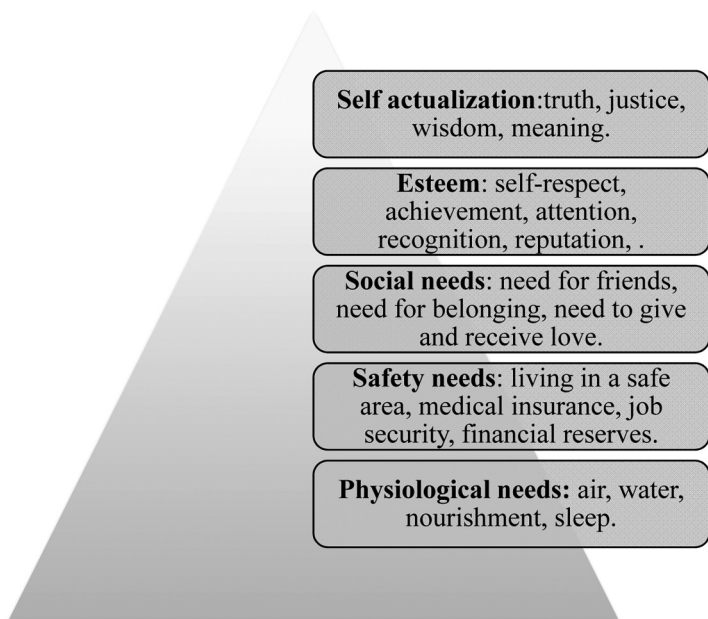


Diagram (II): Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

As with all theories, much critique has been levelled against this theory. Some reject the hierarchical and segmented manner in which human needs apparently move upwards. They argue that all these stages are intertwined with each stage commanding varying degrees of attention which cannot be predetermined. Yet others contend that this pyramid is ethnocentric taking account of human behaviour in the West alone (Maslow studied Einstein and other western individuals). For these critics, societies in the developing nations are not individualistically oriented but collectively oriented.

Our concern, at the end of this theological and spiritual journey, is to ask, “What should be the most important concern of humans?” If Maslow is correct, then we spend an inordinate amount of time and energy working to satisfy the need for food, safety and attention. As the apex occupies a tiny space on the top of the pyramid, a fraction of the energy is devoted to grappling with the big questions of life – why was I born? What is the purpose of existence? Where will I go after death? Jesus understood man’s innate fear of deprivation. He told His disciples not to labour after the meat which perishes but after the eternal manna. He knows that loneliness and isolation are real threats that can drastically reduce one’s quality of life. The radical faith Jesus is calling us to embrace is one where we consciously and deliberately go against what the human nature considers normal and sound – devote the lion’s share of our time and resources to seeking the kingdom of God. The diagram below approximates the pyramid which would be pleasing to God.

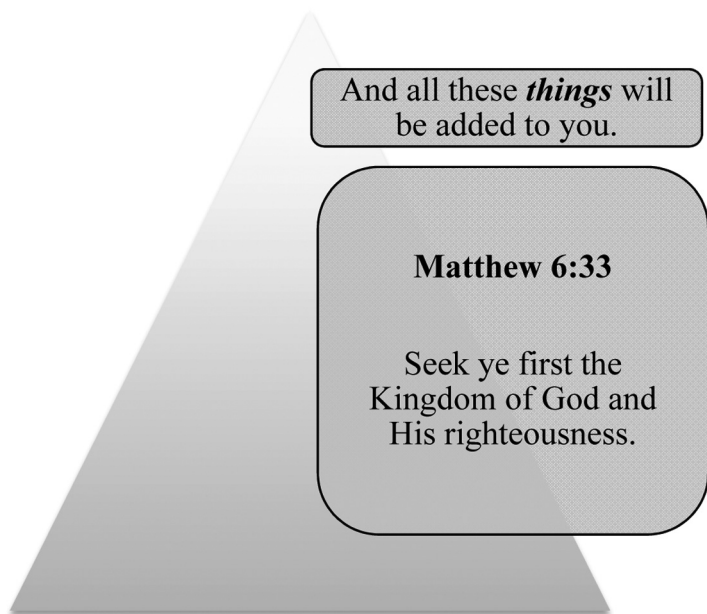


Diagram (III): God's hierarchical pyramid.

Mat 6:25 ¶ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Mat 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Mat 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Mat 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Mat 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Mat 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, [shall he] not much more [clothe] you, O ye of little faith?

Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Having lived in the West for the last 20 years, it is a strange paradox that this part of the world, which has experienced mind-boggling advances in every field of human endeavour, has concurrently seen a steep increase in ailments of the mind or illnesses which can be put down to psychic causation. The BBC estimates that:

One in four people in the UK suffer from some sort of mental health disorder.⁴

The material part of man has flourished having piggybacked on the proliferation of science and technology. On the flip side, however, the negation or, in many cases, the suppression of the spiritual faculty of mankind has

⁴ Mental Health. BBC. http://www.bbc.co.uk/headroom/mental_health/ accessed 22.09.2010.

boomeranged back as an indictment against the forsaking of God. No medicine doled out seems effective for the tormented condition of a soul starved off a spiritual diet.

The German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) appropriately captured the manner in which 19th century Western society has willingly chosen to stifle and then dispose of God. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, a madman runs through the market looking for God. Failing to find God, he cries out:

God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?

Nietzsche did not believe in God. However, he recognized that modern society's rejection of God has grave consequences. Man is condemned to invent new gods – even proclaim himself a god. Since many no longer subscribe to the Christian God and His values, new values will have to be invented based on some transcendent or humanistic philosophy. Failure to do this will usher in nihilism – belief and values are useless. Nietzsche's observation of the West is true in many ways. Having forsaken God, the West turned to Darwin, Freud, science, medicine and a host of other "gods" to fill the vacuum. Modern man struts like a peacock

preening himself with the trappings of material success but inwardly, his soul is in anguish.

This book is a call to return to God. It is a call to humbly acknowledge the self-evident truth that the answer is not in man. The Bible does not *try* to present itself as the truth – it boldly proclaims that it is the *only truth*. Jesus does not mince His words but declares:

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

The inevitability of death should be the best incentive to jolt us out of our complacency. Why do we wait when there is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain? There will come a day when all the lies and delusions percolated will dissipate in the fiery light of the name of Jesus. Every philosophy and subtle distortion of the truth will be exposed as hollow. You, too, can be called the child of God if you accept the invitation of the apostles to repent, be baptized in Jesus name and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Like me, you can begin your spiritual journey with the words of the apostle Paul “Who are you Lord”?

Hosea 6:1 ¶ Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

Hosea 6:2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

Hosea 6:3 Then shall we know, [if] we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter [and] former rain unto the earth.

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