



# HIDDEN TREASURE

**By Peter Aiello**

## **BIBLICAL HIGHER POWER SPIRITUALITY FOR INNER PEACE AND STRENGTH**

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The purpose of this book is to present the unique Biblical method for connecting with God through Jesus Christ. It does not have multiple steps or complicated formulas, because its power is in its simplicity. It has names such as unconditional trust, surrender, and self-abandonment toward God. I feel that it has been neglected for too long in historic Christianity to the extent that it is considered an anomaly. It has been replaced primarily with legalism, which has no power to transform an individual; and things that were intended to supplement Christianity have been made primary. I show how the Biblical method opens us up to the Spirit of Christ, which brings us the Divine inner peace and strength to deal with our human weakness; the Spirit of Christ opens us up to His rest.

Among other things, human weakness manifests itself in worry, anger, unforgiveness, compulsions, and addictions. I feel that the original New Testament spirituality needs to be presented to the modern world, because it is usually not presented in its purest form by contemporary Christianity. Because of this, it is not as effective as it should be; and people have gone elsewhere to seek inner peace. The Bible presents us with the peace that passes all understanding; an infused Divine peace that comes to us from beyond ourselves. This book is a product of my personal testimony, and is a synthesis of psychology, spirituality, and theology. It is a mixture of knowledge and insight which I have gathered over the years; insight that came at unexpected times and circumstances.

I was born in New York City and grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area of California where I found my relationship with God through His grace and His instruction from the Scriptures. I wrote this book as an evangelism tool for myself and others. I pray that God uses it for the furtherance of His Kingdom.

I dedicate this work to God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom none of this would have been possible.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my earthly father, Girolamo Aiello, and my mother, Rosaria (Balistreri) Aiello for bringing me into this world to experience the wonderful love of God that is in Christ Jesus. They were both born near the city of Palermo in Sicily, Italy; my father in Aspra, and my mother in Sant'Elia (Saint Elijah). I couldn't ask for a better pedigree.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this work is to present Christianity as it was in its earliest stages; therefore, I quote a great deal of Scripture to substantiate my premises. I pray that my insights be in line with the original intent of the writers. This appears to be a never-ending work in progress, because it changes in concert with the changes in my thoughts and personal life.

When I was in my late twenties, I got into an Eastern philosophy that completely changed my approach to finding contentment and fulfillment in life. Even though I only used it for a few years, it taught me that it was impossible to find happiness and peace when we make them dependent upon acquiring things that we desire—a novel idea for me at the time; but it was an idea that I subsequently found also in the Bible. Thoughts and desires were considered to be hindrances to awareness or observation, which was the place of love and peace according to this philosophy, but which was difficult to arrive at. The fact that it even spoke of a place of peace within us was an idea that I was not taught; but I was very attracted to because of the oppression from my mind. I no longer had to take my thoughts and desires seriously because it posited a vantage point of detachment from them. This caused a major change in my thinking at this point in my life. I realized that my thoughts and desires did not need to be my primary reality.<sup>1</sup> Later, I noticed this same idea in the Bible where the place of peace is the Spirit of Christ within us, which brings us the fruit of the Spirit peace.<sup>2</sup> In the Bible, we acquire the place of peace. In Eastern philosophy, we are born with it.

The philosophy taught me that whenever we make our happiness dependent upon acquiring the things that we desire, we never arrive at contentment, satisfaction, or fulfillment. Whatever we acquire is never enough for us. Desire provides empty promises. The Law of Diminishing Returns sets in, because as you acquire more of something, satisfaction diminishes, so that you require more and more of it to produce the same satisfaction until it is no longer useful for that purpose. This made sense to me because I tried to find contentment in this way,

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<sup>1</sup> See Proverbs 3:5

<sup>2</sup> See Galatians 5:22

and it ended in frustration. The Bible speaks of deceitful lusts.<sup>1</sup> My personal experiences validated this understanding; so I immediately responded favorably to it; and it effected a major shift of priorities for finding happiness, that changed the course of my life.

This brought me to an understanding of my first major paradox, which is that we acquire by elimination. When we realize that desiring things for the purpose of finding our happiness, does not produce an ongoing happiness or contentment in life, we eliminate the process of desiring things for that purpose—or we don't take it quite as seriously. We look elsewhere. Many non-Christian spiritualities value the idea that pursuing desires for happiness is not conducive to peace and contentment in life because it hinders the attainment of enlightenment as they view it. This understanding is also important in Biblical spirituality because it enables us to more willingly and freely draw close to God for peace and contentment and to arrive at Christian enlightenment. Without our interaction with the Biblical God, our worldly pursuit of happiness keeps us alienated from Him, and unfulfilled.<sup>2</sup>

The Eastern philosophy also taught me my second major paradox, which was that I have more control over thoughts, feelings, and emotions when I don't fear them or try to fight them, and I don't try to distract them with varying escapes. What I had concluded from this teaching was that the method of removing them from my mind was to just passively observe them without trying to push them out myself by using my own willpower. This was a major turning point in my life because it immediately gave me a tool to use in dealing with the oppression in my mind. This was my first encounter with the idea that our own willpower and resolve is not strong enough to deal with worry, anger, stress, unforgiveness, obsession, compulsion, addiction, and frustration from unfulfilled desires—an idea that I also found in the Bible, and something which our experience always tells us. I later realized that higher power spirituality also has this element because when we yield control to someone other than ourselves for removing these feelings and

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<sup>1</sup> See Ephesians 4:22

<sup>2</sup> See James 4:1-10; Matthew 6:33

emotions, we disassociate ourselves from the process of trying to use our own willpower for removing them. Biblical spirituality is a higher power spirituality that also recognizes the insufficiency of our willpower for meaningful self-control; and for this reason, posits the yielding of the self, which, in the Bible, is done toward the Biblical God.

The instruction from the Eastern Philosophy was very helpful for me at the time; and it subsequently steered my inquiry within the Bible a few years later when I was searching for more answers. I wanted to see if the concept of emptying self was also in the Bible. It was. I probably would not have been curious if I had not been exposed to this concept in the Eastern philosophy. I believe that these paradoxes made me receptive to the Biblical ideas of unconditional trust in God for inner peace and the emptying of self toward God, which I probably would not have otherwise been interested in or even noticed. I began to view them as alternatives to the Eastern philosophy.

The Eastern philosophy did not recommend meditation practices such as visualization, concentration, or mantras, because these were also considered to be escapes; but it immediately gave me a technique to use in dealing with my emotional life; and even though there was no Biblical God in it, it started the process of moving me away from my overreliance on thoughts and desires. In the Bible, I found similar ideas, but a much more effective method for dealing with my emotions.

I didn't recall hearing these types of things when I was growing up in Catholicism, but I was immediately attracted to them when I did hear them, and started using them prior to revisiting Christianity from this other perspective. In the Bible, God has an active role in improving our emotional lives. He created us in such a way that, without Him, our own willpower or resolve is not enough for exercising meaningful self-control. I didn't know that Christianity had these very important elements. The ongoing frustration that was a part of my life at that time, apparently, made me receptive to these ideas in Eastern philosophy; and subsequently in Scripture where I was surprised to also find them.

At first, all of this appeared to be psychology; but after I inquired into the Bible, it morphed into spirituality. Without fully realizing it at the time, I was learning that spirituality has a psychological component. Christianity is supposed to affect us psychologically as well as spiritually. Because of the similarities that I saw between the Eastern philosophy and the Bible; and because, at first, there didn't seem to be any clear lines of demarcation between the two, my curiosity brought me into a further inquiry of the Bible. Later, the opposite views of God and how to relate to Him became evident between the two; but by that time, I was willing to try the Biblical method. The Eastern philosophy didn't seem to have a clearly defined view of any god, except that it spelled the word *reality* with a capital "R". I later learned that this generally excludes the idea of a transcendent Biblical God; and is closer to the monistic idea that everything is god or a manifestation of god and that there is an innate presence of god within us.

My main objective after I had gotten into the Eastern philosophy was to find answers to the questions that I had concerning inner peace and how to acquire it. It provided me with my initial instruction in this area, and made me aware that inner peace was what I was actually searching for in all my pursuits; but the Bible eventually taught me that the Biblical God was the only one who provides a sustained reality of it.<sup>1</sup>

After I started using the Eastern philosophy, I became interested in exploring other viewpoints. A few years later, after I had attended a lecture by an Indian guru who said that all religions are basically the same, I wondered what Christianity had to offer in regards to what I had been learning; this, in spite of not hearing of this type of thing when I was growing up. I don't agree with guru's opinion now; but he set in motion, something in my life that I've never recovered from—in a good way. At that time, I didn't know that the Bible had strong components of inner peace and strength in its teachings. This is something that I eventually learned from the Bible itself.

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<sup>1</sup> See John 15:11, 16

It was at about the age of 30 that I started my inquiry into the Bible. Rather than looking for answers by attempting to wade through 2000 years of Christian history—which seemed like a daunting task—I ended up going to the Bible itself which contains the source material for Christianity. It seemed easier and more practical to go to the beginning, rather than to work my way back from the end. I found this approach to be extremely rewarding because I soon began to notice that the Bible presents a spiritual practice that is not being used by most of today's Christianity, and that has been generally discarded for many centuries. I'll call it [unconditional trust in God](#). I found it to be extremely simple and powerful at the same time. Because it was different from the Eastern method that I had learned prior to this, it took me a while before I was willing to try it. When I did try it, I found that the benefits of the Eastern philosophy which I had been practicing for a few years prior, paled in comparison with what I had found through my own private reading of the Bible; so the Bible became extremely important for me. I not only found a greater inner peace than in the past, but inner strength as well. Because non-Christian philosophies do not recognize that our weakened human nature is the result of Adam and Eve's disobedience and separation from God, their remedies fall short and do not lift us out of our weakened state in spite of their attempts at promoting peace and strength. In Christianity, these are products of the Holy Spirit, whose presence we receive by faith in Christ.

This is true of everything in Christianity. The Biblical God provides a greater sustained reality of these things than we could ever have without Him. It comes about by following Biblical instruction on how to connect with Him, and has been available to us for thousands of years since Pentecost; and not by a supposed natural evolution into a higher-consciousness, which, in effect, excludes God's plan of salvation. If I had relied on Christian organizations to point these things out, I'd still be waiting—or not. Biblical Christianity brought into fruition all that I had previously learned, and even more than I could have ever imagined even though it was considered to be difficult to do by the Eastern Philosophy. The Bible taught me how to internalize Christianity. When I was growing up, I had no idea that Christianity had these elements and that this was even possible; and

apparently this is also true of many others, because I often encounter people who have turned against Christianity because of a very legalistic presentation of it when they were growing up. This is unfortunate, because it is anything but legalistic in its Biblical form.

A quasi Christian organization that I was interacting with at the time encouraged self-learning, and the use of various Bible tools such as lexicons, concordances, commentaries, and dictionaries. These were helpful for locating scriptures, and for finding the information that I was looking for. The reference material, along with the comparing of different translations of Scripture, was helpful in understanding texts that were difficult or unclear. At times, my personal conclusions were definitely in the minority. I was determined to read the Scriptures with as little theological bias as I could muster. The organization did have a theological point of view; but when it became evident to me that it conflicted with the one that I was developing, I separated from the group; but what I had found in Scripture was so important to me that it has taken me through all of the subsequent changes in my life, to where I am now. “For the word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”<sup>1</sup>

Our view of God determines the method that we use in order to acquire peace and strength. Each view has its own way of going about it, and its own results. Throughout this work, I use the words *dualism* and *monism* in reference to the major views of God in the world. Dualism refers to God and creation as separate from each other. God is the Creator who existed prior to His creation, and He transcends His creation, which is why the Biblical God is called a transcendent God. The Bible is very dualistic in its world-view. Monism refers to god as immanent; and is the view that god is everything, including us; and that there is no transcendent Creator God. In the Bible, the god of monism is considered to be creation. Most of the world’s religions fall into either one of these two categories, although, at times, the dualistic God can be somewhat immanent, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 4:12 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

monistic god can be somewhat dualistic. The Biblical God can be immanent in the sense that His Spirit can inhabit us if we are humble recipients; but He does not want us to worship Him in His creation, which includes people who are carriers of His Spirit. There are those who excuse the practice by saying that they are worshipping only God in that object or person; but it is still not permitted. The monistic god can be dualistic in the sense that our thoughts are naturally dualistic and that we always tend to view god as something other than ourselves even though we may philosophically believe otherwise; and we may end up worshipping the objects of creation because of the view that everything is a part god or a manifestation of god. This tendency is evidenced in human history.

In conclusion, I would like to quote a beautiful passage of Scripture in the Catholic Bible, which, when speaking about Wisdom, states: “If he trust to her, he shall inherit her: and his generation shall be in assurance. For she walketh with him in temptation: and at the first she chooseth him. She will bring upon him fear and dread and trial: and she will scourge him with the affliction of her discipline, till she try him by her laws, and trust his soul. Then she will strengthen him, and make a straight way for him, and give him joy: and will disclose her secrets to him: and will heap upon him treasures of knowledge and understanding of justice. But if he go astray, she will forsake him, and deliver him into the hands of the enemy. Son, observe the time, and fly from evil.”<sup>1</sup>

Unless otherwise noted, most of the quotations in this work are from the old King James Version of the Bible (old KJV). Although no version of the Bible is perfectly translated, there is a large amount of reference material associated with the old KJV, which makes it easier to do inquiry and to locate Scripture verses.

I would like to share my insights.

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiasticus (aka Sirach) 4:17-23 (Catholic Douay Version)

## 1. HUMAN WEAKNESS (Original Sin)

Biblical spirituality, unlike others, is based on the premise that we are all born in a psychologically weakened state because of Adam and Eve's transgression. This happened abruptly when they disobeyed God and separated from Him. They immediately experienced a severe change of consciousness. Saint Paul describes the human struggle that we all experience from them as follows: "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I...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...For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; 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"<sup>1</sup>. Humans have a bent or a predisposition toward weakness that can only be corrected by God.

Regardless of whether a person philosophically believes in original sin or not, it is a reality in all of us. We have a propensity for worry, anger, stress, unforgiveness, obsession, compulsion, addiction, and the frustration that comes from pursuing desires which are always unfulfilled; but we don't have the basic resources within us to effectively counter these things. For example, I know that I shouldn't smoke or be excessive in any way, but I can't stop. I know that I shouldn't worry so much or be continuously angry, but I can't control it. I experience boredom or loneliness, but it keeps coming back even after I've done everything possible to distract it. I am frustrated because I have desires that are never completely satisfied or fulfilled, even when I've acquired the desired object. We have willpower; but we lack the means to effectively use it. Have I missed anybody? Our minds tell us one thing, but our emotions and impulses drive us in a different direction. They overcome our willpower. One part of the brain doesn't cooperate with the other. The feeling of powerlessness that we experience during a time of crisis is a reminder that, without God, powerlessness is our normal state of being. Some believe that humans will naturally evolve out of this state; but that would

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7:14-15, 18, 22-23. Read Romans 7:14-25

imply that God did not create us to be dependent upon Him. The Bible tells us otherwise.

Our own willpower or resolve doesn't always work the way we want it to. Even if we discipline ourselves and make a concerted effort for a period of time, the strong counter-tendencies remain. Our ability to make rational decisions is compromised; and we don't have as much control as we would like. This is our normal state of consciousness without the Biblical God. Recognizing the limitations of our willpower is an important first step on the path towards acquiring Divine peace and strength. Admitting that we are weak without God is to admit reality; and it shows wisdom. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding."<sup>1</sup> "Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary"<sup>2</sup>. The next step is—what do we do about it? "Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; he is their help and their shield."<sup>3</sup> This theme runs throughout Scripture, and is the essence of Biblical spirituality. Unconditional trust in God is the means by which we open to Him and to His peace and strength; and it is taught in both Old and New Testaments. We don't need to be afraid of God when we unconditionally trust Him, because we open up to His love. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."<sup>4</sup>

Some will complain that God is being used as a crutch. The answer to that is—how true. He wants to be our crutch; it is for our own good. He created us in such a way that we function poorly without Him. He is the potter; we are the clay. "Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the LORD thy God, who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."<sup>5</sup> Human pride prevents most people from attaching themselves to God; and as a result, they shut themselves out of His favor.

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<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 9:10

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 8:13-14

<sup>3</sup> Psalms 115:11. See also 31:19-20; Proverbs 22:4

<sup>4</sup> 1John 4:18. See also Psalms 34:4; 2Timothy 1:7

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 48:17. See also Jeremiah 10:23; Romans 9:21

In the debate between those who say that we are born weak and flawed, and those who say that we are born perfect; Scripture says that we are all born weak and flawed. “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin”<sup>1</sup>. “Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”<sup>2</sup> Culture and conditioning play a part in our imperfection, but they don’t totally explain it. We are born imperfect because of the original sin of Adam and Eve; and we start to notice it at a very early age.

Merely knowing right from wrong isn’t enough to overcome our weaknesses. Satan tempted Adam and Eve with the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They discovered soon enough, that their separation from God produced fear, weakness, shame, and death for them; which is something that Satan didn’t tell them. Knowing right from wrong, without God, wasn’t what they thought it would be. We inherit all of this from them. This is the original sin. We notice that our reason or intellect is limited for overcoming our human weakness, our willpower is compromised, and our Intelligence Quotient isn’t the last word. We need to recognize that humans are complex; and that in order to overcome weakness, we need God. It is part of being a well-rounded individual. Reason and observing the world around us should tell us this. How can we be intelligent people without recognizing something this basic?

Paul tells us: “for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; 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. Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin.”<sup>3</sup> This portion of Scripture describes a general tendency or inclination

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3:22

<sup>2</sup> Psalms 51:5

<sup>3</sup> Romans 7:18-25

towards sin rather than specific acts. We sin (action) because we are sinners (weakness/original sin); we are not sinners because we sin (action). Sin actions do not create this predisposition within us because it is there from birth. Basically, Paul is saying that there is a struggle within us between what we think we should do and what we actually do, and that the “law of sin” (original sin) has the upper hand over the law of the mind (objectivity). We can all identify with this inner struggle, from the hardened addict to the respectable church lady. It makes our willpower operate at diminished capacity so that it cannot function at its best; and that is why we do things that we don’t want to do. Our sin nature has a strong hold on us, and hinders us from doing what we know is right. This is the result of original sin. Once the hindrance of original sin is removed, the will is free to function as it was originally intended to. This is the essence of [Christian freedom](#).

When we don’t acknowledge the effects of original sin on our consciousness, we will look to false solutions for what we all obviously experience. Because we are so accustomed to the effects of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we think that what we now experience is natural and human; but it is not. It is important for us to recognize the opposing principles within us, and understand their origins in order to find the most effective solution.

The book of Ecclesiastes says that “all is vanity and vexation of spirit” (1:14). Original sin (human weakness) is a reality within us, and not just a theological concept; and just because a person says that they don’t believe in it, doesn’t negate the reality of it. It may be given another name, but the reality remains. Paul tells us that this tendency and weakness towards sin came about through Adam,<sup>1</sup> and not just some evolutionary fluke, and that [Jesus Christ](#), the last Adam, became the remedy for original sin by becoming a life-giving Spirit which is able to reside in us and boost our willpower.<sup>2</sup> This first became available for us after His death and resurrection, during the Jewish feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out. Jesus Christ enlivens and transforms us by His presence within

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 5:12-21

<sup>2</sup> See 1Corinthians 15:45; Romans 4:25

us; and we open up to His presence by our [faith](#) in Him. In order to acquire His presence, it's important to understand how the word [faith](#) was used in Biblical times, in contrast with its current usages. I discuss this in the section on [Biblical Spirituality](#). "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."<sup>1</sup> Christ, when He enlivens us, removes the hindrances to objectivity, and greatly increases our ability to freely exercise our willpower.

Desire or lust requires special attention, because it is one of the primary things that hinders us from moving towards God. The word *desire* can be synonymous with the word *want*, which is quite acceptable; but it can also be synonymous with *greed* and *lust*, which is what I am referring to when I use the word. A desired object becomes a substitute for God when we mistakenly think that it will give us a contentment or satisfaction that can only come from Him. It reinforces our separation from God because, unbeknown to us, the object that we desire can never ultimately provide the ongoing fulfillment that we are looking for; but we continue to pursue it with that hope. This is not an accident. It is part of the deception of our sin nature.

The bible calls desires "deceitful lusts"<sup>2</sup>. Desires are the proverbial carrot on the stick, and are driven by self-deception because we mistakenly believe that at the end of the day, there is going to be fulfillment, satisfaction, or contentment. This doesn't materialize because it is not possible for desire to produce these things; therefore, it ends in inevitable frustration. Desire is never supposed to be completely satisfied; it continually reasserts itself. What actually happens is that as we get intermediate gratifications but never complete fulfillment, we get confused and frustrated, and don't understand why we never arrive at fulfillment even though we may have acquired the desired object; and this produces an ongoing frustration that increases with more episodes of non-fulfillment. We see this in the person who can never get enough of what he is seeking. When I was experiencing this frustration, I didn't know why it was always there.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:2

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:22. See also 1Peter 4:2

Addictions and compulsions are linked to this process, because whatever you desire eventually controls you.<sup>1</sup> The misguided hope of fulfillment drives us to continuously repeat the act. The escapes and distractions that we use to deal with the ongoing frustration also become addictive through repetition because the frustration is always there regardless of the temporary distractions. The ongoing frustration keeps fueling the addiction. Desire (greed or lust) itself is a product of original sin; and is a part of what keeps us away from God. Our separation from God compels us to find remedies for its accompanying feelings and consequences; and its accompanying desires direct us into unrealistic expectations of fulfillment from sources other than God. Unless God draws us to Himself, we remain misdirected and unfulfilled. When we want or need something, we only need to acquire it or pray for it with faith; not desire it.

Many people die unfulfilled, thinking that if they had only acquired this or that, they would be happy; but there is never a conclusion or an ending within the framework of desire. It will always continue to assert itself regardless of how much we acquire; yet we are deceived into thinking that it will come to an end when we have enough of what we are seeking. Our own self-deception tells us that we will be happy and content when we acquire the object. When we come to realize what is happening, we can stop pursuing the object altogether, or we can continue to pursue it with a more realistic motive because the object itself may be good, but the motive for wanting it may be unrealistic.

Another problem with trying to satisfy desire for arriving at contentment is that we continually postpone our peace or contentment until we've acquired the object. When we notice that the object doesn't produce the ongoing contentment that we expect, we go on to another one with the same expectation—and so on. The process itself is self-defeating because when we postpone peace, it remains distant from us. Those that do this will never be content or at peace, because ongoing peace and contentment come only from God after we reject the process of postponing. They never need to be postponed because they are a part of God's presence within us when we acquire His

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<sup>1</sup> See Genesis 3:16; 1Peter 4:2; Romans 6:15-16

presence by unconditional trust, and not by desire which is an entirely different process. You surrender and rest from your desires when you unconditionally trust in God, including desires for things that we consider to be good. Desire for God moves the relationship, with its resulting peace, into the indefinite future, and renders it unattainable. He does not want us to endlessly long for Him. He wants us to open up to Him by unconditional trust. This brings the relationship into the present, and makes it an immediate reality. This is how we live in the present, God's way. Peace needs to be a present reality; not something that is indefinitely postponed.

Ultimately, the cause of human dissatisfaction is our basic sin nature. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by them that make peace."<sup>1</sup> A Christian should operate within a framework of peace, and not frustration. Our Godly path should be a path of peace.<sup>2</sup>

God does not give us peace and contentment by satisfying our desires—even for Him; instead, He neutralizes our desires when we surrender them to Him. God is not a substitute object of desire which invariably produces frustration; He is the object of trust which produces peace. He doesn't operate within the framework of desire. "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusteth in him. Oh, fear the LORD, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him."<sup>3</sup>

We should not wait or hope for a certain feeling before we approach God. We will postpone our relationship with Him when we expect some feeling beforehand; or we will feel inadequate when we don't experience the feeling that we expect to have, which is not what we want. We do not need to feel passion, obsession, desire, or a specific level of emotion for God in order to draw close to Him; we only need the willingness. A person without feeling is not at a disadvantage when

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<sup>1</sup> James 3:17-18. The word *entreated* or *intreated* can also be translated as *persuaded*.

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 3:17

<sup>3</sup> Psalms 34:8-9. See also Matthew 6:33

it comes to unconditional trust, because trust is a resting of the mind on God regardless of our emotional level; and it can be done in a very methodical way. Everyone is capable of doing it; but not everyone is willing. A person who feels that God is supposed to be approached with emotion may actually be less willing to do it, or will resist it entirely. Unconditional trust in God may sound too passive for them because it requires you to relinquish control over yourself. Using only our emotions to approach God implies that our level of emotion is more important than trust, and that we receive God through our own efforts. They actually keep us confined within our own minds, and block us from receiving that which is beyond, which includes God's love (agape) that we need to effectively minister to ourselves and others. Surrender of our minds to God is what expands us beyond the limitations of our minds, and brings us Divine peace and strength. Promoting an emotional feeling towards God does the opposite. This brings anxiety and confusion because emotion fluctuates; and we will never know to our satisfaction whether our level of emotion for God is sufficient at any one time.

Trust is surrender; emotionalism is not, regardless of what we affirm or declare in the process. When we relinquish control over ourselves towards God, we actually gain more control, because He greatly reduces the power that our sin nature has over us. Trust in God requires an act of the will because, as a result of original sin, we do not do it automatically. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way"<sup>1</sup>. Instruction on how to trust God is found in the Word of God.<sup>2</sup> I personally found the Bible to be the only reliable place to find it in its purest and most effective form.

Our inner struggle, which is one of the obvious results of original sin, is an important reason for why Jesus Christ came into this world. He helps us to individually overcome our human weakness. When we see the connection between original sin and our weakness, we get a better understanding of what Christian spirituality is supposed to remedy. Christianity is more than just a belief system. It is supposed to have a transforming effect on us, which gives us the

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 53:6. See also Psalms 14:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 10:17

peace and strength to deal with our human weakness so that it is easier for us to use our wills for the good.<sup>1</sup>

During my early Catholic upbringing, my main challenge was to avoid, what Catholics call, mortal sin so that I could participate in the Eucharist or Table of the Lord on Sunday. If I did lapse into sin, which was often, I would confess it to the priest. This was the extent of my Christian experience. I had no concept of a personal Savior who was willing and able to help me deal with my inner struggles, and no concept of unconditional trust in God. There was no inner place of refuge or peace from my weakness. Unfortunately, outside of the Scriptures, these concepts are difficult to find anywhere in Christianity, but they are an essential part of it. I later found that, in order to have Divine peace and strength, I needed a deeper form of Christianity than the one I grew up with. Even though we may not know how we will eventually find what we are really seeking, Christ tells us to “seek, and ye shall find”<sup>2</sup>. In my case, it came about in totally unexpected ways. When I was growing up, I may have had a fair amount of intellectual knowledge about Christianity, but I didn’t know that Christianity could help me deal with my emotional issues.

I now realize that in order to be well-balanced individuals, we need to release our emotions toward God, and not just feed the intellect; by release I mean that we need to let them go—not express them. In the Bible, this is called repentance. Most of us understand the process of accumulating knowledge, but most of us don’t know how to effectively release our emotions. Again, we notice that our own willpower or resolve doesn’t work very well.

We need the Higher Power to boost our willpower. This is not only for people with obvious addictions, but for all of us because none of us are in full control of ourselves. When we, for example, have tendencies toward worry, anger, or unforgiveness, we need to release the *tendency* because the object itself is not the problem; the tendency is the problem, and it comes from our human weakness. We need to release all of them toward God; however, God does not

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<sup>1</sup> See 1John 5:3-5

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 7:7

hold us responsible for those things that we are not aware of because He looks at the intent of the heart. This is why it is not a difficult thing to do but only requires our willingness. The only thing that's required is the intention of surrendering everything to God, including our desires. This is because that at the actual moment of surrender, we are only able to surrender the thing which is in our minds at that point. By our intention, we can rest our entire minds upon Him all at one time; and we can do it whenever we are willing to do so, at any place or time. When we are selective in our surrender, we are holding back from God and He notices it.

Someone with an addiction needs to not only release the desire for what that person is addicted to, but also the desire for everything else, because the release of all desire when surrendering to Christ boosts our willpower toward everything when Christ's Spirit is within us. This affects everything that the person deals with, including other addictions which the person may have; and guards against substituting one addiction for another. Total abstinence is advisable if the object itself is harmful. Total abstinence isn't always an option because, for example, someone who has a food disorder such as overeating has no choice except to go for moderation. This person may have a greater incentive to go for the spiritual option, because its effects are more beneficial and lasting. The person who uses total abstinence in place of the spiritual option continues to struggle without God.

We enhance our emotional state by releasing ourselves, but we enhance our intellect by accumulating knowledge. This paradox sounds like a contradiction, but it is not. The release and accumulation happen on two different levels of the brain—the heart and the mind, and this is why we don't need to be anti-intellectual or to blank out our minds in order to be spiritual. We are supposed to end up with a rested mind; not a blank mind.<sup>1</sup> Our mind can be at rest and at peace while it continues to function. We don't need to be anxious when we intellectualize. With God, this is possible. We do not lose our mind or our capacity to use it when we surrender it to God. In fact, a surrendered mind has a greater capacity for objectivity, because negative thoughts and feelings are greatly

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 11:29; 19:26; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 3:1-2, 12

reduced; “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”<sup>1</sup>.

When we enter into this existential state, the difference between heart and mind becomes apparent. Faith doesn’t negate the intellect, and the intellect doesn’t negate faith; they work together and support each other, and they can operate simultaneously. In this way, God can be part of everything that we are and do, and not be relegated only to a church building or a monastery. If faith was purely intellectual, this would not be possible because faith would compete with everything else in the intellect; and it would not be able to undergird everything that we do. Faith, when it is merely a belief in something that we don’t understand, is also only an intellectual exercise. Our view of [faith](#) needs to be modified in order to break through into the realm of the Spirit, and to get into its deeper levels. This has been ignored for too long. Many people have abandoned Christianity because of a shallow legalistic presentation of it. It needs to give us peace and strength in order for it to be meaningful—as was originally intended—and not just leave us with continued weakness and accompanying guilt when we don’t measure up to its perceived rules and regulations. There are church leaders who are afraid of real Christianity because of its freedom. They believe that people will interpret it as a freedom to sin, instead of freedom from sin; but this is no excuse to avoid preaching the real Christianity. Saint Paul did not compromise with Christian freedom even though he was aware of this possibility. Teaching Christianity the correct way is the only viable alternative, even if there are those who will pervert it.<sup>2</sup>

Much of non-Christian philosophy, because of its monism that everything is god, has a problem with separating heart and mind. The attempt to blank out the mind during meditation cannot be done while, at the same time, performing other activities that require the mind to be active. The same is true for visualization and concentration because they will compete with the other day to day mental activities. They are also incompatible with a strict monism, because if everything

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<sup>1</sup> 2Timothy 1:7

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 6; Deuteronomy 4:2-8

is god, that part of us that is trying to connect with god is also god; therefore, the whole exercise doesn't make sense; in fact, a strict monism leads to total hedonism and relativism, because our darkest instincts are also considered to be god.

The dilemma that I experienced when I was involved with Eastern philosophy was: it seemed that non-thinking was the ideal state for inner peace; but, as much as I tried, my mind would not fully cooperate. The ideal and the practical appeared to be at odds. Biblical spirituality eventually resolved this by, first of all, instructing me that I didn't need to shut my mind down in order to have inner peace, but instead, to simply trust God unconditionally and not lean on my own thoughts; and, secondly, that Divine inner peace comes from the presence of God within me, and is not the product of negating thoughts and desires through my own practices or efforts.<sup>1</sup> Unconditional trust in God subordinates our minds. It does not negate them. Our thoughts are part of our humanity. This is why inner peace is considered to be so difficult by monists. Also, when you don't recognize that there is a competing law of sin within us, the thoughts themselves are considered to be the problem. As a result of applying Biblical spirituality, it seemed like I could almost think and not think at the same time.

Prior to original sin, Adam and Eve were thinking beings with peace. After they transferred their trust from God to themselves, they started to lean excessively on their own thinking and became subject to fearfulness and shame. We were not created by God to be fearful, but to be trusting in God. Fearfulness is an aberration caused by the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Monism does not have this understanding, therefore it has no basis for separating fearfulness from thinking; consequently, all thought needs to be negated in order to have inner peace. But because, as part of our nature, we are thinking beings, I recall how confusing this was for a period of time. The Bible doesn't tell us to stop thinking; it tells us to not lean on our thinking. It recognizes reality.

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<sup>1</sup> See Proverbs 3:5-6; 2Corinthians 10:5; Galatians 5:22; Philippians 4:6-7; 1Peter 5:6-7; Deuteronomy 29:19-20

Because monism is so all-encompassing, the Biblical idea of unconditional trust in God or total surrender of the mind toward God, which is also all-encompassing, did not seem so unacceptable to me when I first encountered it. It didn't seem like a huge leap or change. When I eventually adopted it, I gradually realized that thoughts themselves are not the problem; but instead, it's our leaning upon them that causes confusion and discomfort. The Bible can make this distinction because we have a transcendent God to lean upon and give us a sustained Divine peace that passes all understanding, as opposed to leaning on ourselves for an inferior peace. Because of this, I became aware that thoughts themselves do not need to be a hindrance to peace; but, without God, they are. We need the courage to enter the song.

With inner peace comes creativity. Because Divine inner peace comes from the presence of the Biblical Creator (aka Holy Spirit) within us, it is not simply our own creativity. Divine creativity comes from our interaction with the Creator; and it is the resulting guidance that we receive from Him. The process begins when we receive truth through our intellect; then truth tells us that the ego needs to be sublimated in order for the creative process to emerge; subsequently, the creative process emerges automatically when the hindrances of ego and self are released toward God. Divine creativity resides in God's Spirit, which we receive within us by our faith in Him. We don't have to find or discover it directly; it finds us when we have God's Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

The creative process works at its best when we are at peace. It is not something that we work to acquire, but something that emerges through elimination, or release of ego. The process of releasing ego or self does not require effort; it only requires our willingness to do it. Biblical spirituality tells us to release our egos towards the Creator in order to receive His presence and guidance. This concept is foreign to most of us because we usually assume that we receive things by accumulation and effort, rather than by elimination. Biblical spirituality is acquired by elimination. Paradoxes are difficult to understand and accept, but spirituality is replete with them.

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 6:33-34

The mind needs peace and rest to function well and to rejuvenate itself. When it is overloaded, it will be prone to exaggerations and distortions. Addictions are, in part, the product of an unfettered mind that exaggerates the importance of a particular thing. Have you ever noticed that when you are worried about something, the worry takes on a life of its own, and then starts to create scenarios that don't materialize? When the worry lessens or is distracted, possibly by another worry, we look back at the previous one, and wonder why we ever gave it so much of our attention. A common worry or fear is that we will lapse back to an unpleasant psychological state that we have emerged from.

The peace of God that comes from trusting in Him and yielding to His presence within us is like preventive medicine for our minds. It helps us to keep things in perspective and it prevents our minds from going off into a tangent. It keeps us centered. Trust and yielding maximize the effects (fruit) of the Holy Spirit within us. They neutralize the fear that gives our thoughts and emotions their power; and therefore, our thoughts and emotions lose their power to keep us down; and the power of the Holy Spirit keeps them down. As a result, we have more God-given strength and control because we have surrendered our inferior strength and control; “nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day”<sup>1</sup>.

The Christian process of releasing ego or self is unconditional trust in God, and results in a Divine Creativity that is produced by the presence of the Creator within us, which is His guidance in our lives.<sup>2</sup> Even advancing age is not a barrier to continued creativity because, in God, we need not be limited and enclosed by fear at any age.<sup>3</sup> Unconditional trust or faith is a resting of the mind upon God, which includes resting the mind from spiritual practices such as visualization and concentration, because these require the use of thought; therefore, these practices postpone and hinder our arriving at a relationship with the Biblical God

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<sup>1</sup> 2Timothy 1:12. See also Romans 16:25

<sup>2</sup> See Psalms 16:7; 25:9; 32:8; 48:14; 73:23-28; Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 2:13; 1Corinthians 12:14-18; Titus 2:14; 2Peter 1:4

<sup>3</sup> See Psalms 92:13-14

when we substitute them for unconditional trust. These are an attempt to use thought, to get beyond thought—a difficult task, if not impossible. They are the opposite of what we are supposed to do in order to connect with God.<sup>1</sup>

Unconditional trust is not a self-striving.

Unfettered emotions hinder creativity. They prevent us from realizing our full potential, and are a waste of energy. When our minds are preoccupied, we are not at our best. When we try to distract ourselves from our preoccupations, we do so with difficulty. The lack of control that we experience is distressing. Many solutions are presented to us, but they are not all equally effective. Different methods produce different results. Not all enlightenments are the same. Christian enlightenment is the presence of the Spirit within us; and “the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”<sup>2</sup>. These qualities are the outgrowth of Christian spirituality and enlightenment; and are not caused by ascetic practices or special diets, but by faith in Jesus Christ. He receives His enlightenment by His faith in the Father; and then Christ shares His enlightenment with us by His presence within us, which we receive by our faith in Him. The Father sends the Spirit of Christ within us by our faith in His Son; therefore our enlightenment is actually Christ’s own enlightenment that He shares with us. We can’t have Christian enlightenment directly for ourselves and bypass Christ. In much of non-Biblical spirituality, external things such as ascetic practices are used for producing spirituality; but they are useless for producing Christian spirituality because Christian spirituality is a product of faith in Christ, which is the only practice that a Christian needs.<sup>3</sup> Other practices and things keep our separation from God intact, and they are therefore counterproductive.

The Old Testament previews New Testament enlightenment when it says: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy; they rejoice before thee according to the joy in

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<sup>1</sup> See Isaiah 55:6-9; Proverbs 3:5-6; Hebrews 4:9-10

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5:22-23

<sup>3</sup> See Colossians 2:20-23

harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.”<sup>1</sup> This becomes a metaphor for what God does within us when He lifts our burdens.

Enlightenment methods differ, depending upon the world-views that are behind them. If I believe that everything is god, and that I am god, I will go within myself to find god; and my method of releasing self will probably consist of yoga, breathing exercises, visualizations, or mantras. These practices are from earth or nature based spiritualities; and our interaction is only with our own breathing, thoughts, or words, and not with the Creator. This is why they do not connect us with the Creator. Instead, they attempt to connect us with the creation.

They presuppose that god has always been within us, only to be discovered, but not Someone to be received and opened up to. These practices are also used by many Christians today, but they are modified to include Christian imagery or words. This does not essentially change them or make them more Christian, but gives the illusion that they are. You will not find them in the Bible despite their widespread use because they are not compatible with the dualistic view of Creator and creation God in the Bible. They postpone or hinder you from receiving the Biblical God because your faith is in your own thoughts or words, rather than in Him. Within the dualistic Biblical framework they are called pride, which is resisted by God because we are assuming a function that belongs only to Him. The Biblical God is received only by our faith in Him. He will not respond to practices that exclude Him, regardless of whether Christian imagery or terminology is used. Faith in the Biblical God requires a strict dualism which recognizes the difference between the Creator and His creation.

Other examples of misplaced faith are faith in the Bible instead of its Author; and faith in a church instead of in God. There is no substitute for direct faith in God through Jesus Christ. This is the only practice that is necessary. This is also true even if we have Christ already within us, because when we pray, it is required that

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 9:2-4 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

we have faith in the One that we are praying to.<sup>1</sup> We, in all circumstances, go outward in trust towards the Creator God. Christ said: “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life...[believe](#) in the light, that ye may be the children of light”<sup>2</sup>. Christ, because of His humanity, prayed to the Father and had faith in Him during His earthly ministry even though the Father was within Him; and He continues to do so with His immortal humanity at the right hand of God.

When we believe in a transcendent God—that there is a Creator God and that we are a part of His creation—we need to acknowledge our dependence upon the Creator, and release our minds outward toward Him. This provides a very powerful mechanism for releasing self. The Creator Himself becomes an integral part of the release method. He is not just some obscure thing already buried inside of us that we are trying to contact by using spiritual exercises or practices that include only ourselves, but do not include Him. Releasing ourselves toward God is how we draw close to Him and receive His presence within us; and this is done by unconditionally trusting in Him and resting our minds upon Him. Christian transformation requires this type of relationship with God. This may not sound familiar to most Christians, but the Bible presents it in many different ways. It presupposes that we are not born with the presence of God, but we open up to Him after we are born. This fits in with the dualistic world-view that creation is not the Creator; but, in spite of this, we are able to acquire the presence of the Creator within us as an inhabiting Spirit if we become humble recipients of it. We do not discover a presence of god which is already there; we open up to a presence of God which is not there to begin with. We need to become His dwelling place.<sup>3</sup>

Different world-views produce different results and mind-sets. Transcendent God or Higher Power spirituality is quite different from nature or earth based spirituality. With Biblical Higher Power spirituality or mysticism, the thrust of the mind goes outward in trust towards the personal Creator God. He is the object of

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<sup>1</sup> See Colossians 2:6; Hebrews 3:6, 14; James 1:6-7; Romans 14:23

<sup>2</sup> John 8:12; 12:36

<sup>3</sup> See John 15:4; 17:22-23; Colossians 1:27

trust; not us or someone else. Trust in God is imageless, and consists of resting our minds upon Him; in this way we can connect with the unimaginable and eternal—that which is beyond our own minds, and limitless. This is how we get around the problem of interacting only with ourselves in our spiritual practices. If, for example, we attempt to visualize God, we are not relating to God, but only to our own thought or mental image of God; and this is no different than having a relationship with a statue or a picture because these are also merely products of human imagination and ingenuity. They do not take us beyond ourselves and our limitations, even though we may rationalize that we are not relating to the statue or picture itself, but to the person that it represents. It is impossible to visualize God or to have an accurate representation of Him; therefore, God is not going to require us to do the impossible. Visualizing God for worship or interaction constitutes idolatry—forbidden by God—which is worshipping and serving the creation rather than the Creator.<sup>1</sup> We end up worshipping a product of our own imagination, which is the same as worshipping any other object of creation. Evil spirits, which are created beings, will also present themselves as objects of worship, and will attempt to divert our attention from God; but spirits that are holy will not accept worship; they will always point you to God.<sup>2</sup> Humans, evil and holy, will act accordingly.<sup>3</sup>

If we believe that everything is god and we are god, we will not utilize or perform the requisite dependence and humility that open us up to the Biblical God and His grace; which make us one with Him without us being God at the same time. The duality of the Creator and us is essential, even when His Spirit dwells within our spirit, because humans *need* humility and dependence toward God. Even Jesus Christ, the Creator incarnate, whose humanity and divinity are merged into one person while remaining separate, prays and has faith in the Father because His humanity still requires it. Jesus is Creator and creation within the same person. Human nature requires humility because it is a part of creation.

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 1:21-25; Deuteronomy 29:19-20

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 4:9; Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9; Tobit 12:15-18 (Catholic Bible); Colossians 2:18-19

<sup>3</sup> See Acts 10:25-26; 12:21-23; 14:14-15

Also, Christ's humanity requires humility because justification by faith, which is a product of Christ's faith in the Father, is not possible without it; and if Christ doesn't have justification by faith, we won't have it either because it will not be a part of His Spirit within us. This is the only way that it is available for us. God's plan of salvation requires Christ's humanity and humility. Christ's Spirit within us contains His human spirit which, like ours, needs to be humble. Everything that we receive from God comes to us as a result of the faith and intercession of the man Christ Jesus toward the Father.

Nature or earth based spiritualities, in their spiritual practices, promote oneness with everything around us because, according to them, everything is god including us. This is why self-deification is implicit in any system that does not recognize the need to depend upon a personal Creator God. This includes any Christian group that promotes dependence on itself, rather than on God. In the Bible, this is called pride; which God resists because we are attempting to create our own righteousness and peace, instead of submitting ourselves to the righteousness of God. Everything that is labeled Christian is not necessarily Christian.

The Biblical God also differs from the god or gods of philosophy. Many philosophers, by using their own human reason, have speculated about the attributes of God, and have subsequently ended up with a view of god which is at odds with Scripture. I find that the task of understanding the Biblical God is, in itself, a full time endeavor, even without trying to reconcile Him with all the other views. The different facets of the Biblical revelation, including its view of God, are so intertwined and dependent upon each other, that when we introduce foreign elements, we diminish the understanding and effectiveness of the whole. This is why there is so much confusion in Christianity today. Too many extraneous items have been introduced into Christianity during the past two thousand years that have rendered it ineffective—and it's getting worse. Because of this, it does not provide what was actually intended; so it is mistakenly considered to be outdated in many quarters; but the Bible is still very relevant. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand in

the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk in it, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 6:16

## 2. GUILT AND SHAME

Guilt and shame are emotions that accompany our human weakness (original sin). These were the first recorded emotions of Adam and Eve after the fall; “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”<sup>1</sup> They obviously went through a consciousness change as a result of eating “of the tree of knowledge of good and evil”<sup>2</sup>. This was the beginning of their inner struggle. This change was subsequently passed on to their succeeding generations up to the present time. The higher consciousness that they were expecting actually weakened their willpower and resolve; and we, as their descendants, experience this to this very day. Separation from the Biblical God is always accompanied by weakness; which is the reason why we will always need Him. Humans can never evolve out of dependence on God because He created us this way. Actually, we evolved away from our true and best humanity because of Adam and Eve. The whole Biblical revelation revolves around getting us back to the Garden—nothing else can.

Saint Paul, when discussing the remedy for all of this says: “And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly...Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned...For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”<sup>3</sup> Christ is the solution for guilt, shame, sin (human weakness/weakened willpower/original sin), and physical death—all of which we inherit from Adam and Eve. The peace of God that we receive from unconditionally trusting in Jesus Christ, takes us beyond guilt and shame. God’s agape love, which is given to us through the Holy Spirit, is the fruit of the Spirit that contains His inner peace and strength, in addition to other qualities.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:7

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:17. See also 3:4-6

<sup>3</sup> Romans 5:5-6, 12, 19. See also Galatians 5:22-23; 2Timothy 1:7

When Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they thought that they were going to be like God. What they didn't anticipate was that, unlike God, it would not be that easy for them to choose good from evil when they separated themselves from Him. They ended up with diminished self-control and willpower; which must have surprised them. The serpent conveniently left that part out. They tended towards evil when separated from God; and we inherit this trait from them. They separated themselves from one master; only to be subject to another, which is human weakness. When God was their master, they had full use of their wills. When they became free from God; they became slaves to sin, and had less self-control and use of their wills. Slavery to God ends in freedom. Freedom to sin brings us into slavery.

The difference between God and us is that He can be objective when making choices, but we can't be truly objective without Him. He gives us the peace and strength to be objective. We don't have to look beyond ourselves to see the results of the fall. We have to get back to the Garden. When we rely only on ourselves, we rely on a weak humanity separated from God—by no means perfect. Any belief system that says otherwise is not promoting reality.

For humans, guilt and shame are embedded in the process of knowing good and evil because of our weakened human nature. We are never able to choose good over evil perfectly; therefore guilt and shame are inevitable. A religion of rules and regulations reflects this. It has no Spirit; therefore it cannot produce the inner transformation that is necessary to overcome weakness. Because of this, it only has the guilt and shame from inevitable law breaking to control its members and to keep them in line. This is why Paul tells the Galatians to "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you that are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."<sup>1</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 5:1-4. See also Romans 4:4-5; 11:6

warning also applies to any other religious system of rules and regulations for supposed righteousness.

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### 3. BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY—DEPENDENCE AND HUMILITY

Drawing close to God can be done in a very methodical way; and it doesn't have to be done because of a major crisis. Scripture instructs us on how to go about it: "be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him; for he careth for you"<sup>1</sup>. These verses define humility as casting our cares upon God. He wants us to use humility to express our dependence upon Him; and not just verbalize it and continue in our pride and self-autonomy. Mere words or affirmations do not create humility or bring it into reality. Christ said: "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter into it".<sup>2</sup> Our reliance upon God is what moves us into His realm and under His influence; not just words and intellectual belief. There is a veil that prevents us from perceiving the spirit world. For human beings, trust and reliance upon God opens us up to His divine favor or grace, which is, at least, a partial lifting of this perception veil. Angelic beings fully perceive, but not all of them receive God's favor because they also need humility, just like we do.

These few aforementioned verses are extremely important because they present the Biblical process of drawing close to God, and how we are to relate to Him on an ongoing basis. He favors the humble. He exalts us if we are humble. He defines humility as "casting all your care upon Him", which denotes total dependence upon Him. No care is exempt; and it's as all-encompassing as it sounds. Just as we tend to apply fear, worry, anger, and lust to everything in our lives, we can also apply trust in God to everything. This is how we bring God into everything in our lives, and live in His peace. When we yield to Him, and refrain from pushing out or distracting negative feelings and thoughts ourselves, He neutralizes and dissolves them. Just as original sin affects us psychologically, spirituality also affects us psychologically. This is what made Biblical spirituality meaningful and relevant for me. Prior to this, it was theoretical and distant.

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<sup>1</sup> 1Peter 5:5-7. See also James 4:6; Psalms 112:7-8; 138:6; 118:8-9; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:2; Matthew 7:22-23

<sup>2</sup> Mark 10:15; See also Matthew 18:3-4; 15:8-9; 1Corinthians 1:26

God cares for the humble. He doesn't require us strive after, desire, lust for, or passionately want Him, because these things are the opposites of trust. "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."<sup>1</sup> This is the definition of Biblical repentance and humility. It is not just a verbal formula or affirmation. If you don't cast your burden on the Lord, He will not sustain you. He primarily wants us to recognize our dependence upon Him; and then to act upon it. For this dependence and humility, He sends His very presence within us, which contains His grace and inner rest, among other things.<sup>2</sup> This is what is called the State of Grace. Satan has tried to thwart this since the fall of Adam and Eve, because it reestablishes the Garden of Eden relationship with God.

Another scripture tells us to "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of Lord, and he shall lift you up"<sup>3</sup>. This passage of Scripture is not as bad as it sounds. It tells us that we have a responsibility to draw near to God before He will draw near to us; and that this is done by humility towards Him. This is necessary because we can't save ourselves apart from Him. Our own laughter and joy provides us with a temporary distraction from our discontent; but only God can really lift us. This is the principle that makes Biblical higher power spirituality effective. Jesus Christ is the only one who can save us from original sin and its effects—we can't. Other religions question the premise that we need salvation at all. This is a primary difference between Christianity and other religions.

We also need to clean up our act. When this passage tells us to let our laughter be turned to mourning and our joy to heaviness, it is telling us to stop trying to use our usual escapes to lessen our pain, which includes things like boredom and loneliness, as well as worry and anger; and to just be in that uncomfortable place without trying to lift ourselves out of it. Just let it sit there, and then allow God to

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<sup>1</sup> Psalms 55:22. The word *sustain* can also be translated, "maintain", "nourish" or "feed"

<sup>2</sup> See Hebrews 4:1-11; Philippians 4:6-7

<sup>3</sup> James 4:8-10 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also Zechariah 1:3; 2Corinthians 1:9

lift us out of it by humbling ourselves towards Him because He can do it a lot better than we can. We need not be afraid of these negative feelings. Our automatic response is to try to push them away by our own willpower or methods; but this isn't as effective as we would like. God wants us to make use of Him emotionally and psychologically, because we were created for that and are hard-wired for it. This is required if we want the real peace and contentment that comes from God, and that Adam and Eve originally had.

He wants us to draw close to Him by a deliberate act of the will to trust Him, because this is what He requires and responds to; and He always responds to us within the framework of our choices, regardless of how much influence He may exert in the process. When we relinquish control of ourselves to Christ, we rest our minds upon Him, and yield ourselves to His Spirit within us; He then lessens the power that our feelings, thoughts, and desires have over us; and this enables us to be more in control of our actions, and to live in the present, which means that we are not constantly living in our thoughts and desires. He dethrones the self. This is, in effect, a constant state of awareness or an infused awareness or observation which is valued even by non-Christians because it is the place where the activities of the mind are sublimated. When we are no longer the principal actors in dealing with our emotions, they are greatly reduced, and we are able to be much more objective when observing the world around us. We withdraw ourselves (self and ego) from being the principal actors, and we yield to Christ. This is possible when Christ, the Enlightened One, resides within us, and shares His enlightenment with us from His faith in the Father, which is also called righteousness by faith. This gives us peace and clarity of mind.

Awareness of our thoughts and feelings dissolves them, but our willpower or resolve does not. Awareness implies that we observe them without doing anything to distract them or drive them away. Our self or ego needs to be disengaged or disassociated from them in order for them to be neutralized. When I first encountered this principle, I found it very useful, but I interpreted it as psychology because spirituality did not interest me at the time. I later noticed that it was also embedded in Biblical higher power spirituality, because when we yield

ourselves to God, we recognize our inability to effectively neutralize our own thoughts and feelings with our own willpower, and we yield to Someone who is able. With God, the process becomes greatly enhanced through His Spirit. We instinctively try to control them ourselves unless we are taught to do otherwise. When our self or ego is the principal actor in trying to remove them, they stubbornly remain regardless of how much control we would like to have over them. When we try to resist them with own strength or escapes, they remain resilient. They will not be restrained if we try to restrain them ourselves. Because this is our usual way of dealing with our thoughts, emotions, and feelings, we feel trapped in this mode of resisting, with no tangible results. We end up assuming that this will never change, or that there is no way out of this. When the pain is excessive, some will even take their own lives because they think that there is no solution.

Fear gives our thoughts and feelings their power. When we surrender our entire selves to God, we also surrender our fears. This removes us from being the principal actors in dealing with them. Without the Spirit of Christ, we can only practice awareness selectively, as feelings, thoughts, and desires arise within us; all from a position of weakness, because our own awareness cannot override our sin nature (human weakness); but humility towards God does.

Christ's Spirit greatly boosts our ability to be in control of ourselves and modify our behavior, including addictive behavior, when we yield ourselves to God. Yielding bypasses our attempts to use willpower as a means of neutralizing thoughts and desires; and when yielding to God is combined with the power of the Spirit that we have received, the process is greatly enhanced and expedited. Yielding must not have any fear of our feelings, emotions, or thoughts associated with it. It disengages our self or ego from the process, because when we yield to something other than ourselves, we are expecting something other than ourselves to act upon them. Unconditional trust or resting in God initially accomplishes this because the entire self is surrendered outwardly to the Higher Power, and we then receive His Spirit which has the inner rest that overcomes fear. After this, we yield to the Spirit to maintain and grow in this rest. We rest in

the Beloved. Fear and rest cannot coexist. This is how Christian Higher Power spirituality works. It lends itself to an extreme passivity or receptivity that is not possible otherwise. The passive requires an object (active) to act upon it; and if God is not considered to be the Actor, we will not surrender to or unconditionally trust Him. Verifying the existence of an actor that is not perceptible requires a passive act of surrender to, unconditional trust in, or resting the mind upon the Actor; which creates a vacuum that draws the power of the Creator towards oneself. This is the means by which the Biblical God reveals Himself to His elect, and inhabits and empowers them. Biblical spirituality always has the Biblical God as its object of surrender and trust; anyone or anything else is not permitted. The expectation of intellectual certainty of God's existence prior to this, always lends itself to doubt and postponement. Why not just try it and see what happens? I tried it and I had the most wonderful experience in my whole life.

Paul says to "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."<sup>1</sup> This is Paul's statement of how to develop and sustain a relationship with God that produces an ongoing inner peace—another important verse because it specifically mentions the inner peace that results from trust in God.

When we are told to "be anxious for nothing", we are told to have unconditional trust in God, and yield to His presence after we have received it. This needs to be taken literally if we are going to have the peace of God through Christ Jesus. We are told to not worry about any aspect of our lives. This is how we bring God into everything in our lives, and invite His intervention. The world tells us to worry about the things we can control, and to not worry about the things we can't

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<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:6-8 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). In other editions of the old KJV, the word *careful* is used instead of *anxious* because it is the old English word for *anxious*. The word *careful* is no longer used in this way.

control; but this ends in worry about whether we are worrying about the right thing or not. All worry is non-trust in God. Scripture tells us, in principle, to not worry about anything at all—which is God’s method. We do this by keeping our minds rested on God regardless of circumstances, good or bad. This is more difficult to maintain during a crisis; but this is what is called a test of faith, which may require us to be even more determined to trust God. It builds patience or endurance, which is our ability to remain peaceful and strong in bad situations.<sup>1</sup>

I had always heard that worry doesn’t do us any good, prior to learning that we are to be anxious for nothing, but I had never heard of it stated as a principle for connecting and maintaining a relationship with God. If I am a worry-wart and pray for God’s peace that passes all understanding, but don’t draw close to God in unconditional trust, I will not receive it because it is something that we ultimately receive through close proximity to the Biblical God. The same is true for His strength, and many other things.

Through this relationship of unconditional trust, God is able to channel His grace toward us, which includes His peace and strength. This is a Divine peace and strength which is not available through our own spiritual practices. We present a void for Him to fill when we unconditionally trust Him. This is the only spiritual practice that we need within the framework of Biblical spirituality; everything else is a hindrance and a barrier to connecting with the Biblical God. We can’t hold back anything at all from Him, because if we do, the self remains in control. It is either God or us.

I was pleasantly surprised when I first encountered the concept of non-worry in the Bible. The Eastern philosophy that I was involved in also said that we shouldn’t worry about anything; but because it did not bring the Biblical God into the picture, the peace was transitory, and not as strong as is otherwise available when we have God’s presence within us. The philosophy did not recommend meditation practices because it recognized that the self remains in control within these practices. At the time, this was the best that I could do for myself without

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 5:3; James 1:3

God because it familiarized me with concepts of non-anxiety, inner peace, and not taking thoughts and desires seriously; concepts which immediately changed the course of my life. When I subsequently found these concepts also in the Bible, I wanted to learn more about the similarities and differences between the Bible and the Eastern philosophy. In the Bible, trust in God, which is a simple act of the will, is the method that takes you beyond your thoughts and desires—and is a thing of the heart. I actually needed to do it in order to benefit by it; and not just read about it or verbally affirm it.

Unconditional trust is the vehicle of relationship with the Creator God; and then He sustains our act of trust, and makes it permanent with His peace that passes all understanding—He reciprocates our gesture.<sup>1</sup> God's peace is not within the realm of our thoughts or understanding; therefore, it isn't anything that we can imagine, or that is produced by our imagination. Thoughts and words can attempt to describe it, but we need to surrender our understanding to actually experience it. This is the essence of Biblical spirituality, which is also labeled as a patriarchal spirituality. It is a spirituality that provides us with the means of abandoning ourselves towards the Highest Power; which is a direct interaction with the Biblical Creator God that gives us His peace and strength. Goddess or matriarchal spirituality generally does not require you to go outside of yourself to find or experience its view of god; therefore, the Creator God remains elusive and distant, along with His special benefits for those who trust Him; and when goddess spirituality does go outward, it usually ends up in nature worship, which is the worship of elements in God's creation. "I am the LORD and there is none else, there is no God beside me"<sup>2</sup>.

Christianity is operating way below par because it does not encourage unconditional trust in God. Things that were intended to supplement Christianity have been made central or given undue importance; and as a result of this, Biblical spirituality is ignored, and Christianity is not as effective and transforming as it was intended to be. It has been replaced primarily by legalism, ritual, and

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<sup>1</sup> See Psalms 55:22; 73:28; 118:8-9; James 4:8-10; 1Peter 5:6-7

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 45:5

verbal declarations and affirmations, among other things. Many churches are waiting and hoping for an end-time revival, but they are ignoring the very thing that brings it about.

Even when we let God have all of our anxieties, He still wants us to ask Him for what we need. The place of peace and calm that comes from God purifies our prayers, and ensures that they are effectively communicated to Him and answered; but don't bother to ask for anything to satisfy lusts.<sup>1</sup> Lust is one of those things that you release to God during the act of unconditional trust, because anxiety, frustration, and discontent are unavoidable when you desire something with the expectation of arriving at overall contentment and satisfaction in life. This is something that comes to us only from God through faith; and not from desiring the things of God's creation. We can't choose for ourselves, the means of arriving at contentment in life because we are pre-programmed to have it only with God. It is determined by our very nature.

It is important to recognize that giving God our anxieties does not mean that we expect God to do everything for us, and that we do nothing. Our relationship with God, along with the abiding inner peace that comes from Him, opens us up to His guidance, and gives us a greater ability to make wise decisions; "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."<sup>2</sup> He guides us; but He also expects us to exercise choice—and to make the right choices; and then He responds accordingly.

The peace of God is beyond our thoughts; and therefore, it takes us beyond the limitations of our thoughts and willpower. It reduces the intensity of our emotions; and things like boredom and loneliness are not as painful. When we are at peace in Christ, we are not as prone to the highs and the lows. If we inadvertently move away from this trust and peace, emotions assert themselves again, but not as severely as when we were without Christ. We have maximum control only in Christ; therefore we can never claim that we are strong only in

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<sup>1</sup> See James 4:2-3

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 2:13. See also 1Corinthians 1:30; Psalms 16:7; 25:9, 12, 14; 40:2; 143:8; Proverbs 3:5-6; 4:18; 16:3; Isaiah 42:16; Jeremiah 31:33; Titus 2:14; 1Samuel 10:7

ourselves, because the strength comes from the presence of God within us. To an outside observer we may appear to be strong in ourselves, but we know where the strength actually comes from. When we are weak in relation to God; then we are strong.<sup>1</sup> A posture of weakness and dependence toward God is a prerequisite for receiving Divine strength.

Lastly, we are told what to fill our minds with when we are at peace. This sounds like positive thinking, except that it needs to be done within the framework of humility toward God. This is positive thinking at its best because humility and the Spirit enable it to be sustained much more than is possible with an unfettered mind. Positive thinking has the same limitations that anything else has when it is not coupled with humility. Like prayer, positive thinking can be used for attempting to satisfy lust.<sup>2</sup> God will not honor it.

Generally, because people can only think of one thing at a time, meditation that requires thought or visualization, cannot be done while the mind is thinking of something else, and vice versa. Positive thinking that excludes unconditional trust, experiences this same dilemma. In other words, you cannot think peaceful thoughts and perform other thinking tasks at the same time. Thinking and unconditional trust can be done at the same time because the mind and heart can operate simultaneously without conflicting with each other. We can be as intellectual as we want, and at the same time, still be at peace. There is no place for anti-intellectualism in Biblical spirituality; the intellect only needs to be subordinate to the Spirit, and operate within its framework. Unlike many human institutions, the Spirit does not coerce; it guides and tempers in ways that are known only to God. Prior to consulting the Bible, I didn't understand that this was possible, because I thought that the intellect would interfere with inner peace; I thought that it was preferable to keep the mind as blank as possible. This dilemma is common in non-Biblical spirituality because there is no recognition that original sin compromises our peace; and that trust in God deals with original sin, without requiring us to cease thinking. Thinking is a part of our humanity; and

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<sup>1</sup> See 2Corinthians 12:9; 10:17-18; 1:8-9

<sup>2</sup> See James 4:3

is the means by which we process Biblical instruction on how to relate to the Biblical God.<sup>1</sup>

A common misunderstanding is that peace will reduce us to inaction; but it actually liberates us to act, rather than refrain from acting. Fear encloses us and reduces us to inaction; trust in God does not because we continue to operate as rational human beings; and even better than before because of God's influence. The way of peace may alter our motivations and behavior, but Wisdom and Power will not permit inaction.<sup>2</sup>

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.”<sup>3</sup> This is one of the best statements of Biblical spirituality. We are not told to disregard our own understanding; we are told not to lean on it; and this includes everything in our mind, without exception—our entire self.<sup>4</sup> This produces an inner insulation from the oppression that comes from our own understanding, which is where our negativity resides; therefore, physically isolating ourselves from things becomes unnecessary because the causes of distress are not the things themselves, but how we inwardly relate and react to them. Two people can have opposite reactions to the same stimulus. Physical isolation does not remove the desire for things or settle the mind. This scripture tells us how the mind can be pacified by the heart, without discarding the mind.

The word *trust* in this verse means “to take refuge”, and is one of the primary words used in the Old Testament to describe how we are to relate to God. It also means “to lean on” (Psalms 56:3), “to roll on” (Psalms 22:8), or “to wait for” (Job 35:14), depending upon the Hebrew word that it's translated from. They all imply dependence and humility. “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God; for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 10:17

<sup>2</sup> See Titus 2:14; 1Corinthians 1:24,30; Colossians 2:3; Proverbs 31:27

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 3:5. See also Isaiah 55:7-9; 65:2; Philippians 4:8-9; 2Timothy 2:14; Psalms 118:8-9

<sup>4</sup> See 2Corinthians 10:5; Luke 12:15; Colossians 3:1-34

thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”<sup>1</sup> Unconditional trust takes us beyond our thoughts; and it is the means by which we can get beyond our limitations, so that we are able to draw close to God and arrive at inner peace.

Visualization and concentration do not take us beyond our own thoughts because we are trying to use them to get beyond them; instead, we only need to trust God and not lean on them in order to get beyond them. The same thing applies to rationalizations. They don't take us beyond our weaknesses because they also operate on the same level of the mind as everything else. They don't work because they can't override our human weakness. For example, we can all think of reasons why we shouldn't worry, be angry, or be excessive, but we do it anyway. The limitations of our reasoning are evident when we want to control emotions. Rationalizations can't bring us into the realm of the Spirit where there is God's peace and strength. In order to find a solution, we need to surrender our understanding instead of continuously leaning on it. With this kind of spirituality, the line between psychology and spirituality becomes blurred. An act of faith is not only a spiritual act, but also a psychological one; and this is why the psyche is invariably affected.

We receive instruction from the Bible through our thoughts; but then the Bible instructs us to trust in God in order to get beyond our thoughts. This puts God first, and consists of resting our minds upon God because we can't use thoughts themselves to get beyond them; which is why spiritual practices like concentration and visualization don't accomplish this. They postpone drawing close to God, and provide no guarantee of ever getting beyond them. There is too much of ourselves in these practices to enable us to get beyond ourselves and our limitations, and into the realm of the Spirit, which is limitless and timeless. We can only visualize and concentrate on what we already know; therefore they cannot take us beyond ourselves. We need to respond to God with the heart. There can't be anything really new or different in our thoughts because they are products of what we have already experienced. When we try to use them as a

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 55:6-8. See also Deuteronomy 29:19-20; Romans 14:23

means of getting beyond them, there is no mechanism for getting beyond them at the same time; but when we surrender our thoughts to God we go around this problem, get beyond it, and open ourselves up to the realm of the Spirit. Then we are able to use our thoughts as was intended, and receive the promptings of the Spirit. This same principle is true for desire—even an intense desire for God—because desire is also a product of our own imagination; and it also can't take us beyond ourselves. Positive thinking doesn't bring us closer to God when humility is excluded, even when our thoughts are about God. When we surrender all, bad and good, we receive the wisdom and moderation of the Spirit to apply to everything in our lives. Even good things need the influence of the Spirit for proper use.

The Holy Spirit fills the void that we present to God; and this void is created when we release our thoughts and desires towards Him, and relinquish control; but this isn't possible as long as we withhold ourselves from Him and remain distant. We need to lose ourselves in Him and not in our own thoughts and desires.<sup>1</sup> When we get our inner peace from God, we will not seek it elsewhere; instead, everything will be blessed and guided by God because we will not have put them ahead of Him. They will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit and in their proper place, and will not be given undue importance.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD forever; for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.”<sup>2</sup> The words *trusteth* and *trust* in these verses are from the Hebrew word that means “to take refuge”. The point of all this is to show that the concepts of dependence and humility toward God are found in both testaments of the Bible. In the New Testament, the words *faith*, and most of the time, *believe*, have the same meaning as the word *trust* in the Old Testament. The word *trust* in the Old Testament is usually rendered as *faith* or *believe* in the New Testament.

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<sup>1</sup> See Mark 8:34-35; Psalms 25:9-10

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 26:3-4. See also 40:29-31; 45:24; Psalms 105:4; Philippians 4:13

Christ says, “Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.”<sup>1</sup> In this verse, the verb *believe* is derived from the same Greek root word as the noun *faith*; and both have the same meaning.<sup>2</sup> This is true in most of the New Testament. The Living Bible translates this verse: “Let not your heart be troubled. You are trusting God, now trust in me.” Most of the time, the word *believe* means more than just intellectual belief. The important point is that the concepts of dependence and humility toward God are all over the Bible; and when we recognize this, we get a better understanding of what God expects of us. The dualistic spirituality in both Testaments is the same. Both require humility and unconditional trust, whether the object of trust is the Yahweh (Jehovah) of the Old Testament, or Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of the New Testament.

God needs to be part of the process in order for us to have His peace. Attempting to quiet or clear our minds with non-Biblical spiritual practices before going to God, is actually an attempt to have peace without Him; and this results in an inferior peace that can only come from us. The peace that comes from God is a product of the Holy Spirit. This requires us to interact with Christ and His Spirit within us. We can’t do anything to receive the Spirit except to open up to it. Trust in the human and divine Christ brings God into the process; and when we rest our minds on Christ and receive His Spirit within us, He can share His own rest or peace with us.<sup>3</sup> Trusting in Christ would not be permitted for us if He was only human. Without His own inherent divinity as the Word incarnate, Christ would be the same as we are; and we would not be allowed to use Him as an object of trust and worship. Unlike Christ, having the presence of God within us does not make us God because we do not have inherent divinity.

“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell”<sup>4</sup>. Christ derives His divinity from the fact that He is the Word incarnate; and has divinity within His own person, even apart from the presence of both the Father and the Person of the Holy Spirit within Him; therefore, we are allowed to make Him our resting

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:1. See also Romans 15:13; 1John 5:1-2

<sup>2</sup> Faith = Gr. *pistis*; believe = Gr. *pisteuo*, most of the time

<sup>3</sup> See Matthew 11:28-30; Deuteronomy 29:19-20

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 1:19. See also 2:9; John 1:14; 3:34; 17:21-23; 1Peter 1:21

place. He can then share with us His own peace and rest that He receives from His human trust in the Father. Christ can do this for us individually only when His Spirit is within us; and no one else can do this for us because God sends only the Spirit of His Son within us for the purpose of giving us rest; therefore, only Christ's rest is available to us. This is our Christian enlightenment. We have the responsibility to willingly trust in Christ even though God draws us to His Son.

Christ's rest results from His propensity for faith and prayer, which is a function of His humanity, and continues to this very day in the heavenly tabernacle, where He serves as our glorified, immortal High Priest and intercessor at the right hand of God;<sup>1</sup> and this function is also a part of His Spirit within us, otherwise we could not share in His righteousness by faith and its accompanying rest.

God wants more than intellectual faith or belief; He wants unconditional trust. This not only involves our mind, but also our heart—the center of our being. Our salvation depends upon it. Modern Christianity is practically devoid of this concept, although it can still be found in hymns and readings; but it is generally not taught in homilies and sermons. Faith, when it is defined only as intellectual belief in something that our reasoning cannot grasp, is a very small part of Biblical faith; it encompasses that and much more—our entire beings.

In another interesting passage of Scripture, Christ says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and money. Therefore, I say unto you, be not anxious 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 food and the body than raiment? ...Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? ...Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? ...But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>2</sup> We can't serve two masters because peace and

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 8:34; Hebrews 2:9-13, 16-18; 4:15-16; 7:24-25; 1Peter 1:21; 1John 2:1

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 6:24-25, 27, 30, 33 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). Read 6:25-34 for the full context. See also Wisdom 7:11 (Catholic Bible); Mark 10:29-30

anxiety are opposites. This is why it isn't possible to serve God (peace) and money (anxiety) at the same time. The passage then tells us how to serve God.

Notice that the word *faith* is associated with the state of not being anxious. In other words, faith is more than just belief in something; it includes dependence and humility, as does the word *trust*. When we have our priorities in order, God makes sure that our needs are met. In my late teens, I read these verses, and received my first glimpse of Biblical spirituality. It seemed that these verses were telling me that, as a matter of principle, I wasn't supposed to worry about anything at all. I was extremely attracted to this idea and wanted to believe it because I felt it would alleviate the scrupulous conscience that I was experiencing during this period; but because there was virtually no support for this type of thinking, I thought that I may have been misreading the text; so I didn't go with it at the time. I now realize that this is the primary Biblical method for connecting with God, and that I wasn't misreading it. Even though I didn't fully appreciate it at the time, a seed had been sown which came into fruition about 12 years later. This primal glimpse, which I never forgot, may have given me a clue that the Bible had more to it than what I had previously thought. Also, my godfather told me something interesting in my younger days. He said that the Bible contained information that wasn't being told to us by the priests. He didn't elaborate; but this was something that I also never forgot. At the age of 31, I finally discovered it for myself. I don't believe that most people maliciously withhold information about spirituality. It is more likely that they are either uninformed or uninterested; or, if they are informed, it is not important for them.

The dependence of the creation upon the Creator is a part of the Biblical world-view; and it requires a transcendent God to be dependent upon. This is basic to Biblical Higher Power spirituality. Our faith or trust is always upon the Creator, and not in ourselves or in someone or something else.<sup>1</sup> The dualism of Creator and creation in the Bible is required for the spirituality to operate as intended. Creation needs to be subordinate to the Creator in order to draw from Him what we are lacking. Monism is not relational because it teaches that everything is god

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<sup>1</sup> See 2Corinthians 1:9

or part of god. It cannot use the higher power concept and benefit from it; therefore, it is closed to the Biblical God and all the special graces that He provides to those who humble themselves outwardly toward Him. Higher Power spirituality is something we all need because our willpower or resolve is not only inadequate towards the obvious addictions and compulsions, but also towards the very ordinary things like worry, anger, envy, and unforgiveness, and because it enables us to draw peace and strength from a source outside of ourselves. Human nature has never and will never evolve out of this because if that were possible, it would imply that we would no longer need a dependence upon God with His provision for salvation.

Adam and Eve tried to be independent from God, and it failed.<sup>1</sup> Even though humans can never evolve out of this dependence regardless of what they would like to think, much of humanity will stubbornly resist God until the bitter end. The defiance towards God that is recorded in the book of Revelation will result in all of the dire consequences that are also recorded there.<sup>2</sup> Its depiction of human nature is very realistic.

The Biblical view of God and spirituality is not limited to any culture, place, or time; and it can be used in modern times, as it was in the past. Because this type of spirituality is generally not practiced in modern Christianity, access to the Biblical God is sorely lacking. He requires humility and trust—a relationship of dependence upon Him, so that we can open up to His presence. Without it, Christianity will not function as it was originally intended to; and Christ will only remain a theological concept, with no means of accessing Him for a personal relationship.

At its early stages, Christianity started to drift away from this type of spirituality or mysticism, and eventually became primarily a cerebral religion. Christianity is supposed to involve both heart and mind—not just the mind; and because of the limitations of the mind, Christianity began to regress, and diminish in the

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<sup>1</sup> See Genesis 3

<sup>2</sup> See Revelation 6:10, 16-17; 9:6, 20-21; 11:9-10, 18; 13:6-8; 16:9, 11, 21; 19:19; 20:9

transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit is still fully available to those who will humble themselves toward God.

No vocation or lifestyle puts you at a greater advantage or disadvantage over the others when it comes to faith, because we are all able to use it wherever we are. It doesn't require major lifestyle changes except for those aspects of our lifestyle which are products of our sin nature that need to be modified or avoided. God is accessible everywhere for those who have or want to have a relationship of dependence and trust with Him; and He is always willing to give us peace, strength, and guidance in all of our circumstances. Faith gives Him access to us, as well as giving us access to Him, and enables us to interact with Him; it also opens us up to answered [prayer](#). Of course, God doesn't want us to test Him by deliberately placing ourselves in harm's way; but, short of this, we have His assurance of peace, strength, protection, and guidance.

Faith is the means by which God creates and brings into being those things that we pray or hope for, but have not yet been received or been made evident to us. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."<sup>1</sup> Faith brings into being those things that we hope for, and it provides the evidence for the existence of the unseen spiritual world and enables us to interact with it. Faith bypasses our thoughts; therefore it is not the equivalent of saying that we create with our own thoughts or imaginations. By our faith in the Creator, He creates on our behalf. He can do a much better job than we can.<sup>2</sup> Self-deification tells us that we are the creators and that we create with our own thoughts or words; but faith in the Creator acknowledges that He is the source of creation. An extension of this is that when we surrender our minds to God, He works things out for us in a much better way than we could ever imagine. In the case of worry, He enters into the circumstance for our benefit. When we surrender anger, He does the vengeance as He sees fit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 11:1

<sup>2</sup> See Isaiah 55:7-9; James 4:2-3; 1John 5:14-15

<sup>3</sup> See Romans 12:19; Psalms 103:6; Ecclesiasticus (aka Sirach) 27:27-28:8 (Catholic Bible)

When we need evidence that the spirit world exists, faith enables us to experience it. Without faith, our reliance on philosophy or theology, or anything else, will not produce intellectual certainty because doubt will intrude and interfere with it. The certainty that we want never arrives because we are using desire instead of faith for approaching God. I believe that this is why I was unable to arrive at certainty about the spiritual realm prior to learning of faith.

Most of humanity remains in a state of separation from God that was not there at the very beginning. This separation is considered to be the commonality of all religions by those who believe that the idea of a relationship with a personal God is passé because the entire god that we need is already within us. This type of thinking reinforces the separation. In the interests of ecumenism, many would like to reduce Christianity to this lowest common denominator—and they have been largely successful. Humanity's connection with the Biblical God needs to be reestablished by faith in Him.

Faith is the means by which God can minister back to us because without it, we can only minister to God. Faith is different from anything that we do for God; but it needs to accompany everything that we do, from the ordinary to the extraordinary.<sup>1</sup> Faith is not the sum total of all the external things that we do for God, but it must undergird everything that we do. It precedes good works, but it must also be a component of all of our good works and deeds. With faith, our outward expressions of it receive their maximum benefit. For salvation, faith in Jesus Christ is the first and only step.<sup>2</sup> When we are carriers of the Holy Spirit, Christ accompanies us everywhere we go. We can't leave Him in a parking lot while we're doing something else; or leave Him in church after the service is over.

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 14:23; James 1:25

<sup>2</sup> See Ephesians 2:8-10; 2Timothy 2:13

## 4. WHY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST?

What does Jesus Christ have to do with all of this? He is the one who makes Christian enlightenment available to us by the presence of His Spirit within us.<sup>1</sup>

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light...Wherefore, he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”<sup>2</sup> Christian enlightenment is our oneness with Christ, along with everything that He shares with us as a result of this; whereas, non-Christian enlightenment is usually an experience of oneness with everything around us because it is a product of the monistic view that everything is god. In monism, there is no Father God as a higher power; therefore, no Son of God in the Biblical sense.

In the Bible, our oneness with Christ is never construed to be a total identity with the Deity because that would betray the dependence of the creation upon the Creator, and would render the relationship nonexistent. We do not receive a divine nature in addition to our human nature when we receive the Holy Spirit; and our human nature does not become divine. Even Christ’s human nature is separate from His divine nature within His single personhood; therefore, like us, He needs to have faith and pray while at the right hand of God the Father in the same way that He prayed and had faith during His earthly ministry. He continues to do so in spite of His oneness with the Father because this oneness is a function of His human faith in the Father, in the same way that our oneness with Christ is a function of our faith in Christ. In the Gospels, Christ addressed and prayed to the Father as an entity apart from Himself because Christ was human, even though, at the same time, He was God as the Word incarnate.<sup>3</sup> If His human nature was not separate from His divine nature, He would not be a separate entity from the Father, and He would therefore be praying to Himself and would not be a suitable human mediator between God and us; but in spite of His humanity, Christ qualifies as our Higher Power because of His divine nature as the Word incarnate, and not because of His human oneness with the Father; in the same way that our

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<sup>1</sup> See John 1:4-9

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 5:8, 14; See also John 17:22-23

<sup>3</sup> See John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-8; Matthew 11:28-30; Micah 5:2

oneness with Christ does not make us Christ or God.<sup>1</sup> If Christ was not the Word incarnate, we would not be allowed to give Him the worship, dependence, and unconditional trust that are reserved only for God; and He would be no different than us. All other created beings, human and angelic, have non-divine single natures; and therefore, cannot qualify as higher powers for us regardless of whether the Holy Spirit is within them, or how holy they are. This is why we point people to Jesus Christ instead of to ourselves or others when they recognize their need for a Higher Power.

[Our faith](#) needs to be directed towards Christ because when we receive His presence by faith in Him, His own personal faith in the Father and His intercession within us make everything available to us from the Father. We benefit from our own faith in Christ when we acquire His presence as a result of it.<sup>2</sup> This presence must be within us in order for the Father to connect with us and impart his grace. Christ's Spirit acts similar to a modem that is attached to our computer which makes the internet available to us. Without it, we only have what is in our computer . His Spirit within us makes the benefits of the Father available to us, otherwise we only have what is in our fallen human nature.

Saving faith is present only in the immortal Jesus Christ abiding in us. Our faith in Him opens us up to His presence or Spirit within us, and we then become beneficiaries of all that He carries with Him, including His own personal faith in the Father, which is infused in us as an element of His Spirit. This is the only [justification or righteousness by faith](#) that is available for us. Only Abraham and Jesus Christ were eligible for it. We can participate in it only when Christ's Spirit is within us by our faith in Him. Abraham's spirit is not available for us; and there is no Scriptural guarantee that faith in anyone or anything else will make us recipients of Christ's Spirit. You would never know this by looking at today's Christianity with its faith in anything but Christ. Real Christianity does not exist for us without our faith directly in Jesus Christ, which brings His presence within us.

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<sup>1</sup> See John 17:21-23

<sup>2</sup> See Galatians 3:22-23 (old KJV and Catholic Douay Version). These older translations make a distinction between faith *in* Christ and the faith *of* Christ; most of the newer translations do not. See also Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15; Acts 3:16

His humanity requires Him to pray and have faith, just as we do. As our heavenly High Priest at the right hand of the Father, He intercedes for us with continued faith and prayer. If it was strictly our own faith that makes us whole, Jesus Christ would not be necessary, and all that He did on earth would have been a waste of time. God's plan of salvation requires us to have Christ's presence within us by our faith in Him; then grace will flow into us. Many in the Old Testament had faith, but their faith looked forward to the promised Messiah for its reward.<sup>1</sup> Their perfection needed to wait until Christ completed His mission and the promise of the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. Christ's resurrection and immortality are necessary because without them, we would not be able to have His Spirit within us; and without His Spirit energizing our spirit, none of the benefits of Christianity are available to us. This concept isn't prevalent in today's Christianity because the Biblical method of acquiring the presence of Christ within us has been largely ignored or lost.

John the apostle said of Christ before His death and resurrection: "But this spoke he of the Spirit, whom they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit, as presently constituted, was not available for humanity during Christ's earthly ministry, or prior. The Holy Spirit that includes Christ's humanity was poured out at Pentecost, after Christ's ascension into heaven.

Peter, when referring to Christ, said: "Who by him do believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God."<sup>3</sup> This is the glory that He had as the Word of God before His birth. In Scripture, surrender and unconditional trust are always directed toward God. They can now be directed toward Christ because Jesus is the only person that has both a human nature and a divine nature. The Godhead now has a human component which was not there before Christ's birth. Jesus is the suitable mediator between God and man because His humanity enables Him to have faith

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<sup>1</sup> See Hebrews 11:39-40

<sup>2</sup> John 7:39. The word *believe* (Gr. *pisteuo*) in this verse is from the same Greek root word as the one for *faith* (Gr. *pistis*). See also John 6:28-29; 1John 3:23; Ephesians 4:10

<sup>3</sup> 1Peter 1:21. See also John 1:1-5, 14; 17:5; Ephesians 2:6, 18; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:9

in the Father and identify with us; and His divinity gives us permission to unconditionally trust Him. With Christ's Spirit within us, we also have the Spirit of the Father. This also gives us immediate direct access to the Father in the Holy of Holies in heaven because we are seated at the right hand of God in heaven as parts of Christ's Body. Our oneness with Christ brings us as close to the Father as is possible for us. We have this closeness to the Father, both within us and in heaven at the same time.

"And if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins."<sup>1</sup> Our Higher Power needs to be alive—not dead. Jesus' value is not only in what He taught us, but it is primarily in the availability of His presence within us. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever"<sup>2</sup>. A Jesus, who is only a good and wise teacher of 2000 years ago, is not enough; and a dead Jesus doesn't do us any good because the man Christ Jesus could not be our ongoing mediator. Our job is to open up to His Spirit. Without His Spirit, we can't have the Spirit of the Father because He alone is able to directly embody the Father and inhabit us at the same time. Christ says, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"<sup>3</sup>. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."<sup>4</sup> He wants us to be one with Him, as He is one with the Father. Christ tells the Father that "the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me"<sup>5</sup> He is also God in His own right because He is the Word or Creator incarnate;<sup>6</sup> and this qualifies Him as our Higher Power in spite of His humanity. Our oneness with Christ does not make us God. We are guaranteed salvation only when Christ is our Higher Power; which would not be permitted if He was not also divine. If He was only human, this would be idolatry. Christ's full identity as a God-man was revealed gradually to His

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<sup>1</sup> 1Corinthians 15:17. See also Romans 14:9

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 13:8

<sup>3</sup> John 14:10

<sup>4</sup> John 14:6. See also 1Corinthians 3:23

<sup>5</sup> John 17:22-23. See also 1Corinthians 6:17

<sup>6</sup> See John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-8

apostles. Even they had a difficult time understanding that He was more than what He appeared to be.<sup>1</sup>

He has both a human nature and a divine nature within His single person; no other creature was or is like this. We can only be “partakers of the divine nature”<sup>2</sup>. We do not intrinsically have or become divine nature because that would violate the duality of Creator and creation in the Bible. The concept of the “spark of the divine” complements the monistic view of god because it would be our supposed connection to the totality of god that we are born with. This concept is foreign to the Bible.

Unlike us, Jesus Christ preexisted as God the Word before his birth; He was a God-man throughout His life on earth, and continues that way as our resurrected, immortal, and ascended heavenly High Priest. This is true only of Christ, and this is why Jesus is in a class of His own; no other human is like this. The virgin birth made this possible. He didn’t have a human father and therefore did not inherit the sin of Adam. His blood was untainted, and was therefore the perfect sacrificial lamb, without spot or blemish. The shedding of His blood was required for the implementation of God’s plan of salvation; but the shed blood would not have been possible without His humanity.<sup>3</sup> All of the past animal sacrifices of the Old Testament prefigured this final event. I believe that the ritual shedding of blood throughout history has been around since Adam and Eve, as evidenced by the animal skins that God made for them after the fall, and by the animal that Abel offered to God. The instructions must have been received from God Himself, at the very beginning.

The community of those who direct their faith towards Jesus Christ is called the Body of Christ; and Christ Himself is the Head of the Body; but our interaction with the community is not a substitute for personal faith in Christ. Even when we are in community, our primary [trust](#) needs to be in Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> This is how we receive the resources to minister to each other effectively, which would not be

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<sup>1</sup> See John 14:6-12

<sup>2</sup> 2Peter 1:4. The word *partaker* can also be translated, “fellowship” or “partner”. See also 1John 4:7-13

<sup>3</sup> See 2John 7; Hebrews 2:9; 10:1-10

<sup>4</sup> See Psalms 118:8-9; Colossians 2:19

possible otherwise. Dependence upon the community should never be viewed as a replacement for dependence upon Christ. Community should point you to Christ—not to itself.

Even with Christ in us, we are not empowered to send His Spirit into another person because only God distributes the Spirit of Christ. “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”<sup>1</sup> Christ’s composite Spirit of human and divine natures needs to be imparted to us by God; and then we receive the entire Godhead within us through Christ’s presence. No human being, dead or alive, has the power to give Christ’s Spirit to another person. God is the one who calls us, and sends us the Spirit when we have faith in Christ.

Surrender to each other is not permitted even with the Holy Spirit within us; but surrender directly to Christ is the only thing guaranteed in God’s word that will get Christ’s Spirit within us. In this way, Christ becomes a life-giving Spirit for us. There is no Scriptural guarantee that we can be one with Christ and have the Holy Spirit within us, by surrendering ourselves to anyone else who is dead or alive. This needs to be said because, believe it or not, there are those who rationalize that there is more than one name by which we can be saved.

As in the human body, each part of the Body of Christ is unique, and needs to receive its direction from the Head in order for the Body to function as a unit.<sup>2</sup> The Eucharist or Table of the Lord symbolizes this, because each person takes a piece of the one bread which is Christ.<sup>3</sup> Each piece of the one bread represents each unique person in the Body of Christ. This doesn’t leave any room for envying another person’s gift. When we try to be like somebody else, we neglect our own gift or position in the Body, and the Body of Christ is deprived of it; plus, we are usurping God’s position in the selection process; “But now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased him.”<sup>4</sup> God “raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 4:6. See also Romans 8:15; John 17:22-26; Acts 4:12; 1Corinthians 1:12-13; 15:45; Colossians 2:9-10

<sup>2</sup> See Colossians 2:19

<sup>3</sup> See 1Corinthians 10:16-17

<sup>4</sup> 1Corinthians 12:18

is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”<sup>1</sup> The thing that binds us together in community is the peace of God from the Spirit. We are “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”<sup>2</sup> The peace of God within us breaks down the barriers and thought structures that keep us psychologically isolated from one another. When we are locked into our own thoughts, it is difficult to get beyond them and relate to what is outside of ourselves. This is the essence of self-centeredness. Self-esteem is an offshoot of this because it is an attempt to be complete and fulfilled individuals by our own thoughts and efforts, without God.

Even though we have Christ in us, we don’t qualify as higher powers for each other; therefore, we are not allowed to use each other as substitutes for Christ. This would result in an unhealthy co-dependence—humans using each other as crutches. God is the only reliable crutch who can deliver Divine peace and strength; we can’t supply that for each other. Saint Paul recognized his own boundaries in relation to other Christians when he said: “Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand.”<sup>3</sup> Our job is to point each other to Christ, and not to ourselves or to each other, because it is through Christ that “we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand”.<sup>4</sup>

Everything in Christianity revolves around Jesus Christ: our trust in Him; His presence inside of us through His Spirit; and His enabling us to overcome our weakened fallen nature. Without Him we can do nothing.<sup>5</sup> Also, through Him, we receive God’s forgiveness of our past. When we surrender ourselves to Christ, we surrender guilt and all those things that caused our past indiscretions, along with those things that would cause indiscretions at the present time or in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 1:20-23

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:3

<sup>3</sup> 2Corinthians 1:24. See also Romans 5:1-6; 1Peter 1:5; 5:3

<sup>4</sup> Romans 5:2. See also Ephesians 2:8-9; 2Corinthians 5:19-20

<sup>5</sup> See John 15:5; Isaiah 12:2

This act affects us psychologically as well as spiritually; and eliminates the need to try to forgive ourselves after God has forgiven us. Our original surrender is supposed to include all those things that we are told to forgive ourselves for. If we have surrendered them, there is no need for any additional self-forgiveness. Our evidence of forgiveness is God's peace and strength. There is no possibility of any kind of forgiveness without Him. When it comes to forgiveness, there is nothing that we need to do after God has forgiven us, unless we need to correct some wrong that we did to someone. When someone thinks otherwise, it shows their lack of appreciation for the psychological component of surrender to God, which is the release of self towards God. This is an aspect of faith which is almost totally absent from modern Christianity.

The type of thinking which tells us that we can forgive ourselves, is the product of a Christianity that doesn't understand the fact that forgiveness is a result of faith in Jesus Christ; and that He needs to be a part of the forgiveness process from beginning to end. Even when we forgive others, we let God have our anger so that He can neutralize it; and this is also done by our [trusting](#) in Him. Forgiveness results from a deliberate psychological act of the will to draw close to God.

Judicial forgiveness should not even be a consideration, because when we surrender to Christ, the religious laws that required it no longer exist for us. Christ abolished the Mosaic Law at His death, along with its legal sin penalty; therefore, we are not under the curse of the Law any more, with its legal death penalty. This includes any subsequent versions of legalism. When we subject ourselves to legalism for righteousness, we are fallen from grace.<sup>1</sup>

Our faith in Christ comes by hearing or instruction. We are instructed by Scripture, to perform an act of the will to rest our minds upon Christ; this is how we arrive at a relationship with the transcendent Creator God of the Bible; and not by doing spiritual practices such as yoga, meditation or centering prayer which are suited for the monistic all-is-god-including-me view of god, and exclude faith in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> See Galatians 5:1-4; Romans 4:4-5; 11:6; Colossians 2:20-23; 1Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 10:9-10

Before the first Gentile family received the Holy Spirit, Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was told to send for Peter, because Peter would tell him what he needed to do. After Peter entered the house of Cornelius, he began telling them of Christ, and that “whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word...Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

Peter had to explain himself when he returned to Jerusalem because he interacted with Gentiles, and ate with them. He explained to the Jewish Christians that Cornelius was told that Peter “shall tell thee words by which thou and all thy house shall be saved...Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?”<sup>2</sup> The household of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit because of their faith in Jesus Christ after they heard the word of faith, and before they were baptized. In the case of the Samaritans, who were the prior non-Jewish group that received the Holy Spirit; they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus before they received it. Peter and John went to Samaria to pray for them and lay hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> The household of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit without the ritual laying on of hands. Apparently, God doesn’t always do things exactly the same way.

We receive God’s word through our intellect, but we implement it with our heart. The spirituality of the Bible complements the Bible’s dualistic world-view; therefore, the thrust of the mind goes outward in trust towards God; not inward. When we rest our minds upon Christ as an outside person, we open ourselves up to receive His Spirit inwardly. Even with His Spirit within us, we continue to trust outwardly to maintain it. This is what we do when we trust Jesus as our Lord and Savior, who is the Creator or Word incarnate. This is the type of trust that Christ has in relation to His Father. It is more than just a verbal declaration; and it

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 10:43-44, 46-48

<sup>2</sup> Acts 11:14, 17

<sup>3</sup> See Acts 8:14-17

doesn't depend upon specific locations, or times of the day. It can be done at any place or time. When it is done, the results will permeate our entire days and nights, and produce an ongoing moderation and quiescence of mind which cannot result from performing specific acts; but it *will* express itself outwardly in good works.

Christian good works presuppose faith; but they are not substitutes for it: "Then they said unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."<sup>1</sup> Christ is telling them to apply the same faith to Him that they have in God the Father; and that this is the starting point. Good works start with faith in Christ. Applying faith to Jesus was difficult for a Jewish person to readily accept, because from all appearances, He was only human and not God. This is also difficult for those who believe that good works are the most important aspect of Christianity. They are important; but what is more important is our connection with Jesus Christ that enables us to do effective good works. Through the Spirit within us we have God who is love. Without Christ's Spirit within us, which gives us agape love, all of the good works in the world won't do us any good.<sup>2</sup> The Spirit facilitates our good works; and it makes us zealous of good works. It also brings us righteousness by faith, and opens us up to God's grace. Christ's response was simple because we can do nothing significant without Him.

There is no trust in the Creator in non-Biblical spiritual practices such as yoga, visualization, concentration, and mantras because they are usually based on the view that god is everything and everything is god, which includes us; therefore, there is no personal God to trust. They do not take us beyond our own thoughts and imagination, or God's creation; therefore, they do not connect us with the Biblical God, even though they may have been modified to include Christian imagery. The "spark of the divine" and the Biblical Holy Spirit are not one and the same. This is why these practices are not found in the Bible. It is not an oversight on the part of the writers. They are a serious hindrance because they prevent us

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<sup>1</sup> John 6:28-29. See also Acts 2:37-38; Galatians 6:15

<sup>2</sup> See 1Corinthians 13:3; 2Corinthians 5:17-20; 9:8; Ephesians 2:8-10; 2Thessalonians 2:16-17; 2Timothy 1:7; Titus 2:14; 1John 4:8; John 15:5

from taking advantage of a relationship with the Biblical Creator, along with the special benefits that result from it. Also, there is no trust specifically in Christ as Creator in these practices because He is considered to be no different than we are in terms of divinity. Even though adherents may say that Jesus Christ is God, they actually mean that Jesus Christ is god in the same way that we are all supposed to be. Their Holy Spirit is the “spark of the divine” that they say we are all born with, and not the Holy Spirit of the New Testament who is received by our faith in Jesus Christ. Their aim is to remove blockages to their realization of the “spark of the divine” that is supposedly within them; and because they view themselves as god, they see no reason to interact with anyone higher than themselves to accomplish this; therefore, the grace of the Creator is closed to them.

Many of them use the terminology of the Bible, but they actually mean something entirely different because they superimpose their own monistic view of god on the Bible. This presents them with many Biblical inconsistencies of their own making, because the Bible is unapologetically dualistic; and their world-view just doesn't fit. It is like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. The Jesus Christ of the New Testament, if they bother to read it, sounds arrogant to them because He claimed to be more than the god that you or I are supposed to be. For them, His claims are unacceptable, because within a monistic world-view, there is no transcendent God to have faith in. They usually say that the Bible is primarily metaphors; with the implication that the events in the Bible did not occur as they are recorded, or that the Bible is not history. This cannot be proven because it would involve an attempt to prove a negative; which cannot be done. Also, historic events and metaphors are not mutually exclusive. Extracting a metaphor from an historic event is totally permissible in Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

Trust in the Creator is uniquely suited for the dualistic world-view of Creator and creation in the Bible; but it doesn't lend itself to a monistic world-view that has no personal Creator to rest the mind upon (unconditional trust). Salvation is very much intertwined with and dependent upon the Biblical world-view because there is no salvation without trusting the Creator in the person of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> See Galatians 4:21-31

Humans are inherently dualistic in relation to God. This is also true of those who profess to be monistic. It is difficult to reconcile monism with the tendency of humans to view their God or gods as something different from themselves. Even when the monistic god is intellectualized as an impersonal energy force that is everything or is in everything, humans will tend to worship some tangible object in God's creation, including themselves; and will justify it by saying that the object they are worshipping is a part of or a manifestation of their god, or that their god is in the object.<sup>1</sup> Sun worship, usually found in nature or goddess spirituality, is a universal example of this. Monists do not acknowledge the Creator God of the Bible; therefore, they shut themselves off from the special graces that are for those who will humble themselves towards Him. People without the Biblical God will then be prey for demonic forces that hate humans. The demonic forces will often influence these people to perform immoral acts and human sacrifice for spiritual purposes.

Spirit entities, good and bad, are able to take on a form that is visible to humans; but it is an illusion. What we see may not always be who or what we think it is, or it may not be what the entities themselves want us to believe.<sup>2</sup> Knowledge of Scripture is important because the deceptive spirits often convince the uninformed of what they want them to believe, which includes doctrinal error.<sup>3</sup> What we see may not be the spirit of grandma or grandpa.

A Christianity that does not emphasize a relationship of trust with the personal Creator God of the Bible will, like the monists, find something else to worship. In Catholicism, some will ascribe to Mary, the mother of Jesus, attributes that belong only to God or to His Son, and will consider her to be interchangeable with Christ; this in spite of the clear teachings of Vatican Council II that Mary is a creature of God who is subordinate to Christ.<sup>4</sup> In Protestantism, the written word will be given a place equal to the living Word who is Christ. Without Biblical spirituality, people will tend to worship something other than God, including

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 1:20-25

<sup>2</sup> See Hebrews 13:2; 2Corinthians 11:14-15; Tobit 12:15-22 (Catholic Bible)

<sup>3</sup> See 1Timothy 4:1

<sup>4</sup> See Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Chapter VIII: 62

themselves or each other; and they will always rationalize that what they are worshipping is equivalent to God. Others will immerse themselves into doing good works or deeds, where social justice replaces inner justice or righteousness, thinking that this is the only thing that God expects of them. What all of these have in common is that a relationship with the Biblical God is excluded. When it comes to salvation, these people are no better off than the non-Christian monists.

Nowadays, non-Christian practices and world-views have found their way into Christianity; which makes it hard to distinguish it from everything else.

Christianity needs to inform the culture, and not be corrupted by it. The opposite has happened, and continues to happen. Familiarity with the Bible is important for understanding and countering these trends; but instead, it is ignored and relegated to myth in many circles, which does not bode well for the future of Christianity or humanity. The Bible provides the only clear alternative to the prevailing culture; as it always has.

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## 5. HOLINESS

Holiness is usually thought of as something otherworldly; but it is supposed to be our natural state as human beings. Holiness is to be human in the fullest sense because it results from being connected with the Biblical God. The word has different meanings such as being separate or pure; but ultimately it means separation from the world for God's use. For the Christian, it is a state of being that is brought about by unconditional [trust](#) in Christ, which brings the presence of Christ within us. This causes separation from an inordinate attachment to the things of the world, and, instead, attachment to God. We are so accustomed to an excessive attachment to things that it feels normal for us. This should not be the case. Trust in Christ places God first in our lives, and everything else second. It resets our priorities. Christ's faith in the Father, which is a part of Christ's Spirit within us, accomplishes this for us because our own faith without Christ's is insufficient for righteousness and separation from the world. Our responsibility is to continue to remain surrendered and yielded to Christ's Spirit, so that holiness does its greatest work in us. Holiness is not exterior pious acts, although a person who is holy may perform them. It is essentially an interior spiritual disposition.

Our desires are what keep us attached to the world. Usually, the problem is not the things themselves, but our excessive attachment to them produced by desire; therefore, we don't have to physically isolate ourselves in order to be holy. When God created the earth, He saw that it was good, not evil. Peter speaks of "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."<sup>1</sup> Paul tells us to "put off concerning the former manner of life, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."<sup>2</sup> Lust is what corrupts us; not our physical proximity to the world. The problem is within us, and how we relate to the outside world. This realization becomes especially important when dealing with addictions, because it enables us to

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<sup>1</sup> 2Peter 1:4. See also Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 25; Romans 8:1-21; 13:14; Galatians 5:24; Ephesians 2:3; 4:22; Philippians 3:3, 19; Titus 3:3; 1Peter 1:14-15; 4:2

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:22-24 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also Colossians 2:11

address the real problem rather than the symptoms. Our excessive demand for the object is the problem, rather than the object itself.

When we surrender our desires and lusts to God in the person of Jesus Christ we become one with Christ as Christ is one with the Father, and we become separated from the world for God's use; but oneness with Christ does not make us God, because our human nature doesn't become divine. Also, Christ's human nature isn't divine, even though He is one with the Father; but Christ, because He is the Word incarnate, has a divine nature in addition to His human nature within His own person; and this is what makes Him divine. He is God even apart from His human oneness with the Father. This is why Christ is God, and we are not even though we may have the presence of God within us.

Human nature needs to be surrendered to God—even Christ's human nature. Christ surrenders Himself to the Father; and we surrender ourselves to Christ. When we surrender our desires, we also surrender the source of addiction; therefore, we are addressing the real problem. This surrender is also called self-abandonment toward God. Christ's Spirit within us enables us to share in His holiness, which results from His human faith in the Father and His intercession. Christ gives us an enhanced ability to avoid acting out on our desires.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"<sup>1</sup>. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."<sup>2</sup> Holiness is required for everybody. "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a father unto you, saith the Lord Almighty. Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."<sup>3</sup> Sanctifying grace is what keeps us separate from the world. Grace is God's favor towards us through the presence of Jesus Christ within us. The words: *saint, holy, sanctify, holiness, and sanctification* are all derived from the same

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 12:14

<sup>2</sup> 1John 3:6

<sup>3</sup> 2Corinthians 6:17-7:1. See also Romans 1:7; 1Corinthians 1:2; 2Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2

Greek root word (*hagos*); and they all basically mean the same thing. In the Body of Christ, everyone is a saint. There is no two-tiered sainthood.

Holiness does not require us to physically remove ourselves from the world, or to turn off our electronic devices. When Christ was praying to the Father for His disciples, He said, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”<sup>1</sup> Holiness does not require physical separation from the world. We are told to be as “Obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”<sup>2</sup> Lust is what excessively attaches us to the things of the world. Our personal behavior will change when we don’t participate in lustful attachments to things. This implies that there is a legitimate way of interacting with the things of this world; and that when we are relating to the Creator according to instruction, we are in proper relationship with His creation.

Our primary motivation for behavior change is not the attempt to live according to a system of rules and regulations, but to avoid the slavery of sin (human weakness) by the power of the Holy Spirit; “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”<sup>3</sup>. Specific dress codes and hair styles are not true holiness. The problem is how we *relate* to the things that we interact with, and it is generally not the things themselves that are the problem. There are circumstances and things that we need to avoid; but not to the extent that some groups encourage. A Christian group that isolates itself from the world is usually immersed in legalism, and not the Spirit. Cult leaders are threatened by the Spirit because the attention of the group will not be centered on them. Political tyrants are also threatened for this same reason. They will attempt to suppress religion, and keep the people

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<sup>1</sup> John 17:15

<sup>2</sup> 1Peter 1:14-16

<sup>3</sup> Romans 6:14-16. See also 6:22; 8:2-4, 12-13; Colossians 2:20-23; Romans 13:3

unaware and into themselves by ignorance and immorality in order to maintain power and control. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is inner freedom; and more outer freedom because there is less excuse for government to maintain order. This is always a threat to those who want power and control over people, whatever their motive. It is always in their interest to keep religion as shallow and ineffective as possible. As long as religion is kept within the confines of a church building, it isn't much of a threat—or a benefit—to anyone. No institution that traffics in human weakness will have an interest in helping people to overcome weakness, because their business will diminish.

Jesus was able to associate with sinners, while at the same time remain sinless—something that the religious leaders of His day did not understand.<sup>1</sup> They avoided associating with sinners because they did not have the strength to remain sinless—Jesus did. This continues in today's Christianity because, without the benefits of Biblical spirituality, it remains weak, and misunderstands what it really means to be separate from the world; therefore, it always finds a substitute for real holiness. Modern Christianity has strayed from its roots to such an extent that real holiness is the exception rather than the rule. The strength from the Holy Spirit is still available to us, and it does not need to remain distant. Christ shares His own strength and holiness with us when we have His Spirit within us.

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<sup>1</sup> See Luke 19:7; Matthew 9:11-12; 11:19; John 8:1-11, 43-44; 1Corinthians 5:9-13—only to discipline a Christian

## 6. THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW

The place of the Old Testament Law in Christianity was the earliest recorded doctrinal controversy that the early Christian church had to deal with. This is understandable because the earliest Christians were all Jews who continued to attend the temple and the synagogues after their conversions, and continued to observe the Mosaic Law. At that time, they did not view themselves as part of another religion; they saw themselves as Jews who acknowledged Jesus Christ as the Messiah. When Gentiles began to be evangelized and converted, the question of whether a Christian should be under the Mosaic Law needed to be settled.

Most of the commentary concerning the place of the Mosaic Law in the New Testament church is found in the writings of Saint Paul. “For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> Walking in the Spirit replaced walking in the Mosaic Law. The “law is holy”<sup>2</sup>, but because of our human weakness (original sin), we are incapable of performing the Law perfectly; which is the requirement for benefitting from its righteousness. Christ was the only one who could do it perfectly, and obtain its righteousness for Himself and for us. We are now under Christ's commandment of love. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly...But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”<sup>3</sup> The Spirit is Christ’s presence within us; and as a result of this, we carry His righteousness by faith through His faith in the Father; and we also carry Christ’s righteousness of the Law because He fulfilled it. We carry the Kingdom of God within us.

Christ ushered in a new regime—not of the Law, but of the Spirit; “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, Blotting out the

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:3-4. See Romans 8:1-4

<sup>2</sup> Romans 7:12. See also Matthew 5:17-18; John 15:10, 12; James 2:10; Galatians 5:1-4

<sup>3</sup> Romans 5:6; 13:14. See also Psalms 105:4; Isaiah 26:3-4; Romans 8:3-4

handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”<sup>1</sup>. “But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law”<sup>2</sup>; “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”<sup>3</sup> “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”<sup>4</sup>

Because our faith in Christ opens us up to His Spirit, and Christ fulfilled the Law, we now have the righteousness of the Mosaic Law within us through the presence of His Spirit, which includes the benefits of His own physical circumcision and His identification with Judaism; and we also have His righteousness by faith within us as a result of His personal faith in the Father. We have all of this by proxy when we have Christ’s presence within us by our faith in Him. He shares all of this with us; and because of this, God’s grace is available to us; otherwise, it would not be. The veil of the temple was torn so that we can now, individually, have access to the Holy of Holies behind the veil.<sup>5</sup> Jesus Christ is now in the heavenly Holy of Holies at the right hand of the Father; and when we are parts of Christ’s body by His Spirit within us, we are there with Him.

In the Old Testament, the Jewish high priest was the only one who had access to the Holy of Holies in the temple. There is no longer the veil of the Law to keep us out of God’s presence. Christ’s righteousness by faith superseded the Mosaic Law after He fulfilled it.<sup>6</sup> If He hadn’t done this, the performing of the Law would still be required and the veil of the temple would still be present; therefore, Christianity would not have come into being.

Saint Paul scolds the Galatians for submitting themselves to the Law when he asks: “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 2:13-14 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also Ephesians 2:15

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5:18

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 3:3; See also John 4:23

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 10:16-17. See also Jeremiah 31:33; Romans 11:6; Philippians 3:9 (old KJV); Colossians 2:11

<sup>5</sup> See Matthew 27:51; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 10:19-20

<sup>6</sup> See Matthew 3:15; 5:17-18; Hebrews 12:18-24

law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”<sup>1</sup> The Galatians were being seduced by those who wanted them to submit to the Mosaic Law for righteousness. “Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men?”<sup>2</sup>; “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”<sup>3</sup> Christian spirituality is a function of faith in Jesus Christ, and His Spirit within us; and has nothing to do with food and drink. This is God’s means of salvation. Dietary rules don’t apply because God doesn’t care how physically cleansed we are before He sends us the Spirit of His Son. They are important for those who want to create their own righteousness because they either don’t understand God’s righteousness or don’t want to submit to it.

Christianity needs to evolve back to its beginnings of righteousness by our personal faith in Jesus Christ, and not to a purported righteousness by anything else. There is no adequate personal cleansing of any kind that we can do prior to coming to God. Only God can cleanse us; and only after we receive His presence. Faith is the only preparation that we need. Paul states: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”<sup>4</sup>. You can’t have the “power of God unto salvation” unless you humble yourself to the Biblical God. Also, “though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”<sup>5</sup> Paul repeats the same warning in the next verse. This applies to anyone who changes the Gospel message. There would be less changing of it if people really understood it, applied it to their lives, and reaped its benefits. This warning also applies to those who want to change it because they want to make it more like other religions or because they think it is outdated. Compromising with

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3:2-3

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 2:20-22

<sup>3</sup> Romans 14:17. See also Hebrews 13:8-9; Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15

<sup>4</sup> Romans 1:16. The word *believeth* (Gr. *pisteuo*) in this verse is from the same Greek root word as the one for *faith* (Gr. *pistis*)

<sup>5</sup> Galatians 1:8. See also 1Corinthians 1:24; Hebrews 13:8

Jesus Christ unplugs it from its power source. The primary reason why people don't want to receive Christ is that they want to persist in their evil deeds.<sup>1</sup>

## The Epistle to the Romans

In the book of Romans, Paul says that "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin"<sup>2</sup>. Knowing what is sinful is not good enough for doing the right thing, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."<sup>3</sup> None of us merit salvation regardless of whether we are under the Mosaic Law or not. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."<sup>4</sup> Because of human weakness, this was true of everyone except Christ. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil did not provide Adam and Eve with continued inner strength; instead, it sapped their strength along with the strength of their descendants.

When the Mosaic Law came into existence, it added a penalty for breaking it "Because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression...For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law."<sup>5</sup> This lack of imputation (legal charges) also applies to us as long as we don't place ourselves under a system of rules and regulations for our supposed righteousness. "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets...Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, apart from the deeds of the law."<sup>6</sup> The words *justified* and *righteousness* in these verses are derived from the same Greek word. "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham, or

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<sup>1</sup> See John 3:18-21

<sup>2</sup> Romans 3:20

<sup>3</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>4</sup> James 2:10. See also Romans 8:3-4; 14:14, 22-23; Galatians 5:1-4

<sup>5</sup> Romans 4:15; 5:13

<sup>6</sup> Romans 3:21,28 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). The words *righteousness* or *justice* (Gr. *dikaiosune*), *justified* (Gr. *dikaioo*), and *justification* (Gr. *dikaion*), are from the same Greek root word *dikaos*, which means "holy" or "innocent"

to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect.”<sup>1</sup> Righteousness by faith happened to Abraham prior to circumcision and the Mosaic Law; therefore it could not be annulled by the Mosaic Law. Abraham’s seed (singular) is Christ; and when we receive Christ’s Spirit within us by our faith in Him, we also have Christ’s own righteousness by faith within us, which He has from His faith in the Father. Abraham’s spirit is not available to us by faith in him; therefore, Abraham cannot share his righteousness by faith with us, and it is not available to us by our faith directly in the Father.

According to God’s promise made to Abraham, it was possible only for Abraham and Jesus Christ to be recipients of righteousness by their faith directly in the Father. For us, there is no possibility of righteousness by faith unless we have Christ’s Spirit within us by our faith in Him; this enables Him to share *His* faith with us, along with His infused enlightenment, which is the fruit of the Spirit. Christian enlightenment is an aspect of righteousness by faith, and cannot be separated from it. This is why faith in Jesus Christ is essential for righteousness, faith, grace, enlightenment, salvation, and eternal life. He has to share His own righteousness by faith with us in order for us to have it, along with everything else that accompanies it. We can’t bypass Christ and get it directly for ourselves from the Father; only Christ is the promised singular seed of Abraham who has it directly from the Father; and only He is able to share it with us.

Everything that we receive from the Father pertaining to salvation is funneled to us through the man Christ Jesus, who is within us by our faith in Him; and He acquires it for us by His human faith and intercession toward the Father.<sup>2</sup> This is why Christ’s humanity continues to be essential for our salvation, as well as His divinity. Our faith in anyone or anything else will not save us or do us any good; including our faith directed towards the Father without Jesus. This is why Jesus Christ said that we can’t do anything without Him; which may sound offensive to some people, but He was making a simple statement of reality because He knew

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 4:13-14. See also Galatians 3:16-18; 4:6; Romans 3:22 (old KJV); 4:20-25; 5:18-19, 21; 8:15; John 15:5

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 8:15, 26-27, 32; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 2:18; 1Timothy 2:5

that He was more than just human; and He also knew what His function would be after His resurrection and ascension. Christ gives us an access to the Father that is not possible without Him.

Paul compares us to a wife whose husband dies, and, as a result, is released from the law of marriage to that husband. She is then free to marry someone else. “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”<sup>1</sup> We are no longer under the Mosaic Law because Christ, our first husband, died after fulfilling the Law, and took it out of the way. We are now free to marry the resurrected Christ, our second husband, who represents righteousness by faith. God made Christ, “who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him”<sup>2</sup>. Because of the resurrected Christ, our new husband, we are now under the law of faith.<sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ, prior to His death, subjected Himself to the Old Testament Law, and then completely fulfilled it. This is why Christ restricted His earthly ministry to Israel. When He fully completed the prior covenant (Old Testament Mosaic Law) and suffered the death penalty for breaking the Law even though He was innocent, He was then able to supersede it, after His death and resurrection, with the law of faith, which benefits both Jew and Gentile alike. Because righteousness by faith happened to Abraham prior to the Mosaic Law and Israel, and it was promised to Jesus Christ; it is now available for everyone, and not just for Israel.

The following passage of Scripture seems to be saying that law creates the desire to break the law and to sin (action); but this is not the case because sin actions are produced by our sin nature (human weakness/original sin), which has existed from the fall of Adam and Eve prior to the Mosaic Law. I’ll try to explain the next passage of Scripture the best I can. Paul asks (brackets are mine), “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin [legal] but by the law; for I had not known lust [legal], except the law had said, Thou shalt not

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7:4. See also Colossians 2:13-14; Ephesians 2:15; Matthew 5:17-18

<sup>2</sup> 2Corinthians 5:21. See also Galatians 3:10-14

<sup>3</sup> Romans 3:27. See also Matthew 15:24; 10:5-6; Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:11-18; Hebrew 9:15

covet. But sin [action], taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence [legal]. For without the law sin [legal] is dead. For I was alive [legally], without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin [legal] revived and I died [legally]. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death [legal]. For sin [action], taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me [legally]. Wherefore, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death [legal] unto me? God forbid. But sin [action], that it might appear sin [legal], working death [legal] in me by that which is good—that sin [action] by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful [legal]. For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin [sin nature/human weakness/original sin]”<sup>1</sup>. Legal death is the penalty for legal sin. The whole world was affected by the Mosaic Law. Prior to the Mosaic Law, there was no legal sin; and therefore, no legal death penalty for it, even though people physically died since Adam and Eve: “For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death [physical] reigned from Adam to Moses”<sup>2</sup>. You can’t have a legal penalty for something that is not imputed or legally charged against you. This was the case prior to the Mosaic Law. When the Law came into being, because of human weakness, no one could fully perform its requirements for righteousness except for Jesus Christ; therefore, everyone except Jesus Christ was guilty of legal sin. At His death, He abolished the necessity of performing the Mosaic Law for righteousness, along with the curse of the Law and its legal death penalty; and He superseded it with righteousness by faith, and eternal life.

## **The Epistle to the Galatians**

Apparently, the idea that Christians are not under the Mosaic Law was gradually becoming accepted early in the Christian church because, by the time Paul went

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7:7-14. See also Romans 3:19

<sup>2</sup> Romans 5:13-14. See also 1:32; 3:9, 19-20; 5:20-21; 7:9; Act 17:30; Galatians 3:10-14; Colossians 2:13-23; James 2:10; Deuteronomy 11:26-28; 27:26; 28:15; 29:19-20

to Jerusalem approximately 17 years after his conversion, he took Titus, a Gentile, with him, and he says that “neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised”<sup>1</sup>; but, in spite of this, the controversy remained.

Paul subsequently says in the same chapter: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we may be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified...I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”<sup>2</sup> The word *believe* in this passage is translated from the same Greek root word as the word *faith*; therefore, they mean the same thing. In this passage, most of the newer translations of the Bible change “faith of Christ” to “faith in Christ”; therefore, they lose the sense that it is Christ’s own personal faith in the Father that justifies us. The faith of Christ supersedes the Mosaic Law for obtaining righteousness; otherwise, “Christ is dead in vain”. Our faith in Christ appropriates His Spirit within us; which contains His faith in the Father with its accompanying righteousness by faith. Christ’s faith in the Father is the gift of faith. Both the old King James Version of the Bible and the Catholic Douay Version use “faith of Christ” in this passage. These distinctions are very important because, without them, we won’t know what our responsibilities are toward God. We may end up praying for the gift of faith, and waiting endlessly for it; rather than acquiring it by our [faith](#) in Christ, which is ultimately how we receive it. Bad or incomplete theology can cost us dearly. Our [faith](#) in Christ is done by our own deliberate choice—an act of our will, but motivated by the Father drawing us to His Son—which raises questions of predestination and the [election of grace](#).

Regardless of what God does behind the scenes, He rewards and punishes us according to the choices that we make, good and bad, because they are viewed by God as our responsibility. I would imagine that the pharaoh of Egypt felt that he was making free will choices when he was preventing the Israelites from leaving Egypt during his negotiations with Moses, even though God had hardened

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 2:3. See also 2:11-14

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 2:16, 21. See also John 6:37-45; 17:6; Romans 8:29-30; 11:5; Philippians 2:13

the pharaoh's heart against freeing the Israelites; but in spite of God's part in this, the pharaoh was culpable and Egypt was punished because of his choices. Judas Iscariot was punished for his choices even though he was fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. Prophecy not only demonstrates God's foreknowledge of future events, but also His control over them. Predestination and the use of our wills have never been easy to reconcile.<sup>1</sup>

In the book of Galatians, Paul expands on the notion that Christ, by Himself, is the promised seed of Abraham, who supersedes righteousness by the Mosaic Law with His righteousness by faith. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore, then, serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, til the seed should come to whom the promise was made...But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."<sup>2</sup> Again, note that Jesus Christ's own personal faith in the Father is what provides us with justification by faith, and saves us.

A further confirmation that this is the correct translation is found where it says: "Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster". This obviously refers to Christ's faith because our own faith existed before the Law. The schoolmaster (Mosaic Law) brought us to Christ so that we can be justified by His own faith in the Father after He fulfilled the Law.

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 11:33; 9:14-24

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 3:16-19, 22-25. See also Genesis 12:3; 13:15; 22:18

Only Jesus Christ is the promised seed (singular) of Abraham. Our faith in Christ appropriates His Spirit within us, which contains His faith in the Father that gives Him righteousness by faith; and Christ's Spirit within us is the means by which He can share His righteousness by faith with us. This is the only way that we can have it for eternal life. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."<sup>1</sup> We become Abraham's seed only when Christ shares His position as the singular seed of Abraham with us by His presence within us. "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice."<sup>2</sup> "And the scripture, foreseeing that the God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So, then, they who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."<sup>3</sup> Faith in Christ unifies both Jew and Gentile because the Mosaic Law no longer separates the two. Because of this, righteousness by faith is accessible to all nations (Gr. *ethnos*).

Christ's faith in the Father, along with its accompanying righteousness and peace, became available for us at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out. Historically, without the type of faith in Christ that brings us His presence and righteousness, faith has turned into an intellectual belief in Christ, with faith for the objects of God's creation. There is no humility toward God in this type of faith. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>4</sup> This is one of the most important principles in Scripture because without it, we end up with today's Christianity—shallow and materialistic. Grace, protection, and guidance from God come to us by our faith in Christ; and God determines *how* they are made available to us. Our function is to trust God and not lean on our own understanding; and then He does the rest. Christ needs to be the focal point of faith—not other people or things—because all of the benefits of Christianity, which include His justification or righteousness by faith, flow to us only from His presence within us. Everything that we receive

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3:29

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 22:18. See also Romans 8:17-25

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 3:8-9. See also Genesis 12:3; 22:18

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 6:33. See also 1Peter 5:6-7; Wisdom 7:11 (Catholic Bible) ; Mark 10:29-30

from the Father which pertains to salvation is funneled to us through Christ; and this can only happen when Christ's Spirit is within us by our faith in Him.

"But, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."<sup>1</sup> Christ restricted His earthly ministry to Israel,<sup>2</sup> and subjected Himself to the Mosaic Law in order to fulfill it. He subsequently abolished it by nailing it to the cross when He died. All who have His presence within them, both Jew and Gentile, are now able to benefit from the completion of His earthly ministry; participate, by adoption, in His Sonship; and also participate in His twofold righteousness from His fulfilling of the Mosaic Law and His faith in the Father. The need for us to perform the Law died with Him, along with the performing of any other system of rules and regulations that is ostensibly needed for righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

"For as many as are under the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them...Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law; being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree; That the blessings of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."<sup>4</sup> Christ was able to perform the works of the Law perfectly, which was the requirement for having its righteousness; therefore, He alone was able to obtain it for us. In addition, Christ paid the death penalty for the curse of the Law, even though He was innocent. Other than Christ, humans are too weak to perform the Law perfectly. Through His presence within us, we have the righteousness of the Law because He fulfilled it. This is why those who belong to Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, do not need to perform it; and are the real Jews regardless of ethnicity.<sup>5</sup> By His presence within

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 4:4-5. See also John 4:34; 17:4; 19:30; Galatians 3:13; Malachi 3:17

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 15:24; 10:5-6; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 10:9-10

<sup>3</sup> See Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44; Colossians 2:14-23; Galatians 2:19; Romans 7:4; 8:4; 10:4; Galatians 5:18; Ephesians 2:11-18; 1Timothy 1:9

<sup>4</sup> Galatians 3:10,13-14. See also Deuteronomy 27:26; James 2:10; Romans 9:24-33; 10:19-21; Ephesians 3:3-6; Colossians 3:10-11; 2Corinthians 5:21

<sup>5</sup> See Romans 2:25-29; 9:6-8; Ephesians 2:12-13; Colossians 2:11-17; 2Corinthians 1:20-22; Matthew 5:17-20

us, He connects us to Israel and God's covenants of promise. After He was made a curse for us and completed the Mosaic Law, we have the blessings of Abraham available to us through the Spirit, which we receive by faith in Jesus Christ. Christ is the bridge between the Old and the New Testaments—between Judaism and Christianity. Christianity cannot exist apart from His completion of the Old Testament.

After Christ's earthly ministry was complete, and the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, His presence became available to the whole world.<sup>1</sup> Christ's faith, righteousness, and peace can now be ours regardless of who we are. The practical aspect of this is that, without Christ, our own faith is fleeting and temporary, and therefore, our inner peace is fleeting and temporary. This was also true of Abraham even though he had righteousness by faith. The peace that comes from the presence of Christ, the Prince of Peace, is solid and lasting. His righteousness and peace are intertwined. This is why His presence within us is so important. Because of what Christ accomplished, "righteousness and peace have kissed each other"<sup>2</sup>; and they are now married to each other. Christ's inner peace or rest accompanies His righteousness by faith; and both are now available to us by His Spirit.

Christ's perfect faith in the Father during His earthly ministry, gave Him righteousness by faith and perfect peace; and also the righteousness of the Law because He was thus able to fulfill it. The resurrected Christ, by His continued faith in the Father and His intercession, can now share all of this with us by His Spirit living within us. This also includes, at the present time, His place in heaven at the right hand of God because we are also parts of His Body; and this, in turn, enables us to share in His human role as High Priest, intercessor, and king.<sup>3</sup> Our priesthood is conferred upon us automatically by the presence of the High Priest within us. The fruit of the Spirit, which is our Christian enlightenment, is our inner

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<sup>1</sup> See Acts 1:8; Matthew 24:14; Romans 4:25

<sup>2</sup> Psalms 85:10. See also 72:3; Isaiah 32:17; Romans 14:17; James 3:18

<sup>3</sup> See Ephesians 2:5-7; Romans 8:26; 1Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 2:26-28; 3:21 5:10; 19:14; 20:6

witness of this.<sup>1</sup> Theology needs to have a corresponding reality that we are able to experience. We must get beyond the words, concepts, and ritual.

Paul encourages the Galatians to “Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you that are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”<sup>2</sup> Paul evidently had harsh words for those who wanted to withdraw from simple faith in Christ, and adopt the system of rules and regulations which was the Mosaic Law. Modern Christians should also heed this warning. We drop out of grace when we subject ourselves to any system of rules and regulation for righteousness, because law-breaking subjects us to legal sin and, as a result, we withdraw ourselves from God’s righteousness. We become guilty of trying to establish our own righteousness apart from God’s. God withdraws His grace from us when we reject His means of salvation. When we cut off communication with God, He will not override our choice.

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and the like; of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall

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<sup>1</sup> See Galatians 5:22-23; Romans 8:16; 1Corinthians 13; Philippians 4:6-7; Hebrews 4:9-11; 1John 2:5-6; 5:10

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5:1-5. See also Romans 11:6

not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is not law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."<sup>1</sup> Paul talks about liberty from the Old Testament Law, and also liberty from the inner impulses that drive us to do things that are against our better judgment. Christ is our liberty from both. We have victory over our inner impulses if we "walk in the Spirit"; and "the fruit of the Spirit" contains those qualities that actually give us victory and freedom from our inner impulses. Notice that Paul tells us to use our Christian freedom to serve one another by love, and not use it as an excuse to do the wrong things. [Christian freedom](#) can easily be perverted, by some, into license to do anything we choose when the moderating influence of the Spirit is removed.

## **The Epistle to the Colossians**

In the epistle to the Colossians, Paul speaks of Christ "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross...Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days...Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, ye are subject to ordinances (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which are all to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men?"<sup>2</sup> These passages of Scripture warn against trying to use all systems of rules and regulations for righteousness or salvation, and not just the Mosaic Law. Attempting to measure up to any system of rules and regulations is doomed to failure because of our human weakness. Self-discipline does not provide lasting results. Only the Holy Spirit is able to effectively raise us out of our weakness. He alters our consciousness by putting us in a place of peace and

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 5:13-24. *Variance*=dissension; *emulations*=rivalries; *strife*=contest of emulation. See also Philippians 4:5-7

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 2:14, 16, 20-22. See also Ephesians 2:15-16; 2Corinthians 3:17

strength. The only discipline that we need in this state is to remain in it when it is tested. The discipline needed to attempt peace without God is much greater.

## **The Epistle to the Ephesians**

Paul, when speaking of uniting both Jew and Gentile in Christ, says: “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, to make in himself of two one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, And came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were near. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”<sup>1</sup> The Mosaic Law, which caused the separation between Jew and Gentile, was slain by Christ through His death; it died with Him on the cross. In the Old Testament, only Israel had the presence of God the Father over the Ark of the Covenant behind a veil in the Jerusalem temple Holy of Holies, and prior to that, in the Tabernacle. The Jewish high priest was the only one allowed to enter the Holy of Holies; and this only once a year. Everyone can now have access to the Father through Jesus Christ who is the heavenly High Priest at the right hand of the Father and who is also within us when we have his Spirit. Christ’s Spirit contains the Spirit of the Father. We have access to the Father only through Christ because there is no provision for receiving the Father directly or through any other person or thing.<sup>2</sup> When we have faith in the Son, we receive the presence of both Father and Son.

Humans, at this juncture, have the capability of being in a very privileged position in relation to God. Christ will not always remain at the right hand of the Father.<sup>3</sup> He will eventually leave that place to rule and reign over the earth. At that point,

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 2:14-18 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also 1Corinthians 12:13; Hebrews 10:9-10

<sup>2</sup> See John 14:6; 17:22-23; Romans 8:9; 1Corinthians 3:23; 1Timothy 2:5. Galatians 3:16

<sup>3</sup> See Psalms 110:1; Matthew 22:44; Hebrews 10:13; 1Corinthians 15:51-57; 1Thessalonians 3:13; 4:13-18; Jude 14-15; Revelation 3:21-22; 2:26-29; 5:9-10; 17:14; 19:14; 20:6; Luke 12:44; Isaiah 13:3; Job 14:14; Wisdom 3:8 (Catholic Bible)

there will be no Christianity as we know it today. There will be a literal Kingdom of God on the earth. Generally, those who believe that the rapture or resurrection of the just occurs prior to this, also believe that the raptured Christians will return to earth with Christ to rule and reign over the earth with Him.

## **The Epistle to the Hebrews**

The book of Hebrews has a different approach in handling the Old Testament Law. Christ is now presented as a high priest of a different order than the Levitical high priest of Israel. Christ's Melchizedek priesthood corresponds with the law of faith instead of the Mosaic Law which corresponds with the Levitical priesthood, and He presently functions as our heavenly High Priest who sits at the right hand of God, clothed with His immortal human body. "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."<sup>1</sup> "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore, in all things it behooved him to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."<sup>2</sup> The resurrected Christ is the antitype of both Melchizedek and the Levitical high priest of Israel. Christ has both righteousness by faith and the righteousness of the Mosaic Law. Because of Christ's humanity, He is someone that can identify with our temptations, and is our brother; therefore we should not hesitate to approach Him directly, "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 7:11-12. See also 8:1

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 2:16-18. See also 2:9-11

to help in the time of need.”<sup>1</sup> Scripture does not validate those who claim that Jesus Christ is too distant and remote to be identified with, and that we need other intermediaries who are more human and accessible. Attitudes like this keep us separated from salvation in Christ; and there is no other salvation available.

In heaven, Christ has a function similar to that of the Levitical high priest who ministered in the Jerusalem temple during the feast of the Atonement. Christ intercedes for us, seated at the right hand of God. God’s presence resides over the heavenly Ark of the Covenant,<sup>2</sup> as it did over the earthly one. The tabernacle in ancient Israel was modeled after the heavenly one.<sup>3</sup>

In the prior epistles, Christ’s divinity is emphasized, which allows us to have faith in Him because this would not be allowed if He was not divine; but His human faith in the Father is what provides us with justification by faith, which supersedes the Mosaic Law.<sup>4</sup> When we apply our [faith](#) to Christ, we implicitly acknowledge Him as our Higher Power, and we receive His Spirit within us along with the benefits of His humanity, which include His justification by faith. This means that we don’t have to perform the Law for ourselves because He abolished it on the cross after He fulfilled it. In other words, we are not obligated to do that part of the Old Testament because Christ performed it to perfection for us; which is something we couldn’t do anyway. Our faith in Christ is required so that we can have His presence within us and thereby benefit from His sacrifice, atonement, completion of the Mosaic Law, righteousness by faith, priesthood, and kingship—all of which are functions of His humanity and which He is now able to share with us by His Spirit; “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ; In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after ye [believed](#), ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 4:15-16. See also Romans 5:2; Isaiah 53:12

<sup>2</sup> See Revelation 11:19

<sup>3</sup> See Hebrews 9:11, 24

<sup>4</sup> See Galatians 2:16. The old KJV and the Catholic Douay Version distinguish between faith *in* Christ and the faith *of* Christ; most of the later translations do not. See also Hebrews 10:9-10; 1Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10

purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”<sup>1</sup> Faith in Jesus Christ is our guarantee of receiving the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is our guarantee of salvation.

Christ is also our primary human intercessor “Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek.”<sup>2</sup> The Melchizedek priesthood supersedes the Levitical priesthood of Israel; as the law of faith supersedes the Mosaic Law. The earlier supersedes the later in both cases. “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.”<sup>3</sup> A different priesthood represents a different order of things. The Levitical priesthood was a product of the Mosaic Law; but Abraham was under the law of faith prior to the Mosaic Law, and Melchizedek was his priest. The Melchizedek priesthood preceded the Levitical priesthood; but indirectly, Melchizedek was also the priest of the Levites because they were the descendants of Abraham. “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.”<sup>4</sup> Melchizedek was both King of righteousness and King of peace. Righteousness and inner peace have finally met each other in Christ, who is the antitype of Melchizedek because there is no record of Melchizedek’s death; therefore, symbolically, his priesthood has never ceased. Because Jesus Christ is now immortal, His priesthood also doesn’t cease. Melchizedek is also like the eternal Christ in the sense that because there is no record of Melchizedek’s birth and death, and there is no genealogy for him, he is symbolically eternal.

Melchizedek is both a type of Christ and the Spirit filled Christian. “Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”<sup>5</sup> “The wind bloweth where it

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 1:12-14. See also 2Corinthians 1:22

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 5:10. See also 1Timothy 2:5; Galatians 3:16; 1Corinthians 15:45

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 7:12

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 7:1-3; See also Psalms 85:10

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 6:20

listeth, and thou hearest the sound of it, but canst not tell from where it cometh, and where it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> This last verse speaks to the guidance that comes from the Spirit. The Spirit-filled person may not even be conscious of it while it is happening because it may be beyond our radar.

“And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him”<sup>2</sup>; “But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better”<sup>3</sup>. Levi, a great-grandson of Abraham, was the patriarch of the Levitical priests. Even though their priesthood was established after Melchizedek’s, they indirectly paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham, their ancestor; and were also indirectly blessed by Melchizedek through Abraham who had God’s promises. Whoever blesses you is greater.

“(For those priests were made without an oath, but this with an oath by him that said unto him, the Lord swore and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek), By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they, truly, were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore, he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”<sup>4</sup> Jesus’ priesthood was initiated by God’s oath to Him; the Levitical priests were not of oath, but of ancestry, and they eventually died. Jesus will not die; therefore, His priesthood is unchangeable and lasting. His intercession is reliable and powerful because it is undergirded by His faith in the Father, and His righteousness by that faith. The risen Christ is able to save us because He is the heavenly high priest who lives to intercede for us at the right hand of God; and Christ’s Spirit within us functions as our inner intercessor who “also helpeth our

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:8. Compare this with Hebrews 7:1-3. See also 1Samuel 10:7

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 7:9-10

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 7:6-7

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 7:21-25

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. 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.”<sup>1</sup> Christ’s Spirit within us, and the human Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, are perfectly synchronized in their intercession because they are one and the same. Christ’s intercession at the right hand of God happens simultaneously within us when we have the Spirit of Christ. We benefit to the maximum when we are yielded to the Spirit.

The Spirit of Christ within us also makes us simultaneously a part of Christ’s Body at the right hand of God; and we therefore have immediate and unhindered access to God the Father through Christ. There is no space and time separation between us and Christ. This is our oneness with Christ. Because the Spirit of the Father is in Christ, we share in the benefits that Christ receives from the Father because there is no separation between Christ and His Father; and therefore there is no separation between us and the Father because of our oneness with Christ.<sup>2</sup> The only limitation that we have is the measure of faith given to us by God who assigns our place in the Body of Christ.<sup>3</sup> None of us have it all, and we do not have the responsibility to perform every function of the Body of Christ. Regardless of our oneness with Christ, it is always important to emphasize that whatever participation we have in the divine nature does not make us Christ or God. Christ is God because of His inherent divinity as the Word. We are partakers of the divine nature. We fellowship with it. Creation is never the Creator.

In the Bible, our prayer is always supposed to be directed outwardly even though Christ’s Spirit is within us; and Christ, in relation to God the Father, likewise intercedes for us outwardly towards the Father because His ongoing humanity requires it. He prayed and had faith during His earthly ministry, and continues to pray and have faith at the right hand of God. Our connection with God can be maintained every moment of our lives regardless of where we are; all we need to

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:26-27. See also 8:34; Ephesians 1:3; 2:6 (seated with Christ in heaven); James 1:6-7 (pray with faith)

<sup>2</sup> See John 17:22-23; Romans 8:32-39; 1Corinthians 6:17

<sup>3</sup> See Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:4-7; 1Corinthians 12:12; Psalms 90:17

do is to rest our minds unconditionally on His Son. Prior to Pentecost, angels had to fight their way to carry our prayers to God because the connection that we now have with God through the Spirit of His Son was not available.<sup>1</sup>

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”<sup>2</sup> As long as we don’t lean on our own understanding, but lean on God, He will not limit Himself to our own understanding when He answers prayer because man is not the measure of all things, as humanist philosophy would have you think.

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<sup>1</sup> See Daniel 10:12-13; Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4; Genesis 18:21

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 33:3

## 7. INDIVIDUALITY WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Individuality is essential in the Body of Christ; the Holy Spirit causes it. It is expressed in our individual and personal faith in Jesus Christ, which breaks down the fears and thought structures that keep us bound and confined, and impede our individuality. As a result, our thoughts have less of a hold on us. When our minds are not surrendered to Christ, our thoughts keep us enclosed within a rigid pattern of fear that impinges upon our receptivity to God and prevents us from being open to His guidance and influence. When we are surrendered to Christ, His Spirit within us enables us to move in its flow.<sup>1</sup>

Paradoxically, our oneness with Christ enhances our individuality. Christ's own personal faith in the Father that is within us by His Spirit, has a subduing effect on our minds, and facilitates "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"<sup>2</sup>. This is what happens when we trust the Lord with all our hearts, and don't lean on our own understanding, thoughts, imagination, or reasoning. Christ's faith in the Father gives Him perfect peace, which He, in turn, can share with us by His Spirit within us. This trust and peace enables God to intervene in our lives and make us unique parts of Christ's Body. This causes both our cohesion and our individuality.

Our cohesion is not a cohesion of dependence upon each other; but a cohesion caused by dependence upon God. Without God, humans tend towards an excessive dependence upon each other. This is usually evidenced in groups that are based upon ethnicity, race, or social status; and it always results in feelings of separation from other groups. Divisions and factions develop because of this; including divisions among and within Christian groups.<sup>3</sup> Trust in God breaks down excessive human attachment because our dependence is on God and not on His creation; and we come to realize that there are certain things that only God can

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<sup>1</sup> See John 3:8; 1Samuel 10:6-7

<sup>2</sup> 2Corinthians 10:5. See also Proverbs 3:5-6

<sup>3</sup> See 1Corinthians 1:12-13

provide for us, and that His creation can never provide. This produces a healthy interaction with God's creation.

With trust in God, emotional dependence is greatly reduced; and our thinking and interaction with others are enhanced because they are guided by the Holy Spirit within us—but not coerced. The ability to freely exercise our will is increased, and does not remain diminished because of compulsions and addictions. Faith puts reason, and everything else, in its correct place, and it facilitates proper balance by tempering any exaggerated importance that we may give to anything. It puts our minds at rest. Our faith in Christ, along with Christ's faith in the Father that is a part of the Holy Spirit within us can do this because Christ's faith becomes present in every aspect of our lives, and boosts our ability to apply our faith to everything in our lives.

The normal reaction to this is that it is difficult for us to do, but this does not take into account God's response to us when we trust Him unconditionally—He reciprocates and upholds our gesture of faith.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible for us to do this when the Holy Spirit is not part of the process. Without the Holy Spirit enlivening and boosting our spirit, our own faith can only be applied selectively and intermittently because it is subject to the human weakness that we inherit from Adam and Eve. Christ's Spirit and His personal faith in the Father do not have these limitations; therefore, His presence within us brings us out of original sin and its accompanying weakness. Yielding ourselves to His Spirit helps us to fully experience His own peace and strength within us because He is then able to share them with us without our hindrances, and it helps us to maximize His influence in our lives.

Much of what happens within us cannot be controlled by our willpower or resolve. When we cast all of our burdens on the Lord, a passivity or vacuum is created that draws God to us; and His Spirit acts to neutralize the things that keep us out of control. This is also what happens when we yield ourselves to the Spirit after we have received it within us. We yield because we know that our willpower

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<sup>1</sup> See Psalms 55:22; Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:6-7; James 4:8-10; 1Peter 5:5-7

or resolve is not strong enough to overcome weakness. When we don't yield, we continue to struggle on our own even with the Spirit within us.

It is important for us to know that the fear of whatever is going on inside of us hinders the process. Unconditional trust and yielding toward God neutralize fear and its accompanying manifestations because when yield, we cease to be the primary actors in attempting to alleviate fear; which is one of the reasons why it works. The Holy Spirit greatly enhances the process.

The guidance of the Spirit gives us our individual assignments in the corporate Body of Christ. This would not be possible without our individual connection with Christ, who is the Head of the Body. Every part of the body needs its individual communication with the Head in order for it to work in unison with the rest of the body. Paul says to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”<sup>1</sup>. When we are one with Christ, God is our Core and our guidance.

“Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye stand.”<sup>2</sup> We need to take ownership of our own salvation by individually surrendering ourselves directly to Christ, and allowing God to guide our wills and give us peace because no one else that can do this for us. In Scripture there are no intermediaries appointed by God between Christ and us. We are required to surrender ourselves directly to Christ. Elders are exhorted to “Neither be as lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”<sup>3</sup> Leaders in the Body of Christ should never attempt to usurp the position of Christ vis-à-vis the other members. They are no mediators between Christ and us. Ultimately, we are accountable only to Him. When we place others between us and Christ, we have placed a wall of separation between us and Christ—and salvation.

The level of individuality that exists in the Body of Christ does not exist in cultures with monistic world-views. Because monists don't recognize that there is a Creator God to be dependent upon, human relationships are stronger; and people

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<sup>1</sup> Philippians 2:12-13. See also Psalms 90:17; 1Samuel 10:6-7; Colossians 2:19

<sup>2</sup> 2corinthians 1:24

<sup>3</sup> 1Peter 5:3

will be much more dependent upon each other or upon something else in God's creation. This distorts their relationship with creation because too much importance will be placed on things that were meant only for our use, and not for our emotional well-being or fulfillment. This results in an excessive attachment to people and things, and produces the frustration that occurs from not receiving the emotional lift that we expect from them. We will attempt to extract from people and things, something that can only be acquired by faith in God. This will strain human relationships because we will demand from others, a satisfaction and contentment which they cannot provide, and that can only come from God.

Our contentment in life depends upon the quality of our relationship with God, rather than the quality of our circumstances.<sup>1</sup> There is always ongoing confusion and frustration when our attempts to find happiness are misdirected; and this is always a clue that we are not putting God first. God's creation is limited in what it can provide for us. The Creator had the prerogative to create us any way that He wanted; and He created us to thrive only when we have humility towards Him. Creation functions at its best when it is humble towards the Creator. We can willingly choose not to participate in this; but this implies that we willingly reject God's special blessings for those who humble themselves. God will bless and punish according to our choices—and even when we don't choose.

In any church organization, there needs to be sensitivity to the guidance of the Spirit, for the well-being of the organization as a whole and particularly for the well-being of the individuals. Sometimes the two are not synchronized. Not everyone may identify with the overall mission of an organization. As with everything else, the proximity of the individuals to the Spirit determines how well everything works. An organization that is not led of the Spirit will impose its perceived mission on its members, and will require a great deal of conformity. In more extreme cases, it will even attempt to isolate its members from their own families in order to have total control over them. They will have no interest in promoting real Christian freedom through the guidance of the Spirit because they

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<sup>1</sup> See Philippians 4:11-13

will perceive it as a threat; though, most of the time, they don't understand it at all.

The Spirit guides us in our individual ministries; and yet there is, simultaneously, a cohesion that is called the Body of Christ, which exists among those who are [connected](#) to the Head. "But now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased him."<sup>1</sup> Clergy needs to realize that God is the one who places us in the Body of Christ—not ordination, or membership in a particular church. God Himself is the one who really knows whether a person's heart is directed toward His Son. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"<sup>2</sup>; "holding the Head, from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."<sup>3</sup> In the human body, the head coordinates the functions of the body; so too with the Body of Christ. Not diverting our attention from Christ is the most important thing that we can do for ourselves in maintaining the primary benefits of Christianity. He is our Head.

We "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."<sup>4</sup> The cohesion within the Body of Christ is caused by the Spirit of Christ who resides within each individual member—a cohesion which transcends the organizational structures and divisions within Christianity. Those who have the Holy Spirit are the true members of the Body of Christ.

Any Christian church that does not point its members towards a personal trust directly in Christ is not doing its job because it is substituting itself or something else for Christ; and is, therefore, hindering its members from receiving the Spirit, and participating in the Body of Christ. In light of this, we are not supposed to believe everything that comes our way. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try

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<sup>1</sup> 1Corinthians 12:18. See also 1Corinthians 12:12

<sup>2</sup> Romans 12:5

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 2:19

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 2:20-22. See also 1Corinthians 12:13

the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”<sup>1</sup> We need to take ownership of our instruction because ignorance is not an excuse. This is especially true now that there is so much conflicting information easily at our disposal. We can’t always assume that the Christian organization that we interact with is going to instruct us in the basics of salvation.

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<sup>1</sup> 1John 4:1. See also 2Timothy 3:15-17; 2Peter 1:19

## 8. CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

Humans are easily seduced by those who don't understand Christian freedom; which is not freedom to sin, but freedom from sin. "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life"<sup>1</sup>. The death and resurrection of Christ represent our own death to sin, and our being alive to God through Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Those who interpret Christian freedom as an excuse to do anything that they want don't understand Christianity or themselves.<sup>3</sup> Sin is a snare and an addiction, which is facilitated by our human weakness.<sup>4</sup> When we are servants of God, we have more freedom than when we are servants to sin because God's influence is not coercive. Sin's influence is coercive and compulsive; yet we are afraid to let go of this freedom that we really do not have.

Christ's death and resurrection were for the benefit of the whole world; and the whole world needs them "because we thus judge that, if one died for all, then were all dead; And that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."<sup>5</sup> This applies to everyone. Christ's death without His resurrection and immortality wouldn't do us any good. His immortality enables Him to dwell in us by His Spirit.

Christianity is not supposed to be a religion of rules and regulations; it is a religion of yielding to the Spirit. Rules and regulations do not produce Christian freedom or inner transformation; yielding to the Spirit does. After we have received the Spirit through unconditional trust, yielding to the Spirit is essential because when we recognize that our own willpower or resolve is insufficient for temperance or self control, we can yield and rest in the Holy Spirit in order to maintain the Divine peace and strength that free us from ourselves.<sup>6</sup> When we totally relinquish control of ourselves, and yield to Christ—the ultimate act of surrender and

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 6:22 (all of Romans 6 is worthwhile reading). See also John 8:34-36

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 6:11

<sup>3</sup> See Romans 6:15-23

<sup>4</sup> See 2Timothy 2:26

<sup>5</sup> 2Corinthians 5:14-15

<sup>6</sup> See Galatians 5:13-14, 22-23; Philippians 3:3; Romans 8:38-39

unconditional trust—we obtain the maximum benefits of the Holy Spirit. There is always the tendency to try to use our own strength or effort to deal with our emotional issues even after we have received the Spirit; but periodically we are reminded by its difficulty, that this is not the best way, and that yielding to the Spirit is the most effective method. This involves yielding our whole mind; therefore, spiritual practices that use only our thoughts, actually hinder our interaction with the Biblical God.

Any kind of meditation that attempts to use our thoughts to connect with God actually hinders connection because it blocks us from receiving that which is beyond our thoughts. Thoughts cannot take us beyond themselves. Unconditional trust and surrender toward God take us beyond the limitations of our minds because we surrender everything in our minds. Only surrender of the mind can accomplish this. When it is done towards Jesus Christ, He enters into our lives. This is the method that God requires in His Scripture to connect with Him and His Son, and to receive the Spirit.

Christ's Spirit within us is the means by which we receive everything from God that pertains to salvation because Christ's human faith and intercession appropriates it for us. He contains the fullness of the Godhead bodily, both in His own person as the Word incarnate, and by the inhabitation of the Father and the person of Holy Spirit. This is why baptism in the New Testament, after Pentecost, is specifically in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism symbolizes our death through surrender of self to Christ, and our rising to new life through His inhabiting Spirit—all of this prior to our physical death. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."<sup>1</sup>

We need to use the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"<sup>2</sup>, "That he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:12-14

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5:24

God”<sup>1</sup>. “Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in its lusts. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God”<sup>2</sup>; “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”<sup>3</sup>. Christ gives us a greater ability to use our willpower for the good, and to avoid lust, which brings us into bondage, because “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”<sup>4</sup>.

Christian restraint should not result from the guilt that we experience when we break a rule or a law; but it should result from the restraint of the Holy Spirit within us that is called temperance or self-control, which is a fruit of the Spirit; but this requires a committed relationship with Jesus Christ that is Biblically based. Spiritual practices that involve only our own thoughts will not accomplish this; and this includes thoughts of the Biblical God. The same is true for words, diets, and body positions. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit that was evident in the New Testament Christian church happened within the framework of faith in Jesus Christ. Faith takes us beyond ourselves and our thoughts. We need to go back to Scripture, and revisit and understand this type of [faith](#). We are those “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”<sup>5</sup> It is [faith](#) in Jesus Christ from start to finish. Without it, we will not experience the benefits of Christianity.

Christ is supposed to help us overcome our human weakness (original sin) so that we can be effective channels of His love. “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”<sup>6</sup> The fear that unconditional trust in God will reduce us to

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<sup>1</sup> 1Peter 4:2

<sup>2</sup> Romans 6:12-13

<sup>3</sup> Titus 2:11-12. See also Ephesians 2:8-9

<sup>4</sup> 2Corinthians 3:17

<sup>5</sup> 1Peter 1:5. See also Hebrews 4:9-10

<sup>6</sup> Galatians 5:13-14

inaction is unrealistic because trust actually frees us from the fear and worry that prevents us from doing many things. It is always easier and better to do things with peace and confidence, rather than with fear. Most religions and spiritualities have this idea in common; but they differ in their methods of arriving at peace and confidence—methods which have different results.

If Christians are no longer under the Mosaic Law, what incentive is there to abstain from immorality? “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”<sup>1</sup> “What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”<sup>2</sup> “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”<sup>3</sup> Sin is always addictive. “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any”<sup>4</sup>; “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”<sup>5</sup> Christian freedom is not a license to sin. The Christian’s motivation for not sinning is to remain free from the slavery of sin. James refers to freedom from sin as the “law of liberty”<sup>6</sup>. Peter tells us to be “As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”<sup>7</sup> We need to use our freedom to serve God; not for sin. Jude warned against those “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness”<sup>8</sup>. The many warnings against using Christian freedom as an excuse for sin show that it can be easily rationalized in this way; but, nevertheless, freedom was preached in New Testament Christianity. There is no real Christianity without Christian freedom. Legalism is not Christianity. Legalism and grace are mutually exclusive.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 4:8

<sup>2</sup> Romans 6:15-16. See Romans 8:2-4 for a further explanation

<sup>3</sup> John 8:34

<sup>4</sup> 1Corinthians 6:12

<sup>5</sup> Romans 6:6-7. See also Galatians 2:20

<sup>6</sup> James 1:25; 2:12

<sup>7</sup> 1Peter 2:16

<sup>8</sup> Jude 4. See also Galatians 5:4

Humans have a basic yearning for freedom. This is why addictions and compulsions cause us so much distress. We don't like being out of control in spite of the pleasure we may receive from a certain activity. If it takes control of us, we become very frustrated. We enjoy the sensation that it gives us, but we hate the control that it has over us. When our lives revolve around pleasure-seeking, we will invariably be drawn into an addictive pattern; and we will experience lack of freedom, along with the frustration that accompanies it. Pleasure-seekers can never be at peace, even though peace is what they are actually looking for. "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked."<sup>1</sup> Pleasure-seeking is actually a misguided attempt to find God, because, unbeknown to us, the peace and satisfaction that we are seeking doesn't come from pleasure, but from faith in God. We are hard-wired for a connection with God, and we are miserable without it—we're supposed to be. Our separation from God causes feelings of discontentment, dissatisfaction, and lack of fulfillment; all of which are caused by our sin nature which produces desires that cannot be fulfilled; but in spite of it all, we always tend to look for a remedy outside of God. We are so accustomed to this separation, that anything else seems abnormal. Those who do not recognize that we need God for ultimate peace and contentment will never find lasting peace. When we have the peace of God, we know from our own experience what real peace is; and we know that it doesn't come from anything else.

We will not connect with God if we try to use our emotions or desires to do so. Because they are transitory, we will experience anxiety when our emotional sense of God comes and goes; and this invariably causes us to doubt whether we are really connected with God. Trust is a surrender of our emotions and desires to God, which produces lasting peace—not anxiety. The Holy Spirit reduces our excessive attachment to things so that we are better able to use our wills in making dispassionate and objective choices—choices according to the will of God, and gives us a greater freedom from being controlled by our desires. When we attempt to use our freedom to indulge our desires, we end up in slavery—the opposite of freedom. In essence, we trade our lesser freedom for a greater

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 48:22

freedom when we connect with God. All humans are required to make this choice. If we don't choose, we remain weak and in slavery to sin.

This is a primary incentive for choosing Christ instead of remaining in sin; it is for our own well-being, and the well-being of everyone and everything around us. Paul says that "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."<sup>1</sup> Connecting with God is the best thing that we can do for the environment because when we have God's wisdom and moderation within us, we relate to the environment according to the will of God.

Once we have been given the ability to overcome our human weakness (original sin), most of us will not want to go back to where we came from. "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in it, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."<sup>2</sup> Apparently it is possible to once again be overcome by sin after we have been set free from it.

We need to resist the tendency to change Christianity into a political or economic movement that produces a superficial freedom rather than genuine Christian freedom. The freedom that is produced by political or economic systems can never measure up to the authentic inner freedom that we have in Christ. Christianity influences the culture; but it does so at its best when it remains true to its primary mission of reconciling the world to Christ. Social justice can never be a substitute for inner justice. Inner justice and social justice are different from each other, but they will always accompany each other. Inner justice is a function of faith in Jesus Christ; social justice is equivalent to the good works which accompany that faith. Christian social justice presupposes faith because, without faith, it is dead works. Good works are always supposed to accompany faith in Jesus Christ; but faith doesn't always accompany good works because they are essentially outward activities that are not necessarily performed within the

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:21-22. See also Luke 12:15

<sup>2</sup> 2Peter 2:20. See also Hebrews 6:4-6

framework of faith. In Scripture, there isn't any mandate for them to produce faith in Jesus Christ.

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## 9. BAPTISM IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

It is interesting to note that the baptismal formula used immediately after Pentecost in the early New Testament church was baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. The Great Commission of Christ, given after His resurrection and prior to Pentecost to “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”<sup>1</sup>, apparently was interpreted by the apostle Peter, at least ten days later, as baptizing in the name of Jesus Christ. Instead of using His own name, Christ used a description of the Holy Spirit who would eventually reside within His followers, which was actually a description of Himself. The Son has the dual natures of human and divine; therefore the Holy Spirit, poured out at Pentecost, contains the whole Trinity, as well as Christ’s human spirit.<sup>2</sup> Christ spoke these words to His disciples after His resurrection and prior to His ascension, clothed in His immortal body; but His Spirit presence was not yet within them because it would not be available until Pentecost; and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ would not be performed until after Pentecost because it wouldn’t do them any good prior to that. This may explain why Jesus did not use His own name at that point. He was also indirectly providing additional information on the full composition of His Spirit, which Peter refers to as the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It was a teaching moment.

Immediately after the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter, while still reeling from its effects, was asked by the people that had assembled: “what shall we do? 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.”<sup>3</sup> Peter apparently knew that Jesus was talking about Himself in the baptismal formula of the Great Commission; but Peter used the term Holy Spirit to describe what he and the others in the group had just received. He was probably referring to the composite Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, instead of the distinct person of the Holy Spirit. Later, Peter said: “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>2</sup> See Roman 8:14-15; Galatians 4:6; Colossians 1:19; 2:9-10; Romans 8:9-11

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:37-38

men, whereby we must be saved.”<sup>1</sup> Maybe Peter was fulfilling the words of Christ when Christ said: “But the Comforter, who 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, whatever I have said unto you.”<sup>2</sup> Peter came to a greater understanding of Christ’s total identity and purpose. After Pentecost, Jesus was presented as the only object of surrender and unconditional trust that brings us to the Father and salvation.

Through the name of Jesus, we have: the Spirit, Spirit of Christ, Holy Spirit, Spirit of truth, Spirit of God, Spirit of the Lord, or the Comforter. In the Old Testament, there was the Spirit of the LORD; but Christ’s human spirit, which is necessary for salvation, could not have been included in it at that time. The word *Comforter* (Gr. *parakletos*) is defined as “one who is alongside to help”. The verse, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible”<sup>3</sup> describes the general function of the Holy Spirit on our behalf at the present time. The term *Spirit of God*, at times, is used when referring to those things that originate specifically from the Father; as opposed to the things that emphasize Christ’s human faith and intercession by which we are justified and saved—in which case, the term *Spirit of Christ* is used; but there are exceptions.<sup>4</sup> The term *Spirit*, when used by itself, seems to encompass the whole Godhead, including Christ’s human functions; but there doesn’t seem to be any tidy way of explaining it all.

Christ’s human functions within the Holy Spirit could not have been possible prior to Pentecost, during both the New Testament gospel period and the Old Testament, because Christ either had not fully completed His earthly mission or had not been born. During those periods, the Holy Spirit did not provide immediate salvation to those who were empowered. Their perfection had to wait

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 4:12; See also 1Peter 1:21

<sup>2</sup> John 14:26. See also 14:16-18; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 9:31

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 19:26. See also Mark 10:27

<sup>4</sup> See Romans 8:9-11, 14-16; 1Corinthians 6:17; 15:45; 2Corinthians 3:14-18; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 2:18; 4:4-6; Philippians 1:19; Hebrews 9:14; 1Peter 4:14

for Christ to complete His mission and sit at the right hand of God, before they were able to receive what we immediately have available to us after Pentecost.<sup>1</sup>

After the Great Commission, subsequent references to baptism in the New Testament either specifically mention Jesus, or nothing at all.<sup>2</sup> There is no further mention in Scripture of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in relation to baptism. This is actually in line with Saint Paul's theology of Christ. Paul says: "Know ye not that, as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"<sup>3</sup>. In this life, in order to participate in Christ's resurrection, we need to participate in His death. We symbolically die when we surrender ourselves to Christ because we surrender our whole beings. We then qualify for our resurrection, which symbolically is our inner transformation that results from the presence of Christ's Spirit within us. Our life is now Christ's own life within us, which we now live by Christ's faith in the Father. We have all of this automatically when we have Christ's presence within us by His Spirit, through our faith in Him. Much of today's Christianity seeks resurrection without a prior death. Its reliance upon affirmations, declarations, and claiming of promises are an attempt to use words instead of actual surrender to Christ in order to arrive at inner resurrection.<sup>4</sup> These are shallow substitutes for real Christianity. Higher power spirituality directed towards Christ should be the core of Christianity.

Paul baptized or had people baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When he found some disciples who knew nothing of the Holy Spirit, but had been baptized with the baptism of John the Baptist, he told them that "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"<sup>5</sup>; "For ye are all the children of

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<sup>1</sup> See Hebrews 11:39-40

<sup>2</sup> See Acts 8:16, 38; 9:18; 10:48; 19:5

<sup>3</sup> Romans 6:3-4. See also John 17:2; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3

<sup>4</sup> See Matthew 15:8-9

<sup>5</sup> Acts 19:4-5

God by [faith](#) in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”<sup>1</sup> When we read the words *baptized into Christ*, we usually don’t associate them directly with the words in the baptismal formula, but in the New Testament Church, the connection was evident. Even if we are water baptized, we need to surrender ourselves to Christ in order to be children of God; we need to put on Christ. Water baptism presupposes faith. In the case of infant baptism, the faith of at least one of the parents is required.<sup>2</sup>

Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was not a problem for Paul because in Jesus “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him”<sup>3</sup>. Even though the Trinity had not been formally defined at this point, its fullness resides in Jesus. He, in His own person, is the incarnate Word, which is God the Son. He is God the Word, personified in human flesh. This is why our faith or trust can be applied directly to Him, and why we can be baptized in His name. In His singular person, He has the nature of God and the nature of man, as well as the Father and the person of the Holy Spirit dwelling in Him. No one else has this dual nature. We also are carriers of the full Godhead when we have the presence of Christ within us, but we do not have a divine nature as Christ did; therefore we are not allowed to direct our faith to each other, and to use each other as substitutes for Christ because we are not the Word incarnate even with His presence within us. We are “partakers of the divine nature”<sup>4</sup>, therefore, we don’t qualify to receive the [worship](#) and trust that are reserved only for God. When we are baptized by the one Spirit, we are made to participate in one Body and one Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

The Spirit of Christ within us also contains Christ’s human functions, which are essential for us because His humanity carries and gives us direct access to His righteousness, peace, priesthood, intercession, prayer, faith, Sonship, and blood atonement. God’s grace flows to us through the Spirit of Christ; “For there is one

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3:26-27; Mark 16:16

<sup>2</sup> See 1Corinthians 7:14

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 2:9-10. See also 1:19; John 12:44-45

<sup>4</sup> 2Peter 1:4. The word *partaker* can also be translated, “fellowship” or “partner”. See also 1John 4:7-13

<sup>5</sup> See 1Corinthians 12:11-13; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:4-6; 2:18

God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus”<sup>1</sup>. Notice the reference to Christ’s humanity in this verse. Justification or righteousness by faith requires a human mediator who has the faith which is acceptable to God the Father for righteousness. Only Christ is the promised seed (singular) of Abraham who has righteousness by faith. The only way that we can have it is when Christ shares His own righteousness by faith with us; and He can do this only when we have His Spirit within us by our faith directed towards Him. We can be justified or made righteous only by Christ’s faith in the Father residing within us. This is the only way that we can participate in righteousness by faith. We cannot have it directly by our own faith in the Father. The name of Jesus is the only name by which we can be saved. Jesus Christ, who is both human and divine, became a life-giving Spirit for us at Pentecost. “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”<sup>2</sup>

When divisions arose within the early Corinthian church, Paul’s reply was: “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; or I, of Apollos; or I, of Cephas; or I, of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”<sup>3</sup> The same question could be asked today by just adding some additional names. The obvious answer to Paul’s question is that they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ—not Paul or anyone else. Only Christ was crucified for us; and He cannot be divided up so that we would have the option of having faith in anyone else beside Him.

[Faith](#) specifically in Jesus Christ makes us one with Him; and when we are one with Him, we have the Father because He is one with the Father.<sup>4</sup> If we want the Father, we need to find Him in Jesus. We do not have access to the Father directly, or through anyone else besides Christ. Philip asked Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been such a 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, Show us the Father? Believest thou

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<sup>1</sup> 1Timothy 2:5. See also Galatians 3:16; 1Corinthians 15:45; 1Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10

<sup>2</sup> 2Corinthians 4:7

<sup>3</sup> 1Corinthians 1:12-13

<sup>4</sup> See John 17:22-23; 14:6; Matthew 11:27; Acts 4:12; 1Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 2:18

not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?”<sup>1</sup> The uniqueness of Christ is that He, unlike us, is the Word incarnate. He has both a human nature and a divine nature within His single person. This is what makes Him God in His own right, even apart from His human oneness with the Father, or the presence of God the Father and the person of the Holy Spirit in His human body. This permits us to give Christ the worship and trust that are reserved only for God. No one else can claim this for themselves regardless of their holiness, stature, presence of God within them, or oneness with Christ, because no other creature of God has a divine nature. When “doubting” Thomas saw Jesus after the resurrection, his reaction was: “My Lord and my God.”<sup>2</sup> It took a while before the apostles fully comprehended the identity of Jesus as the incarnate God.

Jesus also identified Himself with the Comforter or Spirit of truth. He spoke to His disciples and said: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you...Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered, and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”<sup>3</sup> Christ spoke these words while He was still on earth; and He spoke of the time, after His resurrection, when the Holy Spirit was to be sent to those who love Him. The Holy Spirit includes Christ and the Father. Christ, as the Word incarnate, has a separate identity from the Father; and because He also has a human nature, He has faith in the Father and prays to Him. This separate identity is also reflected in the terms *Spirit of Christ* and *Spirit of God*. The Spirit of Christ always includes Christ’s human spirit; whereas, the Spirit of God may not always include it.

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:8-11

<sup>2</sup> John 20:28

<sup>3</sup> John 14:16-18, 22-23. See also Galatians 4:6; John 17:22-26; Acts 4:12; Romans 8:9; 1Corinthians 15:45

The Spirit of Christ is the Comforter or Spirit of truth. He is the Spirit of truth because He not only spoke the truth—He is Truth.<sup>1</sup> Christ said that He would eventually indwell His disciples by His Spirit. This was not available to them prior to Pentecost, during His earthly ministry. Because the Spirit of Christ contains Christ's humanity as well as the whole Godhead, we can benefit from all that He obtained for us by His death and resurrection when it is within us; otherwise, without His immortal humanity, we could not. We need Christ's human faith and intercession, both within us and at the right hand of God, in order for us to receive all that God has for us.

When we have the Spirit of Christ, we also have the Spirit of the God.<sup>2</sup> The Father is not available to us without the presence of Christ. Christ also has the Person of the Holy Spirit without measure, which is also ours when we have the composite Spirit, only to be limited by the measure of faith given to us by God.<sup>3</sup> This measure of faith is what gives us our individual roles in the Body of Christ, and is why others need to complement us who also have their measure of faith. In this way, the Body can function as a unit with its unique parts. The term *measure of faith* may refer to Christ's faith—not ours.

Without our faith in Christ, we don't have the Spirit of Christ within us; and without Him, we will not have His human spirit to mediate between us and the Father so that we can receive the Father's benefits. The Spirit of the Father, which resides in Jesus, does not include Christ's humanity. The Father makes Himself available to us only through the human faith and intercession of His Son within us; therefore, Christ's humanity continues to be essential for us because His human faith in His Father gives Him the righteousness by faith that He is able to share with us, and which brings us salvation with eternal life.

God's plan of salvation cannot be separated from the man Christ Jesus as our human mediator between God and us; and it also cannot be separated from Christ's divinity as the Word incarnate, which is what qualifies Him as our Higher

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<sup>1</sup> See John 14:6; 16:7; Romans 4:25

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 8:9. This verse seems to be saying that if we don't have the Spirit of Christ, we will not have the Spirit of God (Father). This would be in line with John 14:6, 10-12; 17:21-23

<sup>3</sup> See John 3:34-35; Luke 3:22; Romans 12:3-8; Matthew 3:16; John 1:32-33; Ephesians 4:4-7

Power so that we are allowed to have faith in Him and receive His Spirit that contains His own righteousness by faith. No one else can qualify, and this is the only righteousness by faith that is available for us. We get Biblical righteousness by faith only with Christ's presence within us. Our faith in Him brings us His faith in the Father.

Prior to Christ's birth, the Trinity of Father, Word, and Holy Spirit did not include Christ's humanity because the Word had not taken on human form to become the Son Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. The Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Great Commission does include Christ's humanity because the Son Jesus Christ has the dual natures of human and divine in His single person, and it therefore has all of the provisions for salvation. This is another clue that the Great Commission describes Jesus Christ who contains all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and that when we have Christ within us by our faith in Him, we have the whole Godhead, including Christ's humanity. There is no other way to have it. God's plan of salvation requires Christ's humanity within us because His human faith and intercession are necessary for our access to the Father and to the benefits of the atonement.<sup>1</sup> There was no immediate full salvation available for anyone until Christ completed His mission and His Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. The Word had to be made flesh, and dwell among us, in order for all of that to occur.

The words of the Great Commission, and the way they were actually implemented show that the divinity of Christ was fully recognized from the earliest days of Christianity, and that our faith needs to be directed towards Him. In later Christianity, as the focus began to shift away from Jesus Christ and [Biblical spirituality](#); so did the baptismal formula. This opened the door to foreign elements that corrupted Christianity, and gradually closed the door, for the most part, to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit; which continues to be available, but still needs to be accessed according to the Scriptures.

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<sup>1</sup> See Hebrews 7:25; 11:39-40; Ephesians 2:18

[Biblical spirituality](#) is the means by which we embrace Jesus our own personal Higher Power (savior) and receive His Spirit; otherwise, He remains distant from us, and doesn't do us or anyone else any good. He is our only option for salvation.<sup>1</sup> Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."<sup>2</sup> When you compromise with Jesus, it comes at a cost, because you diminish the Power and Wisdom of God in your life and in your organization. The change in the baptismal formula evidenced a major theological shift in Christianity. The importance of our direct link to Jesus Christ as our Higher Power was compromised; and Biblical spirituality, the means of appropriating Christ, is today practically non-existent. Real Christianity doesn't exist without both.

At this point, "primitive Christianity" doesn't look quite so primitive. It was different and powerful in its day, but it hasn't been quite the same since then. Maybe we should take a closer look at it—we may learn something. Historic Christianity has evolved away from its original power and effectiveness. Today's Christianity is inferior to primitive Christianity. Jesus and [Biblical spirituality](#) must go together, and both are necessary otherwise Christianity is just an empty shell. We need to understand the Biblical views of faith and God, rather than to superimpose on Scripture, our current views of faith, or a world-view that does not include a transcendent Creator God. Nowadays, many different views of God and spiritual practices are presented to us that are not compatible with the Christian revelation in the Scriptures. They do nothing but diminish the impact of Jesus in our lives. The dark spiritual realm knows this, and presents us with as many obstacles as possible to receiving the fullness of Christ. Christ said, "Strive to enter in at the narrow gate; for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."<sup>3</sup> "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."<sup>4</sup>

Christianity is supposed to inform the values of the culture—not be corrupted by them. The opposite has happened. Watered-down Christianity produces watered-

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<sup>1</sup> See Acts 4:12

<sup>2</sup> 1Corinthians 1:24

<sup>3</sup> Luke 13:24 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also Matthew 7:13-14

<sup>4</sup> John 10:9

down Christians. The theology of Jesus has more or less survived to this day, but the method of receiving Jesus, [Biblical spirituality](#), has for the most part been forgotten. The Holy Spirit has not been withdrawn from the world; we just need to know how to connect with Him. It is done by faith specifically in Christ, along with an understanding of Biblical faith. It seems like Christianity continues to get even further away from its beginnings. It needs to get back to its roots because anything else will diminish it. “Thus saith the LORD, Stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk in it, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”<sup>1</sup> This is still true today—more than ever.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 6:16

## 10. LOVE AND GOOD WORKS

Love is the all-encompassing word for our obligations toward God and our neighbor. Divine agape love is described in Scripture as follows: “Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth...The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”<sup>1</sup>. Notice that these are all personal qualities. We usually think of love as what we do for others; but this is only partially true. Christ says: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.”<sup>2</sup> This is true of divine love (Gr. n. *agape*) which is a fruit of the Spirit, and therefore, comes to us as a result of our faith in Jesus Christ—through His presence within us. It is not otherwise available. Peter apparently knew this when Christ asked him if he loved (Gr. v. *agapao*) Him. Peter responded by saying that he loved (Gr. *phileo*) Him with human filial love.<sup>3</sup> “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love...Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

Divine love was not available for humanity until Christ ascended into heaven, and the Holy Spirit was subsequently poured out during the Jewish feast of Pentecost. Christ’s faith in the Father and His intercession, which are functions of His humanity, make God’s love available to us through Christ’s role as the human mediator between God and us. The man Christ Jesus receives it from the Father by His faith in the Father; and we receive it from Christ when we have His

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<sup>1</sup> 1Corinthians 13:4-8 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition); Galatians 5:22-23

<sup>2</sup> John 15:4-5

<sup>3</sup> See John 21:15-17

<sup>4</sup> 1John 4:7-8, 13

presence within us by our faith in Him. It's a part of His presence. Everything that we receive from the Father pertaining to salvation is channeled to us through Christ's Spirit within us. Agape love is God's love that resides in the Holy Spirit, who we now receive individually through our faith in Jesus Christ;<sup>1</sup> then God displays His love throughout the world through us. We are the means by which God has chosen to do this—through the Holy Spirit that is within us. Yielding to the Spirit maximizes the effects of this love within us, and allows us to use it so that God can do His greatest work outwardly through us. We are then faithful channels of His love.

Sometimes we are told that we need to love ourselves in order to love others. This may be possible with human love; but it isn't possible with divine love because we cannot truly love (*agapao*) ourselves or anyone else until we have this love within us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> This implies that we have to love God first, before we can love ourselves or anyone else. The order of the two great commandments also reflects this; with loving God as the first and greatest of the two because we need agape love from God in order to effectively perform the second. Even in the Old Testament, turning to God with heart and soul needed to accompany the performing of the Mosaic Law.<sup>3</sup> The world generally excludes God from the debate, to its own detriment. When we have this divine love, it affects us, and everyone and everything else around us. It is not an emotional state that comes and goes, but it is an existential state of being. We cannot restrict it to a specific person or thing because it is a part of who we are; and when we carry it, it affects and informs everything that we are and do, including how we relate to our enemies. Divine love is peaceful and moderate; therefore, even nature benefits from it through us. When we have divine love, dominion over nature doesn't automatically translate into its destruction or misuse. Greed is destructive to nature. Nature benefits when humans are connected with God.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 5:5; 1Timothy 2:5; 1John 4:11-13

<sup>2</sup> See 1John 4:7-8; Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28

<sup>3</sup> See Deuteronomy 30:10

<sup>4</sup> See Romans 8:18-22; Isaiah 55:12-13

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”<sup>1</sup> This verse shows us that love and good works are not one and the same, and that it is possible to do good deeds without agape love. Good deeds need the effects of love in order for them to have proper balance in our lives. Love exists apart from our actions, yet it sanctifies all of our actions and good works, and makes them profitable toward our final reward. Good works are dead works without the love of God that we receive through the Holy Spirit within us.

Good works are easier to do when we do them with love. For example, if we are agitated, impatient, worried, or angry, it is much more difficult to be outgoing and helpful to others. Agape love from God gives us patience and kindness, which we can apply even to our enemies. It gives us the capacity to love our enemies. They may not be interested in it, but it is their loss. There are times when people just don’t like us, but we don’t have to respond to them in the same way. We need to be carriers of this love, so that we have it available for the benefit of ourselves and everyone else. “And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1Corinthians 13:3 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also Revelation 14:13; 1Corinthians 3:8, 13-15; 2Corinthians 5:10; Luke 6:35; Hebrews 11:35; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 1:25

<sup>2</sup> 1John 3:23. See also John 6:28-29

## 11. FAITH UNTO GOOD WORKS

In Christianity, there is always the vertical interaction with God, and the horizontal interaction with each other; it is [faith](#) unto good works—in that order, and not the other way around.<sup>1</sup> Good works are never a substitute for faith; both are required. The two great commandments to love God and to love our neighbor also reflect this; they are separate commandments but they always accompany each other.<sup>2</sup> Notice that they are in the same order as faith unto good works. Our obligations to God are prior to our obligations to each other because we need God's resources to effectively minister to each other. Faith and agape love from the Holy Spirit pre-position us for good works. Righteousness is by faith—not of works—but works will follow faith. There is no guarantee that faith in Jesus Christ will follow good works.

The words *righteousness* and *justice* are interchangeable in Scripture because they are both translated from the same Greek word.<sup>3</sup> Social justice is an aspect of good works; inner justice is by faith—Christ's faith. Christ receives inner justice or righteousness by His human faith in the Father; and then Christ shares His own righteousness with us when we have His Spirit within us by our faith in Him. This is what is commonly called [justification by faith](#), which we can receive only through Jesus Christ. An accumulation of good works cannot produce it. This is why emphasis on Christ is not misplaced but is necessary for salvation. Social justice without inner justice is merely dead works.

We need God's grace and agape love from His Spirit to be effective ministers of reconciliation, which is our most important task.<sup>4</sup> The context of the word *justice* in Scripture determines whether it is talking about inner justice or social justice. We should not always assume that it refers to social justice because, most of the time, when Saint Paul uses the word, he is referring to inner justice. He sums it up well when he tells us that “the kindness and love of God, our Savior, toward man

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<sup>1</sup> See Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:14; 3:8, 14; 1Peter 1:2

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28; 2Corinthians 9:8; Deuteronomy 30:10

<sup>3</sup> The words *righteousness* or *justice* (Gr. *dikaiosune*), *justified* (Gr. *dikaioo*), and *justification* (Gr. *dikaion*), are from the same Greek root word *dikaos*, which means “holy” or “innocent”

<sup>4</sup> See 2Corinthians 5:17-18

appeared, Not by the works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ, our Savior, That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”<sup>1</sup> The renewing of the Holy Spirit results from our interaction with Jesus Christ—by our faith in Him. The disconnect between New Testament Christianity and contemporary Christianity becomes evident when we see the emphasis that is placed on social justice in today’s Christianity. The world is defining the Church’s mission, rather than Scripture. This should be unacceptable. It is occurring because Christendom does not understand real Christianity; therefore, it does not recognize the difference between truth and error.

Christianity must not lose sight of its primary mission which is to bring people to Jesus Christ. Too much of contemporary Christianity tries to promote good works unto faith, or good works without faith. The works of the Mosaic Law were ineffective for righteousness because they had to be done perfectly; only Christ could do them perfectly—we can’t.<sup>2</sup> Also, there is no righteousness for performing any other version of good works. Christ’s faith in the Father, which is within us through Christ’s Spirit, is what makes us righteous. The presence of Christ within us also makes us beneficiaries of the legal righteousness of the Mosaic Law, because He fulfilled it. At His death, the Law died with Him. He nailed it to His own cross.<sup>3</sup> He had to do it completely and abolish it so that His personal faith in the Father, which produces His righteousness by faith, was able to supersede the Law for us so that we are not obligated to perform it. Without Christ, we have no possibility of either righteousness by faith or righteousness by the Mosaic Law. Christ bridges the Old and the New Testaments.

Our righteousness, which is part of Christ’s Spirit within us, includes the same judicial righteousness that Christ received by fulfilling the Mosaic Law, which He was subject to during His earthly ministry; and also includes the righteousness by faith that was promised through Abraham, because Jesus Christ was the only one

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<sup>1</sup> Titus 3:4-7

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 3:20-21, 28; 10:3; Galatians 3

<sup>3</sup> See Colossians 2:14-17; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 10:9-10

who was eligible for it after Abraham. Christ shares all of this with us when His Spirit inhabits us by our faith in Him; and He is the only carrier of righteousness or justification by faith and the Law who is able to do this. Righteousness is not possible with faith in Abraham because his spirit is not available to act as a funnel for God's righteousness and grace; and we cannot get it by our own faith directly in God the Father because God's plan of salvation does not provide for this. Righteousness by faith resides in Christ's human Spirit by His faith in the Father; and without our faith in Jesus Christ which brings us His Spirit, we have no access to the righteousness or to the Father. We have righteousness by faith, and access to God the Father, only by proxy. This is why Jesus Christ is so essential for all of us; and why He cannot be bypassed as the object of our faith, with our attention diverted to someone or something else; or be replaced by an external observance or ritual. Everything in Christianity presupposes our faith in Jesus Christ; and all of the benefits of Christianity that we receive from God, flow to us through Christ's presence within us. He acquires them for us by His human functions of faith and intercession toward the Father.

New Testament righteousness by faith, which became available for us at Pentecost, is completely different from any idea of righteousness that may involve good deeds; and it could not have taken place without Jesus' completion of the Old Testament righteousness by the Law.<sup>1</sup> Our [faith](#) in Christ, which brings us His presence, is a prerequisite for effective good works. Good works or good deeds, by themselves, are not a relationship with God that bring us His Spirit and strengthen us; therefore, they cannot bring us righteousness. Christ could not have fulfilled the Mosaic Law without strength from His Father. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."<sup>2</sup> Our initial salvation is not of good works; yet we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works; and they are expected of us. "And God is able to make all

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 3:21, 27-28; 4:25; 8:3-4; 10:5-13; Philippians 3:9; Galatians 2:20-21; Ephesians 2:11-18; Psalms 85:10

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:8-10. See also Titus 2:14; 3:8, 14; 1Peter 1:2; Psalms 73:28

grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”<sup>1</sup> Our connection with God needs to precede our good works so that we can have God's resources to do them effectively. “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”<sup>2</sup>

Grace is the unmerited favor that we receive in order for our good works to count toward our final reward. Our works do matter in eternity. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”<sup>3</sup> In Christ, our labor of agape love is rewarded. Christ is the one “Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”<sup>4</sup> Our good works must always be done within the framework of our faith in Jesus Christ, because we need the Holy Spirit to make them count toward our final reward; which can’t happen without a move towards God that brings the Holy Spirit within us. This magnifies the benefits of our good works. Our works, by themselves, cannot do any of this.

The proper balance between faith and good works should never be our primary concern because God does the balancing. Attempting to balance them ourselves will be another source of anxiety for us, because we will never know for sure if we are doing it properly. The anxiety will be self-defeating, as always.

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<sup>1</sup> 2Corinthians 9:8

<sup>2</sup> 2Thessalonians 2:16-17

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 14:13. See also 1Corinthians 3:8, 13-15; Luke 6:35; Hebrews 11:35; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 1:25

<sup>4</sup> Titus 2:14

## 12. SCRIPTURE

Knowledge of Scripture is essential for being a well-equipped Christian. Paul says to Timothy “that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”<sup>1</sup>. Notice in this passage that even our knowledge of Scripture needs to be tempered with ‘faith which is in Christ Jesus’. This wording is interesting because it sounds like it is specifically Christ’s personal faith in the Father that is within us by Christ’s presence, through which the Scriptures make us wise unto salvation; rather than our own faith in Christ. This would be in line with the idea that Christ’s faith in the Father brings us everything pertaining to salvation. Scripture starts the process by teaching us to have faith in Christ; then our faith in Christ opens us up to His Spirit and His faith; and the Scriptures continue to give us wisdom throughout our journey of faith. Timothy knew the Scriptures as a child; which tells us that we also need to know them regardless of our station in life. At the time that this epistle was written, the Scriptures were the Old Testament.

Knowledge is not a substitute for [faith](#); but it does bring us to the step of faith. “But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”<sup>2</sup> The Bible itself requires us to act on it, and not just read it. Faith in the written Word of God is not the same as faith in God Himself. If our faith is only in His Word, there will remain a distance between us and God. We can rely on His Word only when we personally trust *Him* and not just His Word. The reliability of a person’s word is contingent upon the reliability of the person.

There is a symbiotic relationship between Scripture and faith. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God; but then, faith brings us to a better understand of the Word of God; and this, in turn, strengthens our faith. They feed on each other. Faith gives us the presence of mind and the objectivity to see things more clearly in Scripture; and helps us to remove the denominational or cultural biases that may hinder our receptivity to what is actually there. The person with faith and the

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<sup>1</sup> 2Timothy 3:15. See also 1Timothy 1:14; John 6:28-29; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 6:14-15; Acts 3:16; Proverbs 2:6-7; 11:2; Psalms 111:10; 119:99-100

<sup>2</sup> James 1:22

guidance of the Holy Spirit has a definite advantage when interpreting the Bible because the spirituality of the Bible is a dualistic Higher Power spirituality; and all of its theology is based on this. The person of faith already has this mindset, and will therefore read the Bible from this perspective and understand it better. Christianity doesn't work without faith; and most of it will not make sense outside of this framework. Those with a monistic world-view will find much of the Bible confusing; and this is why they reduce it to metaphors. Most people are content with a superficial or cursory reading of the Bible because they already feel set in their spirituality and do not intend to learn anything really new or different from it. It needs to inform our spirituality.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."<sup>1</sup> Understanding what is in Scripture is essential for our spiritual growth; and it is also essential for getting started on a Biblical spiritual journey, as it was in my case. I found my spirituality through my own personal study of the Bible.

Because of the historic continuity of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches with New Testament Christianity, the New Testament was written by early Christians with direct connections to today's Churches; and was compiled in the Fourth Century A.D. by these combined Churches. With this understanding in mind, we can be confident that the Bible contains the source documents of Christianity; the source from which everything in the Christian religion is nourished and regulated.<sup>2</sup> No one should hesitate to refer to them for any reason because they are too important to be neglected. Unfortunately, they are neglected all too often. Relying only on the opinions of scholars, priests, or ministers may not necessarily bring you to a connection with God.

Making use of Bible lexicons, concordances, dictionaries, and commentaries, helps us to understand how certain words were used at the time that they were written. These resources may also have a bias, so we need to use them wisely. No

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<sup>1</sup> 2Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>2</sup> See Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Chapter VI: 21

translation of the Bible is perfect. If something doesn't sound right, reading other versions is helpful. At times, our opinion may be in the distinct minority. We should allow the Scriptures to reveal themselves to us. We may be surprised at what we will find. I found a spirituality presented in the Bible that I had never heard of before from anyone.

A major clue that a religious group has veered off of simple faith in Christ is when it emphasizes something different than what the Scriptures emphasize. Christian organizations need to have the same balance and priorities as Scripture. At the present time, this is rare. Because humans have a difficult time coming to terms with dependence and humility toward God, modern Christianity is replete with substitutes for faith in Christ. Things that were intended to supplement faith have, instead, become substitutes; and therefore, because they are not combined with faith, they lose their efficacy. The result of this is that the impact of Christianity is diminished. You don't have to look very far to see this. When undue emphasis is placed on a legitimate Christian practice, it is usually done at the expense of real faith in Christ.

Some want to ensure that a relationship with Christ does not get too passive or restful. At times, they actually belittle Biblical spirituality. The idolization of personal achievement in our culture contributes to this because it is usually done with self-striving—with God as an afterthought. This mindset has supplanted humility in most of Christianity. Usually they have replaced humility with some external observance or practice, or something that resembles a motivational seminar; and then they wonder why their congregations are spiritually anemic. They try to motivate people to act like Christians after a verbal declaration of faith, which, of itself, is not faith at all. They are always talking about a future revival, but the basic ingredient of trust in God is always missing from the discussion. If the leaders are not led of the Spirit, the congregations, for the most part, will be “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”<sup>1</sup> Beware of Christian fads that only serve to distract us from real faith in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:14. See also Titus 2:14 (zealous of good works)

Humility towards God opens us up to strength, peace, and the motivation to do good works. An organization that does not emphasize it will try to motivate people to act like Christians, and will tend towards legalism. Strength and peace will remain distant concepts. Group-think that is not Biblically based will prevail in an organization that is not led of the Spirit; and even if the organization claims to be Biblically based, the group-think will not be properly balanced with the other important things in Scripture, and it will be given an undue emphasis. Rigid conformity may be demanded; and a person led of the Spirit will generally not fit in. "The wind bloweth where it willeth, and thou hearest the sound of it, but canst not tell from where it cometh, and where it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> The Spirit filled person is not easily corralled; especially if the corral isn't suitable.

Fortunately, early on, the combined Catholic and Eastern Churches compiled the New Testament Scriptures into the Bible that we have today with Old and New Testaments; and since the invention of the printing press, we have individual access to them. The Bible became readily available to those within the ancient Churches and those outside. The cat was out of the bag. I think that the ancient Churches had a difficult time dealing with this because up to that time they had almost total control of the message and the medium. The Bible could no longer stay within the confines of those Churches. Apparently God didn't have a problem with this because the Holy Spirit didn't seem to want to restrict Himself only to those within their organizations. The Bible had a life of its own apart from the Churches which compiled it.

The personal availability of Scripture gives us a great advantage that the early Church did not have. At that time, somebody either had to read it to you, or you had to get it directly from a prophet. Christ directly instructed His apostles during His earthly ministry and during the 40 days after His resurrection; and after His ascension through the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Now, we can read Scripture for ourselves, anytime we want. If we have questions about the teachings of an organization, or

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:8 (old KJV, 1867 Scofield edition)

<sup>2</sup> See John 21:25; Acts 1:2-3

a group within an organization, we can compare the teachings to the source documents of Christianity; but we need to be aware that when we read the documents, we usually read them with our present understanding of certain words, as they have been taught to us by the current Christian organizations. We can't always assume that the current usage of a word is the same as its ancient usage. The words: *faith*, *trust*, *believe*, and *love* are words that often fall into this category; and are words that are of the greatest consequence in understanding the Biblical message.

The ancient Churches that emphasize the importance of apostolic succession have had a difficult time coming to terms with the widespread availability of Scripture. They view themselves as the custodians of Scripture—which is fine—but they also restricted much of it to scholars and to those within the hierarchal structure. The laity was generally viewed as unqualified for the task, and most of the laity agreed. Many older Catholics have informed me that, at one time, they were told that they should not read the Bible for themselves; but by the time I was growing up, I was required to purchase a Bible in the Catholic school that I was attending at around the year 1950, and I started to use it almost immediately. Attitudes have changed to the point where Bible studies are encouraged in many Catholic circles. The teaching authority of the Catholic Church is not confined to a select group of people who are mostly in the hierarchy. Christ is the one who ultimately gives the gift of teaching.<sup>1</sup>

The authority and inerrancy of Scripture in the Roman Catholic Church was formally documented by Vatican Council II. It states: "Therefore, like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture. For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life"<sup>2</sup>. This sounds like "sola scriptura" Roman Catholic style

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<sup>1</sup> See Ephesians 4:8, 11

<sup>2</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Chapter VI: 21

because even sacred tradition, dogma, and the teaching authority of the Church are all subject to the regulation of Scripture, and are not allowed to contradict it. This gives Scripture a stature that the others don't have because whatever regulates you has authority over you. This principle may help reconcile some of the differences between Catholics and Protestants concerning the place of Scripture in Christianity. Also, the force and power in the word of God has affected countless people outside, as well as inside, the Catholic Church organization.

"Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful...The sacred synod also earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful, especially Religious, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the 'excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 3:8)."<sup>1</sup> This needs to be emphasized more because there is still resistance to the idea that all of the Christian faithful should learn from the Scriptures themselves the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ". Church cultures do not change very easily. Using the Scriptures for devotional purposes is generally accepted; but not for comparing them with current Church teachings and practices, or for trying to understand what the Scriptures are actually saying. Scripture should not be perceived as a threat to anyone. The average person who does have an interest in understanding Scripture should not be treated as an upstart, or looked upon with suspicion. Cursory reading is quite acceptable; but how can the faithful (laity) participate in ensuring that the Church remains true to its Scriptural roots if they don't know what is in Scripture, or if their understanding of Scripture is not considered? There are those who want to diminish the role of Scripture in the Church because it doesn't suit their agenda. A question about whether a generally accepted Church teaching is in line with Scripture, is often met with the response that the Church has always taught this, therefore—end of discussion; and no attempt is made to determine whether the question is even valid. The idea that scholars are the only ones who are qualified to ask questions is rapidly becoming outdated, but it is not totally gone. Religious (clergy) need to be more familiar with Scripture, because I suspect that the evasive responses to questions are probably due to their being

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Chapter VI: 22, 25

Scripturally uninformed or uninterested. Also, settled dogma plays a part in this because, according to many Catholics, it is not supposed to be questioned; but because dogma (including infallibility) is regulated by Scripture, it cannot be placed above scrutiny. Scripture tells us to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”<sup>1</sup>.

In spite of Vatican Council II teaching, many Catholics still do not avail themselves of the private reading of the Scriptures. “Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation.”<sup>2</sup> Anyone who comprehends what he is reading, and practices it, can avail themselves of this knowledge, regardless of organization. God is the one who chooses people, and draws them to His Son. Clergy does not have an advantage in this respect, especially if their Church doesn’t teach Biblical righteousness and salvation.

Here is another interesting statement: “Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence. Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers (see Acts 2, 42, Greek text), so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort. But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of

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<sup>1</sup> 1Thessalonians 5:21

<sup>2</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Chapter III: 11

the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed. It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”<sup>1</sup> This may sound untenable to most Protestants without the prior statement that: “like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture”; and, in spite of the three being so linked together that one cannot stand without the others, it is clear that the teaching office of the Church is not above the word of God and is there to serve it, and that all three need to be in harmony, with Sacred Scripture regulating everything. Only as long as this is the case can it be construed that sacred tradition and the teaching authority of the Church are so linked together with Scripture that one cannot stand without the other, that both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence, and that sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God. Sacred tradition and the teaching office of the Church must be regulated by Scripture, and are under its authority according to Vatican Council II.

All Christian teaching must be in harmony with Scripture, and must not contradict it. Because Scripture regulates tradition, tradition is not totally separate from Scripture; if it was, it would not be tradition. Tradition cannot stand alone, apart from the regulation of Scripture. Protestant commentaries and books on Scripture are similar to tradition when they accurately reflect Scripture. Notice that the word *Scripture* is capitalized but the word *tradition* is not, even though the two “are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence”. This can only be the case when Scripture regulates tradition. All Christian tradition, dogma, and doctrine must be regulated by Scripture in order to be valid. This has not been fully appreciated by many Catholics.

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Chapter II: 9-10

The preeminence of Scripture in the Catholic Church is reflected in the fact that all of the readings in the Mass are from Scripture; none of them are from sacred tradition. “Sacred scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning.”<sup>1</sup> Tradition doesn’t seem to be as well-defined as Scripture because, for example, not all of the writings of the early fathers of the Church are considered to be part of sacred tradition. Some of them have been labeled as heretical. The same is true of later writings. Also, there isn’t a book or a manual called Sacred Tradition. I’m quite sure that opinions within the Catholic Church are not unanimous concerning the contents of tradition. Scripture must regulate and be the arbiter of sacred tradition, as well as everything else in the Christian religion.

The prominent place of Scripture presented in Vatican Council II seems to be similar to the traditional Protestant view of the place of Scripture. If everything is supposed to be regulated by Scripture in the Roman Catholic Church, there seems to be common ground between Catholics and Protestants on the preeminence of Scripture, in spite of its general disregard in many Catholic and Protestant circles.

In Scripture we have the writings of those who were closest to the original events; and because they were recorded early on, we don’t have the corruption that may occur from the telling and retelling of a story.<sup>2</sup> Though this is true for almost the entire Bible, the early stories in Genesis were apparently passed down from generation to generation until the first books of the Old Testament were written. At that time, prior to Genesis being written, there may have been a consensus of knowledge which had been recorded in Egypt and elsewhere concerning the early events in human history. Moses had access to all of this because He was part of the pharaoh’s household; and he also knew the Hebrew traditions that were handed down by word of mouth or in writing.

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Chapter I: 24. See also *Dei Verbum* VI: 21

<sup>2</sup> See Luke 1:1-2

The authority of Scripture transcends denominations. God may use the Scriptures themselves to draw someone to Himself regardless of what an organization may teach, or regardless of the person's denomination. The Catholic and Eastern Churches, which have historic continuity with the Christianity of the New Testament, have a serious responsibility to teach and use the word of God faithfully, because if they don't do the job, others will. In my own personal life, I started to be instructed by the Scriptures, outside of the organizational structure of the Catholic Church, during a period of time that I was not practicing the Catholicism that I grew up in. At that time, I did not fully appreciate the fact that the combined Catholic and Eastern Churches, had compiled the Scriptures that were teaching me; and that I was actually being instructed by the Catholic Church through my own private reading of Scripture. It not only contains Catholic teaching in its original form; but the Catholic Church requires that Scripture regulate all subsequent Catholic teaching, which includes tradition, dogma, and everything else.<sup>1</sup> I could only wish that other Catholics would more fully appreciate what they have, and make use of it. During this period, I found, in the Bible, the primary spiritual method for connecting with the Biblical God; but I also found that it is not given any importance by the most of the clergy of the Christian churches or organizations that I know of.

There is no preparation that we can do for it except to prepare ourselves for surrender to God. There is no way that we can adequately purify ourselves for this because we need God to purify us. I had concluded that without surrender to God, the remainder of Christianity was meaningless; and that I had to try it, or, otherwise, just forget about the whole thing. I decided to try it. When I experimented with it, I was astonished because I had the most transforming experience of my life; and it happened while I was walking down a street in San Francisco, California. This would never have happened if God had restricted Himself to act only through the priests or ministers of a particular organization, and it happened apart from any prior sacraments that I had participated in. I could now feel God inside of me, and the connection was complete. God's peace and strength felt like a single entity and were indistinguishable; and my

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<sup>1</sup> See Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), Chapter VI: 21

impulsiveness toward sin was immediately gone. This affected every aspect of my life—good and bad—and gave me a much greater ability to avoid the things that were harmful.

What surprised me the most was that it happened outside of a church building, without any formal ritual; and also, that God would respond to something so methodical and mechanical, without a strong intellectual belief in Him. I quieted my mind with an attitude of unconditional trust in God, totally resting my mind on Him. It seemed to me that I was experimenting with a mental exercise instead of being motivated by something that I really believed in. I did commit myself to a belief in the resurrection of Christ just prior to the surrender, which was equivalent to a sinner's prayer; but it was difficult because I wasn't sure if I really believed it. My object of surrender was also an issue because I wasn't clear with regards to the Trinity or the divinity of Christ. I decided to surrender to the whole Trinity, which includes Jesus Christ—divinity and humanity. Apparently, God ignored my lack of clarity.

The thought went through my mind that maybe I had received something that I wasn't supposed to, or that I had tricked God. This was understandable because of my upbringing in the Catholic Church. He probably tricked me.<sup>1</sup> At that time, Catholic spirituality revolved almost exclusively around the sacraments, which are outward expressions of faith; and are usually done in a formal setting. Personal [trust](#) in Christ was almost unheard of in the Catholic Church when I was growing up prior to Vatican Council II.

When sacraments are not motivated by personal trust in Christ, they are usually motivated by guilt or obligation, and will not bear fruit. Vatican Council II formally documents the principle that the sacraments presuppose faith when it states that “The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God; because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called ‘sacraments of faith’.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Jeremiah 20:7

<sup>2</sup> Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Chapter III:59. See Romans 14:23

Without faith in Christ, the sacraments don't have anything to nourish, strengthen, or express. *Faith* is the core of Christianity; not the outward expressions of faith. This has not been fully appreciated by many Catholics because they continue to rely only on sacraments for their spirituality. Personal faith in Christ remains a distant concept for many; therefore the benefits of faith also remain distant.

Faith needs to have an identity of its own apart from any expressions of it; and it should not be labeled as something else, such as prayer or worship, because what often happens is that these outward expressions of faith are mistaken or substituted for it. Relationship with God is more than the sum total of all the external things that we do for Him because everything in Christianity presupposes faith. Without faith, all of the external things do not add up to what God expects of us.<sup>1</sup> If trust in God is not applied to everything in our lives, it demonstrates a basic misunderstanding of Biblical faith; and it will not be applied to anything at all.

When I surrendered myself to God in that very informal setting, He actually responded according to His Scriptures. "God, who made the world and all things in it, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;...That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he is not far from any one of us; For in him we live, and move, and have our being"<sup>2</sup>. He did not have to go very far to find me; and His response occurred with no discernible lag time.

"So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."<sup>3</sup> Faith in God doesn't come automatically to humans—we need to be taught; and because of this, private Scripture reading is particularly important because it can teach us how to get beyond the confines of a particular Christian church or organization that does not teach the truth in its entirety. Scripture itself may be the only

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 14:23; 1Corinthians 13:1-3, 7; Galatians 6:14-16

<sup>2</sup> Acts 17:24, 27-28

<sup>3</sup> Romans 10:17. See also Romans 10:6-8; Deuteronomy 30:11-14

source of knowledge for Biblical faith if Christian organizations are not teaching it. I found this to be the case from my own personal experience.

When we obey the Scriptures, God does not limit Himself to act on His Word only within the confines of a specific organization. Chances are that if you remain only within the confines of most church cultures, you will not find a meaningful relationship with God because they do not teach simple [faith](#) directly in Christ; but instead they teach outward observances, and verbal declarations or affirmations. In spite of themselves; at times, truth comes through from their Scripture readings, liturgy, and music; but the congregation will generally filter much of it through the organization's culture. "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth."<sup>1</sup> The Biblical God expects us to approach Him in the proper way.

Apparently, God will honor His Word whenever we are ready to respond to it, regardless of the organization that we are interacting with or regardless of our prior lifestyle. In my case He responded after I had been to a bar, had a couple of beers, and was walking home. He drew close to me when I drew close to Him.<sup>2</sup> God responds according to our choices. A clue from Scripture may explain this: "And John answered, and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followed not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us."<sup>3</sup> Humans have a tendency to want to set boundaries. We don't always see things the way God does. This is why, to this day, I retain a great deal of respect for the Scriptures; they saved my life both physically and spiritually; and I continue to use them as my primary source of spiritual direction.

"As ye have, therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding with thanksgiving."<sup>4</sup> I continue to rely primarily on Scripture for instruction concerning my spiritual journey—I started out that way, and continue that same

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<sup>1</sup> Psalms 145:18. See also John 4:23

<sup>2</sup> See James 4:8

<sup>3</sup> Luke 9:49-50. See also Numbers 11:25-29; Mark 9:38-40

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 2:6-7

way regardless of the church or group that I interact with. Paul warns, “Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”<sup>1</sup> I haven’t used spiritual directors because I don’t know where they are coming from; and if their advice comes from a non-Biblical perspective, which, for the most part, I suspect it does, it would be of questionable value for me anyway. Nowadays, a Biblical perspective is probably the exception rather than the rule. Denominational schools generally reflect the views of the organization that sponsors them; which makes *them* of questionable value. Even though I haven’t found anyone who shares my journey, I occasionally get anecdotal validation or insights from unlikely sources. Most of the time, Scripture is the only thing that I can rely on when I’m confronted with something that is widely practiced, but doesn’t seem to be compatible with the Bible. The reasoning behind it seems to be persuasive, but the end result is contrary to the Biblical message. This is very common in today’s world. We need wisdom and the knowledge of Scripture to recognize these things.

An interesting passage in the book of Revelation shows that God has His elect even in the worst of organizations. He tells the “angel of the church in Sardis...I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead...Thou has a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.”<sup>2</sup> Being told that you’re dead is about as bad as it gets; but in spite of this, the Body of Christ needs the individual members who are faithful to His Word, especially during the worst of times; in which times we must exercise the most patience and vigilance.

When we are led of the Spirit, we do a better job of discerning truth from error because we have an insider’s view of the Scriptures. Along with the guidance of the Holy Spirit who resides in each individual Christian, we have the writings of the original apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers at our disposal

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3:3

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 3:1, 4

to compare with current writings and teachings.<sup>1</sup> In the past, when Scripture was handwritten; it was not as available to everyone as it is today.

As important as Scripture is in discerning error, Christian denominations are often ambivalent toward the private reading of Scripture by the average member. Most of them, more or less, encourage the private reading of Scripture; yet they also try to control the message—a difficult thing to do at times. They may encourage Bible reading as a devotional practice, but not for the purpose of understanding what it is actually teaching because this is mostly reserved for the scholars. Some try to undermine the Bible’s credibility in subtle ways by saying that it contradicts itself, the stories are myths, or that the moral values in Scripture are outdated and not applicable in today’s modern world—all in the hope that you will not take it seriously, or that you will ignore it entirely. Others will say that scholars disagree among themselves on a given subject or text, thereby implying that you are not qualified to have an opinion on what it says, or that you’re not enough of a scholar to understand its meaning. This often happens when you point out to another person, that their opinion is out of line with Scripture.

When a person, in good conscience, interprets something in the Bible, different from the predominant view in his organization—what happens? Sometimes there are no easy answers, especially when the people in the organization, themselves, differ on how to handle this. In today’s world, the private reading of Scripture is essential, especially when a church doesn’t teach personal Biblical salvation; but one of the only ways of knowing this, is by the private reading of Scripture.

When referring to parts of Paul’s epistles, Scripture says that the “unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction”<sup>2</sup>; yet they continue to be read at church services and by individuals everywhere—as they should be. Scripture is too important to ignore, even though, at times, it may be improperly used. Just because some people, for example, have an eating disorder doesn’t mean that the rest of us should stop eating.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ephesians 4:11; Psalms 25:9

<sup>2</sup> 2Peter 3:16

Understanding the world-view and theology that are presented in the Bible, helps us to avoid being misled or sidetracked by trends and teachings in Christian churches that are incompatible with the Gospel. This is especially true in large organizations where erroneous teachings can develop locally or regionally; even before the official organization is aware of them, has time to respond, or even cares to respond. Scripture tells us to “Be not carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with foods, which have not profited them that have been occupied with them”<sup>1</sup>; “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive”<sup>2</sup>. This is just as true now, as it was then. Biblical spirituality does not emphasize what you eat; but much of non-Biblical spirituality does. Faith is a thing of the heart; not the stomach. Because different world-views produce different conclusions in just about everything, it is much easier to veer off into error if we are not familiar or in line with Scripture. When speaking of Scripture, Peter says, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy, unto which ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”<sup>3</sup> Light enables you to see. If your mind is preoccupied, you will not be aware of what is in front of you. Peace of mind heightens your awareness and makes you receptive to the guidance of the Spirit.

Some say that you shouldn’t interpret Scripture for yourself, yet how can you read Scripture without interpreting it? You would have read it with your mind shut off. Translations of the Bible differ on the following passage: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>4</sup> The Living Bible (Catholic edition) translates this same verse as follows: “For no prophecy recorded in Scripture was ever thought up by the prophet himself. It was the Holy Spirit within these godly

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:9 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:14

<sup>3</sup> 2Peter 1:19. See also 1Samuel 10:6-7

<sup>4</sup> 2Peter 1:20-21

men who gave them true messages from God.” In the Living Bible, the second verse flows directly from the first and makes more sense. The old King James Version makes more sense when ‘any private interpretation’ refers to the prophet’s exposition rather than referring to the person who hears or reads the prophecy. When I looked up the word *interpretation* in two Bible lexicons, I found that the word *unloosing* or *explanation* could have been used in the translation, instead of the word *interpretation*.<sup>1</sup> This would tend to support the translation in the Living Bible.

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<sup>1</sup> *Young’s Analytical Concordance* and *Strong’s Concordance* (Gr. *epilysis*)

### 13. HOLY PASSIVITY OR RECEPTIVITY TOWARDS GOD

We receive the things of God through an extreme passivity or receptivity towards Him—a concept lost in antiquity, and antithetical to our modern world of self striving. The word *passive* is defined as being the recipient of an action, or being acted upon. What better posture is there in our interaction with God? This is the definition of humility. We express this humility towards God by unconditional [trust](#) in Him; and then, as a result of this, we receive the benefits of this relationship with Him. When we cast all of our cares upon Him and rest our minds upon Him, we present the void that He requires for filling us with His Spirit. This is an extremely passive act towards God that makes us very receptive to Him. Also, this is how we receive the grace of God and His motivation for doing good works. God's peace and strength are the inner evidences of our relationship with Him.

The duality of Creator and creation in the Bible is essential for unconditional trust in God otherwise there is no Higher Power to trust. Biblical trust always requires the mind to trust God as an object that is outside of itself. Because the thrust of the mind is always outward, a visualized image of God is not a suitable object because it subsists within the mind itself; and it would be surrendered along with everything else during the act of unconditional trust. The object of surrender is defined by our prior intention. It is impossible to surrender to something that is within the mind itself because the act of surrender, by definition, nullifies everything in the mind. Biblical surrender requires that everything in the mind is surrendered to God;<sup>1</sup> therefore, it must be imageless because anything we visualize is a part of self and creation, including a visualized image of God—who is impossible to visualize anyway. A visualized god is a figment of our own imagination, and would immediately disappear at the moment of surrender; and this could be disconcerting. Surrender to anyone or anything in God's creation is not permitted in Scripture because creation is not God.

A monistic view of god does not lend itself to unconditional trust because its god is everything or in everything, therefore there is no object of trust except for the

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<sup>1</sup> See Isaiah 55:7-9; Proverbs 3:5; Philippians 4:6-7

specific objects of God's creation; which is unacceptable in the Bible. The Biblical world-view and unconditional trust cannot be separated. Unconditional trust produces an extreme passivity or receptivity towards its object, which is inherent in the act itself; and provides God with an opening to send the Spirit of His Son into us when our unconditional trust is directed towards His Son. This produces a diminished emotional investment in whatever we interact with; and makes us more tolerant of people and things that we don't agree with.

We don't need to be afraid of extreme passivity towards God. We will not lose our minds or lose our ability to make rational decisions; instead, our minds will be enhanced. We actually receive the wisdom to make better decisions for ourselves because when we release our attachments to things, we are better able to observe things without the emotional baggage that prevents us from making objective decisions; and we also open up to God's protection and guidance in all our circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Trust in God brings Him into everything that we do; and gets His attention, intervention, and presence in our lives, along with His answering of our prayers. This is the total opposite of monism, which has no personal Creator God; therefore, we ourselves become the creators by the use of our own thoughts and words. Whether collective or personal, meditation and incantations have their roots in monism. The Creator God will eventually trump all attempts by humans to set themselves up as creators in competition with Him. This is how the Book ends.

Unconditional trust is a function of the heart which does not require thought because it is a resting of our minds on God; and it does not interfere with our day to day activities, but enhances them. As a result of this, trying to balance God with our activities is a non sequitur because the peace of God affects both our hearts and minds, and permeates all of our activities. This could not be the case if it was primarily a function of thinking. Unconditional trust unifies us both inwardly and outwardly, and affects our entire beings.<sup>2</sup> God reduces the duality between what we think we should do and what we actually do; and reduces the

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<sup>1</sup> See Proverbs 3:5-6. See also Psalms 25:9; 33:18; 34:15; 1Samuel 10:6-7

<sup>2</sup> See Philippians 4:6-7; Ephesians 4:3

hindrances to objectivity. This is what it really means to arrive at a higher consciousness and to find our true self. He alters our state of consciousness. Without God, this is not possible. He enables us to realize our true humanity, as He had originally created it. It is absurd to think that anyone other than our Creator knows what is best for us.

Spiritual practices that do not promote unconditional trust in God actually hinder a relationship with Him, because we mistakenly think that they will draw us close to Him and bring us His peace, when they actually do not. They are not neutral. This is why it is important to go to the Bible for instructions on how to relate to the personal Biblical God, rather than to rely on practices and instructions that are suited for the monistic all-is-god world-view. These will not draw us close to the Biblical God, but will render Christianity ineffective. Many of these practices are now part of most Christian churches; so we need to be especially vigilant and Scripturally well informed, and not assume that they are Biblically based. When Christianity is not regulated by the Bible, it ceases to be real Christianity; and this is what we have today. We need to stay close to the original sources so that we are not easily or inadvertently sidetracked from the original message.

Different world-views have different methods for being at one with their deity; and they are not all compatible with each other. The personal Biblical God requires us to thrust our minds outward in unconditional trust in order to receive Him inwardly after we are born; whereas, the monistic god tells us to go inward to connect with the “spark of the divine” that we are all supposedly born with and which is our connection to the whole of the pantheistic god. It purportedly makes us one with everything because the pantheistic god is considered to be everything.

The Biblical God requires the dependence of His creation because of the dualism of Creator and creation in the Bible. Creation is not God; and the creation is inherently dependent upon its Creator. People express this dependence with a deliberate act of the will to draw close to God by faith—which implies that many choose not to do this; those that do not, remain weak because they continue to be separated from God and their true humanity as a result of Adam and Eve’s

disobedience. True humanity recognizes its dependence on God, acts upon it, and reaps the benefits. With the monistic god, on the other hand, we are our own personal creator god that we are dependent upon; ergo, self-deification, with no means of connecting with the Creator. As a result, these people also remain weak, and have no other way of getting around it unless they change their world-view and draw close to the Biblical God.

Christ said that “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”<sup>1</sup> The word *deny* in this verse means: to utterly deny, disown, or renounce. Being a follower of Christ requires self-abandonment towards Him. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.”<sup>2</sup> This is not as bad as it sounds. Self-abandonment is the use of unconditional trust to release oneself towards Jesus Christ who is the Word incarnate and who embodies the whole Trinity. This is the same method prescribed in the Old Testament for connecting with the Old Testament God. The result of this is the presence of Christ’s Spirit within us, and the resulting fruit of the Spirit, which includes the inner peace and strength that affects our entire beings. This is our Christian enlightenment, which is an infused enlightenment that comes from beyond us; and this is how the Biblical God inhabits us. He does not have to remain distant or separated from us. We embody the whole Trinity when we have the Spirit, but we are not inherently divine as Christ is within His own Person because He is Word incarnate, and we are not; which is why we are not allowed to self-abandon toward each other.

When we relinquish control of our lives to God through Jesus Christ, we gain more control over all of our weaknesses—an interesting paradox. Self-repression, which is the abstaining from specific things using our own strength and resolve, does not accomplish this. In Christianity, whatever we receive inwardly from God, results

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 8:34-35

<sup>2</sup> John 12:24-25; See also Proverbs 3:5; Psalms 55:22; 1Corinthians 7:29-31

from our outward trust in Jesus Christ. We need to lose ourselves in Him. Without humility towards God, our separation from His presence and grace remains intact. The peace of God that we receive through the Spirit of Christ is our indispensable place of receptivity from the Biblical God. The importance of inner peace for well being is also recognized by other spiritualities; but, without Christ, they lack the benefits that come from Him.

Receiving from God requires more than verbal declarations and affirmations, or claiming what we want. These are an attempt to receive things from God without drawing close to Him; so they are actually hindrances to receiving from God because they constitute pride. These are based on the world-view of self-deification because we supposedly become creators with our own words; therefore even repentance is reduced to a mere change of vocabulary because we are only required to speak the words of repentance, and not actually do what we are saying.

Our words are an expression of what is in our hearts;<sup>1</sup> they do not create what is in there, and they are not substitutes for humility towards God. “This people draweth near unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”<sup>2</sup> Our hearts are changed by true repentance; not by merely saying words, or changing the words that we speak. We need to be instructed by Scripture on how to relate to God, and not by current fads.

Our words will change with true repentance; then God will enter into our words. “The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.”<sup>3</sup> “But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in you.”<sup>4</sup> Words express what is in our hearts; and God does use them to accomplish His will on

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 15:8-9 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 16:1 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 10:19-20 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

this earth. He can create by using our words—we can't. The Spirit of the Father will speak through us when we have the Spirit of His Son.

Sadly, most of Christianity is in a state of pride today, which is the opposite of humility; but the problem with this is that “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”<sup>1</sup> Legalism is a sure sign of spiritual pride because churches will use rules and regulations to keep their congregations in line, instead of the power of the Holy Spirit. Because they don't understand humility, they don't know how to open up to the Holy Spirit, so they try to mimic Him; and, if they do know how, but hold back, they are shepherds that are keeping their flocks away from their resting place.<sup>2</sup> Some will ignore simple [faith](#) in Christ by emphasizing the gifts of the Spirit instead of the fruit of the Spirit; others will say that the words you read in the Bible are equivalent to receiving the presence of God—and so on. What they all have in common is that they are substitutes for real faith; and they do not take you beyond human pride. The power of the gospel is realized in the simplicity of faith; not by complicating it or placing barriers and obstructions in its way, or by diverting people away from it.

Christ says that “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”<sup>3</sup> This is probably true of most churches or groups that emphasize the gifts of the Spirit, at the expense of true humility towards God. Generally, there is little to no mention of the fruit of the Spirit, for the obvious reason that it requires humility to receive the Holy Spirit and experience its fruit; which is something that they are not familiar with. I've had to endure more than one Christian fad that had no Biblical basis. Some of these fads get deeply rooted in an organization. Sadly, this is the normal state of Christianity today.

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<sup>1</sup> James 4:6. See also 1Peter 5:5; Psalms 138:6

<sup>2</sup> See Jeremiah 50:6

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 7:22

The fruit of the Spirit is what is supposed to keep us in line morally; and the Spirit of Christ is what makes it available.<sup>1</sup> Temperance is specifically the one that gives us victory over our compulsions and addictions. Peace is for stress, worry and anger. Long-suffering is for patience. All of them in some way give us the ability to be peaceful, gentle, loving, joyful, and controlled individuals. The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of Christ's presence within us. These are His personal attributes and character traits that He shares with us through His Spirit, which include His rest or peace. In light of this, it's important to recognize that we can never, by ourselves, do this as satisfactorily as Christ is able to do this for us. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to overcome our weaknesses. When this power is not present in us, we struggle to be moral and enlightened from a position of weakness; and this causes a lot of unnecessary distress because it really cannot be done. Christian Higher Power spirituality produces an infusion of Christ's Spirit within us, along with its attributes that are not available from any other source including ourselves. God's righteousness is only available through the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Those who believe that unconditional trust is very difficult for us to do, don't recognize that the Holy Spirit facilitates it by His presence within us. It is difficult to do *without* the Holy Spirit. Our unconditional trust brings us the Holy Spirit, who in turn, maintains it with Christ's trust in the Father that is present within us.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."<sup>2</sup> The fruit of the Spirit, which includes inner peace, comes from the Spirit of God the Father within the Spirit of Christ. This was true of Christ during His earthly ministry because He had the Spirit of the Father within Him; and this gave Him the inner rest that resulted from His meekness and humility toward the Father;<sup>3</sup> and this is also true of Christ today, at the right hand of God the Father and within us. Christ's faith in the Father appropriates it for Himself; then Christ is able to share His rest with us by the presence of His Spirit within us, which we receive and maintain by our [faith in Him](#). This is the only way that we can receive

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<sup>1</sup> See Galatians 5:22-24

<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:14

<sup>3</sup> See Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 7:25

righteousness and peace from God. He then treats us as His adopted sons because we have the Spirit of His Son within us, and are parts of the Body of His Son; and His Son's peace binds us together. This is quite a position to be in. Christ's human spirit within the Holy Spirit is essential for us because His human faith in the Father and His intercession bring us everything pertaining to salvation. Without God's provision of having Christ's Spirit within us, we would be in the same predicament as the fallen angels, who have no possibility of redemption.

Because the word *fruit* is singular, one opinion is that the primary fruit of the Spirit is love, and that the other qualities are parts of love. Paul, in 1Corinthians, speaks of the many aspects of love, similar to the fruit of Spirit listed in the book of Galatians.<sup>1</sup> I believe that the different parts of love are all received at the same time, and that they are all parts of the same package. For example, when I am peaceful in a given situation, I am also patient; and the reason that I am at peace is because of faith. The fruit of the Spirit seems to be all tied together; but the other gifts and manifestations of the Spirit appear to be distributed separately and selectively by God.

There are those who say that the Eucharist or Table of the Lord is the primary way of connecting with the Holy Spirit; but our interaction with the Holy Spirit works differently from the Eucharist. By our [faith](#) in Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit who puts us in the state of grace, and who gives us the strength to deal with our sin nature. This requires an imageless surrender to Jesus Christ that brings us His presence; and which can be done at any time or place. It is an act of the will that needs to be done prior to participating in the Eucharist; otherwise, we will not be in the requisite state of grace. We come to Christ in our weakened state, and rest our minds upon Him in unconditional trust, so that we can have victory over sin through His Spirit that is given to us.<sup>2</sup> Christ becomes our resting place. Without this, we will be driven by our sin nature, which seriously compromises our ability to exercise our wills for the good. The sacrament of Reconciliation (confession), without faith, is also not a substitute for this because it also presupposes faith,

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<sup>1</sup> See 1Corinthians 13:4-8; Galatians 5:22-23; Romans 12:6; 1Corinthians 12:7-12, 28-30

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 11:28-30; Psalms 55:22; Galatians 4:6. Burdens include all worry, anger, addictions, compulsions, frustration from unfulfilled desires, etc.

just like the other sacraments.<sup>1</sup> Sacraments are outward expressions of faith that must be undergirded by our trust in Jesus Christ because they do not stand alone apart from this.

In my younger days I would go to confession without even a concept of personal faith in Christ. The results were frequent lapses into sin and frequent confessions; which indicated that my sin nature was still fully intact. We can have real victory over this pattern, and not just read or hear about it. We need to have our sin nature dealt with before we can successfully avoid the recurrence of sin actions. A religion of rules and regulations is not going to help us overcome our weakened human nature; it only adds guilt and penalties to our actions.<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit overrides all of this. Real transformation and enlightenment come only from the presence of Jesus Christ, who is within us by our faith in Him. This usually does not require major lifestyle changes with the exception that we need to avoid the acting out of our sin nature.

The christ spirit and the Biblical Spirit of Jesus Christ are two entirely different constructs. The terms *christ spirit* and *holy spirit* are used in non-Christian spiritualities to mean something that we are all born with; and it is our job to come to a full realization of it. When the terms are used in this way, there is no personal Jesus Christ to unconditionally trust in and open up to; and that He is no more the Logos or Word incarnate than we are. Using a term that is similar to a Biblical term is a clever and a common way of deceiving the uninformed into thinking that the person who is using it, is using it in a Biblical way. The objective is to draw people into a group before they fully understand what it is all about.

There is bad theology that tells us that we need to clean ourselves up before we can approach God. The problem with this is that we are too weak to do it ourselves. We can only do it by faith in Jesus Christ while we are still in our weakened state. This is how we get Christ within us so that we can be cleansed by His blood and be strengthened.<sup>3</sup> The idea that we need to do the cleansing

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<sup>1</sup> See Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Chapter III: 59

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 8:2-4; 7:7-14; 6:23; 5:13; Galatians 5:1-4; Colossians 2:20-23

<sup>3</sup> See 1John 1:7-10; 5:6-8; Hebrews 10:1-10

probably comes from the mistaken belief that we receive Christ only in the Eucharist or Table of the Lord; but, if this is so, we won't have His presence inside of us for cleansing before we participate in it; so we would need to cleanse ourselves without Him, which is impossible.

This also implies that we can have sanctifying grace without the presence of Christ within us. It is easy to have this kind of thinking because many Christians do not understand the concept of receiving Christ by faith. The sacraments presuppose faith and are not substitutes for it because sanctifying grace is imparted to us through the presence of Christ already within us when we have received Him by faith. Sanctifying grace cannot be separated from the presence of Christ's Spirit within us; and without His Spirit, we cannot have the requisite sanctifying grace prior to participating in the Eucharist. The Spirit is the means by which the mediator of all graces, the man Jesus Christ, imparts grace to us from the Father. The Eucharist, by itself, does not put us in the state of grace; therefore, we need to be in the state of grace and have Christ within us by faith before we participate in the Eucharist, otherwise we will receive it in a state of sin.

In the gospel of John, when Christ said that He was the living bread from heaven, and spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood for eternal life, His response to those who did not understand what He was saying was: "What if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"<sup>1</sup>. He seems to have been alluding to the Holy Spirit who was going to be poured out at Pentecost after His flesh and blood ascension; at which time, Christ became a life-giving spirit who inhabits us.<sup>2</sup> The Spirit is the reality behind the Eucharist, as well as everything else.

The sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) won't put us in the state of grace either unless the person who confesses his sins has faith in Jesus Christ; and if he does have faith in Jesus Christ, he probably won't need the sacrament of Reconciliation in its present form because he has already been cleansed. In the

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<sup>1</sup> John 6:62-63 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also 6:35

<sup>2</sup> See 1Corinthians 15:45; John 14:19-20

New Testament, James says to “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of confession in this verse is to reveal your faults to others so that they will pray for you to overcome them—not to absolve you. The sacrament of Reconciliation, in its present form, seems to have evolved out of a Christianity that has insufficiently availed itself of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

All of the externals of Christianity require faith in Jesus Christ if they are going to do us any good. They are not meant to stand alone.

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<sup>1</sup> James 5:16

## 14. HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE

Physical death is a result of Adam's disobedience. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned. (For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 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...For if by one man's offense death reigned by one, much more they that receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as by the offense 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...Moreover, the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound...That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, our Lord."<sup>1</sup> Physical death has been around since Adam's transgression as a penalty for sin (human weakness/original sin) even though legal sin did not exist until the Mosaic Law. The Law made the offenses even worse because it added law-breaking into the mix, along with its legal penalty.

Christ has the righteousness of the Law and righteousness by His faith in the Father; and Christ's presence within us enables Him to share all of this with us, along with eternal life. Jesus Christ is the last Adam who reconnects us with God and eternal life. "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving spirit."<sup>2</sup> This happened at Pentecost, after Christ's ascension into heaven. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."<sup>3</sup> Eternal life is available to us only through Christ's presence within us; whose presence we receive by our faith in Him. This is true of everything that we receive from God the Father as a result of the redemption. Christ appropriates it for Himself by His faith in the Father; and then He shares it with us by His presence and intercession

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 5:12-14, 17-18, 20-21. See also Philippians 3:9 (old KJV); Galatians 2:20-21

<sup>2</sup> 1Corinthians 15:45 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

<sup>3</sup> 1John 5:11-12. See also John 5:26

within us. This is how the man Christ Jesus is the one mediator between God and us in all things pertaining to salvation, including justification or righteousness by faith. Christ's immortal humanity continues to be essential for us.

Along with the victory over our human weakness (original sin) in this life, eternal life is the other main benefit that Christ provides for us. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>1</sup> "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."<sup>2</sup> "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever [believeth](#) in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God...He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."<sup>3</sup> Faith in the Son of God is the only thing that really matters.

Eternal life is our hope. Notice that inaction in relation to Christ is not an option. The consequences are the same as saying no because we are born alienated from God and condemned from the start as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. If we don't connect with Christ, we just stay that way. This seems normal for us because our negative state has been with us since birth, and we don't know anything else. Our attachment to ego and sin needs the restraint of the Holy Spirit.

In this present life, we start experiencing eternal life when we have inner peace through faith in Jesus Christ—when we are at peace from the things of the past, present, and future. "That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."<sup>4</sup> "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan

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<sup>1</sup> John 8:12

<sup>2</sup> John 1:4

<sup>3</sup> John 3:16-18, 36. See also 5:26; 6:28-29; 17:2; 1John 5:11

<sup>4</sup> Titus 3:7

within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”<sup>1</sup> The redemption of our bodies is the completion of our redemption. Hope is an “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast”<sup>2</sup> for those who have fled to God for refuge.

We need to get beyond the limitations of our own minds in order to connect with the infinite and timeless, and to get into the realm of eternal life. This happens when we open up to the inner peace that comes from Christ when we trust Him unconditionally. Our sense of time resides in our thoughts. When we get beyond our thoughts by the Holy Spirit, we are in the realm of the timeless; and as a result, we are more patient and peaceful, less prone to anger, anxiety, boredom, or loneliness; and less frustrated because we will be less likely to seek contentment or satisfaction by trying to satisfy desires. This is how we begin to participate in eternal life in a very real way even before we depart from this world. Most of Christianity has not grasped this, and this is why a relationship of unconditional trust with God is not as valued or as prominent as it should be. Without God’s presence within us, there is no relationship with God; therefore, we end up having a dysfunctional relationship with ourselves or with either someone or something else; and we will not reap the special benefits that are available from the Creator when we are close to Him.<sup>3</sup> When our hope is directed toward satisfying our desires for merely passing joys, we will never arrive at real peace and contentment. When we seek peace and contentment by satisfying desires, we never arrive at them because desire, of its very nature, is insatiable; we never get enough; therefore, frustration is inevitable.

“Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”<sup>4</sup> “Beloved,

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:22-25. See also Matthew 24:31; John 11:25-26; 1Corinthians 15:51-57; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 9:28; 1John 3:1-2; Job 14:14; Psalms 17:15

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 6:19. See also Hebrews 6:17-20

<sup>3</sup> See 1Corinthians 2:9-16; James 4:6-10; 1Peter 5:5-7

<sup>4</sup> 1Peter 1:13

now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.”<sup>1</sup> It sounds like hope is an important thing.

When we physically die in Christ, we temporarily lose our bodies, only to wait for an immortal body in the future. If we are alive and in Christ Jesus at the time of His initial return, we don’t die at all; instead, our bodies are instantaneously changed into incorruptible ones. Christian victory over death is fully realized at this point even though we may have gone through a physical death. This is our hope.<sup>2</sup>

We are not destined to live eternally as disembodied spirits, as are angelic beings. Christ told His apostles, “Because I live, ye shall live also.”<sup>3</sup> Without the resurrection of Christ and His ongoing immortality, we have no possibility of eternal life because He needs to be alive at the present time in order for His full presence to be available for us. The incorruptible bodies that we are to receive will be the same as Christ’s resurrected and incorruptible body.<sup>4</sup> He is our forerunner. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; but every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”<sup>5</sup> “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

As much detail as there is in Scripture concerning this teaching, it is not popular in today’s Christianity except among those who take Scripture seriously. My guess is that this is so because it implies that all of the real Christians will be resurrected or changed, and removed from the earth prior to the end of the world. The only form of Christianity that will remain, if any at all, is a dead structure. This may not

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<sup>1</sup> 1John 3:2-3

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 24:31; John 11:25-26; 1Corinthians 15:51-57; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 9:28; Job 14:14; Psalms 17:15

<sup>3</sup> John 14:19. See also 1Corinthians 15:20-21

<sup>4</sup> See Philippians 3:21; 1John 3:2

<sup>5</sup> 1Corinthians 15:22-23. See also 1Timothy 6:16

<sup>6</sup> Romans 6:23

sit well with Christian denominations who think that they will be around until the end of the world.

A lot of interesting things are going to happen on this earth prior to the new heaven and new earth which come after the end of the world.<sup>1</sup> The Christians that have been removed from the earth will return with Christ to rule and reign with Him over this present earth.<sup>2</sup> Many of those that were not part of this first resurrection will not like it. God's rule will not be popular with everybody: "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples"<sup>3</sup>, "and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."<sup>4</sup> Christ is going to return to a hostile environment—to say the least—and He will reciprocate the hostility.

The popular belief that humanity is going to evolve into a higher consciousness will not do its advocates any good, but will only harden their rebellion against God, with its obvious consequences. *Higher consciousness* is code language for self-autonomy from God, and comes from the idea that people will evolve out of dependence upon the Biblical God, and evolve into a self-autonomy that complements the monistic—all-is-god-including-me view of god. Another aspect of this idea is that people will evolve into a more cooperative and peaceful state, without God. For those who believe that humans evolved from primates, our weakened state is considered to be only an evolutionary step away from full strength. This is impossible because humans can be strong and peaceful, only with God; and He is not going to change the human nature that He created so that it can function well without Him. Only He is able to bring us to our full humanity.

God created us perfect. Adam's separation from God caused our weakness and selfishness. The last Adam, Jesus Christ, enables us to restore our connection with God, along with its accompanying benefits. The only real higher consciousness that is available to us is through faith in Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve wanted a higher consciousness and independence from God, but it resulted in weakness;

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<sup>1</sup> See Revelation 21:1

<sup>2</sup> See Revelation 2:26-29; 5:10; 19:14; 20:6; Isaiah 13:3; Luke 12:44; Jude 14-15

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 2:4. See also 2Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 13

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 11:4. See also Psalms 2

and we, their descendants, have been the beneficiaries of it. Evolutionary higher consciousness happens to be the latest incarnation of this idea, and is regarded as a logical evolutionary step; but it is actually another form of human pride and rebellion against God. The packaging may change, but the rebellion remains the same.

Religion is denigrated, and blamed for human conflict; but, in reality, it is the only real solution when it is done right. The Bible is reduced to myth and metaphor because it challenges the prevailing wisdom. The history of the twentieth century shows that secular political and economic systems such as atheistic Nazism and Communism have the capacity for killing tens of millions of people who stand in their way or don't adhere to their ideologies. They don't have the capacity to transform human nature; therefore, they kill and instill fear in order to bring about the changes that they envision. Christianity required the death of only one person—Jesus Christ. All human systems, including religious systems, need the transforming power of God in order to function well. They will always be weak and will fail without the Biblical God. His word will always be relevant.

Scripture tells us how the story ends: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."<sup>1</sup> "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all"<sup>2</sup>. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne"<sup>3</sup>; "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."<sup>4</sup> Whatever Christ receives from the Father as a result of His human faith in the

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 17:14

<sup>2</sup> Jude 14-15

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 3:21

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 2:26-29. See also 5:10; 19:14; 20:6; Luke 12:44; Isaiah 13:3

Father and His prayer, He shares with us by His Spirit within us, including His own throne and rule over the nations. Are we listening?

“And I saw heaven opened and, behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were like a flame of fire; and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies that were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 19:11-16. See also Zechariah 14:9; Psalms 72; 2Thessalonians 2:1-12

## 15. INNER PEACE AND STRENGTH

Inner peace and strength are the most evident and logical results of unconditional [trust](#) in God, which is at the core of Biblical spirituality in both Old and New Testaments, and is the essence of humility towards God. Unconditional trust in Jesus Christ, which brings His presence within us, is required for grace to flow to us from God. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> This scripture says it all. When it tells us to be anxious for nothing, it is telling us to have unconditional trust in God. The resulting peace of God that passes all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds through (or in) Christ Jesus. Our faith in Christ makes this possible because the peace of God is Christ’s own peace that He has from His faith in the Father, which He shares with us by the presence of His Spirit within us.<sup>2</sup> Everything pertaining to salvation that we receive from the Father comes to us through His Son. The peace of God comes from the Spirit of God, which resides in the Spirit of Christ through Christ’s faith in the Father; all of which resides in our human spirit through our faith in Christ. “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts”<sup>3</sup>. It needs to umpire our lives and our decisions because it is the place of guidance from God; and it is the best place for us to be for making objective choices.

Any spiritual practice that does not include unconditional [trust](#) in God is not a practice that connects us with the Biblical God. As the transcendent Creator God, He requires it from us. If we don’t comply, we shut ourselves off from the special graces that He has for those who will humble themselves. He doesn’t treat everybody the same because “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”<sup>4</sup>. He differentiates, based on humility towards Him. This is basic Biblical spirituality. “For, therefore, we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust

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<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:6-7 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also 1Peter 5:6-7 and Romans 15:13; 2Peter 3:14

<sup>2</sup> See John 14:27

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 3:15

<sup>4</sup> James 4:6; See also 1Peter 5:5; Psalms 138:6; 103:2-13; 145:20; 146:9; 147:6; John 10:17; Romans 10:12-13; 2Corinthians 9:7

in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.”<sup>1</sup> Unconditional trust requires an object of trust such as a personal transcendent God. An impersonal energy force that permeates everything, including our own minds, does not require our trust. Our minds are naturally dualistic, and go outward whenever we trust. When we trust the Biblical God, we get special attention from Him.

The resulting peace is mentioned throughout the Bible. It is the peace *of* God, which indicates peace *with* God, and results in peace with those around you. It can also result in peace among nations if enough people participate in it. There is also the “peaceable fruit of righteousness”<sup>2</sup> that comes from God’s chastening. In the Holy Spirit, righteousness and peace complement each other. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated”<sup>3</sup>. “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>4</sup> “The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.”<sup>5</sup> “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come upon thee.”<sup>6</sup> Christ is “The Prince of Peace”<sup>7</sup>. “But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”<sup>8</sup>. The inner peace from the Holy Spirit and Christ’s promised rest are one and the same. Within this framework, good shall come upon thee.

The strength from the Holy Spirit is called temperance. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD forever; for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.”<sup>9</sup> In Christ, our willpower is unencumbered and freed up so that we can love one another. “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an

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<sup>1</sup> 1Timothy 4:10. See also Psalms 34:15; 33:18; Ecclesiasticus (aka Sirach) 15:19-20 (Catholic Bible)

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 12:11. See also Psalms 85:10

<sup>3</sup> James 3:17

<sup>4</sup> Romans 14:17 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

<sup>5</sup> Numbers 6:26

<sup>6</sup> Job 22:21

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 9:6

<sup>8</sup> Galatians 5:22-23. See also Matthew 11:28-30

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 26:3-4; See also Psalms 105:4; 2Peter 3:14

occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another”<sup>1</sup> “The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.”<sup>2</sup> Because our righteousness by faith is actually Christ’s own righteousness by His faith in the Father that He shares with us, peace and strength always accompany each other. Without Christ’s Spirit within us, strength will not accompany peace, and our peace will be transitory.

The peace that comes from God starts with [resting](#) our minds on Christ in unconditional trust. It is not a product of our own thought, visualization, concentration, or mantra; if it was, it would not last very long because our thoughts are so fleeting; therefore, peace is transitory for those who use these methods. God needs to be part of the process in order for us to get beyond our thoughts, so that the peace can be solid and lasting. He wants to be trusted, and to have our minds rested upon Him. This is what a transcendent Creator God expects from His human creation. He does not want us to visualize Him even though He is a personal God. “For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”<sup>3</sup> Our trust in the Biblical God brings us His rest, which does not have the limitations of our own thoughts and methods. God’s rest is an infused rest that is a part of the Spirit; therefore, we only need to be yielded to the Spirit and remain in its rest after we have received it. We can cease from our own works. We can rest from our worry, anger, and addictions. We can also rest from our desires because we will not expect to find our contentment in other things.

The amount of peace that we receive from God is directly proportional to the amount of trust that we give Him; then His peace becomes a catalyst for His grace. We are not at peace because God works in our favor; God works in our favor because we are at peace. Our faith in God draws His favor; otherwise He will resist us. When we find our rest in God, everything is at its best. We need to make the first move even though our tendency is to want to see the results first. Our faith in Him precedes the results. Peace, strength, and righteousness are all

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 5:13

<sup>2</sup> Psalms 29:11

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 4:10. See also Job 22:21; Isaiah 55:6-9; Deuteronomy 29:19-20; 2Peter 3:14

products of the Holy Spirit who we receive within us *after* we draw close to God by using unconditional trust.

The inner peace of God is a fruit of the Spirit;<sup>1</sup> therefore, it presupposes that we have the Holy Spirit. It is something that we open up to, and not something that is part of our natural state apart from God. Then it is sustained by a yielding to God, enabled by the Holy Spirit;<sup>2</sup> a yielding which is facilitated by the fruit of the Spirit called faith. We continuously yield ourselves to God in order get the maximum benefit from His peace that is already within us through the Spirit.

Christ says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."<sup>3</sup> Christ's peace comes to Him from His faith in the Father, and He is able to give it to us. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."<sup>4</sup> Christ is able to impart the inner rest that He has from His humility toward the Father.

At Pentecost, these verses of Scripture were fulfilled because He was then able to transmit this peace and rest to us through His Spirit. Prior to Pentecost, He could not. When Christ spoke these words, He knew that His meekness and humility toward the Father would eventually benefit us because without them we could not have access to the Father and be saved. He was describing one of His essential roles in the plan of salvation that brings us justification or righteousness by faith, which is His faith in the Father. The man Christ Jesus needs to be humble and subordinate to the Father in order to acquire peace and rest for Himself; and we need to be humble and subordinate to Jesus in order to acquire peace and rest from Him. The Father was Jesus' Higher Power; our Higher Power is Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> See Galatians 5:22

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 6:13-16; Philippians 4:6-7

<sup>3</sup> John 14:27

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 11:28-30. The word *lowly* in this verse is translated from the same Greek word as *humble* in other verses. See also John 14:28; 1Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 2:18

Christ's presence within us makes His rest available to us. When Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, and we live in Him, He shares with us His own inner rest that He has by His faith and humility towards the Father. His own meekness and humility acquires this rest for Himself; and we acquire Christ's own rest when we have His presence within us through our faith in Him. This is a Divine rest that is available to us only with Christ's presence within us; without Him, we can never have it. This is why He told us that His peace comes to us in a way that is different from the way that the world provides peace.

In the new Covenant or Testament, whatever we receive from God the Father, must first have been received by His Son through His faith in the Father; and His Son can then share it with us by His presence within us; which presence we receive by our faith in the Son. We cannot receive directly from the Father, and bypass the Son.<sup>1</sup> This is because Christ's faith in the Father gives Him the justification or righteousness by faith that opens Him up to the benefits from the Father that He shares with us. In order for Christ to do this, He must still be alive, and His Spirit presence must be sent to us from the Father. Everything that Christ accomplished was for our benefit; but we can't have any of the benefits without His presence within us. This must also include His human spirit because it is His human faith in the Father that brings us righteousness by faith, and salvation from His intercession. Without the resurrection and ascension, the man Christ Jesus could not be our functioning heavenly high priest.<sup>2</sup> This is a function similar to that of the Jewish high priest at the feast of the Atonement.

The Old Testament Joshua is a type of the New Testament Joshua (Jesus). The names Joshua and Jesus are the same. Joshua is translated from Hebrew; Jesus is translated from Greek. The Old Testament Joshua brought the Israelites into the promised-land rest; the New Testament Joshua brings us to inner rest. In both cases, faith was and is required. Both outer and inner peace result from trusting in

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<sup>1</sup> See John 14:6,23; 15:4; 16:15, 32; 17:7-8, 21-23, 26; 1Corinthians 3:23; Galatians 3

<sup>2</sup> See Hebrews 7:24-25; 1Corinthians 15:17

God through Christ. God's grace is compared with "the waters of Shiloah, that go softly"<sup>1</sup>. The wisdom from above is peaceful and gentle.

In summary, Christ's Spirit is available to us by [faith](#) in Him.<sup>2</sup> Our faith needs to be directed towards Him because this is how we open up to His presence. Christ's personal faith in the Father is a part of Christ's presence within us; and Christ's faith in the Father is the thing that justifies us and makes available to us the benefits of the Atonement, which include inner peace and strength.<sup>3</sup> This is how Christ shares His enlightenment with us. Even if we pray for Christ's Spirit, we actually receive it by our [faith](#) in Him because, ultimately, it is a product of relationship or drawing close to God rather than prayer. Subsequently, yielding ourselves to the Spirit within us brings us the maximum benefits from the Spirit. We need to draw close to God, before He will draw close to us—a basic Biblical principle. The logical question is, what are we waiting for?

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 8:6. See also Psalms 23:2; James 3:17

<sup>2</sup> See Galatians 3:14,26; 4:6; John 17:22-26; Acts 4:12; 11:17; 1Corinthians 15:45; Colossians 2:9-10

<sup>3</sup> See Galatians 2:16, 20 (old KJV and Catholic Douay Version)

## 16. UNCERTAINTY

Uncertainty about the past, present, and future is basic to humans. Life is inherently uncertain; but this doesn't need to be distressing. How well we handle it affects our well being and peace of mind. We generally handle it with fear unless we've found an effective way to cope with uncertainty; and fear usually translates into worry or anger. Uncertainties about health, finances, or relationships usually disturb us the most; but it can be anything else. Our experience tells us that we can control only so much. How do we deal with uncertainty so that it does not become a serious preoccupation? The Biblical answer is [faith](#) in Jesus Christ, which opens us up to His Spirit and peace, and guarantees that the unknown will ultimately work in our favor. Christ's faith in the Father that is a part of Christ's Spirit within us, not only brings us peace of mind, but it also affects the course of the events in our lives because we are sons of God and co-heirs with Christ. Christ's faith puts us in the shadow of God's wings,<sup>1</sup> and within the zone of God's grace.<sup>2</sup> Psalm 91 tells us a great deal about the benefits of faith in God. Christ's Spirit within us brings all of this into fruition and ensures that our ultimate fate is not uncertain or haphazard. The more complete and all-encompassing that our faith is in Christ, the greater the benefit is that we receive from His presence within us. This is the best that we can do for ourselves within the framework of uncertainty.

Much of the time we worry about things that may not even happen. An example of this is when we worry about how we will care for a parent who may be incapacitated in their old age. Actually, this may either never happen or they may die prior to this. If this is the case, we will have worried for no reason at all. Trusting in God is the best that we can do for ourselves and for the person that we are concerned about because we thereby invite God's participation in the situation; and we make better decisions about preparing for possible eventualities.

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<sup>1</sup> See Psalms 57:1; 23:4; Romans 8:28; Galatians 3:26; 4:5, 7; Philippians 4:12-13

<sup>2</sup> See James 4:6; Job 22:21

When something unexpected happens, good or bad; the worst thing that we can do is to withdraw our faith from God. It is probably a test of faith; and how we respond during the event affects the outcome. To ensure that it will work in our favor, we need to stay faithful to God by continuing to trust Him because He will then participate in the outcome for our good; “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”<sup>1</sup> This scripture is realized in our lives only when we trust Christ on an ongoing basis; otherwise, we have good reason to doubt that it applies to us. When we worry about uncertainties, we hinder God’s participation in them; when we leave uncertainty in God’s hands, He controls the outcome for our good. Inner peace and strength aren’t the only benefits from trusting in God.

Also, we need Christ’s own wisdom and power for handling the uncertainty in our lives; therefore, we need to stay connected to Him regardless of what the situation looks like, because this is the best that we can do for ourselves, considering that we humans are not privy to all of the forces, spiritual or otherwise, that affect us. God has the resources and knowledge for directing them toward our benefit—we don’t. We need to keep Him on our side so that we can remain in His bubble of protection and guidance. All of this resides in Christ because He alone is the Word incarnate who has the righteousness by faith to receive all of this for Himself, and which can be imparted to us through His Spirit. We can have it only insofar as we have His Spirit within us so that He can share it with us. Christ does not share from a distance. There is no human or angelic mediator between Christ and us.

Another aspect of uncertainty is: how do we arrive at objective truth while, at the same time, we use our personal experiences to process the information that we receive? Is it possible to be certain or objective about anything? Within the framework of the Biblical revelation, the answer is yes. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we also receive peace, wisdom, objectivity, and the certainty of salvation.<sup>2</sup> This gives us clarity. The world tells us that we are unable to discern truth, and

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:28. See also 1Samuel 10:6-7; Psalms 112:7-8

<sup>2</sup> See 1Corinthians 1:30; 1John 3:24; 5:10; Romans 8:16; John 7:17; James 1:17

that everyone has their own subjective truth which is only valid for them regardless of how much it contradicts that of another person. Scripture tells us that we can discern objective truth. Our opinion of something is able to reflect reality and not be totally subjective. A false opinion does not bring its content into reality. A false opinion is the only reality that is created by a false opinion. Ultimately, there is only one Creator.

When we have faith in Christ, and His Spirit is within us, we don't live a life of anxiety because of uncertainty; but in a relativistic universe with no personal God, we do, because uncertainty and anxiety are our normal state without Him.

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## 17. WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

God's wisdom is one of the things we have in Christ Jesus; and is an aspect of our salvation.<sup>1</sup> Christ has wisdom by His human faith in the Father; and Christ is able to share it with us when we have His Spirit within us by our faith in Him. God uses Christ's human nature to bring it to us. The Father uses only His Son Jesus Christ to channel His grace and blessings to us; and it all comes about by faith—our faith in Christ and Christ's faith in the Father—faith to faith. Our faith in Christ elicits a response from God, which is an infusion of Christ's Spirit within us that contains His faith in the Father, and brings us righteousness by faith. "And ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's"<sup>2</sup>. This is how the man Christ Jesus functions as our one mediator between God and us.

For those who are called, there is "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."<sup>3</sup> Wisdom is what we need to make the best decisions in our daily lives—decisions that correspond with God's guidance. The extent that we are in Christ determines how well it operates in our lives, because it is an aspect of His Spirit presence within us. We remain in His presence through unconditional [trust](#) in Him and yielding to His Spirit.<sup>4</sup> "For the LORD giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous".<sup>5</sup> The Wisdom that is personified in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament is a veiled version of Christ.

When prophesying about Christ, Isaiah says: "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding"<sup>6</sup>. Christ shares this with us when we have His Spirit within us. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord,

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<sup>1</sup> See 1Corinthians 1:30; Romans 1:17

<sup>2</sup> 1Corinthians 3:23. See also 1Timothy 2:5

<sup>3</sup> 1Corinthians 1:24. See also 1Samuel 10:6-7

<sup>4</sup> See Philippians 4:6-7

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 2:6-7. See also 11:2; 8:33-36; Psalms 16:7; 25:9, 12-14; 111:10; 119:99-100; Acts 1:3

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 11:2

that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> When we have Christ’s Spirit presence, Christ, the Teacher, is alive within us, and we have His own mind residing within us, which gives us wisdom and understanding that are not otherwise available. The person without Christ is at a disadvantage when evaluating what is truthful and beneficial. In Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”<sup>2</sup>, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”<sup>3</sup> The wisdom that we have from Christ’s presence is a treasure. God uses mostly the ordinary or less than ordinary people of this world to display His wisdom, in order to demonstrate the fact that humans can never muster this kind of wisdom on their own regardless of their wealth, social status, or intelligence. Godly wisdom requires humility towards the Creator; which is something that everyone needs to exercise, but not everyone will; least of all those who are of privilege. Those with humility are of privilege because they are able to receive the Spirit, and the things of God as a result. Humans tend to measure others by outward appearance or attribute; God measures us by our humility towards Him. There is no human caste system in God’s economy. All are eligible to be humble.

The wisdom from God will affect everything that we think and do. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup> When we ask God for anything, our prayer needs to be combined with faith because faith creates the conditions for a response from God; and He requires it for answered prayer. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1Corinthians 2:14-16. See also Isaiah 40:13-14; 50:4-5; John 7:17; 16:13-15; Romans 11:34; Ephesians 1:17-19; Philippians 1:9-10; Malachi 3:18; 1John 3:1

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 2:3

<sup>3</sup> 2Corinthians 4:7. See also 1Corinthians 1:26-31; Isaiah 50:10

<sup>4</sup> James 1:5-7. See also Acts 3:16

<sup>5</sup> Luke 11:9. See also verses 10-13

## 18. PRAYER

In Scripture, faith and prayer are always directed toward God; whether it is the Yahweh of the Old Testament, or Jesus Christ, the incarnate God of the New Testament. “I am the LORD; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another”<sup>1</sup> “These things have I written unto you that [believe](#) on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; And if we know he heareth us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”<sup>2</sup> Our faith needs to be directed towards the Son of God because “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.”<sup>3</sup> “And they who know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou LORD, hast not forsaken those who seek thee.”<sup>4</sup> Notice that seeking God involves trusting Him. “The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they who seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.”<sup>5</sup> Faith brings into being, the things that we pray for; and this is why faith is always required for answered prayer. Without faith, it is impossible to please God;<sup>6</sup> it carries God’s response to our prayers. With the Biblical God, our words and petitions, by themselves, do not elicit answers to our prayers. Faith always needs to accompany our prayers in order for them to be answered by God.

Nature spirituality that has no Creator God tells us that we are the creators, and that we create with our own words and thoughts. This places a great deal of responsibility—and stress—on the person with a weakened human nature (all of us) who believes this. False prophecy is an example of presumptuously trying to use words to create a certain outcome. True prophecy speaks what God has

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 42:8

<sup>2</sup> 1John 5:13-15. See also 3:21-23 (old KJV); John 9:31; 15:7

<sup>3</sup> Psalms 34:15. See also 4:3; 10:17; 33:18; 86:5 Ecclesiasticus (aka Sirach) 15:20 (Catholic Douay Version); Acts 3:16

<sup>4</sup> Psalms 9:10

<sup>5</sup> Psalms 34:10

<sup>6</sup> See Hebrews 11:1, 6; Philippians 4:6; James 1:6-7

spoken.<sup>1</sup> When we have faith in God, we don't need to be afraid of false prophecy or words and curses directed toward us.

Biblical Higher Power spirituality acknowledges that the Creator creates on our behalf, and that our words are used for asking or praying—not for creating. A mere change of our vocabulary does not create, because our words are only an expression of what already exists—they don't create it. Creation on our behalf for answered prayer requires the intervention of the Creator, and our faith in Him.

Prayer and faith are separate things. Prayer is primarily words and thoughts directed toward God. Faith is a heart relationship with God, which consists of a deliberate act of the will to unconditionally trust, lean, and rest our minds upon Him. Faith and prayer are different from each other; and faith is also different from words, concentration, visualizations, mantras, or images, which actually end up being barriers to connecting with the Biblical God and answered prayer when we substitute them for simple faith. In much of non-Biblical spirituality, these practices are intended to produce enlightenment without faith in God—an enlightenment that cannot be the same as Biblical enlightenment. Within the dualistic Biblical world-view, these fall within the category of pride because we are assuming a function that belongs only to God; and this produces resistance from Him. They are not the trust in the Biblical God that we ultimately need for Biblical enlightenment. Jesus Christ's enlightenment from His faith in the Father is ours when we have His Spirit presence within us; therefore we don't need to try to do it ourselves—which we can't do anyway. All of what Christ receives from the Father is ours when we have Christ's presence within us; but we can't have any of it without our faith in Christ.

Because prayer and faith are done in different levels of the mind—the intellect and the heart—they can be performed simultaneously. As a result, faith can undergird and accompany prayer, along with everything else that we do; “And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”<sup>2</sup>. Prayer and devotions should be viewed as parts of our [faith or connection with God](#),

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<sup>1</sup> See Deuteronomy 18:22; Isaiah 8:10; Psalms 31:19-20; Ecclesiasticus (aka Sirach) 27:27-33 (Catholic Bible)

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 3:17

rather than the other way around. When faith is viewed only as a component of prayer, it will not get the prominence and use that it deserves; and it is unlikely that it will be a part of everything else in our lives because a person may get the mistaken impression that relationship with God is exercised only when we are in dialogue with Him. Faith or relationship with God needs to constantly permeate our entire beings and every aspect of our lives, and not just our prayer; and needs to be in a category of its own, and not buried in another. Prayer, by itself, without faith, is not a relationship with God; and this is also true of everything else. What we don't want to do is to pray, and then to stop there. We need to move on to humility and surrender. Prayer is not to be used as an excuse for not going further with God. It needs to be viewed as a component of ongoing humility toward God.

The one that we pray to must be trusted, and the one that we [trust](#) requires our prayer; “ye have not because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”<sup>1</sup> Trust and lust are opposites. We should not pray for things that are for our own self-gratification, because they become substitutes for God when we view them as essential for our inner peace. [Faith](#) neutralizes self-gratification and lust, and it purifies the motives for our prayers. “The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”<sup>2</sup> Righteousness, which comes from faith, is important for answered prayer. Our inner peace, which is a fruit of the Spirit, needs to precede our prayers.

Christ tells us to “Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened”<sup>3</sup>. “And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”<sup>4</sup> If what we now see is any

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<sup>1</sup> James 4:2-3. See also John 15:7; 16:24

<sup>2</sup> James 5:16. See also Philippians 4:6-7; John 15:16; Psalms 4:3; 7:10; 10:17; 34:17-19; 66:18; Ecclesiasticus (aka Sirach) 35: 20-22 (Catholic Douay Version) 16-19 in other versions

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 7:7-8. See also 21:22; Luke 11:9-13

<sup>4</sup> Luke 18:7-8. See also Psalms 4:3

indication, the answer is no. Notice that faith is associated with God's election and His speedy responses to prayer.

Trusting in the promises of God is not the same as trusting in God Himself. Our primary trust needs to be in God Himself; otherwise, there is no bridging of the separation between us and God. If we are only trusting in the promises, we are still approaching God from a distance, without humility, detached from a connection to Him. Claiming the promises of God, by itself, is also not a relationship with Him because this leaves us open to wanting God's promises in order to satisfy our lustful tendencies; and this prevents answers to prayer.<sup>1</sup> Only with faith in God, are we freed from the dominance of the self. Only in Christ, can God's Biblical promises become a reality, "For all of the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen"<sup>2</sup>. Even the promises made by God to Israel apply to us because the Jewish Jesus Christ within us connects us to Israel. The word of God is operative in those that have faith. Faith enables us to experience the reality of the unseen world and to actively participate in it.

Prayer is supposed to supplement our faith in Jesus Christ, and not be a substitute for it. It needs to be done within the framework of faith. James tells us to "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."<sup>3</sup> When Christ's disciples asked Him why they were unable to cast out a demon, Jesus' reply was, "Because of your unbelief"<sup>4</sup>. Before He spoke of being able to move mountains Jesus told them to "Have faith in God"<sup>5</sup>. Without trust in God, our prayers are ineffective.

There are times when we may be praying and asking God, from a distance, for something that is received only by drawing close to Him; or we may be asking someone to intercede on our behalf for these things. Divine peace and strength, for example, are integral parts of His presence within us; and if we pray for these,

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<sup>1</sup> See James 4:3

<sup>2</sup> 2Corinthians 1:20. See also 1Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 11:1; Matthew 9:27-30; Mark 1:40-42; Acts 3:16

<sup>3</sup> James 1:6-7. See also Psalms 112:7-8

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 17:20

<sup>5</sup> Mark 11:22

we will have a long wait if we don't ultimately draw close to God and receive His Spirit. All of this is due to misinformation about how God operates. There are things that we have from God because of His presence within us; and then there are things that we receive by prayer. It's important to recognize the difference and to be informed.

Prayer and faith involve two entirely different processes. Prayer is primarily asking God for things—a mental activity. Faith is trust, along with its accompanying non-anxiety; and it is within this calm that prayers are answered. Most of us do not have an understanding of Biblical faith; so we approach God from a distance, and our prayers are hindered. We need to be taught how to exercise faith in God; and we can never assume that the person who prays knows how to do this. Those who trust in God have a huge advantage over those who don't, because they are God's favorites, and he looks after them in a special way.<sup>1</sup> We are supposed to be trusting in Him, and He is supposed to be within us. We need to get into the [process of drawing close to and connecting with Him](#). What are we waiting for?

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<sup>1</sup> See Psalms 1:6; 2:12; 4:3-5; 5:11; 9:10; 17:7; 23; 28:7; 32:10; 33:22; 34:7-8, 15; 37:39-40; 57:1; 84:11-12; 91; 138:6-7; Proverbs 29:25; Isaiah 57:15; Jeremiah 1:8; 17:5-8; Nahum 1:7; John 10:9-10, 27-28; 1Corinthians 2:14-15; James 4:6-10

## 19. PRAISE AND WORSHIP

God requires praise and worship. “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”<sup>1</sup> Praise and worship are to be done within the framework of our faith in Jesus Christ; and, like prayer, are not substitutes for [trusting in Him](#)—they are supplements. Jesus said, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus Christ is Spirit and Truth; and His Spirit presence within us ensures that our praise and worship are acceptable to God; otherwise, we praise and worship God from a distance. “The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him and I am helped. Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him...Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.”<sup>3</sup> “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance...who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”<sup>4</sup> “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.”<sup>5</sup> “Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous; for praise is comely for the upright...I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.”<sup>6</sup> Being upright must precede praise; praise does not make us upright. I can’t help thinking that Christ, in addition to interceding for us with His faith in the Father, is also praising and worshipping the Father at His right hand and within us.

Praise and worship, like prayer, should be viewed as supplements to [faith](#), and not the other way around. If we exercise faith only when we praise and worship, we may view faith as something that is done only at certain times of the day or week, or only in certain places. Faith is too important to be restricted in this way; it is supposed to be a constant in our lives, and permeate everything that we do.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalms 29:2. See also Deuteronomy 26:11

<sup>2</sup> John 4:23

<sup>3</sup> Psalms 28:7; 63:7; See also 33:21; 95:6-7; 118:21

<sup>4</sup> Psalms 42:5; 43:5. See also Isaiah 61:11

<sup>5</sup> Philippians 4:4

<sup>6</sup> Psalms 33:1; 34:1-3. See also 92:1-4; 118:13-15; 130:4

It makes our praise and worship acceptable to God. Because faith in God needs to be taught to us, we can never assume that the person who is praising or worshipping is doing it with Biblical faith; especially if the church that the person attends does not teach it.<sup>1</sup> Just like prayer, praise and worship can be misused when they are not coupled with humility toward God. Some churches promote praise and worship as their main form of spirituality and ignore Biblical faith. Usually they attempt to use praise and worship, instead of faith, to receive God's presence and get prayers answered. Outward observances and rituals are never a substitute for unconditional trust in God. Humility towards God needs to precede everything that we do, whether in church or out of church. It needs to be the base of our entire lives, with no intervals permitted. With God, this is possible.

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 10:17; Isaiah 66:2-4; James 4:3

## 20. THE EUCHARIST (Table of the Lord)

Saint Paul's teachings on the Eucharist are found in chapters 10 and 11 of 1Corinthians. He tell us that "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are partakers of that one bread."<sup>1</sup> Communion is another word for fellowship or joint participation, which refers to the participants in the ceremony. The individual pieces of the one bread that are distributed symbolize our role or function as the individual parts of the Body of Christ. The Eucharist is an enactment of the corporate Body of Christ. When we drink of the one cup, it symbolizes that we "have all been made to drink into one Spirit"<sup>2</sup>. Just as there is one Body of Christ that we all participate in; so too the one Spirit of Christ. We do not receive individual, fully intact, Spirits of Christ; we participate in the One. This is why we all have individual functions in the Body of Christ that are not the same, and which are commensurate with the measure of faith and the grace that are given to us.

We don't have to do it all ourselves. In fact, we can't do it all ourselves. There are no parts of the Body of Christ that can act in isolation. The Head coordinates the remainder of the Body and makes it act as a unit. Our individual connection to the Head makes us dependent upon each other, and it enables us to work in concert toward "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"<sup>3</sup>. Paradoxically, a strong individual connection with Christ creates a strong interdependence with the other parts of the Body because we are well connected to the Divine Coordinator. The Eucharist is an ongoing reminder of this, and is the ritual of our interconnectedness. It is not required that we fully understand our individual function in the Body of Christ in order for us to be performing it. We are only required to individually trust in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Head; and then, by His Spirit, He places us into His corporate Body and actuates our function apart from our full understanding of it. It is impossible for a real Christian to be

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<sup>1</sup> 1Corinthians 10:16-17

<sup>2</sup> 1Corinthians 12:13. See also Ephesians 2:18; 1John 5:8

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:13. See also 1Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:3-13; Ephesians 4:4-13

unconnected, appearances or perceptions notwithstanding. The world is replete with examples of natural interconnectedness. A bee hive functions as a unit in spite of the instinctive individual functions of the member bees. Other examples of this are an ant hill, a wasp nest, and a city.

The Eucharist symbolizes “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”<sup>1</sup> The Spirit is the presence of Christ that is within us as a result of our trusting in Him; and His inner peace or rest, which He shares with us, is the glue that binds us together into His single Body and Spirit. The bread represents Christ’s broken body; the wine represents His shed blood, which gave life and spirit to His body, and through which there is full remission of sin for us. As a result of this, we can now receive Divine inner peace through His living body and Spirit. Our [trusting](#) in Jesus Christ, combined with His Spirit living within us, brings this about because we are “holding the Head, from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”<sup>2</sup> “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”<sup>3</sup> When we are in Christ, we are treated as His own flesh and bones. Christ’s Spirit within us makes this possible because it connects us directly with Christ at the right hand of God.

Trusting in Christ keeps us communicating with the Head which coordinates the different functions of the body; and without this trust, we have neither unity nor peace because our part of the body is not communicating with the head. Any spiritual practice that does not open you up to the Spirit of Christ is of no consequence; and is actually detrimental when it is viewed as a substitute for unconditional trust in Christ because it prevents you from drawing close to God. It diverts you from a connection with God that is Biblically based. If it is not Biblically based, it will not connect you with the Biblical God; although it may connect you with something else.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:3. See also verses 4-7; 2:18; Philipians 4:7

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 2:19

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 5:29-30

In another reference to the Eucharist, Paul says “that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; And when had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.”<sup>1</sup> This occurred at Christ’s last Jewish Passover meal, and is another purpose for the Eucharist. He identified Himself with the bread and the wine that was served. The broken bread serves as an ongoing reminder of Christ’s death and our own death to sin, and is the outward expression of this. The wine is an ongoing reminder of the shed blood of Christ that was necessary because “almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without the shedding of blood is no remission”<sup>2</sup>. The life of the flesh is in the blood, therefore, the wine also signifies Christ’s death by His shed blood. The Eucharist reminds us of Christ’s death as the final fulfillment of the Mosaic Law—and then it was finished. Christ ended the Old Testament by His death on the cross. Justification by faith was about to begin for us. It began at Pentecost when Christ’s Spirit was made available to us by our faith in Him. Christ can now share with us His own justification or righteousness by His faith in the Father.

The Passover meal is significant because it commemorates the passing over of the destroyer, whereby the Israelites were spared the judgment of God that was going to be inflicted upon the Egyptians. When the Israelites applied the blood of the lamb that they had slain on the two side posts and the upper door post of houses where they ate the lamb, the destroyer saw it and passed over. They were then able to leave Egypt and eventually reach the Promised-Land rest. We arrive at our inner rest through the blood of Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb of God. Without His death, and His subsequent resurrection and ascension, we would not be able to able to receive His Spirit which carries His rest. At the Passover meal, He identified His body with the bread, and His blood with the wine; and clarified the meaning of the event so that it now unambiguously speaks of Him. His blood,

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<sup>1</sup> 1Corinthians 11:23-26

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 9:22. See also Leviticus 17:11; Luke 24:44-46; John 19:30; Hebrews 9:15; 10:9-10

when it is applied to us, entitles us to have the destroyer pass over us so that we can have eternal life. Jesus Christ's death destroyed our death. All of this is celebrated in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is not a substitute for our faith in Jesus Christ, but a supplement; in fact, our [trusting](#) in Jesus Christ is the *sine qua non* of our whole Christian experience, as well as being a requirement for participation in the Eucharist, otherwise, we will not have Christ's presence within us and be in the state of grace prior to participating in the Eucharist—the sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) notwithstanding, because it also requires prior faith in Christ. This precludes faith in the Eucharist as the means of salvation because faith in Christ, which brings salvation and His presence, needs to precede the receiving of the Eucharist, otherwise, we will not be in the state of grace prior to receiving it. If we expect to receive Christ *only* in the Eucharist, we will not be in the state of grace prior to it. The Eucharist does not put us in the state of grace. The man Christ Jesus, as the mediator of all graces, must reside within us by faith in order for God's grace to flow into us. Christ's human spirit within us acts as a funnel for God's grace to us; and grace is not otherwise available because it is Christ's human faith in the Father and His intercession that acquires it for us. This is why Christ's presence within us is essential in the plan of salvation. "Jesus saves" are not idle words.

When the Eucharist is falsely presented as the only means of receiving Christ, the ordained priest who produces Christ for the faithful through the words of consecration, in effect, becomes an indispensable mediator between Christ and us. This is unacceptable because there is only one priest and mediator between God and us: the man Christ Jesus. Under these circumstances, the ordained priest becomes a barrier between Christ and us because we must receive Christ by our personal faith in Him.<sup>1</sup> And when we have Christ's presence within us by faith, we participate in His role as heavenly high priest. This is the only priesthood that is available to a Christian.

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<sup>1</sup> See 2Corinthians 1:24; Romans 5:1-4; 1Timothy 2:5; 1Peter 1:5; 5:3

When people don't know this, it gives rise to a strong distinction between clergy and laity. The role of the ordained priest becomes so prominent, that the role of the non-ordained priest is downplayed to the extent that many are not even aware of the priesthood of the faithful and that we must all have direct access to Christ by our personal faith in Him. No one can do this for us. Every Christian who receives the presence of Christ by faith, is a priest and a representative of Christ on this earth.<sup>1</sup> In New Testament Christianity, the words *priest* and *priesthood* apply to all Christians.

Jesus refers to Himself as the bread of life.<sup>2</sup> Bread is for strength; wine is for peace. These are perfect symbolic elements for the Eucharist, because strength and peace are our primary inner witnesses of trusting in Christ when we receive His Spirit. We experience the reality of the Eucharist when we surrender to Christ, our Higher Power. This connects us to the Head of the Body, who can then coordinate us with the rest of the Body, and bind us together in peace. The bread that we break is the fellowship of the body of Christ. Faith in Christ equalizes both clergy and laity when participating in the Eucharist because our personal faith unites us all to the Head of the Body and to each other; and because of this, there is no distinction between the priesthood of the faithful and the priesthood of the ordained priest who presides; only, our functions and gifts in the Body of Christ differ. All of us participate in the same priesthood of Christ in the same way that we participate in His personal righteousness by faith; and this is why there is no mention of a two-tiered Christian priesthood in Scripture. Ordination cannot confer a second priesthood. There is only one in the Body of Christ; and when Jesus Christ abides in us, we are also vessels of His personal priesthood. This is the only one that is available for those of us who are parts of His Body. We can't have our priesthood without Him because it is a part of His Spirit. Our priesthood is actually Christ's personal priesthood that He is able to share with us only when we have His Spirit within us by our faith in Him.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See 2Corinthians 5:17-20; 1Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6

<sup>2</sup> See John 6:35; 1Corinthians 10:16-17; Proverbs 9:1-5; Colossians 2:19

<sup>3</sup> See Hebrews 2:16-18; 1Timothy 2:5; 1Corinthians 12:22-25; 1Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6

## 21. DIVINE MERCY

The fullness of God's mercy towards us is a function of our faith in Jesus Christ, who personifies God's mercy towards humanity. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"<sup>1</sup>. The ultimate expression of God's mercy is the provision He made for humanity to overcome the effects of the sin of Adam. The only way to participate in this is by [trusting](#) in Christ as our Higher Power and receiving His Spirit. God could have treated us like the angels who rebelled; for them there is no provision for repentance—but for humans there is. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visiteth him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands"<sup>2</sup> "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"<sup>3</sup> "And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."<sup>4</sup> Apparently, humans are very important to God, seeing that He goes out of His way to lower His heavenly tabernacle over the new earth.

I wonder if God gives humans a second chance because we are born weak and separated from God, even before we do anything wrong. All of the fallen angels were created with a connection to God, but disobeyed Him individually and willfully while they were in their state of perfection. Humans are born imperfect because of Adam.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."<sup>5</sup> Christ is our Mercy Seat or reconciliation with God

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<sup>1</sup> 1Corinthians 1:30

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 2:6-7. See also Psalms 8:4-8; Proverbs 8:31

<sup>3</sup> 1Corinthians 6:3

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 21:2-3

<sup>5</sup> 1Peter 1:3

for sin.<sup>1</sup> Through Christ's Spirit within us, we have the fullness of God's mercy towards us; but we must first receive Christ's Spirit through faith in Him. Mercy, along with grace and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, is important enough to be included in the epistle salutations of 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and 2 John. God's mercy is basic to Biblical spirituality in general and Christianity in particular; and it is something that we all need, as well as grace and peace. These three things are not only important for the afterlife, but they also enhance our present life while we are alive and functioning in this world.

There is also the general mercy of God that extends to all. "The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy;"<sup>2</sup> "It is because of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, his compassions fail not"<sup>3</sup>; and then there is the special mercy of God that extends to us individually in our lives only when we are in a relationship with Him through His Son. "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."<sup>4</sup> "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort."<sup>5</sup> "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about."<sup>6</sup> "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee. Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."<sup>7</sup> We need God at all times, but it becomes especially evident when things don't seem to be going well; which is the worst time to withdraw from God, but the best time to perfect our faith. Trusting in Christ ensures God's participation and intervention in whatever we are going through, and makes everything work out for the good,<sup>8</sup> and it is the precondition which ensures that grace and mercy flow unimpeded in our lives.

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 3:25; Psalms 116:6

<sup>2</sup> Psalms 119:64

<sup>3</sup> Lamentations 3:22. See also Psalms 25:8; Jonah 3:5-6, 10

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 4:16

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:3

<sup>6</sup> Psalms 32:10. See also 32:7; 103:2-13; 31:7; 2 Chronicles 16:9

<sup>7</sup> Psalms 57:1. See also 123:2; 33:16-21; 23:4; Philippians 4:12-13

<sup>8</sup> See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 1:2-4, 12; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-14; John 15:1-2; Romans 8:28

the man who trusteth in thee.”<sup>1</sup> God tells our enemies: “Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us.”<sup>2</sup> We don’t need to fear those who believe that they are able to create harm towards us with their words. God is the only real Creator. When we have Christ in us, we have the power of heaven to protect us.<sup>3</sup>

[Biblical spirituality](#), which provides us with the method of having faith in Jesus Christ, is required for the fullest expression of God’s mercy towards us. The mercy and grace that we receive from God is directly proportional to the amount of control that we cede over to Him. “Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.”<sup>4</sup> Only then, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”<sup>5</sup> God’s mercy is within us through the Spirit of Christ, who is the Truth. Christ’s righteousness by His faith in the Father, which is also within us through His Spirit, makes His inner peace and strength available to us. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they who put their trust in him.”<sup>6</sup> Our trust in Christ gives God the opening to send the Spirit of His Son within us and to enter into every aspect of our lives, and allows Him to work on our behalf as we release our burdens upon His Son. If we don’t give Him our burdens, God lets us try to work things out without His help. Life works better when we have God intervening in our lives.<sup>7</sup> The abundant life that we are promised, not only applies to material things, but also to every other aspect of our lives. Without humility towards Christ, teachings on the abundant life easily turn into a gospel of materialism.

Interestingly enough, God’s mercy extends to nature as well—through humans. This principle was established in Scripture from the very start. “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’s; but the earth hath he given to the children of men.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Psalms 84:11-12. See also 4:3-5; 11:7; 18:20-26; 66:16-20; 146:8-9; Deuteronomy 4:40

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 8:10. See also Psalms 31:19-20; Ezekiel 2:6; 1Corinthians 12:15-16

<sup>3</sup> See Romans 8:32-39

<sup>4</sup> Psalms 33:22. See also Psalms 33:18-19; 34:15; Proverbs 8:34-36

<sup>5</sup> Psalms 85:10

<sup>6</sup> Psalms 2:12. See also 13:5-6; Matthew 9:27-30; Mark 1:40-42

<sup>7</sup> See John 10:9-10; James 4:6-10; Psalms 4:3-8; 11:7; 23; 91

<sup>8</sup> Psalms 115:16

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth...And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”<sup>1</sup> When God created matter, it was good, not evil. After Adam and Eve disobeyed, God said: “cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life”<sup>2</sup>. Their disobedience affected the earth and nature. Our disobedience affects the earth and nature.

The interaction between humans and nature is also found in Deuteronomy 28. Some of the blessings and curses related to the behavior of the Israelites are events in nature such as locust plagues, and adequate or inadequate rainfall for crops. When we are in Christ, our presence on the earth blesses it because we are extensions of Christ.

Nature itself is waiting with the hope that humans will finally reach their true destiny in God. “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”<sup>3</sup> Nature will share in our freedom from corruption, just as it involuntarily shared in our slavery to corruption because of Adam and Eve. When humans connect with God, nature also benefits. We are not as isolated as we think—we affect nature. The best thing we can do for the planet is to have faith in Jesus Christ, because, if human greed is destroying the planet, we will be treating the source of the problem, and not just the symptoms, as we are now doing. Nature cheers us on when we evangelize in joy and peace because nature’s well-being depends upon the well-being that humans experience from their relationship with God.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:26, 31. See also Psalms 8:4-8

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:17. See also Psalms 107:33-34; Jeremiah 12:4

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:19-22. See also Psalms 96:11-13; Isaiah 55:12-13; 35:4-7

We are so accustomed to seeing the world in its present state that it is hard to imagine a world that is not cursed because of human rebellion. In Biblical prophecy concerning future events, which also includes God's mercy towards Israel that is demonstrated in the re-gathering of Israel into the original homeland, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."<sup>1</sup> Biblical prophecy is potential history. When the prophesied event comes to pass, prophecy and history become one and the same. From God's perspective, there is never a separation.

In ancient times, Israel was chosen by God to be the carrier of His revelation for the eventual redemption of mankind in spite of everyone's lack of faith including Israel. Apparently, God was not going to abandon humanity after the disobedience of Adam and Eve. He will continue to honor His commitments and covenants to Israel. What appeared to be a fatal error for Israel in rejecting Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, was actually what was supposed to happen at the time. It enabled the Gentiles to enter into the Kingdom of God by faith, and to provoke Israel to jealousy.<sup>2</sup> Even prior to the completion of Christ's earthly mission which ushered in the availability of righteousness by faith for everyone, He rewarded Gentiles and the outcasts of society for their faith in Him even though His mission was to Israel at that time and it had not been completed.

Prior to reigning over the earth, Jesus was prophesied to be the suffering Messiah for the redemption of mankind.<sup>3</sup> This is why He rejected the premature attempt to make Him king.<sup>4</sup> If this is the case, why is Israel criticized for having fulfilled prophecy? The reason is that people are still responsible for their motives, choices, and actions. The end doesn't justify the means. "The Son of man goeth as

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 11:6, 9. See also Baruch 5 (Catholic Bible); Isaiah 40:27-28; 27:1; Joel 3:20-21; Obadiah 17-21; Zephaniah 3:20

<sup>2</sup> See Romans 11; Matthew 8:8-13; 9:22; 15:28; Acts 3:17-18

<sup>3</sup> See Isaiah 53; 2Samuel 7:12-16; Psalms 89:3-4, 27, 29

<sup>4</sup> See John 6:15; 18:36; Luke 9:20-22

it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus said this of Judas before the betrayal. In spite of all this, when the King returns, the world will be ruled from Jerusalem and Israel, as is prophesied.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 26:24; See also 18:7

<sup>2</sup> See Deuteronomy 30:3-10; Psalms 2; 66:4,7; Isaiah 2:2-5; 11:1-16; 25:6-12; 27:1; 35:1-10; 49:8-26; 62:1-5; 65:13-25; 66:10-21; Jeremiah 12:14-15; 16:12-21; 23:1-8; 24:6-7; Ezekiel 20:33-38; 36:24-38; 37:11-14; 38:8; 39:25-29; 47:6-12; Micah 4:1-8; Zechariah 12-14; 9:9-10; Romans 11; Revelation 20:1-6; 21:2

## 22. JUDGING OTHERS

The subject of judging others needs attention. When a non-regenerated person judges others, it is the sure sign that the person misunderstands his own reality. The reality is that we are all born weak, and that we are in no position to belittle or correct another person's weakness before we have dealt with our own. "Thou hypocrite, first cast out beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye."<sup>1</sup> This statement implies that it is possible to be helpful to others, *if* we have found help for ourselves. If we haven't found help for ourselves, how can we teach others to find it?

Christ's parable of the Pharisee and the publican was directed to those "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others"<sup>2</sup> If you trust only in yourself, you are not acknowledging the reality that you are too weak to be righteous without God. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool"<sup>3</sup>. "This people draweth near unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."<sup>4</sup>

We can be in a position to effectively instruct someone else, only when we have Christ's Spirit within us. If we haven't found a solution for our own weakness, we are in no position to tell others how to go about it, because we really don't know how. Who wants to be with a person who only knows how to criticize, but doesn't offer workable solutions? "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."<sup>5</sup> Christ shares His own mind with us when we have His Spirit within us. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"<sup>6</sup> Maybe this is one of the reasons why Satan has such a hatred for humans. He would like to eliminate as many as he can. He is the antithesis of truth, and would

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:5

<sup>2</sup> Luke 18:9

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 28:26

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 15:8 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

<sup>5</sup> 1Corinthians 2:15-16

<sup>6</sup> 1Corinthians 6:3

love to keep us separated from our destiny in Christ; or, at least, keep us uncertain of it.

Another aspect of judging is the attempt to judge another person's standing with God; "For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him who eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth."<sup>1</sup> Even when a person does something that is clearly immoral, a person's standing with God is between that person and God. How do we know whether the person has repented or not, or whether the person knows that he is doing wrong? The person who violates his conscience is the one who is condemned because he is not acting with faith, "for whatever is not of faith is sin"<sup>2</sup>. This also includes those who place themselves under a system of rules and regulations for righteousness instead of faith because these can never be done perfectly and their conscience is always violated; therefore, they subject themselves to law-breaking and legal sin. Everything in Christianity presupposes faith. With faith, all of the other aspects of Christianity will be in their proper place and will not be given undue importance.

In spite of all this, Paul felt it was acceptable to ostracize a Christian who was not behaving properly; but non-Christians were not included in this. "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators; Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world...Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are outside God judgeth. Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person."<sup>3</sup> This is an important point because evangelism is hindered if we disassociate ourselves from the world because of its sinfulness. The world is supposed to be that way without Christ; and we are supposed to be ambassadors for Christ with the ministry of reconciliation to present the solution.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 14:2-4

<sup>2</sup> Romans 14:23 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition)

<sup>3</sup> 1Corinthians 5: 9-10, 12-13 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also 5:4-5; 4:5; 2Corinthians 5:17-20

Jesus had to deal with the legalists of His day who, “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it”<sup>1</sup>, criticized Him for associating with the wrong people.<sup>2</sup> Legalists need to be careful of their associations because they don’t have the power to resist temptation. Legalism does not produce peace and strength. Like Christ, Spirit-filled Christians can mix with anyone because they are not as easily seduced by sin. Many churches talk about reaching the unsaved, but at the same time they avoid them for fear of being influenced. Usually these are the most legalistic; and they are this way, because they lack the power of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> 2Timothy 3:5. The word *denying* (Gr. *arneomai*) can also be translated “rejecting” or “disavowing”

<sup>2</sup> See Luke 19:7; Matthew 9:11-12; 11:19; John 8:1-11

## 23. WORSHIPING ANGELS AND HUMANS

The subject of angels is important because they are a part of God's protection on our behalf, and because they provide instruction in the Bible on how to relate to them and to God. "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about those who fear him, and delivereth them. O, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusteth in him."<sup>1</sup> "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"<sup>2</sup> They perform in a special way for those who trust in God. This is important for us to know because our job is to trust God; and then He is the one who chooses how He will extend His favor towards us, which includes His use of angels to minister to us. This is how we receive the maximum benefits from the ministry of the angels. Whoever God uses to help us or intercede for us, is His domain. This is why our attention should never be diverted from God; because, to the extent that we divert it away from Him and apply it to His creation, He correspondingly withdraws His favor and protection.<sup>3</sup>

The holy angels of God do not want human worship; they always point you to God. An angel corrected John the apostle two times in this regard. "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not! I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy...I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he saith unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, the prophets, and of them who keep the sayings of this book. Worship God."<sup>4</sup> John had been an apostle for probably 65 or 70 years when this had happened. We would expect him to know better by this time. If he, the disciple whom Jesus Loved,<sup>5</sup> was inclined to do this, how much more do we need to be watchful?

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<sup>1</sup> Psalms 34:7-8

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 1:14

<sup>3</sup> See Psalms 33:22, 18; 34:15

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9

<sup>5</sup> See John 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20

The angel Raphael, upon revealing his identity to Tobit and his son, said, “For I am the angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord. And when they had heard these things, they were troubled; and being seized with fear they fell upon the ground on their face. And the angel said to them: Peace be to you. Fear not. For when I was with you, I was there by the will of God: bless ye him, and sing praises to him.”<sup>1</sup> God is the one who dispatches His angels on our behalf. Our attention needs to be directed towards Him—not the angels. “Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”<sup>2</sup> We need to remain [centered in Christ](#) in order to ensure the greatest amount of protection from angels, or anyone else that God chooses. When we divert our attention away from Christ to them, we move ourselves away from the God who directs them. God doesn’t want this, and His holy angels don’t want it; but devils love it because they want to keep us separated from God by directing our attention away from God, and vulnerable to them.<sup>3</sup> When they want to divert us from God, they provide us with distractions to which we are susceptible because of our sin nature. We receive our spiritual nourishment from Christ; and not from His created beings because there are things that only God can provide for us.

The same thing that applies to the holy angels, applies to human saints whether dead or alive. If the holy angels point us to God, why wouldn’t a human saint do the same thing? An example of human worship happened when Peter went to see Cornelius; “And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.”<sup>4</sup> Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, and was one with Christ; yet he would not accept worship. One may ask: why are we not allowed to worship the Spirit of Christ that is in another person? The answer is: because that would be idolatry. Peter knew that, so he did not permit it. Also, there is only one Spirit of

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<sup>1</sup> Tobit 12:15-18 (Catholic Douay Version)

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 2:18-19

<sup>3</sup> See 2Timothy 2:26; Matthew 4:9; 2Corinthians 11:14-15

<sup>4</sup> Acts 10:25-26. See also 1Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:18; Romans 12:3-8; Colossians 2:18-19; 2Peter 1:4

Christ that we participate in. We do not receive individual copies or become deified. We participate in the whole. This is why each person in the Body of Christ is assigned a different function by God when our trust is directed toward His Son who is the Head of the Body. No one has all of the functions.

We need to worship God in Spirit and in truth; and not try to rationalize ways of placing God's creation between Him and us. I'm sure that Peter has not changed his attitude even though he is dead. Scripture is clear on who merits worship. Because only God is omniscient and omnipresent, how would created beings, angelic or human, know of prayers and devotional practices directed toward them, when they are not present in our earthly realm while they are being done? When we ask someone to pray or intercede for us, we are usually talking to them directly, or indirectly through someone or something else. Are angels instructed by God to bring prayers to His created beings when the prayers are directed toward them as opposed to Him? Does Jesus communicate them to His created beings? I do not find answers to these questions in Scripture, although I do know from Scripture that *God* receives and answers prayer. In Scripture, God's servants, angelic and human, always instruct people to direct their attention to God and not to themselves.

When Paul and Barnabas were about to be offered sacrifices because of a miracle that God had done at the hands of Paul; "Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of [it], they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God"<sup>1</sup> I imagine that dead saints would have the same response for those who would want to worship them. Worship should always be directed towards God.<sup>2</sup>

In Scripture, there are examples of humans that accepted worship from others, and were severely punished.<sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, always accepted

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 14:14-15

<sup>2</sup> See Exodus 20:1-6; Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8; Romans 1:25; Colossians 2:18-19

<sup>3</sup> See Acts 12:22-23; Ezekiel 28:1-10

worship without any protest—which speaks to His divinity.<sup>1</sup> Paul criticizes those “Who changed the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen.”<sup>2</sup> “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.”<sup>3</sup> The first of the two great commandments points us to God.<sup>4</sup> It is reserved only for the Godhead. The second applies to His creation. Any interaction that we have with God's creation, including ourselves, is within the scope of the second great commandment. There is a tendency in humans to blur the line between Creator and creation. Interaction with God's creation is never a substitute for relationship with the Creator. Both commandments are necessary.

Our job is to have faith in Christ, so that we can have the greatest amount of protection from whatever source God chooses. Ultimately, the name of Jesus is the only name under heaven which provides us with mercy, protection, and salvation.<sup>5</sup> All of this resides in Christ's Spirit, which is within us by our faith in Him.

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 2:11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 28:9, 17; Mark 5:6; Luke 24:52; John 9:38; 20:27-28; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:6

<sup>2</sup> Romans 1:25

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 17:5

<sup>4</sup> See Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28; Deuteronomy 30:10

<sup>5</sup> See Acts 4:12; 1Peter 1:21

## 24. EVANGELIZATION

Evangelizing others is a natural response for a person who has been successfully evangelized. When something wonderful happens to you, you want to tell everyone about it. “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”<sup>1</sup> This well summarizes our response to being reconciled with God. Jesus told the woman caught in adultery that He would not condemn her; and to go and sin no more. He did not impute her trespass on her. This was symbolic of Christ’s eventual abolishing of the Mosaic Law with His death.<sup>2</sup> God uses those of us who embody the Spirit of His Son, to reconcile the world to Himself. We are parts of Christ’s Body; and God uses us as extensions of Christ to reconcile the world because Christ Himself is now at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.

When evangelization is accompanied by miracles, people are more attentive and responsive. I believe that this is why the early Christian church grew so rapidly. Jesus Christ drew a great deal of attention because of His miracles. They were also a verification of His claim to divinity. The rulers of His day felt threatened by them because the miracles gave legitimacy to Christ’s message. He could not be dismissed as a charlatan.<sup>3</sup>

There are those who are formal evangelists;<sup>4</sup> but the rest of us do it part-time, within the framework of our daily lives. Peter tells us to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you

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<sup>1</sup> 2Corinthians 5:17-20. See also Galatians 6:15; Isaiah 55:11-12

<sup>2</sup> See John 8:11; Romans 4:15; 5:13; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 10:9-10

<sup>3</sup> See Acts 2:22, 43; 4:29-30; 5:12-14; 8:6-8, 13; 9:40-42; 14:3-4; Romans 15:19; 2Corinthians 12:12; John 4:48; 5:36; 10:19-21, 25, 38; 14:10; 15:24; Mark 6:2; 16:17, 20; Luke 7:13-17; Hebrews 2:1-4; 1Kings 17:22-24

<sup>4</sup> See Ephesians 4:11

a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”<sup>1</sup> Paul tells Timothy that “the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”<sup>2</sup> There is no guarantee that the person we talk to will be reconciled to God, because He controls the outcome. Our job is to plant the seed and to water, but God gives the increase. “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”<sup>3</sup>

When Paul was instructing those who are married to unbelievers, he said that “if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”<sup>4</sup> In other words, there is no need to feel guilty if the person that we evangelize does not come to Christ; ultimately, God is the one who draws the person to His Son. When praying to the Father, Jesus said, “I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world.”<sup>5</sup> Some people take too much responsibility upon themselves, and feel that everything depends on them. This should not be the case. This is why coercion is ineffective. You may be able to force people to perform the outward observances of faith, but you can’t force anyone to have personal faith in Christ. We are told to evangelize in peace. “For ye shall go out with joy; and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1Peter 3:15. See also Luke 10:2

<sup>2</sup> 2Timothy 2:24-26; See also 1Corinthians 3:6-8; Isaiah 55:11

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 55:11

<sup>4</sup> 1Corinthians 7:15-16

<sup>5</sup> John 17:6. See also 6:37-46; Romans 8:29-30; Galatians 4:6

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 55:12

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## 25. THE ELECTION OF GRACE

The sovereign election of God is basic in Scripture. Exactly how it occurs within the framework of our will has been discussed for millennia. God influences our will, but at the same time, He holds us responsible for our choices. Paul says discusses this at length: “What shall we do then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”<sup>1</sup> The person, who responds by asking God why he is to be blamed if God made him a vessel of dishonor, really can’t say that because, in reality, he doesn’t know what God’s design is towards him. Also, he is still responsible for his choices and actions if he uses his will to reject God and do the wrong thing, just as the Pharaoh did. Judas Iscariot was responsible for his choices even though he was fulfilling prophecy.

We always need to choose correctly. God expects us to come to Him with dependence, humility, and trust. You can decide to want or claim God’s blessings, or work hard to get them in your own way, and not be a vessel of honor if God doesn’t show you mercy, and direct you in the way that *He* requires: “For God

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 9:14-24. See also Ecclesiasticus (aka Sirach) 15:11-21 (Catholic Bible); Isaiah 45:1-5

hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will”<sup>1</sup>. The gate is narrow, and few find it. There are not many paths to the Biblical God. Many have been presented throughout the history of Christianity, but to what end? The power of Christianity is almost non-existent. This is why it is important to stay within the framework of the Scriptures. Don’t expect others to figure it out for you because they probably won’t.

We are always supposed to use our will when we come to God, regardless of how much God intervenes in the process. He requires us to draw close to Him by choice, with a deliberate act of the will to trust Him because he always responds to us within the framework of our will. “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”<sup>2</sup> This is the order in which God works. He does not draw near to us before we draw near to Him. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure”<sup>3</sup> Prior to this verse, Peter lists a number of things to ensure this. This is the best that we can do for ourselves without trying to read God’s mind—which we can’t.

When Christ's disciples asked Him why He spoke in parables, "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."<sup>4</sup> This passage is significant because it tells us that the reason for the use of parables was the people's own predisposition to not receive His message. Christ ensured this by speaking in parables and to take away "even that he hath". I believe that this is why Christ also said: "For many are called, but few are chosen"<sup>5</sup>. Few are chosen because many do not respond to the message, but the opposite is true when we are open to the message. God chooses us to "have more

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 17:17. See also Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24

<sup>2</sup> James 4:8 (old KJV, 1967 Scofield edition). See also Zechariah 1:3

<sup>3</sup> 2Peter 1:10

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 13:11-13

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 22:14

abundance" and to work with us. He tells us to "be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble"<sup>1</sup>. God's election either way is based on His foreknowledge of the person's prior free choices. Our choices precede His election and drawing near to us.

It is paradoxical that the more self-autonomy that we exercise in relation to God; the less able that we are to use our wills freely. The reason for this is that without God, we have less operative willpower because of compulsions, addictions, and other things that are difficult to control like worry, anger, unforgiveness, and lust. Adam and Eve experienced this after their transgression, and we inherit this from them. In God we have a greatly enhanced use of our wills because of the peace and strength that we have through the Spirit of Christ.

We are "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father"<sup>2</sup>, "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"<sup>3</sup>. This tells us God's purpose for choosing us. "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"<sup>4</sup>. Christ said that "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me"<sup>5</sup>. Apparently, God's election works in conjunction with our choices—which do matter. The remainder is academic.

The bottom line is: "He that [believeth](#) on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"<sup>6</sup>. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"<sup>7</sup>; "And by this we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit whom

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<sup>1</sup> 1Peter 5:5

<sup>2</sup> 1Peter 1:2. See also Acts 13:48

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:29

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 2:13

<sup>5</sup> John 6:44-45. See also Isaiah 54:13

<sup>6</sup> 1John 5:10. See also 2Corinthians 13:5

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:16. See also 1Corinthians 6:17; 5:4; 2Timothy 4:22

he hath given us.”<sup>1</sup> Uncertainty about salvation is not a virtue. Christ never has to be or feel distant from us.

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<sup>1</sup> 1John 3:24. See also 4:11-13

## 26. THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD FOR SIN

The concept of shedding blood for sin goes back to the earliest stages of human history. Even before the fall of Adam and Eve, there was a death penalty for disobedience to God.<sup>1</sup> When Adam and Eve disobeyed, “they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”<sup>2</sup> God substituted animal skins for their fig leaves, which required the death of an animal.<sup>3</sup> After Cain and Abel were born; “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering”<sup>4</sup>

God had a preference for the animal sacrifice, but not murder. “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man.”<sup>5</sup> The death penalty for murder was established shortly after the great flood, before the Mosaic Law. The dark spiritual forces eventually perverted God’s order and convinced people to do human sacrifice. What was supposed to be a remedy for death, instead, became death for humans.

Animal sacrifices became part of the Mosaic Law. “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the sanctuary. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was, therefore, necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”<sup>6</sup> The animal sacrifices prefigured the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, which, in turn,

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<sup>1</sup> See Genesis 2:17

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:7

<sup>3</sup> See Genesis 3:21

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 4:3-4. See also Hebrews 10:1-10; 11:4; 12:24

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 9:6

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 9:19-23. See also 10:10

prefigures our own death to self and sin. God's plan of salvation could not have been implemented without Christ's humanity and the shedding of His blood.

The Christian ritual for death to self and sin is baptism into Christ. "Know ye not that, as many of us that were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."<sup>1</sup> "For ye are all the children of God by [faith](#) in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."<sup>2</sup> Water baptism presupposes the faith in Christ that brings us His Spirit; and when Christ shares Himself with us through His Spirit, we are able to walk in newness of life. He also shares His Sonship with us, and this is why we are also sons of God. When we have the Spirit of the Son within us, the Father views us as adopted sons because we have become parts of Christ's Body. This puts us in a very privileged position in relation to the Father, provided that we continue in weakness and humility toward the Son.<sup>3</sup> Our recognition that we are weak without God leads us to the humility towards Him that brings us His strength and His other benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 6:3-4

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 3:26-27. See also 4:4-6

<sup>3</sup> See 2Corinthians 12:9; Galatians 3:26; 4:5, 7; Philippians 4:13

## 27. RELATIVISM

Relativism is a system of morality that is based upon the non-Biblical world-view that everything is god; and if everything is god, I am god, and I can make up my own rules. If there is no personal Creator God, then there is no objective morality. Relativism is inherently subjective because without the Creator, humans are the measure of all things. Because we are born in a weakened state, relative morality is easily perverted into whatever anyone wants it to be. It can be used to justify the worst instincts of mankind, with nothing to counter it when it is left unchecked. Fortunately this is not the case because the Creator does have an interest in mankind, and will see to it that evil does not ultimately triumph—but in the meantime it will try.<sup>1</sup>

Relativism is the morality of the secular humanist. Secular humanism tells us that there is no Creator God to whom we are accountable; that there is no divine revelation from the Creator to instruct us on how to relate to Him and to each other; and that all notions of God were created by humans for their own convenience. This is a product of Darwinism because if we evolved from primates, we would have gradually developed the idea of a personal God to explain our existence and surroundings; and that if we evolved into a conscious dependence on God, we can also evolve out of it. Even though there is no evidence for this, these views are common in today's world. Without God, we are accountable only to ourselves; and the special place that God has for humans will not be acknowledged.<sup>2</sup> Rationalism is related to this because it tells us that human reason is the only source of knowledge and understanding. This idea entirely rules out divine revelation and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the absence of God, different views of God have been created by human reason and philosophy that are not always compatible with the Biblical view of God; but it *is*

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<sup>1</sup> See Revelation 21:2-3

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 6:26; Genesis 1:26-31; Hebrews 2:5-8

possible to arrive at a knowledge of God by observing His creation.<sup>1</sup> The Biblical view of God is for everyone, and He exists for everyone.<sup>2</sup>

A companion idea to rationalism is that humans are inherently good and that we do not need God to be peaceful and strong. This idea is contrary to the Biblical concept of a fallen human nature that needs to connect with God. Whenever you hear that humans are evolving toward a higher consciousness, it implies that we are evolving into a self-autonomy that does not require a dependence on God. Creation is inherently dependent upon the Creator; and humans need to acknowledge this reality. Self-autonomy is based on faith because it cannot be proven scientifically; and neither can the monism that it comes from. Everyone has faith in something—however misguided—whether they admit it or not.

This misplaced faith removes us from the reality that, in order to function well and be fully human, we need God. History, with all its wars and atrocities, shows us that people are not at their best when left to their own devices. This is always problematic for those who think that humans do not need God; but they will always blame religion or something other than themselves. Reality will always impinge itself upon, and be a thorn in the side of those who hold unrealistic world-views. Sadly, at times, religion *is* part of the problem; but it should be the solution.

Many believe that God is uninterested in what happens on this earth because if He were, things would be much better. God doesn't operate by our standards. He has the hairs of our head numbered.<sup>3</sup>

Whenever people are distant from God, or refuse to acknowledge His existence; relative morality becomes the norm, along with its undesirable consequences. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."<sup>4</sup> Even with written divine revelation, the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit that comes from faith in Christ is also required; along with the resulting

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 1:19-20; Deuteronomy 4:34-35

<sup>2</sup> See Psalms 47; 66:4; 67; 96:10; 97:5

<sup>3</sup> See Matthew 10:29-30; Isaiah 40:27-28

<sup>4</sup> Galatians 6:7

wisdom and understanding that we are expected to use<sup>1</sup>. Just because we are not into relativistic morality, doesn't mean that we don't use our minds and instincts.

When discussing moral issues, a relativist will often say that whatever you feel about something is correct for you, even though you may totally disagree with someone else and have opposite opinions on a given issue. When you believe in objective reality, this is an absurdity because both of you cannot be correct at the same time. In a relativistic universe, the only thing that you can be certain of is that you can never be certain of anything. This is totally impractical because even the most ardent relativist will act with certainty during the course of his ordinary activities, otherwise he wouldn't be able to function. Relativism is not reality.

Moral culpability is a different issue. Objectively, a person may be incorrect in their thinking, but if it is held in good conscience, God may excuse the person. "For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him who eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand...So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God."<sup>2</sup> Notice that Paul is saying that the person who is weak in faith, only eats herbs; therefore, that person is not on an equal footing with the one who believes that he can eat all things, even though he may not be morally culpable in the sight of God.

Nevertheless, in Christianity, agreement among people is possible and desirable. Paul says: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."<sup>3</sup>

In spite of all the secular humanism and rationalism that exists in the world today, advances in science have made the existence of a spirit world and a transcendent

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<sup>1</sup> See 1Samuel 10:6-7

<sup>2</sup> Romans 14:2-4, 12

<sup>3</sup> 1Corinthians 1:10

God more plausible than ever. We now have examples of things such as radiation and electromagnetic fields, which we can't perceive with our senses, but we know exist because we now have instruments to measure them. Science did not create them when they were discovered; they existed all along and were already part of reality. What else is there that already exists, just waiting to be discovered? Science seems to be making us more open to the idea that a spiritual realm exists, rather than moving us further away from it. In the past, people felt more confident when doubting the existence of something that they could not see or touch; but this is no longer the case. Man is no longer the measure of all things—he never was. Reality, whether seen or unseen, does not need human permission to exist.

We now know that reality encompasses much more than what is apparent to our human senses. It sounds old-fashioned and dated to hear someone say that something doesn't exist because they can't sense it; or that it doesn't exist because the present level of scientific knowledge does not support it. How do we know that, at the present time, we have arrived at ultimate human knowledge? What else is going to be discovered in the future? Our conception of reality has rapidly expanded to include not only the imperceptible, but also things to be discovered that are unknown to us at the present time. This is as it should be.

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