

BOB HITCHING

FRESH FRUIT FROM DEEP ROOTS

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LIVING THE GOSPEL BEFORE A PAGAN WORLD

A COSMOGENIC READING

By

Bob Hitching

*“What Robert Hitching identifies in Modernity and Post-Modernity as “paganism” is truly genuine and original, and his discussion of the Systematic Society and the structural evil, a mission theology should address, is State of the Art.”*

Dr. Evangelia Voulgaraki Theology Faculty, National and Kapodistrian University, Athens

**IN MEMORY**

To the memory of my daughter Charissa Anastasia who is now seated within the Communion of Saints but mysteriously present with me at the meeting place of the whole Body of Christ in The Eucharist.

**DEDICATION**

To the unknown Orthodox Jewish woman in Stamford Hill, London whose feelings I deeply hurt when standing on her doorstep fifty years ago while sharing the “Gospel” in a way that was insensitive to her history and culture.

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To my long-term friend and associate Stuart McAllister, former General Secretary of the European Evangelical Alliance, Global Apologist and Mission strategist. It was a discussion, in the middle of the night, in a field outside of Vienna in 1988 that began the thinking process that has led to this research project.

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His Grace Archbishop Ray Sutton who leads our global communion in these days of theological complexity and who agreed and opened the door for me to be ordained into the Reformed Episcopal Church. Like “ET”, my cry has been, “I have come home”.

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words from Winston Churchill after the Battle of Britain, “So much is owed by so many to so few”.

Archbishop Joseph D’Suza, a friend of fifty years, for leading the way for historic mainstream Evangelicalism to become a sacrament, liturgy, and lectionary mission to the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities in India.

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Nancy Hitching - My Inter and Transdisciplinary Advisor and who is my wife, my friend, my counsellor, my academic mentor, and who holds me accountable to an academic standard that is rigorous and ruthless and far beyond that which I would choose if left to my own devices.

The Bayaš Roma congregants of my Parish where I serve. You are my priority in the seeking of the Kingdom of God. Hundji var ju mes, voj vic uvek âm suflit amnjo.

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For My Daughter Galina Marie Hitching

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Traditionally, Paganism or what this work terms Non-Christian Creative Spirituality [NCCS] have functioned as far back as any records have been kept. In South Asia, East Asia, China, Siberia, and Africa these NCCS have remained stable until the early twentieth century. From 1920 to 1990, the forces of Marxism, Neo-liberalism, and Evangelical/Pentecostalism have made a substantial impact in diminishing the influence and role of NCCS in their traditional territories.

The first quarter of the twenty-first century has seen a reversal of this trend and the original ground that was taken from NCCS has been taken back. The NCCS movement has spread into the Christian background sectors of Protestantism, Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism. In real terms, it is a reversal of the first three centuries of the Church whereby pagans became Christians based upon the Cosmological theology embodied by the early Church. Today vast numbers of adherents to Christianity at a variety of levels of commitment are embracing NCCS. This is a result of the presented Cosmological worldviews to those nominal Christian by those within

the realm of NCCS that they encounter.

With the traditional NCCS heartland regions and historic Christian regions all now reflecting massive growth in NCCS, the architecture of cultural civilisations is being fundamentally redesigned.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Marxism, in its Russian and Chinese forms, have lost the battle against neo-liberalism, albeit in different ways. Evangelical/Pentecostalism has fragmented into segments which have made it impossible to speak in any monolithic descriptive way about its set of theological truth claims or confessional boundaries and what they represent. In many senses Evangelical/Pentecostalism has become an extension and proliferator of neo-liberalism by its universal adoption of secular technique as a means of its growth and maintenance. The result is, what this work will term, a Transcendence Vacuum has emerged that has come from the neo-liberal ascendancy that has generated a space for NCCS to fill. In short, with the removal of a biblical cosmology and its replacement with a transcendence vacuum, a new set of NCCS has simply moved into the unoccupied space within the vacuum.

When the term Pan and Trans Tradition Theology of Mission is used in this study, it refers to Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Protestant, Messianic Judaism, and Anglican. The Anglican designation is with intent in that it will be viewed from a *via*

*media* perspective rather than a Reformed Protestant position. The reason for the Messianic Judaism category is that as a theological milieu it has matured and developed to the point that it has now a clearly independent identity from the Protestant framework.

The research participants, historic and contemporary academic and theological writers which inform this research, will reflect all the above-mentioned traditions. The output, in terms of a theology of Mission, therefore, will be applicable to each of the various traditions while at the same time confronting the institutional issues that have caused the drifting away from the earlier mentioned Gospel of the first three centuries of the Christian faith.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research project forces an Ecumenism. However, it is an Ecumenism that is not based upon theological compromise and or co-belligerences. Rather, it is an Ecumenism that forces a transgressing of historical and religio-political dissonance and adopts a teleological theology of Mission that purifies traditional institutional structures. And it does so in order to embrace an existential spirituality based upon engagement with the presence with Christ in real space and time.

## **METHODOLOGY**

As the biblical texts are approached, the study makes use of a



Kabala biblical methodology known as *Pardesh*. There is a basic form to this methodology which is built around the term *Pardes* (פרד"ס) as an Acronym, which in Hebrew means Orchard. This was developed or popularised by the towering Rabbinic scholar Moses de León (c. 1240 – 1305), known in Hebrew as Moshe ben Shem-Tov. This method seeks to interpret scripture through a grid or matrix as follows: (i)

*Peshat* (פְּשָׁט) – "surface" ("straight") or the literal (direct) meaning.

There are times, especially in the historical accounts where this is quite straight forward. At other times questions need to be asked concerning whole texts of scripture that were created with allegory in mind; (ii)

*Remez* (רְמִזָּה) – "hints" or the deep (allegoric: hidden or symbolic)

meaning beyond just the literal sense. This allegorical method is used extensively in this work as the scripture itself refers to other scriptures as allegory; (iii) *Derash* (דְּרָשׁ) – from Hebrew *darash*: "inquire" ("seek") uses the comparative Midrashic meaning. An example may be two passages of scripture what are out of context to each other but shine light on each other. An example of *Derash* may be found in the text of Job that reads:

Do not human beings have a hard service on earth, and are not their days like the days of a laborer? Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like laborers who look for their wages, so I am allotted months of emptiness, and

nights of misery are apportioned to me.<sup>1</sup>

This text speaks specifically to the condition of Job's mind, but it also describes a much wider sense of pain in many peoples' lives. *Midrash* shines an unrelated text upon the description of pain in Job's life. An example being from the Song of Solomon:

My beloved speaks and says to me. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.<sup>2</sup>

These two texts are unrelated in their context, yet they speak to each as comfort and encouragement; (iv) Sod (סוד) (pronounced with a long O as in 'lore') means "secret" ("mystery") or the esoteric/mystical meaning, as given through inspiration or revelation. This relates to the idea that the Word of God in the Scriptures speaks in light of the Holy Spirit knowing every conditional of every person for all eternity and has constructed the Bible to speak individually to everyone in a unique manner.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition* (Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ, 1993), Job 7:1-3.

<sup>2</sup> So. of Sol. 2:10–12.

Another methodology utilized in this work can be termed Narrative Theology. Although this does encompass a vast range of styles, the term is used here as the study of the *story* as it relates to a person's experience and the emotions and the implications of how that story effects their lives. N.T. Wright gives a very helpful profile or overview of the idea of the narrative. He writes:

The way in which stories possess the power they do, by which they actually change how people think, feel and behave, and hence change the way the world actually is, can be seen more clearly by means of an analysis of the essential components which they (stories) contain.<sup>3</sup>

The primary methodology utilized in the study when working with various texts is what Anders Nygren terms "Foundation Motifs" in the history of ideas. He states that:

Quite early in the history of thought we find the great fundamental questions asked concerning the True, the Beautiful, the Good, and-to crown them all-the Eternal. For our Western civilisation the formal statement of these questions was the work of Plato, though the materials for it were in existence long before his time.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992), p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, (Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1953), p.42.

The distinctive of the Foundational Motif methodology is that the identified *motifs* and *themes* are tracked in their recurrence throughout the whole research.

To analyse the essential components of the narratives in this work, the research methodology utilized is an *Ekphrasis* or a *Poetic Dramatic Narrative*. The strength of this methodology is that it views propositions in a wider range than simply through the framework of a rational textualism. *Ekstasis* or Cosmological Narrative methodologies will inform the interpretations of the texts of the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists of the first three centuries. In short, this can be defined as seeking to understand the wider frames of thought and their implications within a multi-dimensional creation milieu.

In Modules One through Three extensive effort has been placed on understanding at the exegetical level what the scriptures teach focusing upon how the Literal, Historical, Grammatical applies to our understanding. The next three modules, Modules Four through Six, while also employing exegesis, additionally begin to develop a series of speculative theological positions. These speculative explorations draw from the Sophianic methodologies of the Slavophil movement in Russia and its development in the Paris émigré school of Theology. In Module Seven the focus migrates to a more dogmatic form of methodology. It argues in definitive forms through the citations and cross referencing.

In the Eighth and final module, the thesis migrates into a monographic yet systematic mode of presentation. Topics are explored from the standpoint of my own gathering of the content from the previous seven modules giving interpretation of that content, defining, and proposing various propositions.

### **WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS OF THE RESEARCH**

The most obvious limitation to this research project is that due to the fact it is built as set of teaching modules, it tends towards the general rather than in depth detail in any one area. I have chosen to present this work in a manner that will hopefully evoke readership in a wider space than the purely academic world. This research is in part a standard academic project but primarily it is a doctoral artefact project that has as its output a book and teaching series. The use of non-academic prose to assist and editorialise the research is the result of my own thinking and is intentional and should not reflect on the various specialists who have kindly and graciously advised me on this work. This also is perceived as a weakness because the emphasis within the work is focused on communication rather than objective and specific detail.

While I have attempted to position this work in as wide a framework as possible in terms of the Church being made up of all its traditions and confessions, The study still presents as highly

domesticated toward an Evangelical Anglican perspective. As peer review continues, I will seek to update the material to reflect those recommendations.

Another area that may be seen as a weakness is the lack of a consistent and balancing template for each of the modules between the Biblical and the Social-Theoretical. This is intentional as there are some areas within the study that require a focus upon Biblical exegesis and other areas of the study which discuss non-Theoretical or non-Biblical research and require citations that reflect a wide range of historical, sociological, and critical theoretical contemporary thought and opinion. These two types of research, Biblical exegesis and social-historical-theoretical are evenly distributed throughout the chapters.

The strengths of the project are in many senses based on similar weaknesses. For example, the generalist tone taken in parts of the work which may be considered a weakness is also a strength because the intention of the work is to fit the primary claims of the thesis into as broad a context of reception as possible. This whole area of generalist interpretation is an ongoing debate; However, I have made the conscious decision to present the work in this more generalist manner.

One of the areas of deficiency within the framework of 'missions' is the lack of Cosmological Theology. One must say that theory abounds in copious proportions, but there is very little in the

area of Cosmology. Therefore, a Cosmological, and in this study a Cosmogenic, view of the context of Mission is, if not unique, certainly part of a very limited corpus of work. Michael Heiser's work has been of immeasurable value in setting some of the Celestial constructs that I have worked with.

## PREFACE

It is important to state at the outset of this project that I am not an Academic. I use certain academic methodologies, as I have done in my work on Lesslie Newbigin and on the Oxford Movement, but in the real sense of the word, I am a cross cultural missionary activist. I make extensive use of New Testament Greek and Biblical Hebrew, but I have expertise in neither. Rather, I use the vast range of linguistic tools available through Logos Software. I have a biblical languages advisor who is both a trained linguist and translation specialist. I make extensive reference to Missiology, but I am not a Missiologist and stand in awe and appreciation at the growth of the discipline. Within the Central European context in which I live and minister, I especially recognize the research of such experts as Dr. Anne-Marie Kool and Dr. Melody Wachsmuth.

The grounding language of the research fits into an ecumenical framework but I am not an ecumenicist. As an ecumenicist I would be forced into a posture of seeking to find common ground and then elevating of that common grounding above the differences that actually exist; I do not subscribe to this position. At the intellectual level I am above all else a follower of the idea given to us by Olivier Clement. As the *People of Christ*, our imperative mandate is to take the presence of Christ into the darkest, humanly unreachable spaces, and with the light of Christ's presence to purify those spaces by prophetic



engagement. Lastly, I am an Anglican, but an Anglican in exile. The stream of Anglicanism that I belong to is an eclectic stream of Charles Simeon, John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Edward Pusey, John Keble, Arthur Stanton, as well as a young woman among them the attachment to which I have confessed to my wife as being unusually connected – Charlotte Yonge, albeit she died nearly 100 years before I was born.

The following teaching programme has been designed for 400-level undergraduates as well as a general audience of those who seek understanding of the complexities of mission in the twenty-first century. This work has been created to act as a set of teaching modules for our small Mihael Starin seminary in Osijek, Croatia and the European Anglican Theological Center in Belgrade, Serbia.

The Reformed Episcopal denomination of which I am an ordained priest has its locus where the three great rivers The Danube, The Drava, and The Sava enter confluence. This river basin is also the confluence of multiple religious and spiritual worldviews. Oriental Sephardic Jews, Ashkenazi Jews, Muslims, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, Byzantine Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Pentecostal, Baptist, Old Pagans, New Pagans, and Anglicans living together in a disharmony that best be described as an art form. The blood spilled in the name of “we are right, and you are wrong” is one of the defining distinctives of the region.

With this context in mind, the core message of the Gospel is researched in ways that can build and burn bridges as a means of seeing the purity of the heart of God in Christ by the Spirit penetrate the darkest corners of the spiritual morass that exists. The teaching programme has been purposely constructed in content, orientation, references, and citations to reflect the ethos of European Ressourcement, The Paris Emigre School, Oriental Orthodox, Reformed, Evangelical, and Messianic Judaism. By design, the objective of this project is to take the core Gospel of Christ into every expression of historic Christianity and seek to “leaven the whole lump” through the purifying reality of the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **THE BACK STORY**

In 1972, as a young trainee missionary in Calcutta, India I visited, along with some other missionary trainees, a Hindu temple that was focused upon devotion and service to the Hindu god Krishna. We sat on the floor of their ashram and discussed our various viewpoints with the Hindus, giving our testimonies and sharing our thoughts about the meaning of life. Suddenly, there was an enormous crash of a cymbal and drum. What was a partition in the room was pulled open and we found ourselves seated before a giant idol of Krishna.

The Hindu men we had been talking with jumped up and,

joined by others, danced, and sang together in the incense filled room. Then the men began to bow down in worship to the idol. One of the young men had just offered food to the idol and then came close and almost insisted that we eat the food offered to the idol of Krishna which we declined. This was my first experience of Non-Christian Creative Spirituality [NCCS]; It was an encounter with the multi-sensory. There was sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste in a kinaesthetic flow of devotion towards an object – the spirit of the Hindu god Krishna embodied within the physical idol. We left with a sense of being overwhelmed by the manifestation of what we would have termed at that time ‘pagan worship.’ Personally, I found the experience deeply troubling because I had no sense as a Christian of how I could respond to what I had just seen.

This experience fed into the complexity of my own personal history. One strain of my ancestors was from Jewish stock. Even though they had assimilated into 19<sup>th</sup> Century London, there were still enough of the traditions left within the family that in 1941, when London was braced for imminent invasion by Nazi Germany, my grandmother (under the instruction of her husband) destroyed whatever physical links she had to her, (and all of our) Jewish past; It was fundamental, if the Nazi’s had come, the Jewish connection certainly would have been a very negative one.

My mother and father were both part of the Communist

resurgence movement in the 1940's. My mother was a member of the British Communist Party and my father a member of a Communist Trade Union. My mother brought into our lives a plethora of pagan superstitions that may have come from her Jewish roots or from other places of origin. Growing up in such a complex, and to be honest, toxic culture, I was plagued by fear, superstition, nightmares, awareness of evil spirits and all the emotional trappings that went along with such things. My earliest dreams as a child were of my being in the centre of a battle between God and something evil.

My conversion, a somewhat violent spiritual experience brought me into a new world of faith. Despite that, I carried with me a fear of demons, pagan activities, and anything related. The experience in the Krishna temple seemed to strengthen these deeply complex inner spiritual struggles.

It was nearly 20 years later when I was living in London that I inwardly began to face the demonic struggles head on. In a series of spiritual encounters, I was simply set free from those fears. It was not emotional. There were no unusual phenomenological experiences, and it was not accompanied by any kind of ecstatic sense of release. It was more like walking through a door and realising that I had been deceived and the power of the Gospel became more than propositions to promote. Rather, it became an encounter with the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world. Not only was I no longer engulfed by fear,

but I was driven by a desire to help others to be set free from the fear of evil. When praying with a young man who had rather complex evil spirit issues and who threatened to kill me, I realised I was not only unafraid, but I was filled with a spiritual compassion and desire to help him be released. This walking through a door connected with another fundamental spiritual experience rooted in the early 1970's.

In 1971, I was being trained and serving as a young Protestant Evangelical missionary among Muslim Turkish people. I worked among the minority Turkish Cypriot community in London and then as a 'special projects' worker in Turkey. Turkey at that time was under martial law and so our operations were both covert and high risk. I was captured in July 1971, with three co-workers in the city of Kütahya and was charged with Christian propaganda. I was held for three months without trial before being released and blacklisted from the country. When I was released from prison, we travelled back to the UK by road and drove through Northern Greece before heading north through what was then Yugoslavia. We drove from the border at what is now called the Kipi crossing through to Alexandroupoulos, Komotini, Kavala and then on to Thessaloniki. The time travelling formed a mystical experience, which until recently I put down to as a psychological reaction to being locked up for 80 days in a 500-year-old prison cell with 50 murderers and my three Christian brothers. Alongside the long road from the Turkish border to Thessaloniki I saw for the first time the

small roadside shrines, or *Kandylakia*, with their crosses and icons. Seeing them every few kilometres, I felt a sense of love and devotion rising from within me. It was thymotic in terms of my recognising something deep. In retrospect, I was simply unable to describe it. I had a longing to stop the car and simply sit, be quiet, and pray at these little sacred spaces. It really was as if I was being drawn, beckoned, called, invited, and welcomed to meet the Lord Jesus right there, right then. I put that experience away in my mind, but from time to time I would retrieve some of those thoughts and feelings. However, despite the 'Greek Orthodox' experience, I was, and always would be, a Protestant Evangelical that would find it very hard to create space for salvation for anyone outside the narrow confines of Dispensationalism.

Moving quickly forward to 1988, I was one of three featured Evangelists at the Love Krakow Christian Festival, in Poland. This was just at the time when the winds of change, sweeping Eastern Europe, brought a new level of freedom to publicly present the Gospel of Christ. I made an announcement that I wanted to preach outside the Police Station to see how far we could push the authorities. I offered a dinner in Kraków's finest restaurant, albeit at that time \$3 would buy a feast, to any young person who would join me. Four teenage girls turned up who were either hungry or radicalised. Together, we held an open-air Gospel meeting directly in front of the local police station and experienced no opposition.

The Love Krakow festival saw hundreds of people coming every day to evangelistic meetings as well as outreach teams going into the streets to share their faith. As a leadership team, we talked through how we would make 'responding to the Gospel' a calling that would require a 'counting of the cost' in the people who we knew would respond to our message. As the ten days went on, I saw what I had never seen before. Parenthetically, I am an Evangelist of little or no public importance and a person of little global consequence, but I saw hundreds of people streaming forward after our meetings – people spending long periods of time in counselling and prayer. It was very moving to behold this.

I returned to Poland about one year later and met with the leader of the programme and we talked about all the people who had responded to the Gospel. He shared that over 500 people had made a very definite decision to trust Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The plan had been that those who responded would have been followed up by the local Evangelical Churches. Of those several hundred people, one year later, none were part of any Evangelical Church. This was a turning point in my own life in terms of thinking and praying about what was going on. When thinking about the Gospel and the spirituality it produces my mind would remember the longing and spiritual yearning on the drive along the Egnatian Way in Greece.

Another pivotal experience I had was watching the changes that

were taking place in the Middle East among the traditional Christian communities; These were communities primarily from Oriental and Eastern Orthodox traditions. The people in these Orthodox communities had been high on our Evangelical agenda for many years. Just as it had been in Poland, these were people to whom we needed to send missionaries in order to ‘get them saved’ through our evangelistic efforts.

Then came a series of Martyrdoms of those precious saints who refused to renounce Christ. Each watched on as the throats of their brothers were slit and yet never did any give in to renounce Christ. As I saw them, I realised these ones did not have a crisis of spirituality, productivity, nor identity. They knew who they were. They knew what they were doing. They had “something” – a living faith – to give away.

We were trying to evangelise them when we should have been pleading with them to come and give us leadership in knowing Christ, being true to Him even to the point of death. In these observations or experiences, after nearly fifty years as a Missionary, I came to the realisation that Evangelical Missions had some serious issues to think through. This reality, albeit painful, ugly, and dreadful, caused me to deeply return to the Scripture, the early Church, and especially the Apostolic Fathers, to take a deep look into Church history. I knew I must try to make sense of what I was seeing as the dilution, and potential fragmentation, of Evangelical Christianity. What I found was far more



complex than what appeared on the surface. My idea – that Evangelicalism was bankrupt and that we just needed to get missionaries to be more committed and more spiritual – was fundamentally in error. Instead, we were living in the midst of a paradigm shift that was going to demand far more than a reboot, a rethink, or a revision. Rather, we were staring in the face of something spiritually akin to the Armenian genocide, when large areas of land that had been filled, for a millennium and a half with the sound of Trinitarian praise, entered a vacuum of silence brought on by the brutal murders, and total elimination of the Church by the Muslim Turks. The complexity was exacerbated when, as Missionaries, we created new sociological communities by our work there. The group in Poland were genuine in their response to our message; Of that, I have no doubt. The problem was they, as new converts, were no longer acceptable in the Roman Catholic communities they were from, and they simply could not fit into the cultural frameworks of the Baptists and the Pentecostals. We as evangelists had unwittingly created a “subaltern partitioned” spiritual community that fit nowhere. All of this made me realise that we were facing a set of deep spiritual realities that were, and still are today, very uncomfortable for someone like myself growing up and giving their life to the Evangelical milieu of Christianity as I had.

My research is the outcome of that battle with my own

discomfort and to some extent a battle with myself. The conflicts, and there are many, that arose through my reading are also in some sense extensions of my own family history as well as my own wrestling through spiritual realities. My great, great grandfather was an Evangelical and a charter member of the then new Metropolitan Tabernacle when Spurgeon's congregation moved from Park Street to the Elephant and Castle. My great, great grandfather's daughter, my great grandmother, became pregnant out of wedlock and was unable to fit into the prevailing Baptist culture of that time as she was intent on keeping her child.

Grace is very easy to present as a theological principle but often very difficult to dispense in the face of our dominant cultural value systems when it means that those cultural norms are being disturbed. My great, great grandmother spent several years moving from boarding house to boarding house never staying more than six weeks in any one place as she sought to keep her anonymity and the fictional story she told, that her husband, a soldier, had been killed in India. She worked as a washer woman especially in the growing Chinese laundry sector in London's West End. Whilst living in this unstable world she was brought into contact with the High Church ministry of St. Alban the Martyr in Holborn. Their reception, acceptance, and adoption of my wounded ancestral seed (a fact which I have only just recently begun to understand) has called me back deeply into my own history, and it has

helped me to make sense of the crisis of the current Evangelical world.

My background, although being a mainstream Evangelical was strongly informed and influenced by Reformed Theology. Over the last 35 years, I have periodically reread the six Princeton Stone Lectures delivered by Abraham Kuyper in 1898. In 2005, whilst rereading those lectures I stumbled across a line in Kuyper's introduction that I had missed before. He shared his own testimony of how he came to faith and how he was deeply influenced by the novel written by Charlotte Yonge entitled "The Heir of Redclyffe". In another testimonial, Kuyper shared that while reading Yonge's novel at the point where one of the central characters "fell to his knees in repentance, I (Kuyper) fell to my knees with him."

After reading this, I obtained a copy of "The Heir of Redclyffe" and sat in a chair in my home in Varaždin, Croatia and did not leave that chair until I finished the book. I wept in new ways as I discovered that a spiritual reality which I had been closed to for many years was burning into my heart. It was the same kind of longing after beauty that I had known on the road in Greece. My heart was not 'strangely warmed'; Rather it exploded with the molten lava from a violent volcanic eruption pouring forth the pre-eminence of Sacrament, Liturgy, and Lectionary as the balanced Christian life.

When I closed the covers of that book, I realised I had metaphorically, walked through another door and that my whole

Christian life had been a liminal ritual in preparation for this moment of induction into a whole new way of thinking spiritually. Through Charlotte Yonge, I was introduced to John Keble and Edward Bouverie Pusey, which threw me into the midst of the theological tempest that raged from the summer of 1832 and that continues today. Through Keble and Pusey, I was introduced to the writings of John Mason Neale and my journey caused me to walk through the doors his works placed before me. He took me, as an Anglican, a former hubris-filled Evangelical and an Englishman, to the Church of the East. Reading his work, *The Quay of Dioscuri*, a novel on Athanasius before Nicaea, caused a new door to open to me. I walked through it and found myself back in Northern Greece after coming out of the Turkish prison, sitting quietly by the side of the road desiring to be with Jesus. I knew instinctively that I was seeing something that was not just my experience but rather a global movement in the form of a pilgrimage to 'come home'. As a result, I began the journey of which my research is just one of the elements or outcomes. As a result, I can say very clearly that the research findings have as their objective the building of the case for Sacramental outcomes in missiological applications. And especially this may be said in the case of "Subaltern Partition" communities that we usually call pagan but which we probably should term Non-Christian Creative Spiritualities. That is to say, the spiritualities that are increasing in their size in all the major

metropolitan centres of the world.

When visiting London, I would try to go to midday Communion or Eucharist at Southwark Cathedral. One day as I partook of the elements, something happened. I reflected on what had taken place. In some mysterious way as “two or three of us gathered together in His name” I had received by faith that God, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit was uniquely present with us. I thought of Luther in his meeting with John Calvin, Luther banging his fist, some say shoe, upon the table declaring and repeating, “*Hoc est corpus Meum*” [“This is my body.”] That *presence* was an encounter. It demanded a response. First, it demanded that I acknowledged my need for continued cleansing. Secondly, it demanded that I needed to forgive those who were considered enemies. Thirdly, it demanded that I needed to worship in thanksgiving that the Lamb of God had taken away the sins of the world, and because of these, fourthly that I was then sent forth in the liturgy to take the light of Christ into the darkest places – spiritually, intellectually, and theologically.

I walked out of the Cathedral that day and started to cross over London Bridge. I tried in some way to connect with every person that passed me – pleading to God for their souls, their lives, and the spiritual destiny. Parenthetically, I had read in 1971, some of the works of Francis Schaeffer. In his writings at that time, Schaeffer’s whole vision was, *The God Who is There*. And it was there, on London Bridge, I

realised that with an absolute power and impact, God was certainly *there*. But right *now*, in the ‘corona-experience’ of the Eucharist, *God Was Here*. He was, and is, “The God Who Is Here”.

I also realised other things that day. I realised that what I was touching was not a theological principle to encourage the people of God in their quest for yet another technique to be achieved or accomplished – although that may well be a worthy cause. I realised that it was not an issue of Missiology as a study of contexts, methods, and means – this was a Cosmological Theology of Mission. It was a biblical framework of understanding. It was a Missional reading. It was an old hermeneutic that saw a restoration of the sacred as a multi-sensory rupture of time and space. Rather than this being the happy ending to a story with an American style testimony. – once I was a drunken sailor but now, I work in a nursing home – it was in fact the beginning of a journey that far surpassed our small work among Roma in Central Europe.

The *God, Who is Here awareness*, led to hundreds of hours or study and research. I have no hobbies other than reading, talking to my wife, and taking pictures of wildflowers on my iPhone; I have time to study, and this has led me into the realm of Theology of Mission. Thirty-five years ago, I believed that world was becoming secular, and I saw that the movement of secularisation was producing a new unreached-peoples bloc. I now see the process of secularisation as

being a liminal state situated between the leaving of one religious worldview and the becoming into either neo-pagan Henotheism or Polytheism, re-adopting Monotheism, or remaining in a non-theistic condition as a *de facto* Atheism.

From my personal perspective, which has involved working with Muslim people, living in a Muslim home, spending three months in a Muslim prison, and engaging with Muslims in many parts of the world, I lean very much in the direction that it is very difficult to build bridges to a religious worldview that was born in conscious opposition to the Christian view of the Incarnation and the perichoresis view of the Trinity. I understand the various “insider” mission modalities to the Muslim world. I share the concerns of others that care must be taken within a theology of Mission that is contextualised such that it may not become syncretised. In the final analysis if the pre-existent ontology of the eternal Logos is even remotely diluted then there is no Gospel of the Kingdom. For a “Jesus Muslim” to confess with intent the *Shahada*, and still see *Hazret Isa* as the One who was “in the beginning with God and was God,” demands a level of ambiguity that cannot be easily adopted without a hermeneutic that denies much of where the Church has been in the realm of Ontology and even Phenomenology.

Judaism is far more complex as we share the same scripture and there is no standard creed within Judaism that precludes the Incarnation or a Perichoresis Trinity. In recent years there has been a

lot of interest in the Kabala teachings especially the Zohar. The ten Sefirot of the Zohar are in themselves not so far away from a perichoresis ontology – certainly close enough to not expel as heresy the historic Jewish Christian Trinitarian thought. A Messianic Jew can say and recite the Schema with utter conviction that belief in the Triune God is not inconsistent. Certainly, there are large groups of Jewish people who position themselves within a Rabbinic frame of reference that are anti-Christian, but this is more a result of history than ideological truth claims. The fluidity of Second Temple Judaism belief cannot be over emphasised.

The greatest challenge today in my opinion is the gathering storm of paganism in its traditional forms but even more foreboding is the great revival of neo-paganism that is growing in all the monotheistic blocs. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, each in its own way, are going through a period of unprecedented defections into the plethora of consumer neo-pagan spiritualities. This work of research is a response to the coming pagan onslaught that is already a wrecking ball in much of Christendom. It is my belief that of all the Christian Franchises none have a message that is plausible to the coming neo-pagan world. Something new must happen and it may be now in that embryonic stage of happening. In the final chapter of this work, I call this happening, 'The Great Integration.'

I commend this work to you as one who has got it wrong so



much of the time but who now, in my final years, is convinced as much as it is possible to be that unless the Theology of Mission written of in this thesis becomes normative, we will continue to haemorrhage our most precious asset, people, into the abyss of the transcendent vacuum of the Post-Modern milieu that we inhabit.

### **A NEW THEOLOGICAL WORLD ORDER**

The role of gender, sexual preference, and political identity have emerged as new litmus tests for the adherents of the various Christian traditions. However, that is a lite motif to what is happening in the realm of Theology. The pluralism that has grown through globalisation has forced new epistemologies and new hermeneutics to act as a healthy challenge to the old. Often these new academic areas have created insecurity among the brokers of the system and have been rigorously resisted. More dramatic has been the growth of new meta-narratives such as Post Colonialism, Intersectionality, Feminism, Queer Theory and Transdisciplinary Hermeneutics; All have shaken the foundations of the institutions and the pushback by the Traditional has been robust.

Identity in the Protestant world is more complex. The Evangelical community being the largest bloc in terms of actual practising members is going through a fragmentation process that some believe has gone too far to reverse and return to previous

positions. It has reached the point whereby it is increasingly difficult to identify what Evangelicalism is; But even more troubling, what it is not. The focus in the last 50 years has been to define Evangelicalism as having a central commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture but not an equally high view of the two natures of Christ and the historic Trinitarian doctrines.

With large tracks of Modalist Charismatic theology co-existing with Evangelicalism, the future of what we think of as Missions is at stake. In short, Evangelicals believe they have the truth and need to invade those regions of the world that do not have the truth. Those regions being Orthodox and Catholic cultures as much as the “unreached” blocs like Hinduism and Islam.

This has been exacerbated with the hegemonic soteriological emphasis of an evangelicalism, which is above all else the means by which Church history and contemporary theology is understood and the grid through which it is processed. In short, it is now possible to have a Modalist view of Christ within the Godhead and be considered “Born Again” whilst claiming Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christians as being “unregenerate” because their view of “Justification by Faith” is not in line with our own. Within this highly complex milieu of diversity, politics, and polemics, God is working to create something new by reimagining the old. The threefold revival of Sacrament, Liturgy and Lectionary gives an unprecedented opportunity to make major course

corrections in all branches of the Church.

Returning to my role as a researcher, but primarily as a Pastoral Evangelist, the lament I have is this: What does the emerging pagan world think when it views Christianity in any of its profiles such as I have explained them? That is why I am, as man in my sunset years, working on this research project. If, as this research will argue, the new Mission milieu is one of cosmology – and not idea truth-claims – then the impact on the Theology of Mission will be enormous.

As far as the Gospel is concerned, the research is forced to look at its the most basic and undiluted form. I will argue that the Gospel needs to be viewed in the following way: (i) The Messianic notions of Jewish history, (ii) The declaration of the Gospel of Jesus by Jesus, (iii) Commentary and explanation of the Gospel in the lives and writings of the Apostles of Jesus, (iv) The Apostles Doctrine expanded in their disciples', The Apostolic Fathers' teaching through the Grafted Olive Branch New Cosmology and (v) The New Cosmology producing a universal application in the ante-Nicene Apologists.

To understand this Gospel, it needs to be comprehended that the pagan world was the primary contact point for its message in the first three centuries. From this standpoint, I am going to argue that the essence of this message is central to the *kerygma* required to reach the neo-pagan in today's world. Hopefully, the essence of that message will be presented in a way that can be of help to those in the task of

BOB HITCHING      FRESH FRUIT FROM DEEP ROOTS

Mission in the twenty-first century.

Bob Hitching Osijek, Croatia. May 10, 2023

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**THE SYSTEMATIC SOCIETY AND THE BIRTH OF THE TRANSCENDENCE**  
**VACUUM**

The research and output in the teaching modules is built upon three threads. The first of these threads is the formation of a Biblical Cosmology. This biblical cosmology is built upon three basic axioms or postulates: (i) Everything that takes place in the seen and the unseen world is related and fully interdependent; (ii) The coming of the Jewish Messiah into human history was, and is, the fulcrum of both history past and history as it will unfold. This Jewish Messiah is a person as an ontological reality and that ontological reality is made up of the undivided aspects of His personhood – The eternal Logos, The Jewish Messiah, The head of the Church made up of Jews and Gentiles, and the One in whom all authority in the realm of the seen and the unseen dwells; (iii) The teleological reason or objective for His incarnation is to dispossess the “gods” of their authoritative domains and replace them with His own authority. This anti-Christ body, the “gods,” and worldview, will be referred to as the *dark logos*. God’s instrumentality for this teleological purpose is a grafted Jewish and Gentile church whose primary message converts the dark eros hunger of humanity into a longing for the Good, the True and The Beautiful. This first thread forms Biblical Cosmology.

A second thread is required to give the Cosmology, defined by

the three axioms above, a sociological context. This second thread places those axioms into an historical context that allows for the flow of ideas, rooted in first century thinking, to flow through the five major shifts of philosophical history that relate to the place of the Church *within* that history. The historical context for the five major philosophical shifts into which the above Cosmological framework does rest are: (i) The convergence of Hebraic and Greek thought that lays the groundwork for the shift from the exclusive 'Nation' concept, as God's participatory partner, to the 'Grafted Olive Branch' of Jew and Gentile in spiritual symbiosis as the expression of the restored Edenic mandate; (ii) The filtering out of the Hebraic into a Hellenic dominated spiritual *weltanschauung* of the ante-Nicene period developing into the Hellenising of Christian thought through the Byzantium world and epoch; (iii) The violent Latinisation of Western Christianity that replaced the remaining vestiges of the Grafted Olive Branch that went on to build a new understanding of God in essence and God in energy which built the intellectual architecture for Roman Catholic worldview and Scholasticism in the West; (iv) The Reformation that extended and redefined a new Protestant scholasticism that led ultimately to the Enlightenment Philosophie which in turn used the instruments of said scholasticism to build a framework in which Modernity, the Secular, the Nihilistic Transcendent Vacuum was the end result; and finally (v) The resurgence of Eastern theology that is leading both the Western and

Eastern Church through apophaticism into a new post-modern, post-secular, and de-secular milieu.

The third thread in this evolving Tapestry is the unchanging Mission of the Church within the twenty-first century world that is a pagan world with large pockets of Muslim, Christian and Secular domains. Several propositions may be stated about the Mission of the Church: (i) The ultimate objective of the Church is to see the whole earth filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord; (ii) That universal calling involves engaging and reaching into the Pagan, Muslim, Christian, and Secular domains; (iii) The earlier mentioned thread “The resurgence of Eastern theology that is leading both the Western and Eastern Church through apophaticism into a “new post-modern, post-secular, and de-secular milieu” is central to Mission of the Church in the twenty-first century; (iv) Biblical models and outlines of engagement with the pagan, when adopted, will dispossess the pagan domains of authority, revitalise the Christian world from its neo-pagan proclivities, and bring wonder and spiritual reality into the secular world.

## **THE HISTORY OF THE DARK LOGOS**

The research will put forward the thesis that the world, after the Babel dispersion, was divided into territories that were assigned to the heavenly powers, [Daniel 11, Prince of Persia, Prince of Greece]

that were committed to bring the force of de-creation and disorder to the work of God’s creation. In their case the “god of this world” has blinded the minds of the unbelievers in order to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ who is the image of God.<sup>5</sup> These forces, the Dark Logos, were deceptive and ultimately used pagan idolatry as the means of its de-creation agenda. These powers were demonic and evil. In the context of Deuteronomy 32:17, *shedim* were *Elohim* – spirit beings guarding foreign territory – who must not be worshiped. Israel was supposed to worship her own God (here, *eloah*;<sup>6</sup>). One cannot deny the reality of the *elohim/shedim* in Deuteronomy 32:17 without denying the reality of demons.<sup>7</sup>

The basis of all the pagan idolatries was outlined in the four abominations shown in Ezekiel 8; (i) The idol that provokes jealousy<sup>8</sup> - The Spirit of lust, consumerism, and competition; (ii) Jaazaniah burning incense<sup>9</sup> - The spirit of political power as social alchemy. (iii) Women weeping for Tammuz<sup>10</sup> - The spirit of appeasement based on fear and;

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<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, 2 Col. 4:4.

<sup>6</sup> cf. *Ibid.*, Deut. 29:25

<sup>7</sup> Deut. 32:17 is poorly translated in several Bible versions. See Michael S. Heiser, “Does Deuteronomy 32:17 Assume or Deny the Reality of Other Gods?” *Bible Translator* 59.3 (July 2008): 137–45; cf. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Ez. 8: 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 14.



(iv) The elders worshipping the sun<sup>11</sup> - The spirit of devotion to god, gods, and any god.

Each of these illustrations from Ezekiel acts as both the backdrop for an overview of historic Pagan belief and practice, as well as, acting as a structure for viewing paganism as, what this thesis will term, the *Non-Christian Creative Spirituality* [NCCS] framework that is universal in terms of space and time. At the same time the research seeks to explore the aspect of each of these illustrations as reflective and reflexive in the desire for beauty within the human condition. In responding to the patterns, theories, and practices of pagan NCCS, a central idea is identified, developed, and defended. This idea will be referred to in this work as the *Gospel of the Kingdom*. This Gospel is identified in Old Testament prophetic notions, the teachings of Jesus the Messiah in the written Gospels, the explanations of that teaching in the Apostles writings, the development of that same teaching as applied in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, and the application of that teaching in the writings of the Apostolic Apologists. The core element in the claims of the Gospel of the Kingdom is that there is a fusion, synthesis, symbiosis, and ontological reimagining of the Nation of Israel as the people of God that extends to the “grafting in” of Gentiles into the ontological reality of “The Church”. Within this core element is a kernel of truth that is defined as “Mustard Seed or

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 16.

Leavening for Bread” which is referred to by Jesus and the above-mentioned writers as the “Kingdom.” This Kingdom is a picture of the *Cosmogenic* or participation desire and will of God, whereby the uncreated essence of God chooses to function, for the purpose of His own good pleasure, within His created energies involving all of creation, seen and unseen. I propose that this Gospel of the Kingdom is driven by a chosen Jewish people who as a Priestly Kingdom and a Holy Nation – like the mustard seed and leaven metaphoric principles – incorporate all the nations, kindreds, tongues, and tribes of the world into a New Humanity that restores the mandates of creation to defeat the evil forces of de-creation. The result being a New Heaven and a New Earth where all will be “filled with the knowledge and Glory of the Lord.”<sup>12</sup>

Central to this Creation Mandate is the Gospel of the Kingdom in conflict with, and in opposition to, the forces of de-creation embodied within the idols of NCCS. Whilst stating that there is a conflict, there is also found within the mustard seed and leaven metaphoric principles of the Athenian Declaration by the Apostle Paul a manifesto for a new humanity. that the previously “Unknown god” of Greek idolatry is made known as, is redefined by, is fulfilled within, the Incarnate Logos, Jesus the Messiah as the eternal Son of God.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Hab. 2:14.

## THE QUEST FOR SPIRITUAL PLAUSIBILITY

For much of the Christian world in contemporary Europe<sup>13</sup>, one of the difficult realities that must be faced, is the quest to find spiritual viability, authenticity, and balance within such a diverse religious pluralistic milieu. To give a descriptor for this quest I will use the term “Spiritual Plausibility” or as Peter Berger writes, “secularization has resulted in a widespread collapse of the plausibility of traditional religious definitions of reality.”<sup>14</sup> This collapse has created a space in which persons seek for a “spiritual plausibility” that is both authentic at the existential level and is rooted in its ability to provide safety and security.

The temptation is in one of three directions: (i) to embrace any spiritual practice that seems to ‘ring true’ at the subjective level; (ii) to retreat into hard and fast traditional rationalistic forms which place obvious restrictions upon anything that presents as new and fresh; and (iii) to become disappointed and disillusioned in the process as a whole. Safety at the emotional level often becomes the central objective or focus because of a fear of partaking in error. Sadly, the result is almost always imbalance.

There is the active and aggressive work of the Dark Logos that functions against the Kingdom of God at some complex realm of the

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<sup>13</sup> Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical/Pentecostal.

<sup>14</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967), p. 126.

unseen world. There is a secondary level whereby the Dark Logos infiltrates into the sociological structures of society. The strength of this enemy is that its attack is upon *structures* rather than *ideas*. These structures create environments that on the surface seem neutral to the ideas for and against the Christian faith. However, in reality, it is that very neutrality which is the basis of the homogenising of the convictions of the faith.

### **THE BUILDING OF THE SYSTEMATIC SOCIETY**

It is difficult to give definitions to cultural contexts that are in the process of changing. Lesslie Newbigin in, *Foolish to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*,<sup>15</sup> began to use a term that was effective initially in outlining the modern cultural milieu of the Western world. He simply called it “modern Western culture.”<sup>16</sup> I have wrestled with this in recent years and see a shift beyond Newbigin’s term and have settled upon the idea of the modern world as being *The Systematic Society*. I based this term upon the growth of the thinking of Jacques Ellul and his texts *The Technological Society*<sup>17</sup>, *The New Demons*<sup>18</sup> and

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<sup>15</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1954).

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Ellul, *The New Demons*, trans. Edward Hopkins (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).

*The Presence of The Kingdom.*<sup>19</sup> Ellul has given a post-Marxist critique that he believes has passed beyond the framework of labour and capital. Ellul calls this *la technique*; It is the placing of the same process of applied technology to social constructions. I have taken Ellul's *la technique* one step further. I define where we find ourselves today in contemporary terms as – The Systematic Society – which simply stated is all cultures that function in a connectivity through the Internet and the 'Internet of Things.' The Systematic Society is not made up of *ideas* but rather a set of *sociological processes*: Globalisation, Urbanisation, Pluralisation, Centralised Bureaucracy, and the spawning of self-sustaining technologies.

## **GLOBALISATION**

Globalisation is the secular alternative to the Kingdom of God. The drawing together of all peoples into a singular cultural and spiritual space that acknowledges god, gods, and no god as opposed to the "earth being filled with the knowledge of the Glory of THE LORD"; This is the outcome of Globalisation. Globalisation as a process or sociological carrier has moved into an accelerated or overdrive mode from the late 1940's onward. The need for the United Nations to act with a new authority built on the 1919 League of Nations Covenant was made mandatory by the anatomy of the world order in the post-

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<sup>19</sup> Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, trans. Oliver Wyon (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989).

World War 2 era. Globalisation has been built upon the foundations of the political but rapidly evolved into a user interface for a process of bureaucratic centralisation and sociological homogenisation.

As the larger political spheres of the British, French, Spanish, and Portuguese Empires fragmented into autonomous and sovereign states, those states needed mechanisms to function outside their own borders. The international postal code, road signage, telephone exchanges, banking systems, and many other real-life every day needs were moved to the United Nations as a clearing house for all global administrative and utilitarian requirements. This set-in motion the means or instrumentality for international communication which in turn structured trade in the form of imports and exports. The need to govern this environment of trade, treaties, and international legal systems developed. This process has continued to optimise and as a result the planet has moved beyond being able to function in anything other than an interconnected society. Even the most isolated states must find means of by-passing their own systems by participating in some way with the global community. Europe was at the centre of this new global reality.

## **URBANISATION**

Anonymity was a new experience for the vast majority of people living in London during the second half of the nineteenth

century. Anonymity was one of the first outcomes of the process of urbanisation. In the various rural communities that people originated from there were, as in all rural communities, a sense of social norms being enforced by the approval and disapproval of the community. In short, morality was enforced by the need to be accepted and the fear of being rejected within one's rural community. As soon as a person leaves the narrow sociological confines of the small community, they are no longer subject to its moral enforcement. This emancipation from the sociological enforcement agencies of the small community gave access to moral experimentation that is at first liberating but then destructive as there is only the subjective inner moral compass around which to structure one's life. It is difficult to document how this leads to moral deviancy. However, without seeking to create a correlation-causality matrix, one can state that sexual and violent deviancy grew rapidly within those sectors of society which were no longer morally grounded upon community sociological enforcement.

Urbanisation is not a new phenomenon; What is new is that urbanisation is rapidly embracing the whole of the world. When moving the discussion away from nineteenth century London and into the current global context, similar patterns emerge. In 2014, the most urbanized regions were North America (82% living in urban areas), Latin America and the Caribbean (80%), and Europe (73%), while Africa and Asia still just remained mostly rural, with 40 and 48% of their

respective populations living in urban areas. The relationship between industrialisation and urbanisation is clear but the speed at which the under industrialised is urbanising is important to grasp. The more rural regions of Africa and Asia are urbanizing faster than elsewhere; Their urban populations are expected to reach 56% and 64% of their total populations respectively by 2050. The inhabited world is ostensibly an urban world and with that urbanisation has grown economic interdependency and shared cultural values; Values which fifty years ago would have been unimaginable.

Historically, shared values often have implied religious, political, and cultural forms. Within the Systematic Society of today, a new set of shared values has crossed territorial borders. The dominant values that govern Systematic Society today can be classed more in terms of rights and demands of the populace: Women's Rights, Children's Rights, Workers Rights, Education Rights, Health Rights, and Sexual Preference Rights are the major groupings around which the urbanised world functions. These new shared values or demanded norms within Systematic Society often cut against the grain of the traditional values systems of the worlds cities.

In 1970, in New York City's Greenwich Village, Christopher Street, the first Gay Pride Parade took place. In 2022, the International LGBTQ Travel Association offered an online calendar highlighting travel choices from hundreds of Gay Parades across the globe. In 2022, The



London Gay Parade had approximately 1 million in attendance in juxtaposition to 1972 when homosexuality was classified as a mental illness. As cities relate to each other informally through social media the growth of paired identities and values increases.

From my own observation this new redistribution of social constructions is not based upon ideas but upon the process of urbanisation that allows for the proliferation of resources for the various ideas that we see at work. The levels of anonymity that urban settings create are one of the distinctives which facilitates this process. In rural settings behaviour, certainly at the public level, is enforced by the taboos and moral demands of the culture. The fear of exposure that in turn would cause ostracism and rejection by the society to which one has belonged for multiple generations in rural settings socialised the population.

In urban society singular dominant morae structures have been replaced by new values under the rubric of 'Human Rights.' In previous generations Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews would struggle to find points of agreement wherever and whenever their cultures intersected. In the Systematic Society, however, they can all agree on many, if not all the new Human Rights demands of the cities they share.

In the urban world the idea of a concept of the "The Lord" that is mutually exclusive is rapidly becoming redundant. A god, gods, or no

god, is a far more acceptable frame to live with. All the worldviews and life systems that have existed for centuries need to step aside and allow for a unity to be based upon the above listed index of human rights. The concept of “The Lord” is rapidly becoming implausible in today’s urban context. That ‘plausibility gap’ has not been created by ineffective Christian belief and practice. It has been caused by the Systematic Society developing processes that demand coexistence within which an exclusive “The Lord” worldview can only function on the fringes of society. Urbanisation, by default, produces or forces pluralisation to develop and become the dominant cultural framework.

## **PLURALISATION**

Pluralisation, like Globalisation and Urbanisation, is a process not an idea. There is an idea that can be called pluralism but that fits under the rubric of the Systematic Society rather than being built into the process of Pluralisation. Pluralisation is the process whereby for multiple reasons people from varying and different backgrounds come together in a geographic space and are forced to co-exist. That co-existence has many levels. It spans from children of different linguistic and religious backgrounds playing in a school yard to a factory bench where Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Jew are forced into close proximity with common production goals. Their beliefs and practices are forced into a state of irrelevance to the production process. They

may have Halal, Kosher, and or Vegan options for lunch. They may worship at a multi-faith centre where specific hours of the day they are able to observe their various rituals. When it comes to production, they are little different than the animal other than they produce.

Pluralistic societies are the norm in most urban centres of the world. There are other dimensions to the pluralistic workplace. A pacifist Quaker may work on the production line where a particular item is produced. That same Quaker may have no idea where the items he makes ultimately are utilised. It may well be in weapons of mass destruction. A Pro-Life Roman Catholic may work in a science lab and unawares produce products that are used in chemical nerve gas. The result is increasingly, by pragmatics, that peoples of unlike background are forced to work with each other and at the same time the anonymity of their production makes their personal faith irrelevant. The more the basic dogmas of personal conviction are forced into a person's private life, the more pressure evolves to see one's personal belief as one of many beliefs rather than exclusive. As well as the neutral processes that form the framework of society, there are very clear "idea" fault-lines that bring the Systematic Society into a place of meaning. This stream or track that informs the Systematic Society is Post-Secular Society.

**THE POST SECULAR BORN IN THE *GESAMTKUNSTWERK* OF WAGNER**

A dynamic key change in European culture was brought into being by the philosophy expressed in the music of Richard Wagner. Wagner's work was the beginning of a high-profile artist employing forms and means of communication that lay somewhere between the Modern and the Post-Modern. The modern was the continuation of familiar art forms, whereas the post-modern was unified into a liminality that grew into the Post-Modern milieu of the twentieth century.

Wagner was linked at varying levels of intimacy, with both the writings and persons of the nineteenth century. In that sense he was part of a roadmap involving many other thinkers. Wagner brought together in artistic forms the philosophies of Schopenhauer, Shelling, and in particular, Nietchze. He was an artistic 'clearing house' providing a wide platform of access to the most radical philosophies that were extant at that time.

Wagner communicates a Pagan message; It was a message that inspired the birth or growth of the principal occult and esoteric movements of the day. Hermeticism, Rosicrucianism, and the Theosophy of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky were all nourished by Wagner's art. All three esoteric movements either led or represented the fundamental shift towards the NCCS that was to emerge nearly 100 years later. Wagner's spirituality was complex but should not be viewed

as having any actual ontological realities in the same way as those who took his art and message to define and propagate their own views.

It was much more than a spiritual or esoteric force as Thomas Mann wrote that Wagner's "Ring des Nibelungen" was "an attack upon" "all of bourgeois culture and civilization which had been dominant since the Renaissance,"<sup>20</sup> For Thomas Mann, Wagner represents the death of the status quo bourgeois milieu that he wrote so much about himself. The ontological paganism of Wagner is simply symbolic or as T. W. Adorno argues "Wotan is the ghostly image of the dead and buried revolution."<sup>21</sup> Whereas Wagner's Wotan, the Germanic version of the Norse Odin, is used to celebrate the emergence of the pagan from Wagner's time forward, it is important to understand that for Wagner, Wotan was simply a political and psychological symbol. George Windell writes, "Wagner wrote later that only after reading Schopenhauer had he come to understand his own Wotan."<sup>22</sup> Schopenhauer's Wotan represented the meaningless and suffering of the human condition which was the bedrock of his pessimistic philosophy. One could say that German Romanticism and German Idealism was the existential response to the nihilism of

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<sup>20</sup> George G. Windell, "Hegel, Feuerbach, and Wagner's Ring," *Central European History*, 1976, Vol. 9, No. 1 Cambridge (1976), pp. 27-57, see at p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 27-28.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. It produced the flow of antisemitic ideas that grew from the occult and ran into the Nazi movement in the 1930's. In allegorical terms, the wrestling with the transcendent of the nineteenth century is similar to the twenty-first century because those who choose NCCS do so as an existential response to the transcendence vacuum so visible within The Systematic Society.

The three elements of this new focus were: (i) Wagner's *Gesamtkunstswerk*, or Total Art, in which all the elements of the production, music, drama, set design, costume etc. all work together to create a unified whole; (ii) Pagan thought in the mythological which was presented as the highest ideal and; (iii) Antisemitism that was built on race alone not on the 'Christ-killers' of Latin Roman Catholic theology.

Wagner's "Ring des Nibelungen" cycle took place on August 13, 1876, at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus in Bayreuth, Germany. The "Ring des Nibelungen cycle" takes nearly fifteen hours to perform. It is usually presented in four sessions which seeks to bring together a multilevel sensory experience. The use of fine arts, dance, orchestra, and opera have individual roles within the total experience, as well as, presenting as a unified form. It could be argued that "Ring des Nibelungen cycle" is, or conforms to, a liturgical frame and yet that frame is not held accountable, at the ontological level, by any living presence.

Unique to Wagner in these festival performances are music backgrounds that are separated from the actors on stage but designed to influence the mood of the audience. This is not unlike a music score for a modern motion picture that sets the stage for what is being seen and yet is not part of the actual “script”. Wagner saw himself as reacting against the separation of the arts; He sought to create a unified field of artistic expression. Wagner’s unified whole of art can be viewed and understood if not by design, certainly in form, as an antithesis to the Hagia Sophia Divine Liturgy from sixth century Constantinople.

The multi-sensory of Hagia Sophia which holds all the elements to account in the Divine Logos is reversed in Wagner. The destructive nature of the pagan gods becomes an active pseudo Logospoetic. The Dark Logos represents all that is embodied in the post-Babel “sons of God” rebellion and rejection of the Heart and the Will of Yahweh. In Wagner’s case there was no philosophical framework to create accountability other than his own subjectivity. In contrast the Byzantine multi-sensory aesthetics were bathed in accountability to the eternal Logos. From a Christian perspective, Wagner’s interpreting of the Nordic and Teutonic myth into Germanic genetic supremacy is an example of the fundamental need for the *kalokagathia* principle in Christian communication which is ultimately based upon the living presence of the Logos who embodies and animates the True, the Good,

and the Beautiful.

## **TWENTIETH CENTURY *GESAMTKUNSTWERK* IN THE POST-MODERN CONDITION**

An outstanding example of the NCCS use of the multi-sensory in the Post-modern "*Gesamtkunstwerk*" may be found in the work "*Le Sacre du Printemps*" [The Rite of Spring] performed in Paris on May 29, 1913. Igor Stravinsky was the composer, Vaslav Nijinsky was the lead ballet dancer and choreographer, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballet Russes provided the dance members, and Nicholas Roerich created the costume and set design. The impact of the performance was to make "*Le Sacre du Printemps*" one of the most influential artistic works of the 20th Century. The multi-sensory impact upon the audience was significant. Fights broke out in the audience, there were hysterical arguments for and against the performance between the theatre goers. In this case, the multi-sensory animated the emancipation of the dormant inner self of those who were present at the performance; Their outer behaviour was the result. The message of the "*Le Sacre du Printemps*" was the victory of NCCS *youth* over the *old* and the redundant. The implicit idea was that Christianity had ended its place within civilisation and new and "fresh" NCCS were emerging. In real terms, the philosophical framework, like Wagner's work, was based upon the collective subjective demand of the luminaries within the



performing company to be set free and emancipated from bourgeois morality.

## **MULTI SENSORY HERMENEUTICS**

The multi-sensory is *not* ontological but rather it is: (i) A *tool* or a facilitator for the ontological: (ii) It is the Logos not the poetic that creates and demands the ontological; (iii) The metaphysical multi-sensory aesthetics are important to study, learn from, and appreciate, even if the content is something we find hard to relate to; however it is (iv) The ontological within the Logospoetic brings the Divine Logos *and* creation, bathed in multi-sensory aesthetic, rooting it in the historical post-Chalcedon Christian narrative

From a Christian perspective, liturgical events can be viewed as valuable, faithful, and positive but the question must be asked and answered – Is there an application that can be adopted for the non-Christian becoming a Christian? Is there a place for the multi-sensory in *Kerygma* rather than just for spiritual formation or worship. The question that needs to be answered is – What is the ontological change that takes place in a person’s spiritual conversion and how is that conversion actualised? And in this case – How is that conversion actualised by the multi-sensory *unveiling* of the Gospel?

Conversion in Church history has three primary forms: (i) A response of the will in changing the direction of one’s life by placing

one's decision-making process under the authority of Christ, which we can define as *metanoia*; (ii) By Baptism as a means of entrance into the Kingdom of God, which we can define as *ritual* and; (iii) By Confirmation such that after catechism one's life is placed, by their decision, under the authority of Christ, which we can define as *Theurgy*. In each of these three cases an ontological change has taken place within the individual. There is no multi-sensory aesthetic experience that can actualise any of these three events or positions.

The issue at stake is to be found in what was the means which drew the person to the point and place of their conversion. In terms of a conscious decision to place one's life under the authority of Christ, it is not determined by any method or technique. Whilst saying that, a growing and very significant number of people in the Western Hemisphere and an even greater number already found within Eurasia identify with, and respond to, *truth* in the context of beauty and goodness. The longing, *eros*, for the beauty and the good is what leads the person to long after God. The demonstration of beauty and goodness is often in the form of love which is communicated by a *living icon* – a human being who represents the beauty of Christ. Equally, the demonstration of beauty and goodness may be found by the visual encounter with the ceiling of one of the great Churches of the world and being gripped by the power and beauty of the heavenly gaze of the Pantocrator. In each case, the person is seized by beauty and goodness

which is the antecedent to conversion.

The propositional truth of the Gospel always travels into human experience through the pathway, track, or channel of the human relationship or a mystical encounter; The Logospoetic provides for this pathway. It rejects the claim of objective rational textualism that seeks to remove the ontological by a simulated encounter through the disembodied medium of text.

The task that is set forth in this research is how do we as a Church translate that *eros* for God, this longing for beauty and goodness within the context of truth, into communication forms that can reach and transform our contemporary milieu. In this Introduction the objective has been to outline and define the broad social constructions of our age and our culture. In the final analysis, all these discussions relate ultimately to the person, or persons, in deity truth claims. As we will see, the context in which the Gospel is presented is an environment that must be dominated by either the Lord or god, gods, any god.

## **THE LORD**

The concept of The Lord is found to stand at the very centre of Christian belief and practice. The first reference to The Lord as being a deity to acknowledge, recognise, and worship is found for the first time in Genesis 5:28 which reads, “At that time people began to invoke the

name of The Lord". This entity called The Lord had very little to say to persons in terms of expectations, responsibilities, and privileges. It is only when we enter into the Mosaic period that a vast compendium of laws, demands and rewards come to the chosen nation of Israel. Prior to the Exodus narrative The Lord focused His attention upon a deeper moral imperative. Jacob Boehme writes,

You set him as a ruler above Your wondrous works, and gave him no commandment nor law except that he was not to lead himself into his own lust and will, but that he was to work and will alone in Your power (in the will that You gave him) and not direct himself into his own possessiveness, to test good and evil so that the anger of the fire and the might of darkness might not be aroused in him to destroy the noble image or to change it into the harshness of the earth.<sup>23</sup>

That moral imperative contrasted with the gods of the nations. The world prior to the Mosaic Covenant was a world in which a god, gods, and any god was the predominant milieu within which all functioned. With the introduction of the Ten Commandments and the opening manifesto in Exodus 20:3 stating, "I am the Lord, you shall have no other God besides me" a fundamental shift in revelation between God and man took place. This was an explosive statement to the nation of Israel as it removed any possibility of The Lord being a personal

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<sup>23</sup> Jakob Böhme, *The Way to Christ*, trans. Peter Erb, (Paulist Press, 1978), p. 102.

preference among many as in the case of Henotheism. The demand was for an exclusive narrow view of a unique God. The implications of this exclusivity extended to viewing 'a god', 'gods,' and or 'any god' as ideas that were represented in the idols, and that those idols must be destroyed. Therefore, When Joshua stood on the border of the land of Canaan, he had to make a clear decision. That decision was either to eliminate all other spiritual worldviews or to seek common ground for inter-faith dialogue.

The story of Israel taking possession of the Land is one of the most bloody, brutal, and uncompromising expeditions within the Judeo-Christian narrative. There is little room for the essence of this narrative to be even remotely acceptable within today's Systematic Society. To claim connection to it, other than through a clever sophistry with a set of mitigations, renders the Judeo-Christian narrative as being *implausible* in our current epoch. It is this implausibility that governs the moral attitude of our contemporary world.

The Lord and His actions cannot be defended using the logic and sensibilities of today's Systematic Society. The taking of the Promised Land by the methods commanded by God are beyond modern-day comprehension. They make the Judeo-Christian worldview implausible to the modern mind. In short, the theodicy in question is not a Holy God who allows evil to exist without intervention, it is rather an evil that is created and sanctioned by a God of Love. Within this

matrix the whole concept of a loving God who cares for all His creation is rendered implausible at best and inexcusable.

Therefore, the questions need to be answered within a broader frame of reference whereby the character and nature of God's is understood in light of *Sophianity*. It will unfold that a balance can be struck with a new plausibility for the message of "The Lord" replacing the homogenised plurality of today's Systematic Society.

### **GOD, GODS AND, ANY GOD**

Today's concept of, a god, gods, and any god, needs to be viewed in a context. That context is one of authority; Each belief and practiced worldview has a *source* of authority. Whether there is a complex and comprehensive set of beliefs and practices or a more simplistic outline, the issue of authority is central.

The Muslim Koran, Jewish Rabbinic writings, The Buddhist Tripiṭaka The *Book of the Dead*, The Bible with Old and or New Testaments, Norse Mythology, The Hindu *Baghavad Gita* to name just a few all reveal a source of authority. These sources of authority give the reasons for the various beliefs and practices that they represent. Cultures that have been built on these sources of authority are based on a religious text that is interpreted by a Priest, Shaman, Prophet, or Preacher in order to outline the expectations and responsibilities attached to the belief system. The power of these

authority structures is beyond the singular propositional interpretations at any given time. They permeate a culture as a whole, and in so doing, they set up enforcement agencies based on the fear of rejection.

Before the growth and development of The Systematic Society, in the premodern world, cultures could function within the structures and strictures of what was delivered to them by their various sources of authority. More than anything else there was little interaction and interdependency between unlike truth claims and their cultures. The Systematic Society abolishes *singular* sources of authority and replaces them with *multiple* sources of authority. This is the core condition of diversity within a pluralistic society. This diversity allows for the smooth functioning of any given social construction. The reason should be self-evident. If two sources of authority demand that other sources of authority be rejected or eliminated, then only disharmony will be the result.

In *The Consequences of Modernity* by Anthony Giddens<sup>24</sup> a schemer is outlined which demonstrates the outcome of the removal of singular authority being replaced by multiple sources of authority.

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<sup>24</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 1st edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1991A).

The only outcome can be what Giddens calls *radical doubt*.<sup>25</sup> This radical doubt is not a fluid movement up and down a scale between belief and unbelief but rather is the removal of the plausibility of certainty in a pluralistic society. Truth must become preference based. New sets of beliefs and practices that supersede the old ones need to be developed. In real terms belief and practice becomes a pragmatic consumer option, an option among many, that can function in one's private world without disturbing The Systematic Society.

### **FAITH WITHIN THE TRANSCENDENT VACUUM**

To distil the goal of understanding the Good, The True and, The Beautiful is above all else an exploration of the presence of God. That presence of God will be explored within the narrow Judeo-Christian context. This research proffers a unique, distinct, and exclusive interpretation of the presence of God: "The Lord" who is the God and Father or our Lord Jesus Christ and who, with the Blessed Holy Spirit, is the Triune Godhead of Holy Scripture.

Within the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, Targums, and commentaries a pattern emerges concerning what occurs when the presence of God is manifest. This presence has implications for worship

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<sup>25</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1991B), p. 3, 21, See also pp. 187-201.



in both the Hebrew and Christian context such that obedience in following God's patterns for worship and the revelation of the presence of God are closely related. The *Sacred Divine Order* is spoken off all through this teaching series.

Beyond the obvious implications stated there is a much wider frame of reference concerning the presence of God. God is intricately involved in all aspects of the *telos* of the universe. That involvement is central to God's plan for all He has created. There are two aspects of this relationship to His creation. The first aspect is that which proceeds from God as a creative act in His creation. The second aspect is the antithesis to that creative act whereby the supernatural structures of the realm of evil act in a manner to undo what God creates. This act of evil can rightly be called de-creation. Within this conflict between God's creative and evil's de-creative acts is a *Cosmos* in need of redemption. The vision of God through the Gospel is to see, "The earth filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." The work of evil to see the *Cosmos* in rebellion to the very idea of "The Lord". The Lord who loves and meets as Friend and Father with persons He has created. The goal of evil is to turn the hearts and minds of persons against the idea of "The Lord" and to replaced it with an unlimited spiritual worldview of "god, gods, and any god".

To accomplish this act of de-creation the powers of evil have sought to unite the world around common values that are the values

of the “Anti-Christ”. The road map for this goal is simple and crude and yet highly effective. Unify persons around *systems not ideas*. Then the systems themselves will create a transcendence vacuum which can only be filled with a worldwide system of compatibility. That compatibility can only work or function within the concept of “god, gods, and any god” in opposition to “The Lord”. Evil is not seeking to convert the world away from “The Lord” but rather to make the idea of “The Lord” an implausible, redundant, and irrelevant idea. Then such an idea will allow the *system itself* to create plausibility for “god, gods, and any god”.

A Systematic Society whereby conceptually “god, gods, and any god” has been made plausible by this process; It has taken place globally in the last 200 years. This process or set of sociological carriers has been given a variety of names: Modernity, Post Modernity, or Enlightenment Presuppositions to name just a few. Each of these terms has reached a point whereby they mean different things to different disciplines. When these forces are left free to redefine cultural boundaries and social constructions, the outcome is almost always a three-step process: (i) Secularisation, the development of a (ii) Transcendence Vacuum, which is then followed by (iii) De-Secularisation. Secularisation hollows out culture into homogenised frameworks which in turn creates a spiritual vacuum; The spiritual vacuum then compels a longing (*eros*) for something beyond the

secular. De-secularisation provides a response by facilitating the transcendent.

A central issue or feature of the outworking of this thesis is to be found in the uniqueness of our contemporary epoch. In short, for the first time in history all the major metropolitan areas of the world are connected through a vast interweaving network of connected social constructions. What is unique is that the peoples of the world have been moving towards a unity of values based upon the central element of connectivity; The world today is fully connected with itself. These social constructions have begun to evolve so that despite the prominence of ethnic and national identities a new, and yet undefined milieu has begun to develop which is based upon value systems of connectivity.

## **SUMMARY**

In conclusion, this research project consists of a basic initial premise. There is a growing universal global cultural milieu with various sets of values – some dominant and some being of a lite motif in nature. This milieu has evolved at the sociological level by carriers of modernity: Globalization, Urbanization, Pluralization, Centralized Bureaucracy, and the spawning of Self-Sustaining Technologies. This milieu is referred to as The Systematic Society.

This framework as a cultural shell has had the dominant value

systems of various forms of nihilism through multiple layers of Philosophy during the mid-nineteenth century running through to our current epoch. This has been referred to as Post-Modern Society. The Post-Modern Society is defined by the absence of certain traditional values effecting consciousness. This has resulted in a new milieu that is referred to as the Transcendence Vacuum. This Transcendence Vacuum can also be thought of as a Post-Secular Society that is marked by the pursuit and hunger within populations for transcendent experiences.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**TEACHING MODULE ONE:**  
**COSMOLOGY AT THE CORE OF MISSION**

**WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

Seeking to develop a Theology of Mission that transcends the historic differences within the various Christian Traditions and Franchises, the starting point must be in the area of anthropology. That anthropology needs to be rooted not only in a purely one-dimensional view as is often the case. This module seeks to integrate the anthropological into a wider biblical cosmology that reaches beyond the narrow confines of the rational and scientific in order to view the *anthropos* in light of a multi-dimensional framework that incorporates both the seen and unseen world.

**INTRODUCTION**

The incarnation of God, in the Divine Logos as Jesus the Messiah by the Holy Spirit, is the fulcrum upon which all history rests. This incarnation is thought of not as an event, but as the presence of the Divine, rooted in both the realm of the created and uncreated Sophia of God. In this work the use of Sophia will follow a similar outline as Sergei Bulgakov and Vladimir Soloviev; All that exists, all that is separate from God, extends from His active energies. The energies of

God create all that exists within the heavens and the earth. This created order has the mediation of the Logos who is in the Essence of God as well as in that which is created by the energies of God. In the Sophianic view, the incarnation is understood as the Logos – begotten not as created – as perfect God and perfect Person. All that takes place in terms of the plan, the will, the nature, and the actions of God does so within this Sophia – this Divine yet creaturely space which is *not* God but *extends from* God.

The critical issue when thinking of this mystery is that it is not the knowledge of the Logos that has effective, efficacious, or merit producing outcomes. It is the presence of the Logos that is central to our thinking especially as it relates to the topic being studied in the thesis. David Bentley Hart states the point beautifully when he writes,

[...] it is this presence within time of an eschatological and divine peace, really incarnate in the person of Jesus and forever imparted to the body of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, that remains the very essence of the church's evangelical appeal to the world at large, and of the salvation it proclaims.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), pp. 1–2.

In the final analysis, this entire project is built upon the idea of the presence of God, in Christ, by the Spirit, in the Church to and for the world as a mission.

The creation of Persons [(*anthropos*) the term Persons being women and men] described in Genesis, is the focal point of pre-Incarnation human history. This is followed by the eruptive events of rebellion of Persons to God and their dismissal from the Garden in Eden. The implications of this are enormous. What genetic realities are involved here are difficult to confirm as the biblical account is written in a narrative without detailed explanation. What can be deduced is that prior to the rebellion, Adam and Eve lived inside of a prepared place, Eden. This place was distinct from outside of Eden and was a place that was a model for Persons to spread to all the earth. One can speculate that Eden was a place where there was a symbiosis of what we now think of as the unseen world and what we now refer to as a three-dimensional world. What is evident, when Adam and Eve rebelled there was a barrier placed between them and Eden which disallowed them from remaining in this habitat; A barrier that was enforced by a celestial being.<sup>27</sup>

The condition of sin that Adam and Eve entered dramatically affected their spiritual and physical anatomy. This was given the

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<sup>27</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition* (Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ, 1993), Gen. 3:24.

descriptor of death, “You shall surely die.”<sup>28</sup> Whereas Adam and Eve were defined by the *absence of death*, their rebellion meant they were defined now by the *absence of life*. In this case, the *absence* being the absence of eternal life. Athanasius gives an authoritative word on the subject of this change:

Thus, then, God created the human being and willed that he should abide in incorruptibility; but when humans despised and overturned the comprehension of God, devising and contriving evil for themselves, as was said in the first work, then they received the previously threatened condemnation of death, and thereafter no longer remained as they had been created, but were corrupted as they had contrived.<sup>29</sup>

From a Hebraic or Jewish perspective, the language used is similar but adds to the meaning in terms of the condition of sin that Adam and Eve have fallen into. Nahum Sana writes:

Man, having already exceeded the limits of creaturehood, has radically altered the perspective of human existence. He lives henceforth in the consciousness of his mortality. He may therefore be tempted to change his condition by artificial means,

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 3:3.

<sup>29</sup> St Athanasius the Great of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation: Translation*, ed. and trans. John Behr, vol. 44a, Popular Patristics Series (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), p. 59.



rather than by restoring the ruptured harmony between divine will and human will, the harmony that is ultimately the definition of paradise.<sup>30</sup>

When we read in the New Testament accounts of “all” being in Adam, it can be understood that the posterity of Adam and Eve was emanating out of a condition that included the absence of eternal life.<sup>31</sup> Sin is thus a condition and as a condition it is more thought of as a genetic disease rather than a breaking of laws. In this view of sin therefore, the law is being given to Persons to provide evidence of the condition of sin as being actual and real and that touches all the moral and ethical realities of life.<sup>32</sup>

Whilst stating the two-fold nature of sin, its condition as a disease and its moral guilt by actions, as noted by Isaac of Nineveh to be of “a great variety in the curse that was directed against each one of them [Adam, Eve, and the serpent]” he writes that “in accordance with

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<sup>30</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> Therefore, just as “sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12)—sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law.

<sup>32</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard*, Romans.7:7, see at “Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.”

the propensity and inclination of each unto sin, is judgment made more heavy.”<sup>33</sup>

The absence of life as characterised in juxtaposition to the Edenic absence of death is the prevailing motif of the narrative in Genesis. There are a series of pictures given. In Genesis 4 the narrative of Cain and Abel is given but with little background story. The obvious question is how did Abel know that God’s desire was a sacrifice of blood? Charles Simeon asks the same question and enlarges upon it when he writes,

In the first place, we may be sure that the offering of sacrifices was not an institution of man’s device; and that, if it were, it could not be pleasing and acceptable to God. How could it enter into the mind of man to imagine, that the blood of a beast could make any satisfaction to God for sin? What connexion is there between the blood of a beast and the sin of man? There was much more reason to think that God would be displeased with the unauthorized destruction of his creatures, than that he would be so pleased with it as to forgive the iniquities of mankind on account of it.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> A. J. Wensinck with Isaac of Nineveh, *Mystic Treatises* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Akademie Van Wetenschappen, 1923), p. 75.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae: Genesis to Leviticus*, vol. 1 (London: Samuel Holdsworth, 1836), 41.

Augustine places the narrative into an allegorical explanation by arguing that it was a conflict between ‘The City of Man’ and ‘The City of God.’ He writes:

Now, the first man born of the two parents of the human race was Cain. He belonged to the city of man. The next born was Abel, and he was of the City of God. Notice here a parallel between the individual man and the whole race.<sup>35</sup>

Was this revealed to Abel by God? Did he intuit this in his relationship with God?

An answer is furnished that fits with much of Augustine's subtext in *City of God Book 17*. God predestined Abel to know that his offering was acceptable. A similar set of questions can be said of Cain.

The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.<sup>36</sup> [emphasis added]

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<sup>35</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God, Books VIII–XVI*, ed. Hermigild Dressler, trans. Gerald G. Walsh and Grace Monahan, vol. 14, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), p. 414.

<sup>36</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 4:6–7.

“Sin is lurking at the door.” This is the first actual use of the word “sin” in the Bible. It is used in a reified form as a “something” as opposed to an abstract concept. It is also placed within a metaphor “lurking at the door.” Then this something called sin is given an ontology, “Its desire is for you.” In short, sin has a genitive capacity. This idea is re-enforced by the use of the term “it”; Sin being a something.

One of the immediate questions that must arise when thinking and talking of sin as a reified something is, does evil exist? Sergei Bulgakov works extensively with this question when he writes:

First of all: Does evil exist, as an independent principle of being, as a “substance,” alongside good? The philosophers of antiquity, the church fathers, and the scholastic theologians all unanimously answered this question in the negative: evil does not exist alongside good as an independent principle, a principle that competes with and is parallel to good.<sup>37</sup>

Schmemmann puts it creatively when he writes:

When we see the world as an end in itself, everything becomes itself a value and consequently loses all value, because only in God is found the meaning (value) of everything, and the world is meaningful only when it is

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<sup>37</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI; Edinburgh: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; T&T Clark, 2002), p. 147.

the “sacrament” of God’s presence.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, it is the removal of anything from the presence of God that creates a something that is not of God. Evil is simply this action which develops and grows under a vast spectrum of circumstances. In Cain there is a development from sin as a condition that is caused by Adam and Eve refusing to obey God in Eden to an act of sin within the community, Cain murdered Abel. That act of sin, emanating from the *Condition* created by Adam and Eve, is extends from within the freedom of Cain’s volition.

In Eden, the “absence of life” condition that Adam and Eve have moved into has an ontological effect upon themselves. It also has an ontological effect upon the physical earth as it partakes in the overall condition of sin.

[...] cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, vol. I, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press Classics Series (Yonkers, NY: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2018), p. 24

<sup>39</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Ge 3:17–19.

With Cain, as with Adam and Eve, the cursed-earth concept is employed by God as the impact of sin. “When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”<sup>40</sup> The theological implications of this are beyond the scope of this study. However, it is reasonable to assume that there is a direct correlation between sin as a condition, in terms of Adam and Eve, and sin as an act of violence within the condition and quality of the created order as Cain kills his brother. The act of violence of Cain towards Abel is clearly a moral and ethical issue and as Soloviev states, “However convincing or authoritative a moral teaching may be, it will remain fruitless and devoid of power unless it finds a secure foundation in the moral nature of man.”<sup>41</sup>

Cain's moral condition was corrupted not by his act of violence, but the act of violence which proceeded from his moral corruption. This must be a central message in our Mission. Persons are corrupted at an inner place which gives them the propensity and normative desire to sin. A motif can be identified that the earth is seen as a “victim” of sin. God's original intent being, the whole earth under mandate, is to become like Eden through Persons' acts of care and cultivation. Maximus discusses the theological principle of the ontological change in both Persons and

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 4:12.

<sup>41</sup> Vladimir Solovyov, *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy*, ed. Boris Jakim, trans. Nathalie A. Duddington (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), p.23.

the created order actualized by the sin of Adam and Eve. Maximus writes:

One possibility is that God, at the very moment humanity fell, blended our soul together with our body on account of the transgression, and endowed it with the capacity to undergo change, just as he gave the body the capacity to suffer, undergo corruption, and be wholly dissolved—as was evinced when God covered the body with the garments of skins (Gen 3:21).<sup>42</sup>

The narrative of history between the Edenic dismissal and the Flood takes on a new revelation as Persons are described as functioning within a community, “Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and *he built a city* and named it Enoch after his son Enoch”<sup>43</sup> [emphasis added]. This entrance of community opens the door for the birth of culture; “Adah bore Jabal; he was the ancestor of those who live in tents and have livestock.<sup>44</sup> Added to this was the entrance of music into the cultural milieu, “His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> St Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor*, ed. John Behr, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, vol. 25, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), p. 76.

<sup>43</sup> The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Gen 4:17–22.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* v. 20.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* v. 21.

This was followed by “Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools.”<sup>46</sup> By the time of the Flood, civilisation had developed to include the domestication of animals, the identification of musical instruments, and the development of tools all of which presupposes a variety of artisan vocations. The community by this point has familial structure, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge exchange but it is functioning within a corrupted condition. Lossky writes concerning the very meaning of this emergent community, “[...] if a world can exist in which nothing that exists lives for itself and experiences the existence of others, a world in which nothing has any meaning for itself or for others.”<sup>47</sup> The self-consciousness of the corrupted condition of culture did not exist in the mind of God alone but in the consciousness of Persons who he created.

The first idea of the prophetic among the inhabitants is introduced when Lamech the father of Noah, consciously aware of the moral corruption in the land, speaking of his son, says, “Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.”<sup>48</sup> Lamech speaks into a series of situations with this prophetic word. He identified that the physical

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. v. 22.

<sup>47</sup> N. O. Lossky and John S. Marshall, *Value and Existence*, trans. Sergei S. Vinokooroff (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1935), p. 62.

<sup>48</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 5:28–29.



ground was cursed, and that toil and work was a result of the curse. He prophesies that Noah will bring relief from the curse of work. When viewing the sacred calendar given by God to His people Israel in Leviticus 23, six examples may be noted: (i) The Sabbath is to be a day of “[...] complete rest, a holy convocation [...] you shall do no work: it is a sabbath to the Lord throughout your settlements,”<sup>49</sup> (ii) The Passover, “On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupation,”<sup>50</sup> (iii) The Feast of Pentecost, “You shall hold a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations,”<sup>51</sup> (iv) The Festival of Trumpets, “You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall present the Lord’s offering by fire,”<sup>52</sup> (v) The day of Atonement, “It shall be to you a sabbath of complete rest,”<sup>53</sup> and lastly (vi) the Festival of Booths, “On the eighth day you shall observe a holy convocation and present the Lord’s offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations.”<sup>54</sup>

The one exception to this paradigm of rest is to be found in the festival of First Fruits. There may be some deeper explanation for this, but it

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, Lev. 23:3.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, Lev. 23:6–7.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, Lev. 23:21.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, Lev. 23:25.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 32.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 36.

also may be that the offering of the First Fruit takes place on the day after the Sabbath which has built into it the concept of rest from labour. "He shall raise the sheaf before the Lord, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall raise it."<sup>55</sup>

A dominant motif is the idea that work, or labour is an outcome of sin both as a condition and a personal violation against the will of God. Lamech had a sense or intuition that Noah was going to bring relief from the curse. This was also seen in the cultural and moral disorder that had descended upon civilisation at that time which is outlined in Genesis 6. There are series statements made in the final stages of civilisation that are complex to understand.

Lamech had two wives, Adah and Zillah from these two wives Adah bore Jabal and Jubal and Zillah bore Tubal-cain. Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-cain were those identified earlier as being the originators of the cultural elements of animal husbandry, musical instruments, and artisan tools. A speculative approach to this is, that at the time of the Flood only Noah and his wife, Shem, Ham and Japheth and their wives entered the Ark and were the progenitors of the human race from that point on. This condition presupposes that the skills of Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-cain must have gone through the process of knowledge exchange that deposited their indigenous knowledge into the four men and their wives who entered the Ark. This brings into being another motif.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 11.

Within the community, knowledge is shared, probably through families as a part of the response to living in the face of the Curse that had come by sin. Salvation, in the very general sense of the word, was not to be found in work. Rather, it was to be found in the concept of dependence upon God. This principle did not manifest itself until the time of Moses with the earlier mention of rest, based on trust, as central to human salvation as mentioned earlier in Leviticus 23.

If in this project we follow the generally accepted view, of Heiser, Parker, Mullen, Simeon, and Sarna as earlier cited, that the Sons of God were in fact celestial beings, then the implication is that at least one section of the Celestial hierarchy was capable of union with the purely human. In Genesis 6:1-2 the reference of the sons of God is important to note that *Beney ha Elohim*, [בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, LXX, υἱοὶ θεοῦ] is the same term that is used for the members of the Divine Council which will be explored later in this work. Once more a speculative view is reasonable in terms of an assumption. Prior to the Edenic dismissal, celestial beings, and Persons (*anthropos*) shared a common space. There was a curse and an ontological shift in the created order of what we would call today the earthly creation.

When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for

themselves of all that they chose.<sup>56</sup>

Persons and the *Beney ha Elohim* shared the same physical space to the point that they were able to bear fruit together as human-celestial hybrids. When we pass into a new paradigm, probably the Flood, or possibly the Tower of Babel, a new cosmic order is created. This new cosmic order that we will explore later has a clear separation in terms of co-existence between celestial beings and Persons.

Another purely speculative explanation is that the creation saw two distinct types of human beings. The first are Persons. Persons were created by God and unique in that they had within them the breath of life breathed by God. These Persons were created to dwell within Eden. And secondly, other *anthropos* were created in the same way animals were created. These did not have the breath of God within them. These beings are generally thought of as the Neanderthal. The original vision of Eden was that it would be exported as a Kingdom to all the other places of the earth. When Adam and Eve were dismissed from Eden, they entered the broader realm of creation and their progeny intermix with the Neanderthal population. This may also act as an allegory for the Church. The Apostles received the Holy Spirit, the breath of God

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 6: 1-2.

and then expanded their newly inaugurated Kingdom by taking the Gospel to the Nations.

As interesting as this speculative explanation may be, especially for those who hold to a theistic evolution paradigm, one has to say that there is nothing other than imaginative speculation to support such an idea. When in Genesis 6:3-4 we read:

Then the Lord said, “My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went into the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.<sup>57</sup>

It is apparent that civilisation in its ante-diluvian form was very different from what was to emerge as the Heavens and the Earth in the post-Babel epoch. The question of the Nephilim [ נַפְלִיִּים ] is complex. Various explanations are pursued but for this scope of study it is important to establish some order.

There was no oral or textual history available after the Flood that did not come from either Noah and his wife, Shem and his wife, and Ham and his wife. There were no other survivors of the Flood other than these Persons. This demands certain truth claims. The only

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 6: 3-4.

genetic material within the ongoing *Anthropos* was limited to these eight Persons. In Genesis 6:5-8 there is an anthropomorphic demonstration of God's dealing with both the *Beney ha Elohim* and the Persons living on the earth:

The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favour in the sight of the Lord.<sup>58</sup>

All the inhabitants of earth, the celestial-human hybrids, Persons, and animals were to be destroyed and a small group of Persons and the animals they brought onto the Ark would survive.

The period of time between the resting of the Ark on Mt. Ararat and the scattering of Persons into ethnolinguistic groupings is very thin in terms of information but the peoples operated as a single tribe with a single language and migrated to Shinar which was to become Babylon. The post-Flood era comes to an end at the event of the Tower of Babel whereby Persons in community as they were, were scattered

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, vss. 5–8.

throughout the earth and given new identities and language structures. This event leads to what is proffered in this first Module concerning the concept of the celestial realm as being a direct participant in the history of the earth. It is the meeting place where the synthesis of the Old Heavens and the Old Earth is actualised.

## **SUMMARY**

From the perspective of Mission there are series of themes that are recurrent in this section.

(i) There was an agenda that God had in terms of the creation of Adam and Eve.

(ii) This was to be exercised in the care, nurture, and flourishing of Eden that in turn would extend to the whole of the earth outside of Eden.

(iii) Central to this process was a cosmogenic partnership with God under His authority and guidance.

(iv) When Adam and Eve refused to act in obedience to God's agenda, they entered into a new state-of-being determined as a *condition* of sin.

(v) This condition had spiritual genetic qualities to it such that all who proceeded, in terms of children, from Adam and Eve would generate out from the new *condition* of sin.

(Vi) A plan of redemption is initiated by God immediately after the disobedience and entrance into the state of death or the absence of eternal life.

(vii) An outcome of this condition of the absence of eternal life resulted in the propensity towards sin being normative.

(viii) With Cain and Abel, a clear distinction in types of Persons emerge, they both have the propensity to sin, but in the case described in Genesis 4, Abel pleases God and Cain displeases God.

(ix) During the period between Cain and Abel and the Flood of Genesis, civilisation is formed into a variety of social constructions: animal husbandry, music, and tools for artisanship. This knowledge is then passed on in some form to those who enter the Ark.

(X) The Tower of Babel sees a dramatic change among Persons as a new order is created by God scattering peoples into new distinct ethnolinguistic social constructions.

## **DISCUSSION**

1. Theorise a theology of Mission that is built on a Cosmology that places the principalities and powers as a poetic or rhetorical device alone. In short, just the idea of salvation exists.
2. Speculate and conjecture what the hybrid of the Sons of God and the daughters of men could represent.
3. Identify three foundational motifs, (recurring themes that act as the scaffolding for the thesis) in the text.



4. Think through and discuss the idea of sin as a condition and disease or as a legal, moral, and ethical failure.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**TEACHING MODULE TWO:**  
**THE DIVINE COUNCIL AS INTEGRAL TO MISSION**

**WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

The focus of the mission of the Church is to see the accomplishment of Matthew 28 and Acts 1 as being encapsulated in the declaration in heaven,

by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.<sup>59</sup>

The tribes, languages, peoples, and nations have been under spiritual deception by the authorities in heavenly places. It is the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world who has dispossessed these spiritual authorities and translated the former spiritually dark territories from the “kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son.”<sup>60</sup>

**INTRODUCTION**

The first thread in building the tapestry for the plan of the

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<sup>59</sup> *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Rev. 5:9.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Col. 1:13-14.

redemption for the heavens and the earth is to be found in the area of Cosmology. This area of Cosmology in Mission generally is underrepresented in terms of an academic Theology of Mission. I proffer that the core issue in the study of mission is to be found in an understanding of the Cosmological framework that Mission is taking place within. This is especially critical when the biblical cosmology directs a relationship between that which is seen and that which is unseen. When considering the subject of a Theology of Mission Cosmology, it is important to view this on two levels: The realm of The Spirit as well as a Teleology, or ultimate purpose, in and through Mission.

## **THE COSMIC CONFLICT**

The Apostle Paul makes it very clear to the Ephesian Church that the Mission of the Church is a Cosmic battle that involves a conflict with evil powers in heavenly places by those who are the Church on earth.

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, Eph. 6:12.

ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς **ἀρχάς**, πρὸς τὰς **ἐξουσίας**, πρὸς τοὺς **κοσμοκράτορας** τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ **πνευματικὰ** τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς **ἐπουρανίοις**.<sup>62</sup> [bold emphasis refers to the parse below]

[ἀρχάς, Rulers] - [ἐξουσίας, Authorities] -

[κοσμοκράτορας, Cosmos Rulers]

[πνευματικὰ, Spiritual] - [πονηρίας, Wickedness] -

[ἐπουρανίοις, Heavenly]

When this verse is parsed, the recurrent theme of the *Beney ha Elohim* in conflict with the individual Christian and the Church emerges. The Peshita Syriac version gives a fresh translation from the original Syriac translation.

For our conflict is not with flesh and blood, but with principalities, and with those in authority, and with the possessors of this dark world, and with the evil spirits that are beneath heaven.<sup>63</sup>

John Chrysostom frames this conflict in terms of deception. This framing fits with the idea of the Nations being deceived by the *Beney*

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<sup>62</sup> *The NET Bible: Greek Text* (Dallas, TX: Biblical Studies Press, 2017), Eph. 6:12.

<sup>63</sup> Horace L. Hastings and Isaac H. Hall, *The Syriac New Testament Translated into English from the Peshitto*, trans. James Murdock, Ninth Edition (Boston: H. L. Hastings & Sons, 1915), Eph. 6:12.

*ha Elohim* as spoken of in Deuteronomy 32. Chrysostom shows the source of power to stand against the deception. Chrysostom states:

And put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. He saith not, against the fightings, nor against the hostilities, but against the wiles. For this enemy is at war with us, not simply, nor openly, but by wiles. What is a wile? To use wiles, is to deceive and to take by artifice or contrivance; a thing which takes place both in the case of the arts, and in words, and actions, and stratagems, with those who seduce us.<sup>64</sup>

Following a Midrash and Talmudic view of this text we are given insight. Strack and Billerbeck demonstrate that:

1. σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα = ׀׀׀ ׀׀׀, see § Matt 16:17 B.
2. ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι are not here, as in Eph. 1:21, designations for classes of angels, but rather for classes of demons. On the kingdom of the devil, see § Matt. 25:41 B; see also § Matt. 12:24, #3. — Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah 2:2: “Manasseh served Satan, his angels, and powers.”<sup>65</sup> || Jubilees 49:2: “All the forces of Mastema (= Satan) were sent to kill all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.” — See further in the excursus “Ancient Jewish Demonology,” #3 (Structure of the

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<sup>64</sup> S. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, and Homilies on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, vol. VI, A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church (Oxford; London: John Henry Parker; J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1840), 352–353.

<sup>65</sup> || a break in the preceding material, most often a transition between citations

Demon World).<sup>66</sup>

This description is followed up by the concept of persons' moral, ethical and ascetical decisions in everyday life as being the weapons in that spiritual warfare.

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.<sup>67</sup>

A Teleological argument is to be found in a construction of connected biblical statements.

[...] then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Midrash*, ed. Jacob N. Cerone, trans. Joseph Longarino, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 713.

<sup>67</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eph 6:14–18.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 Cor. 15:20–24.

There are a series of steps that relate to the teleology of the conflict; (i) At his coming; (ii) The end; (iii) Giving the Kingdom to the Father; and (iv) After destroying every rule, every authority, and every power. The final act of the Church as the Body of Christ is the dispossession of all the realms of spiritual authority that were originally delivered to *Beney ha Elohim* after the scattering of, and formation of, the ethnolinguistic groups at the Tower of Babel.

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.<sup>69</sup>

This connects to the account in Revelation 12:10 as the point when the defeat of The Satan is realised:

Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.<sup>70</sup>

The means of this victory over The Satan is defined by the Body of Christ exercising spiritual power as they “[...] have conquered him by

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, Deuteronomy 32:8–9.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, Rev. 12:10.

the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.<sup>71</sup> This teleological framework forces the discussion of the eschaton onto the common life of the Church: (i) The blood of The Lamb of God, (ii) the word of their testimony (*Kerygma*) and (iii) the commitment of their faith as a willingness to martyrdom.

## THE PRESENTATION

*Beney ha Elohim*, in the immediate aftermath of the Tower of Babel, appear to be connected to actual ethnos or peoples and territories. Following the earlier thought that *Beney ha Elohim* were the Principalities in the Celestial Hierarchy, the assumption, albeit a reasonable assumption, can be made that there were in some manner rulers of designated domains.

The clearest idea of a presentation takes place in Job 1:

One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."<sup>72</sup>

Driver and Gray write,

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, Rev. 12:11.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, Job 1:6-7.



Since the Satan does not report immediately and alone but presents himself along with the other sons of the gods (2:1), it may be inferred that Yahweh was conceived as holding a session at stated intervals for the mission of his messengers to earth, and for the reception of reports from them on their return.<sup>73</sup>

The establishment of a Divine Council connects to the retrospective of Deuteronomy 32 and the Psalm 82 discussed above. The actual constitution of the Divine Council is debated, however, generally the opinion is that Lucifer as The Satan, or The Accuser, is one of the *Beney ha Elohim*. The Satan has a following of Angels who submit to his leadership.

Whereas the actual textual evidence concerning the fall of parts of the heavenly host in Lucifer's rebellion is both complex and difficult to elucidate, it is clear that *Beney ha Elohim* became the object of worship by those persons living in the newly divided territories. These *Beney ha Elohim* were given the designation as demons. In Deuteronomy 32:17, they [the Israelites] sacrificed to demons [*shedim*], not God [*eloah*], to gods [*elohim*] whom they had not known.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), pp. 32–33.

Heiser writes:

In the context of Deuteronomy 32:17, shedim were elohim—spirit beings guarding foreign territory—who must not be worshiped. Israel was supposed to worship her own God (here, eloah; cf. Deut. 29:25). One cannot deny the reality of the elohim/shedim in Deuteronomy 32:17 without denying the reality of demons.<sup>75</sup>

Heiser elaborates further:

Most English Bibles do not read “according to the number of the sons of God” in Deuteronomy 32:8. Rather, they read “according to the number of the sons of Israel.” The difference derives from disagreements between manuscripts of the Old Testament. “Sons of God” is the correct reading, as is now known from the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>76</sup>

Heiser’s claim concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls is affirmed in the JPS Torah commentary. Where the Masoretic text which has been followed

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<sup>75</sup> Deut. 32:17 is poorly translated in several Bible versions. See Michael S. Heiser, “Does Deuteronomy 32:17 Assume or Deny the Reality of Other Gods?” *Bible Translator* 59.3 (July 2008): 137–45; cf. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, p. 33.

<sup>76</sup> For a discussion of the Hebrew text and manuscript support for “sons of God,” see Michael S. Heiser, “Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (January-March 2001): 52–74. The ESV and NRSV have incorporated the reading of the scrolls into the running translation. Other English translations leave it in a footnote. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, First Edition (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), p.113.

by most Bible translations, the variant reading from Dead Sea Scrolls is considered from a Jewish point of history as being more reliable.

Jeffery Tigay writes:

As noted in the Commentary, the variant reading of verse 8, “equal to the number of sons of the divine” (le-mispar benei ’elohim), obviates several problems that are raised by the Masoretic reading “equal to the number of the sons of Israel” (le-mispar benei yisra’el). For this reason, the variant is most likely the original reading.<sup>77</sup>

The opinion among scholars is divided concerning this council of the *Beney ha Elohim*. As mentioned above, those commentators that follow the Masoretic text tend toward the idea that the council were the Elders of Israel. As mentioned above Tigay tends towards the idea of the Dead Sea Scrolls. A more in-depth work gives even greater credence to this Variant view.

The familiar עֵדֶת אֱלֹהִים (‘divine assembly’; ‘assembly of God’) of Psalm 82:1 occurs six times at Qumran, only one instance of which is a quotation of Psalm 82.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), p. 514.

<sup>78</sup> Michael S. Heiser, “Monotheism and the Language of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 65, no. 1 (2014): 93, See where Heiser quotes from the Qumran: 21 1QM 4:9; 4Q401 11 3; 4Q427 7 l.14; 4Q427 8 l.10; 4Q457b 1 l.5; 11Q13 2 10. Note –The last reference is a citation of Ps. 82:1.

Another interpretation that has been argued on the subject relates to Psalm 82.

Simon Parker puts forth the argument:

In the first seven verses of psalm 82, Yahweh is not presiding over the divine assembly, as is usually maintained, but rather is a member of the assembly who charges the rest of the gods with abuse of their office (misrule of the world) and announces their downfall. Those verses are the "myth", to which the call for God to assume rule of the world (v. 8) is the liturgical response.<sup>79</sup>

Daniel McClellan adds to the discussion by bringing a linguistic question to bear:

[...] majority of readings of the psalm, there are a handful of interpretive difficulties that continue to be debated. אלהים One of the longest-standing questions has been the identity of the plural. Until about the mid-twentieth century, most scholars accepted that the אלהים were either disobedient angels or human judges referred to honorifically or metonymically as "gods" in the psalm.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Simon B. Parker, 'The Beginning of the Reign of God – Psalm 82 as Myth and Liturgy,' *Revue Biblique* (1946-) 102, no. 4 (1995): 532–59.

<sup>80</sup> Daniel McClellan. 'The Gods-Complaint: Psalm 82 as a Psalm of Complaint.' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 4 (2018): 833–51.

Brent Straw broadens the argument stating:

Furthermore, not only can this language also be used of human beings who in some way (Isa9:1;40:21; Job29: with reference to the oppressed of Ps 82 situation.<sup>81</sup>

Whereas there are many interpretations, the testimony of the text within the Dead Sea Scrolls and the linguistic arguments put forward by Heiser lend very strong support for the view that this Council were the *Beney ha Elohim* that we followed from Genesis to Job.

### THE ACCUSER

The origin of this adversarial role of The Satan is found in the positioning of the *Beney ha Elohim* as part of the Divine Council. The Accuser, The Satan accuses the brethren day and night before God. This is important considering Job 1:6 as an ongoing model of the role of the fallen *Beney ha Elohim* in seeking to bring destruction to the people of God.

One day the heavenly beings (the Sons of God, *Beney ha Elohim*, Hebrew. בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים) came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From going to and fro on the earth,

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<sup>81</sup> Brent A. Strawn, ‘The Poetics of Psalm 82: Three Critical Notes Along with a Plea for the Poetic’, *Revue Biblique* (1946-) 121, no. 1 (2014): 21–46.

and from walking up and down on it.<sup>82</sup>

There is a presentation made of themselves, the *Beney ha Elohim*, in a gathering before Yahweh. This gathering sets a hierarchy in place. Yahweh is the Lord God above and beyond the created Celestial beings. In later texts, it is apparent that the celestial beings have no power unless permitted by God for God's ultimate purposes. In anthropomorphic pictorial form, Yahweh is seated on His throne and the *Beney ha Elohim* come before His throne under His authority.

The Satan more specifically "The Accuser" is one of the *Beney ha Elohim* who comes before the Lord. A dialogue then takes place between Yahweh and the Accuser concerning the Accuser's movements and activities. The Accuser declares he has been moving throughout the earth. This indicates that in the post-Babel paradigm there is no evidence that the unseen and seen worlds are merged. The space remains the same space for both sets of created beings: persons, and the *Beney ha Elohim*. This is a critical point reason within terms of the Cosmological Geography of the heavens and the earth. I would suggest the actual space is the same, but the means and mobility in travelling inside the geography is very different.

As the dialogue continues, The Accuser is asked by Yahweh

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<sup>82</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised*, Job 1:6–7.

whether he has noticed Job. “The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil.”<sup>83</sup> The response is in the affirmative as The Accuser replies in the form of an accusation to Yahweh:

Then Satan answered the Lord, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.”<sup>84</sup>

The tone of the accusation is like that of the Accuser’s accusations to the Lord Jesus during the temptation of Christ:

If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard*, Job 1:8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, Job 1:9–11.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, Lk. 4:3–11.

The central theme of the accusation is to create a hermeneutic of mistrust or suspicion. Invariably, the accusations are designed to create mistrust towards Yahweh in order to create an alternative cosmology. The objective being that persons can and will mistrust Yahweh and be deceived by the *Beney ha Elohim*, (also known as the *Dark Logos*) and therefore worship that which is other than Yahweh.

This dialogue in Job has been the subject of much discussion in both East and West. In the case of Isho'dad of Merv we read in his commentary:

Even the Devil's Thoughts Are Known to God. Isho'dad of Merv: There was never a special meeting where Satan dared to speak, to formulate questions and receive answers—nothing of the sort—but these facts are reported in a narrative style for the edification of the listeners.... They never took place in reality, and here the devil did not address God or pose questions; Satan never had the faculty to speak to God or to see him who is the one that “the creatures of fire and spirit” cannot see, but [the devil] meditated in his heart, and God, “who searches the hearts and examines the mind,” knew the devil's malice.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Manlio Simonetti, Marco Conti, and Thomas C. Oden, eds., *Job* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), p.4.



Isho'dad quite strongly presents Job 1 as an anthropomorphic framework which is consistent with the hermeneutics of the East in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. It may also be a worthy consideration that Merv at that time was the largest city in the world and would have been described as a pluralistic milieu whereby language and propositions tended to take on a less dogmatic literalistic forms. Isho'dad does not doubt the process, or that the dialogue took place, but rather, he doubts the form in which it was expressed.

Driver and Gray give a technical explanation:

The first scene in heaven: the Satan questions the disinterestedness of Job's religion. The scene, though not explicitly defined, is, like that in which Mastêmâ questions the whole-hearted devotion of Abraham to God (Job. 17:15f.), clearly heaven: it is here that the "sons of the gods" present themselves before (על) Yahweh, who is pictured, as the prep. probably implies, seated (on a throne)<sup>87</sup>

Patrick Henry Reardon gives a clear cosmological view which places the whole dialogue in a very real time and space environment:

According to the Hebrew text of Job, Satan is numbered among the "sons of God," an expression that the LXX

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<sup>87</sup> Driver and Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, p. 9.

understands as a reference to the angels. The Christian Church, following the lead of such passages as Matthew 25:41 (“the devil and his angels”), understands Satan to be the leader of the fallen angels.<sup>88</sup>

One of the recurring themes of this work is that the *Beney ha Elohim*, who have fallen from their place as guardians of the peoples and territories of the earth, follow the Edenic temptation and fall, in as much as their message is always a heretical or deceptive version of the truth as opposed to some original concept.

The extra biblical texts that deal with this epoch of history have similar narratives to the biblical. However, there exists deceptive changes which in turn set the ground for deception of persons to worship in ways that have not been prescribed by Yahweh. This can be found in the multiple Creation Myths that are transvaluations of the biblical narrative designed to relativise and distort. This is seen in the variety of presentations in early post- diluvian texts concerning the concept of the Divine council. The most obvious example is in the

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<sup>88</sup> Patrick Henry Reardon, *The Trial of Job: Orthodox Christian Reflections on the Book of Job* (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2005), p. 18.

somewhat recent discoveries of Ugarit.<sup>89</sup> The Ugarit narrative reflects at several levels the accounts in Genesis, Deuteronomy, Job, and the Psalms. Of this James Trotter states:

Divine council scenes in ancient Near Eastern texts are the location for discussion, decision making, and vital activities of the gods (such as creation). In Mesopotamian texts there are numerous references to divine council scenes.<sup>90</sup>

There is extensive documentation concerning the locations and roles of the *Beney ha Elohim* in the ancient manuscripts that are still extant. Heiser writes,

The location of the pre-exilic council in the Hebrew Bible is described with terms found in the literature of her polytheistic neighbours, such as Ugarit. Examples include the ‘heights’ (בְּמֹת, מְרוֹם) or ‘heights of the north’ (נִרְכַּתִּי צָפוֹן). At Qumran, the God of Israel is the ‘God of the exalted heights’ (אלוהי מרומים הרמים) who is ‘among

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<sup>89</sup> At Ugarit, the council of El and its gods met on a mountain or lush garden (Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain*). These descriptions are actually the same place. The abode of El was at the “source of the two rivers” (*mbk nhrm*) in the “midst of the fountains of the double-deep” (*qrb 'apq thmtm*). El and his “assembled congregation” (*phr m'd*) met to issue divine decrees from the “tents of El” (*gd 'il*) and his “tent shrine” (*qrš*; *KTU* 1.1.III:23; 1.2.III:5; 1.3.V:20–21; 1.4.IV:22–23; 1.6.I:34–35; 1.17.VI:48). This description of gods living and meeting in “tents” (*'ahlm*) or “tabernacles” (*mšknt*) is common at Ugarit (*KTU* 1.15.3.18–19). The Ugaritic god Baal, the deity who oversaw the council for El, held meetings on Mount *Špn*. Baal’s palace had “paved bricks” (*lbnt*) that made Baal’s house “a house of the clearness of lapis lazuli” (*bht thrm 'iqn'um*).

<sup>90</sup> James M. Trotter, “Death of the אלהים in Psalm 82.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 2 (2012): 221–39.

all the gods of knowledge' (בכול אלי דעת). The well-known cosmic temple of the *Shabbat Shirot* is explicitly referred to as the 'heights' in scenes with multiple אלים. For example, 4Q400 1 I.20 references 'the gods, priests of the exalted heights', אלים כוהני מרומי. "רום".<sup>91</sup>

The central idea discussed thus far is that there is a celestial hierarchy which functions mysteriously in the heavens whereby *Beney ha Elohim* appear before Yahweh concerning the affairs of the creative order on earth. Heiser expands this *Beney ha Elohim* presentation further through Yahweh's response to Job recounting Psalm 82:

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk,  
or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the sons (*Beney ha Elohim*) of God shouted for joy.<sup>92</sup>

In 1 Kings 22:19 we read, "And he [Micaiah] said, "Therefore, hear the word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne with all the hosts of heaven standing beside him from his right hand and from his left hand." Yahweh is observed with all the hosts of heaven.

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<sup>91</sup> Heiser, "Monotheism and the Language of Divine Plurality," pp. 93-94.

<sup>92</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard*, Job 38:4-7.

Included in this “host” would be the *Beney ha Elohim*. Yahweh is distinct from the *Beney ha Elohim* who are themselves distinct from other beings that make up the “host of heaven”.

Drawing together the Divine Council concept that is presented in the book of Job the question arises, what was the active role of the *Beney ha Elohim* in their relationship to the affairs of persons on the earth? In church history, it is Dionysius the Areopagite who gives a sense of definition concerning how the Hosts of Heaven are divided and described.

He writes that,

The Word of God has designated the whole Heavenly Beings as nine, by appellations, which shew their functions. These our Divine Initiator divides into three threefold Orders.<sup>93</sup>

Dionysius develops this further when he writes:

He also says that that which is always around God is first and is declared by tradition to be united closely and immediately to Him, before all the rest. For he says that the teaching of the Holy Oracles declares, that the most Holy Thrones, and the many-eyed, and many-winged hosts, named in the Hebrew tongue Cherubim and

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<sup>93</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite*, trans. John Parker, vol. 2 (London; Oxford: James Parker and Co., 1899), p. 23.

Seraphim.<sup>94</sup>

According to Dionysius, the first order of the Celestial Hierarchy are Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim.<sup>95</sup> The *Thrones* are associated with justice and judgment and are said to support the divine throne of God. The second are the *Cherubim*. The Cherubim are depicted with multiple wings and are often associated with wisdom and knowledge. The third, which are the *Seraphim*, are the highest order of angels and are described as having six wings. They are often associated with the intense love and fiery passion for God.

Dionysius goes on to say that the second order of the hierarchy is composed of the Authorities, Powers, and Lordships.<sup>96</sup> *Authorities*, the fourth level are angels that are believed to have power over the lesser angels and are associated with leadership and authority. The fifth level, Dionysius describes, are the *Powers*. These Powers are the angels associated with the maintenance of order and control over the demonic forces of chaos. The sixth level is the *Lordships* which are associated with miracles and other divine manifestations in the material world.

The third order, the lowest of the three hierarchical orders of

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, "Caput VI."

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

the heavenly hierarchies, are Principalities, Archangels, and Angels<sup>97</sup>. The seventh level are the Principalities that are associated with the protection of nations, cities, and other human communities. The eighth level are the Archangels which are often depicted as messengers of God delivering important news or carrying out important tasks. The ninth, which is the lowest order in the hierarchy are the Angels. These Angels are often depicted as messengers or servants of God, carrying out tasks, and delivering messages to humans.

Principalities are the *Beney ha Elohim*. However, there is a distinction to be made between the *Beney ha Elohim* and the Angels. Historically, terms for the two groups, *Beney ha Elohim* and Angels have been used interchangeably and yet in the technical sense, “there are no instances of divine council terminology with the specific Hebrew lemma for angels (מלאכים).”<sup>98</sup> The distinction must not be dogmatic, but it gives credence to the idea that Angels have no sexual function whereas the *Beney ha Elohim* do, or did, as in the case mentioned earlier with the Daughters of Men in Genesis 6.

## **THE PARTITION OF THE NATIONS ACCORDING TO THE SONS OF GOD**

In Deuteronomy 32:8–9 we read, “When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, he fixed the

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Michael S. Heiser, “Monotheism and the Language of Divine Plurality, p. 93.

boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods. The various arguments concerning who are the *Beney ha Elohim* has been explored earlier. The central issue for the further study of Deuteronomy 32:8-9 concerns territories and inhabitants within those territories which become the basis of the great cosmic conflict. The most erudite confirmation of this cosmic political geography is to be found in Daniel's prophecy.

Gabriel the Archangel comes to Daniel and explains that he has been sent to strengthen and encourage him. He explains he would have come sooner but was delayed:

[...] "Do you know why I have come to you? Now I must return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I am through with him, the prince of Greece will come<sup>99</sup>

There is a Prince of both Persia and Greece; The Archangel Gabriel, and the Archangel Michael engage in some form of spiritual combat with them on behalf of Israel.

Thus far we have seen the *Beney ha Elohim* primarily in the context of the Old Covenant narrative. There were passing references, however, to the Temptation of Jesus (Luke 4) and Paul's epistle to the Ephesians concerning spiritual warfare. This motif is developed in the

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<sup>99</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard*, Dan. 10:20.



New Covenant with various interchangeable terms. However it speaks of the same role of designated spiritual forces working against the people of God.

When Jesus is speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit he does so in terms of the Holy Spirit's role and driving out the wicked spiritual rulers when He says, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out."<sup>100</sup> A similar statement by Jesus relates to the Satan coming to the Upper Room where Jesus will be betrayed when He says, "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me;"<sup>101</sup> The Apostle Paul when writing to the Church in Ephesus connects peoples' sin to a pathway guided by the Ruler of the Power of the Air when he states,

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient."<sup>102</sup>

The Apostle Paul's epistle to the Church in Corinth uses similar

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., Jn. 12:31.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., Jn. 14:30.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., Eph. 2:1-2.

language stating there is a hierarchy of evil rulers who are heading towards perishing. “Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.”<sup>103</sup> This realm is given a broader frame of reference. It is the realm of Anti-Christ, the ultimate denier of the Incarnation. The Apostle John gives this spiritually dark realm a broader frame of reference by calling it the realm of “antichrist” and identifying this realm with the denial of the incarnation. “Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.”<sup>104</sup>

### **SUMMARY**

The recurrent themes and motifs in this module deal very directly with the unseen realm, this realm being actively involved in the nations and peoples on the earth: (i) A Divine Council has been identified that is a body or assembly of the Sons of God the *Beney ha Elohim*; (ii) This Divine Council presents itself to Yahweh to give account of themselves and to receive instruction concerning what they may or may not participate within, in relationship to persons on the earth; (iii) This Celestial body is generally thought of as being made up by the fallen celestial beings that continue to be led by Lucifer the Satan; (iv) The

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 1 Co 2:6.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 1 Jn. 4:3.

role of The Satan is that of seeking to deceive the nations concerning the agenda of Yahweh that has been given to all of creation in the Edenic Mandate; (v) Central to the deception is the work of accusation. This action of accusation is made against God and targeted at persons seeking to do the will of God; (vi) This Divine Council receives a mandate from God, albeit a mysterious one, whereby the *Beney ha Elohim* are given designated territories over which they exert some level of control and the power to deceive in participation with persons' condition and propensity towards sin; (vii) The mission of the Church, the body of Christ, is to dispossess the Princes of this world from their areas of authority; (viii) The means of this dispossessing is embedded within the common life of the Church given the status of new birth by the forgiveness of sins and actualised by the Blood of the Lamb. It is to be worked out in lives that have both *Kerygma* and *praxis*.

## **DISCUSSION**

1. Discuss the plausibility of a literal interpretation of the "Divine Council" in a Theology of Mission.
2. Speculate what kind of consciousness is involved for the individual Christian on a daily basis in light of the deceived structures of authority being dispossessed by the Church.
3. Discuss the complexity of ethnolinguistic groups living in a pluralistic framework in terms of geography and spiritual world views.

4. What is a case for combatting spiritual authorities by warfare prayer in relationship to common life spiritualities confronting the

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**TEACHING MODULE THREE:**  
**ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED CHOSEN FOR WORLD MISSION**

**WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

A plan, too mysterious to define in finite terms, existed within the mind of God to bring redemption to both the unseen and seen realms. Together the seen and unseen are brought into wholeness and harmony in a New Heaven and a New Earth through the incarnate Logos and the agency of His Church. The first step in this plan is revealed when in light of the nations of the world being under the authority of the *Beney ha Elohim* (as described in Deuteronomy 32) God initiates the birth of an entity, to become the locus from which redemption flows. The name of the entity is Israel. Its beginning was in the call of Abraham.

**INTRODUCTION**

In Deuteronomy 32:8–9 we read,

When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he

divided humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods: the Lord's own portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share.<sup>105</sup>

The text in Deuteronomy 32, gives two designations within the celestial hierarchy, (i) The borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God, and (ii) a people that belong exclusively under the authority of Yahweh, Jacob, and his allotted heritage. At the time of the Post Babel dispersion Jacob's Heritage, The Nation of Israel did not exist and is a picture of God's secret hidden and mysterious plan for the immanentizing of the eschaton that unfolds throughout history and is yet to be completed.

There are a series of stages that bring this Nation of Israel into being before its realised place as a people with a language, ethnicity, cultural milieu, and then the privileges and responsibilities under the Suzerain Vassal Treaty of the Sinai dialogical framework: (i) The Call of Abraham; (ii) The Covenants made with Abraham; (iii) Isaac in light of the Covenants; (iv) The elucidation of the Covenants with Jacob; and (v) The call of Moses.

These five steps act as a precursor to the point at which Yahweh gives his new people (*The Lords Portion*) a position within the cosmic conflict of the sons of God with the placement of Israel into their own territory,

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<sup>105</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Dt. 32:8–9.

the land of Canaan. In this module the concentration will be placed upon the first of the five stages – The Call of Abraham.

### **THE CALL OF ABRAHAM – GENESIS 12:1**

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”<sup>106</sup>

The centre of what would be thought of as a people of rebellion in the Tower of Babel narrative is Shinar which geographically corresponds with what was to become Babylon. It is out of Babylon that the deception of idolatry developed which was to be a constant cause of failure for the people of God. It is out from this place of sin and pagan deception that Abraham is called. This is also a picture of the heart and mind of God placing Himself in the midst of darkness to bring His light to bare.

In Genesis 11:10 - 26 Abraham is revealed as being descendent of Shem. In the latter part of Genesis 11, the story unfolds in which Terah, the Father of Abraham, takes his family and those under his care from the Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran. Terah’s intent was to move to Canaan, but that intention was not fulfilled as he died in Haran.

The first mention of God interacting with Abraham is found in the words, “Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show

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<sup>106</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 12:1.

you.”<sup>107</sup> The whole process of God and Abraham in dialogue begins at this point: (i) There is no indication how this communication took place, (ii) There are three descriptors used to designate what was required of Abraham in terms of that which he was leaving behind: *Your Country*, אֶל־הָאָרֶץ as being your lands, or pasture lands, *Your Kindred*, וּמִקְרֹבֵיךָ as being your relatives, and your *Father’s House*, וּמִבְּיַת אָבִיךָ, being the larger community that came from Ur of the Chaldeans under the leadership of Terah.

Each of these three points represent what will become a foundational motif within God’s relationship with Israel of (i) Protection, (ii) Provision, and (iii) the Social Enforcement of values. Israel reaches the point of becoming a nation upon their departure from Egypt and their arrival in the Wilderness of Sinai. It was apparent that there was no structure of an army for protection, no agriculture for provision, and a pluralistic social construction with no central constitution, written or oral, for the enforcement of values. The journey from Canaan to Egypt and back to Canaan is a story rich in spiritual symbolism as well as historical documentary evidence.

Abraham represents, in autobiographical form, a similar pathway that the nation of Israel passed through after 450 years. His call was to leave – *your Country*, *your Kindred*, and *your Father’s House*

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

– which he did in stages. This is also a picture of the Lord Jesus in His incarnation, and it is a picture of the committed Christian life. Derek Kidner writes,

The call to forsake all and follow finds its nearest parallels in the Gospels (which are in some ways nearer the patriarchal pattern than was the Law—cf. Gal. 3), and Abram’s early history is partly that of his gradual disentanglement from country, kindred and father’s house, a process not completed until the end of chapter 13.<sup>108</sup>

### **THE FIRST COVENANT MADE WITH ABRAHAM - GENESIS 12:2-3**

At the outset of God’s dealing with Abraham a series of promises are made by God concerning the destiny and future of Abraham and his family. The structure of Genesis 12:1–3 in the Hebrew text is that of two imperatives followed by three promises given by God.

I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of

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<sup>108</sup> Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), p. 124.



the earth shall be blessed.<sup>109</sup>

There are four areas or categories that describe this initial covenant: (i) Great Nation, גֹּדוֹל וְלִגְיוֹי, Therefore, in addition to the seventy nations of Genesis 10, there will now be one additional nation, and that nation is Israel;<sup>110</sup> (ii) Bless You - These blessings upon Abram included both material and spiritual blessings;<sup>111</sup> (iii) *Make your name great so that you will be a blessing*, [emphasis added]. Therefore, what the builders of the Tower of Babel wanted for themselves (Gen. 11:4), a great name, is something that God now promised individually to Abram;<sup>112</sup> (iv) Bless those that bless you, curse those that curse you, Therefore, those that curse Abram will be cursed; and indeed those that curse the Jews will be cursed (Num. 24:9). The first word for curse is *kalal*, which means “to treat lightly,” “to hold in contempt,” or “to curse.” To merely treat Abram and the Jews lightly is to incur the curse of God.<sup>113</sup> God will bless those who are exposed to Abram in a positive way, such as

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<sup>109</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition* (Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ, 1993), Ge 12:2–3.

<sup>110</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis*, 1st ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2008), p. 241.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 241–242.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

Melchizedek, who received from Abram a tithe of the spoils of war.<sup>114</sup> The second word for curse used in this phrase (him that curses you will I curse) is *aor*, from the Hebrew root *arah*, which means “to impose a barrier,” “to ban.” This is a much stronger word for curse than the first one in the phrase. Altogether, there are three dynamic changes in Gen.12:3. First, the number of participants changes from plural, them, regarding blessings to singular, him, regarding curses. Second, vocabulary changes from a weaker word for curse to a stronger word for curse. Third: The language changes from a cohortative to an obligatory imperfect meaning “The one who treats you lightly, I must curse.”<sup>115</sup> ; and (iv) “In you the families of the earth will be blessed.”<sup>116</sup> This blessing to the Nations is to be accomplished through the Messianic Seed of Abraham because, as the prophets pointed out, it will be through the Messiah that the Gentiles will receive their spiritual blessings (Isa. 42:1, 42:6, 49:5–6; Amos 9:11–12).<sup>117</sup>

## THE SECOND STAGE OF THE COVENANT - THE LAND

The Lord said to Abram after Lot had separated from him,

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also cannot be counted. Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” So Abram moved his tent, and came and settled by the Oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron; and there he built an altar to the Lord.<sup>118</sup>

This is certainly the most controversial and hotly debated aspect of the Abrahamic covenant, The Land of Canaan. The argument is also beyond the scope of this research although some speculative thoughts may be in order. Our thesis argues that territories and peoples were delivered into the hands of the *Beney ha Elohim* as in Deuteronomy 32. When Israel is chosen to be the alternative society to those *Beney ha Elohim* communities, they also were given a geographical territory. It was the people of God under the Lordship of Yahweh that would act as a *Light to the Gentiles*. That Light was to be displayed at several levels; (i) Circumcision as a sign of the Covenant; (ii) Living in accordance with the Law in their social setting; (iii) Care for creation which involved care for the poor in the sabbaths of the land and the use of the produce of the Land.

With the coming of the Messiah these three distinctives are

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<sup>118</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gen 13:14–18.

redefined by the New Covenant; (i) Baptism as the sign of the New Covenant; (ii) The Church is marked by Grace that is exhibited by Love for fellow Christians; (iii) The Church becomes a prophetic community by loving neighbours and enemies which implies care for the poor and oppressed.

### THE THIRD STAGE OF THE COVENANT - POSTERITY

In this meeting with God, Abraham is given a picture of the authority of God as it relates to His promises. God,

“[...] brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.”<sup>119</sup>

Much has been made of this statement in terms of a soteriological event or reality. The LXX uses ἐπίστευσεν which is translated as ‘believe,’ is a much stronger term than even πιστεύω which is often used for ‘believing faith.’ The distinction between believe and trust is difficult to define as they are often used interchangeably. What is represented is the concept of trust outside of the normal frame of seeing evidence and believing. The term ἐπίστευσεν is used in John 20 when Peter sees the empty tomb and believes that Christ has risen. To

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., Gen. 15:5–6.

some extent this fits the Reformation scheme of saving Faith with the three levels: (i) information, (ii) Intellectual assent and, (iii) trusting in what has been revealed.

## **THE FOURTH STAGE OF THE COVENANT - IDENTITY THROUGH CIRCUMCISION**

The first identification for the people of Israel is given when Abraham is commanded to circumcise all those under his authority and care:

You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring.<sup>120</sup>

The mark of belonging to the covenant people was circumcision. The important words used here are “between you and me”. There is hardly any other mark or sign that can be more private than male circumcision. The circumcision was a continual reminder to the Jew that they lived under a covenant. The outward sign to the watching world was the keeping of the Law. This private public reality is

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., Gen. 17:11–12.

central to the idea of influence. A tribal mark defines the person by the mark to the outside world. Their public ability to live up to this definition is a different process. In terms of circumcision, it was performed publicly and still is today among the Jewish people. However, the meaning of circumcision immediately became private because the mark, hidden by clothing, was no longer public.

In the New Covenant Baptism was the equivalent mark of the New Covenant. In the same way that as circumcision was public in its ritual so Baptism is. In most cases Baptism is before a company of witnesses. Just as circumcision is “between you and me” before the Lord. It is intrinsically, a seal or a reminder to the person that they have died in Christ and risen with Him also.

The mark of belonging in the Old Covenant was primarily for the male, and the females were to be under their authority in spiritual matters. A tragic instance of this male/female hierarchy of authority is found in the example of Achan. When Achan sinned, his entire family was punished along with Achan for that sin (Joshua 7:22-26). In the New Covenant a fundamental shift takes place as both male and female partake of the ritual of Baptism. In the same way that the *middle wall of partition* has been removed between Jew and Gentile, so the partition between male and female has been removed in the New Covenant.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, Gal. 3:28.

## THE FIFTH STAGE OF THE COVENANT - GOD AND ABRAHAM IN FRIENDSHIP IN A MEAL

The first four Covenant illustrations act as a picture of the broader themes of posterity and the land. In Genesis 18:1-8 the picture is one that illustrates the essence of God's relationship with Abraham as being one of friendship and fellowship. This is the core within which Israel – as a Nation chosen to be the instrument by which God will immanentize the eschaton – is rooted. The worship of Yahweh is beautiful; The presence of Yahweh evokes a longing and a desire for the Good and the True.

The Biblical narrative in Genesis 18 is the first of the overtly Sacramental allegories in the Old Covenant scriptures. It is the first record of God eating, in the presence of a person, a meal that had been prepared for Him. In this narrative the foundations of what would become Sacramental theology are laid. The great distinction between Yahweh and the other gods was that He appeared, He was seen, and He ate the food prepared for him. The pagan gods did not appear and the food if eaten would be eaten on their behalf by a priest or mediator. The concept of *presence* is very important in early Israelite history of God's dealing with persons in that he "tabernacled among us".<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, John 1:14.

Origen gives a detailed allegorical interpretation:

Three men, therefore, come to Abraham at midday; two come to Lot and in the evening. For Lot could not receive the magnitude of midday light; but Abraham was capable of receiving the full brightness of the light.<sup>123</sup>

Origen then builds on this allegory by explaining that the Lord is with Abraham who represents Mercy and the two Angels who represent judgement upon Sodom. Origen writes, “[...] observe that the Lord also was present with Abraham with two angels, but two angels alone proceed to Lot.”<sup>124</sup> Origen then develops the theme further by revealing the words of the Angels to Lot. “And what do they say? ‘The Lord has sent us to consume the city and destroy it.’ He, therefore, received those who would give destruction. He did not receive him who would save.”<sup>125</sup>

Origen then emphasises that Abraham embodied a relationship with God that drew upon both Judgement and Mercy. “But Abraham received both him who saves and those who destroy.”<sup>126</sup> Derek Kidner

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<sup>123</sup> Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, Ed. Hermigild Dressler, Trans. Ronald E. Heine, vol. 71, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), p. 103.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*



develops this theme when he writes,

The noon encounter in this chapter and the night scene at Sodom in the next are in every sense a contrast of light and darkness. The former, quietly intimate and full of promise, is crowned by the intercession in which Abraham's faith and love show a new breadth of concern. The second scene is all confusion and ruin, moral and physical, ending in a loveless squalor which is even uglier than the great overthrow of the cities.<sup>127</sup>

In Abraham's case the critical point for this study is that he "saw God". In response to seeing God he joyfully runs to meet Him with the strangers and then prepares a meal of hospitality in which both God and a person together partook of food.

When viewing this encounter as an Old Covenant Theophany, the idea of "seeing God" supports the notion that the Eternal Logos saw Abraham rejoicing in His presence. This perspective on presence fits well with the New Covenant passage in John 8:56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad."

Caesarius of Arles makes this point in his commentary on Genesis:

The vision and discernment of Abraham delighted him;

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<sup>127</sup> Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, p. 142.

he was clean of heart, so that he could see God. Therefore, in such a place and in such a heart the Lord can have his feast. Of this vision our Lord spoke to the Jews in the Gospel when he said, "Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day. He saw it and was glad."<sup>128</sup>

The first act of Abraham is to run to and then bow down before God who is standing before him. Abraham then gives instructions for a meal to be prepared. Before they eat, Abraham washes the feet of the travellers. This is clearly a picture of John 13, where the Son of God extends *synkatabasis* (condescension) to his disciples by taking the role of the servant. In John 13 we read:

You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.<sup>129</sup>

The meal that has been participated in becomes the means or the agency by symbol, of Jesus becoming a friend to His disciples. The whole Upper Room redemptive drama is saturated in the symbolism of

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<sup>128</sup> Caesarius of Arles, *Saint Caesarius of Arles: Sermons (1–238)*, Ed. Hermigild Dressler and Bernard M. Peebles, trans. Mary Magdeleine Mueller, vol. 2, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press; Consortium Books, 1956–1973), p. 14.

<sup>129</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, John 15: 14-15.

Genesis 18 with Abraham and the Lord becoming friends by the Fellowship meal. That Friendship meal with God and His creation speaks to a profound sense of a Holy God which cannot be one with sinful man by nature. A mortal fallen man and the Holy God become one by the intervention of the eternal Logos. The very act of mutual hospitality is a picture of the Grace and Goodness of God towards man in the dilemma of his potentially unfulfilled desire to meet with God.

Sergei Bulgakov writes that the very fact Jesus calls His disciples friends represents an aspect of the Incarnation that is fundamental to our faith. His statement of friendship means that the ineffable mystery of God himself as Divine person, not just his represented energies, is able to be in union with his creation. Bulgakov writes, “The Lord calls the apostles His friends and in their person summons every soul to co-friendship, to reciprocal personal love with Him.”<sup>130</sup>

Through the washing of feet in both Genesis 18 and John 13, the act of humility surrounds and sets the emotional context of the meal that is served. The friendship that is given by God to man is not legal in a representative way but is an ontological reality. Of this reality Hans Boersma states:

The Greek fathers marked this infinite difference  
between our hospitality to God and his hospitality to us

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<sup>130</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder: On Angels*, trans. Thomas Allan Smith (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), p. 3.

by means of the distinction between philoxenia (hospitality) and synkatabasis (condescension). The term philoxenia derived from philos (friend) and xenos (stranger) describes the stranger turning into a friend. As the opposite of xenophobia (fear of foreigners), philoxenia is a virtue that counters our isolationist inclinations.<sup>131</sup>

To outline the text highlighting the fellowship and friendship meal into a short working explanatory model reads such that: (i) God is revealed to Abraham as the Lord who has authority to grant Mercy and execute Judgement; (ii) When God is seen, Abraham responds by running to Him without fear and he falls down with a sense of awe. In so doing he is aware of the authority to judge; but (iii) he does not stay prostrate, rather he immediately prepares a meal; (iv) That meal is preceded by Abraham washing the feet of the travellers; (v) Abraham and the travellers become friends by the hospitable act of sharing the meal. *Philoxenia* is the act of hospitality from man and *synkatabasis* is the act of condescension from God. The result is communion in friendship; and (vi) The meeting place of God and man from both of their perspectives was *the meal*. The meal was not a metaphor in the abstract sense of the word; It was actual and real. God and man unite in the meal of friendship.

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<sup>131</sup> Hans Boersma, *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), p. 58.

John Chrysostom develops the theme into an exhortation for the Christian to be not just the receiver of *synkatabasis* but to be those that extend *philoxenia*. Chrysostom exhorts his listeners:

Hence Paul too said, ‘Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some people have entertained angels all unawares,’ referring precisely to the patriarch. Hence Christ as well said, ‘Whoever receives one of the least of these in my name, receives me.’<sup>132</sup>

What needs to be emphasised here is that in the face of Judgement and Mercy God seeks to extend “Friendship”. As we look at this Scripture, we can see the five distinctive points at work; (i) Abraham “sees” God and the sight of God even though veiled in an anthropomorphic form is beautiful to behold; (ii) The response is a childlike “running to greet” the strangers, as opposed to concern in the case of danger; (iii) there is clearly a rupturing of time and space as The Eternal Logos in Christ, makes reference to the encounter with Abraham as the Apostle John writes, “Abraham saw my day and was glad.”<sup>133</sup> There is also a transactional cosmogenic confession taking place as Abraham deals with the reality of the rationality of God’s promise concerning Sarah giving birth to a son; (iv) The cosmogenic

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<sup>132</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 18–45*, Ed. Thomas P. Halton, Trans. Robert C. Hill, vol. 82, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), p. 453.

<sup>133</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, John 8:56

aspect of it is that Abraham by faith participates with God in the realm of the eternal. The liturgical is evident in that the meal that was prepared was detailed and specific with each element having a specific meaning ascribed to it. It was healing in that by eating together God and man become friends and; (v) The Eucharistic aspect of this narrative is a type of the Sacramental Meal when Jesus calls His disciples ‘friends’ and they eat together.

The picture of Israel within the Abrahamic Covenants is that each of the elements are projected onto the Universal Church. Exodus 19:6 states “but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.”<sup>134</sup> This same set of spiritual categories are then projected onto the New Testament Church.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[γένος ἐκλεκτόν, Elected Race] - [βασίλειον ιεράτευμα, Royal Priesthood]

[ἔθνος ἅγιον, Holy Nation] [λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν, A People for God’s Possession] [ὅπως τὰς ἀρετὰς

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., Ex 19:6.

ἐξαγγείλητε,<sup>135</sup> So That You may proclaim the virtues] <sup>136</sup>

A more precise reading of the text in the Greek states that the Church, like Israel, is an elected race. Israel's race was defined by the circumcision of its people; The Church is defined in the same way by Baptism. Israel is declared to be a Priestly Kingdom, a Kingdom of Hierarchy built upon the principles of that which is Priestly or intermediary. At the time the statement is made in Exodus 15 that there was no King in Israel. Rather, it was an autocratic Theocracy based upon the judgements of the Priesthood. Moses as a Prophet is given the task to lead the people into this autocratic Theocracy. Philo describes the Church in this way:

The Church is also declared to be a Priestly Kingdom and a Separated Nation, that has been consecrated as God's possession. Once more Jacob is the source of the twelve tribes, of whom the oracles say that they are "the palace and priesthood of God" (Exod. 19:6), thus following in due sequence the thought originated in Shem, in whose houses it was prayed that God might dwell. For surely by "palace" is meant the King's house, which is holy indeed and the only inviolable sanctuary.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> W. Hall Harris III, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear New Testament: SBL Edition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), 1 Pet. 2:9.

<sup>136</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, 1 Pet. 2:9.

<sup>137</sup> Philo, *Philo*, Trans. F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker, and J. W. Earp, vol. 3, The Loeb Classical Library (London; England; Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann Ltd; Harvard University Press, 1929–1962), p. 479.

The unity of Israel as a race, was an unimpeachable, reality. Despite all of the opposition, conflicts, internecine struggles Israel, in and to itself, was always considered as a monolithic entity. The implications for the Church are obvious in that any other interpretation of the Universal Church, other than it being monolithic, would render the analogy of the above stated 1 Peter 2:9 as void. Within this idea rests the most provocative confrontation for the very concept of denominations, traditions, confessions, or any other category for the Church to be anything other than the same monolithic entity as was modelled or exemplified in Israel's inherent unity.

## THE CUTTING OF THE COVENANT

Immediately after Abraham has believed God, “[God] reckoned it to him as righteousness,”<sup>138</sup> Abraham enters into an argumentative dialogue with God. Abraham continues, despite having previously just “believed” God, to question whether he can really trust what God says will take place. In response, God tells Abraham to,

[b]ring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”<sup>139</sup> He brought him all these and cut

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<sup>138</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 15:6.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 15:9.



them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.”<sup>140</sup>

The JPS gives an insight into this cutting,

The list of beasts and birds must have suggested at once a covenant ceremony, for Abram knows to slice and arrange the items without being so told. The Hebrew stem b-t-r, “to sever,” contains the same consonants as berit, “covenant,” and is otherwise used only in the similar context of Jeremiah 34:18f.<sup>141</sup>

Various commentators have given diverse opinions of the allegory of the animals and birds. Caesarius of Arles for example states:

Therefore, the heifer, the she-goat, and the ram of three years, as also the turtledove and the pigeon, presented a type of all nations. They were described as of three years, because all the nations were to believe in the mystery of the Trinity.<sup>142</sup>

These fit well with the context relating to the nations and Israel’s place among them.

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 15:9–10.

<sup>141</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 115.

<sup>142</sup> Caesarius of Arles, *Saint Caesarius of Arles*, p. 7.

“And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.”<sup>143</sup>

Whilst Abraham was awake, he was able to drive away the predators but in the deep sleep that was to come upon him he was helpless to work in this way. The lesson he learned was that he had to believe God when God gave him a promise, there was nothing that Abraham could do. He was to experience this lesson in a very powerful way when he chose to take Hagar as a wife to bare him a son.

Abram cannot control future events and must leave this to Yahweh. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him.<sup>144</sup> This deep sleep is similar to that described in the case of Adam whereby Adam was the instrument but not the means for the creation of Eve. However, it is more important to grasp the power and awe of the *presence* of God in such a sleep. Sarna notes that, “[...] the abnormally deep sleep is associated with the dread inspired by the awareness of the Divine Presence (cf. Dan. 8:18; 10:9).”<sup>145</sup>

God speaks to Abraham in ways He has not done before. Whereas the promises were specific but without detail, this revelation comes with a clear historical narrative in prophetic form about that

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<sup>143</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 15:11.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, v.12.

<sup>145</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*), p. 115.

which will take place. “Then the Lord said to Abram, ‘Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years.’”<sup>146</sup> There is a very direct and distinct outline of what is going to transpire in the future and as is mentioned above in Dan. 8:18 concerning the Divine presence. Say it here again. The outlining of prophetic vision is often accompanied by a sense of deep spiritual exhaustion. God finished this part of the prophetic word by sharing “[b]ut I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.”<sup>147</sup>

There is certain existential comfort for Abraham as he is told about his own future, “As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”<sup>148</sup>

We reach the climax of this event as Sarna explains:

The principal party, here God, passes between the pieces. He is represented by the smoke and the fire, which are frequent symbols of the Divine Presence. As in a legal document, the nature of the instrument of transfer is defined, its promissory clause is specified as

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<sup>146</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 15:13.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 15:14.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 15:15–16.

concerning a grant of land, and the extent of the territory involved is delineated in geographic and ethnographic terms.<sup>149</sup>

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.<sup>150</sup> On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram:

The significance of this passage lies first in the fact that the promise of land is now made by God under oath and second, in the clear display of divine authority reminiscent of the creation event. The same God who brought a deep sleep on Adam is now at work in relation to Abram.”<sup>151</sup>

The prophetic word ends as a final promise being made in the midst of the cutting of the Covenant to Abraham concerning the Land. “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.”<sup>152</sup>

## ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

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<sup>149</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 117.

<sup>150</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 15:17.

<sup>151</sup> McKeown, *Genesis*, p. 93.

<sup>152</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 15:18.

After this dramatic unfolding of the Covenant with God Himself passing through the cut animals as a sign that He is making an oath under His own authority, Abraham in the next chapter of Genesis disobeys God and takes Hagar as a wife who produces Ishmael. In Genesis 21, after yet another prolonged argument that Abraham has with God we read:

The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him.<sup>153</sup>

Despite the fulfilment of the promise God chooses to test Abraham in ways that he could barely comprehend:

God spoke and said, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.'<sup>154</sup>

When Abraham replies to God with the response *here I am*, *Hineni*, [ הִנְנִי ] he is using a term that implies his readiness to serve. It could be

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<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 21:1–3.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen. 22:1–2.

thought of as similar to a military situation in which a subordinate is asked a question and the appropriate response is “Sir”; It implies *readiness* to respond. Abraham, as has been observed, found it extremely difficult to trust God despite all of the miraculous occurrences and revelations that he was granted by God. Now after the whole process of the last ten chapters of Genesis, Abraham is at peace with God’s word speaking into his life. There is no argument from Abraham concerning what, for him, would be his greatest test. A similar comparative would be that in the Garden of Gethsemane when the Lord Jesus battles in His spirit concerning going to the Cross. The battle for Christ concerning the Cross was won in Gethsemane. In the same way the battle concerning the sacrifice of Isaac was won in the reply. God calls him, and he replies *Hineni*. Abraham was ready to obey.

## **CONCLUSION**

Abraham was chosen for a purpose. That purpose has been defined in the five aspects and stages of God’s covenant with him. Unquestionably, the most dramatic of these aspects is the fifth stage where in the midst of God being revealed in the dialectic of Judgement and Mercy, He builds his relationship with Abraham upon the concept of friendship and hospitality. As has been stated earlier, this reflects the teaching of the Lord Jesus towards His disciples in the Upper Room spoken of in John 13. The same dialectic is present with Judgement and

Mercy about to be enacted in the reality of the Cross, into which He is about to enter. It is in the midst of this dialectic that Jesus reveals His loving friendship for His disciples. He then commands His disciples to take that same form or type of friendship and extend it to all his disciples that are yet to come.

The short work often referred to as the Athanasian Creed, the authorship of which is not important for this research, defines the biblical view of the Perichoresis Trinitarian position and the Incarnation. Almost all the heresies of the first six centuries invariably come back to a deception or distortion concerning these truths. I would suggest that the principle of John 13 could be applicable to the body of people who would claim the Athanasian Creed as their own. In the mind of Jesus, I would suggest any division among the Chosen Seed, Kingdom of Priests and Holy People that are inside the Perichoresis Trinity and the Incarnation of the Eternal Logos, is a violation of His command.

Through Abraham a new people were brought into being to bring the process of dispossessing the Territories of the *Beney ha Elohim* and through that action bring about the New Heaven and the New Earth. Through Abraham's seed, Messiah has come to *enlarge the Tents of Israel* to include all nations, kindreds, tribes and tongues. Just as Israel was one, the Church is one and any other interpretation needs to be fiercely rejected.

**SUMMARY**

In response to what God establishes, as written in a retrospect in Deuteronomy 32, a specific people and territory chosen to correct and redeem the lost nations who live under the deception of idolatry. The people were Israel coming from the Seed of Abraham and the geographic territory was the then land of Canaan. God reveals His covenant with Abraham through a series of stages with the end result being that in the midst of the dialectic of Judgement and Mercy a unique platform at the relational level is established, Friendship bonded in a meal. This concept is ultimately extended into the New Covenant with Jesus and His Disciples. The nation of Israel as a whole from Abraham to the exodus from Egypt, has to experience a set of socialising factors to make them, as a nation, a Light to the Gentiles. This is explored in the next teaching Module.

**DISCUSSION**

Discuss the idea of friendship between God and persons as it relates to the profile of the Church in the twenty-first century before the watching world of NCCS.



**CHAPTER FIVE**

**TEACHING MODULE FOUR:**

**YAHWEH'S GIFT TO ISRAEL - A LOGOSPOETIC LITURGICAL  
WORLDVIEW**

**WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

The Children of Israel are a type or symbol, from a biblical standpoint, that defines the spiritual condition of a people who have no structure to their spiritual formation as both individual persons and as a community. In the case of Israel coming out of Egypt, Yahweh

employs a spiritual and didactic series of agencies to bring the people into a nourished spiritual formation that is sociologically enforced by both the Law that was given and the acceptance within the community of the value system as a whole. This acts as a Missional picture for the outreach of the Church as it moves beyond the boundaries of reaching peoples outside of a nominal Christian background.

## **A NEW SACRAMENT, A NEW CALENDAR, A NEW SCRIPTURE AND NEW SACRED SPACE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A new foundational theme is introduced to the overall thesis of this teaching series at this point. In short, there is the introduction to both form and function in how the people of God, Israel and then the Grafted Olive Branch Israel, dispossesses spiritual territories under the Prince Leadership structure of the *Beney ha Elohim*. This new foundational motif is that which has been referred to previously as *Logospoetics*.

The theatre of the cosmic conflict has been established as being the Heavens and the Earth. The inter-relationship of these two realms is outlined in the concept of the uncreated and created spheres of the Sophia. Further explanation is required. This has been broken down into segments to assist.

Within the Triune perichoresis of the monotheistic Yahweh: (i) It is the Logos of Yahweh that creates and maintains all that exists within the created order. This is defined by being His energies; (ii) The energies of God are a created projection of His essence or the Uncreated imprints Himself into a created structure. This animated projection takes the form of all that is created within the seen and unseen realm; (iii) There are two levels of the unseen realm – the celestial realm of creatures and the unseen realm of dimensions –for example in the highly theoretical physics of quantum mechanics and string theory and other dimensional realities that exist but cannot be seen; (iv) The central ontological reality of this created Sophia is the Pre-Incarnate Logos who sustains, maintains, and holds together the Logoi, (that which makes up creation); (v) The Sophia of God is not the Logos. The Sophia of God is not personified as in the case of the Triune Perichoresis. There is a hypostasis of the Logos, but Sophia is a manifestation not a hypostasis. The Hindu and Buddhist concepts of Atman as the world soul is in real terms a helpful illustration in the broadest sense, albeit in error, because it can only be perceived as Polytheistic or Atheistic; (vi) The Monotheistic understanding of Atman as the world soul is an ontological reality but has no personal aspects to its ontology. The created Sophia is not a random collection of matter and energy. Rather the created Sophia is a whole and singular reality made up of multiple but harmonised elements. The Sophia cannot exist

without the Logos. Whereas, the Logos does exist and has existed as uncreated eternal essence; (vii) Within this Sophia there are two known working paradigms – a Celestial Hierarchy and an Earthly Hierarchy. The Sophia is a fully participatory ontological reality in that the harmony of both Celestial and Earthly Hierarchies are allowed to take form according to the influence of both Celestial and Earthly Hierarchies upon each other; (viii) When Lucifer fell from his original estate as the lead *Beney ha Elohim*, the impact was to obscure and de-harmonise the Sophia in the heavenly realm. The same is true when the Serpent tempts and deceives Eve and Adam in order to disobey God’s word and will and as a result the earthy realm is de-harmonised. By Genesis 11 there is a fully de-harmonised Sophia; (vix) The redemptive work of Yahweh is established by the choice of Israel, through Abraham, in Genesis 12 to become the force, the entity, and the means for both the Celestial and Earthly Hierarchies to be harmonised into a “Theosis Like Newness” whereby Persons and Celestial beings return to a reborn and harmonised Sophia. This is the New Heaven and the New Earth; (x) Central to this process is the hypostasis of The Logos proceeding from the Father in Triune Perichoresis and also the Holy Spirit in hypostasis. If the hypostasis of the Logos or the Holy Spirit were to be without mediation, then the wounded, troubled, and de-harmonised Sophia would be consumed by the Holy Consuming fire of the Triune God. This is important to

understand in terms of the utter incomprehensible reality of who God is; (xi) In relationship to the hypostasis of the Logos in the incarnation, it is the body and being of the Theotokos, Mary the Mother of Jesus, that is prepared to receive the Seed of the Most High and; (xii) In terms of the Holy Spirit, it is the Eleven Apostles who are prepared to receive the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit. The preparation of both the Theotokos and the Apostles is developed by a Royal Seed in the case of Mary, and in the case of the Apostles as a separated Royal Priesthood that begins with the Feast of Passover in Exodus 12. There is conformity and unity in the semiotics of Exodus 12 with the unfolding epochs of history that culminate in the Incarnation that ultimately leads to immanentizing of the Eschaton in the New Heavens and New Earth. With the introduction of a Logospoetic worldview the story of the process unfolds. In short, the Logospoetic worldview assists in understanding the process that takes place in Israel and then in the Grafted Olive Branch extension of Israel.

## **LOGOSPOETICS**

Historic Jewish and Christian spiritual formation is exceptionally broad and yet is held tightly inside a very clearly defined philosophical framework of belief. This locus of rooted truth is central to the idea of *Logospoetics*. I have created the term *Logospoetic* to be used and understood in the following way:

A theological intersection of semiotics, the arts, aesthetics, propositions, history, epistemology, and hermeneutics that are expressed and held accountable to, and by, the Logos as the Divine Word and the purveyor of Divine Light. [author's definition]

In short, the 'Logos' limits the content from un-superintended subjectivity and the 'Poetics' emancipates the content from Rational Textualism. In this context, I have created a definition so that poetics can be thought of as the placing of ideas in frames beyond forensic textual forms with the creative use of imagination that transcends the parameters of prose.

The story of Israel from Exodus 12 onwards is one of multiple communication forms: (i) The fine Arts and artisan sculptures in the Tabernacle and the resulting Aesthetics; (ii) The poetics in the first Psalm and dance of Miriam, the sister of Moses, on crossing the Red Sea; (iii) The use of colour as an allegorical hermeneutic in both the High Priests vestments and the fabrics of the Tabernacle; (iv) The role of spices to produce sensory connection through smell that are used in both the actual sacrificial system and then as aspects of the worship inside the Tabernacle; (v) The Bread, meat, and spices to act as semiotic allegories that involve taste that are participated within; (vi) Kinaesthetic movement in the raising of hands, waving of the offerings, and bowing; (vii) Cognitive propositions in the Texts of the Law and;

(viii) Written history as a presentation that authenticates all of the elements mentioned.

The poetic does not demand the use of words and can involve symbols, arranged and communicated in multiple semiotic forms. As a result, the poetic operates at the cognitive level in a manner that transgresses the various hermeneutic and epistemic boundaries of a rationalistic milieu. The poetic also forces, by default, a trespassing on the various traditional territories claimed by the many Christian franchises. For example, Reformation Theology finds it hard to function in terms of Sacramental Ontology in the same way Roman Catholic Scholasticism finds it almost impossible to view the ontological, outside of a forensic understanding of matter.

The Logospoetic is able to retain structure and yet remain free from the rigid confines of textual prose. The poetic is best thought of, not as a medium but rather a style or method of communication: A means of placing content into an imaginative frame that evokes participation on the part of the receiver in a uniquely personal and interpretative way. In short, the content is animated by its form but in a way that demands participation to process the content through what is evoked by the poetic or speculative imagination. Certainly, the most graphic example of this principle is in the vast index of theological truth that is communicated through the Psalms of the Bible. The text, or written record of the Psalms is only one part of the experience that was

originally at work when the Psalms were either read or sung. The intent was to involve music, unseen aura of a group experience, voice and acoustic frames coalescing into a multi-sensory whole. If in today's world, we limit our understanding of the Psalms to text, albeit divinely inspired, we malpractice their original intent by placing filters that only allow for the textual to inform us. When we seek to place the Psalms into a community multi-sensory experience, the appeal for the objective in Rational Textualism is replaced by a deeper sense of 'knowing' at the subjective level. Imagination is the creative task of making symbols, joining things together in such a way that they throw new light on each other and on everything around them.

## **PERICHORESIS**

Trinitarian Theology has been the central point of theological conflict in the history of the Church and the scope of that topic is far beyond what can be presented in this research project. Since the fifth and sixth centuries the councils of the Church have focused upon the Chalcedonian Christological definitions. This focus brought a general acceptance of Trinitarian Theology in both the Western Church and Eastern Church.

The Chalcedon definition of CE 452 states,

[One] and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to



be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>155</sup>

There were a series of heresies that became the battleground in the Church in terms of its various Trinitarian formulas. Most of these issues related to the Christological. Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism or Monophysitism were the prevailing groups who held differing views on the Trinity. This Chalcedonian position was also in response to the earlier non-Trinitarian theologies such as Arianism, the teachings of the Ebionites, and various Gnostic groups. In real terms, the Council of Chalcedon brought much of these non-Trinitarian teachings to an end. There was a period between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries where forms of non-Trinitarian doctrines surfaced and were a threat to the Roman Catholic Church. This was especially true in parts of France and Italy with a dualistic theology of two gods – one good and one bad. This movement was generally defined under the rubric of Catharism. In the sixteenth and

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<sup>155</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890), p. 63.

seventeenth century non-Trinitarian theologies began to reappear. The conflict between Calvin and Michael Servetus was over a form of Arianism that was referred to as Socinianism. It was during the seventeenth century that a reason-based rationale began to enter into the Protestant Churches.

By the nineteenth century, through the growth of Unitarianism, the Anglican Church in Great Britain was significantly affected. The twentieth century saw what can only be thought of as an explosion of non-Trinitarian theologies within an expanded Protestant Evangelical milieu. Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism have in general remained fully committed to the Chalcedon definitions, whereas the Protestant Church in general has been the harbinger of corrupted Trinitarian doctrines.

Perichoresis is the foundation of historic Christian Trinitarian doctrines. A definition of Perichoresis is helpful. In essence, the concept of "Triune Perichoresis" expresses the idea that the three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – exist in a state of mutual indwelling, interpenetration, or co-inherence. They are distinct, yet they share in the divine essence in such a profound way that they cannot be separated. This concept is used to explain the unity-in-diversity of the Godhead and to stress that God is a dynamic, living communion of love.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> AI Chat-GP generated response to the search term of "Perichoresis."

To understand this as a working reality for the Triune God, it is important to look at the relationship within the One and the Three. Maximus the Confessor writes concerning the ongoing work of God as Father within the Trinity. He writes concerning the completion of Creation and defines that which God has created as the *logoi*. Maximus writes, “God, as he alone knew how, completed the primary principles (λόγοι) of creatures and the universal essences of beings once for all.”<sup>157</sup> The *Logos* is in relationship with the *logoi*, (primary principles (λόγοι) of creatures). It is the *Logos* that holds the *logoi* together; *Logos* is both Creator and Sustainer.

This sustenance, however, is not an unchanging condition as Maximus notes,

Yet he is still at work, not only preserving these creatures in their very existence (τὸ εἶναι) but effecting the formation, progress, and sustenance of the individual parts that are potential within them.<sup>158</sup>

This idea of formation, progress, and sustenance reveals the capacity of God to develop in the form of a process all that He has created. Redemption would not be possible without this principle being at work.

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<sup>157</sup> St Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, p. 99.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

This principle is in fact redemptive as it is,

[b]ringing about the assimilation of particulars to universals until he might unite creatures' own voluntary inclination to the more universal natural principle of rational being through the movement of these particular creatures toward well-being (τὸ εὖ εἶναι).<sup>159</sup>

This well-being is critical to our understanding of the Gospel within our milieu. The ongoing work of God the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit is leading a redemptive programme that will, “make them harmonious and self-moving in relation to one another and to the whole universe.”<sup>160 161</sup> In short, there is a plan, and a mandate, and an agenda from God that involves the interpenetration of mutual indwelling, singular in essence yet diverse in personal actions, towards the goal of a New Heaven and a New Earth.

The Father approves this work, the Son properly carries it out, and the Holy Spirit essentially completes both the Father's approval of it all and the Son's execution of it, in

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Here, in effect, is a brief encapsulation of Maximus's entire christocentric cosmology: the binding of all particular beings, in their individual modes (τρόποι) of existence, and with their peculiar drives and volition, to the universal whole as manifested in the λόγοι of all created things. On the divine providence pervading the cosmos, see also *Amb.* 10 (PG 91:1189C–1193C). In Maximus's vision, God will graciously raise his creatures from being, to well-being, and beyond this to “eternal wellbeing” as he sometimes says (cf. *Amb.* 7, PG 91:1073C; *Ad Thal.* 60, CCSG 22:79, 117–120). On the broader philosophical parameters of Maximus's cosmology, see Torstein Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor: A Study of His Metaphysical Principles*, Acta Humaniora 72 (Oslo: Unipub Forlag, 2000).

<sup>161</sup> St Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, 99–100.

order that the God in Trinity might be through all and in all things (Eph. 4:6).<sup>162 163</sup>

Every other form of non-Trinitarian theology would have no mechanism to function in the way Maximus describes. God as “singular single” could only love himself without the object of his love being the Son and the Holy Spirit. His redemptive actions without the Logos would have no structure of meaning as an ongoing set of meaningful acts. We move now into the redemptive realities of Israel being chosen as a vessel, vehicle, and means of redemption. This principle of the ongoing of *formation, progress, and sustenance* cited above informs our theology of a *sign and signified* which is central to our understanding of the formation and progress of God’s working with the nation of Israel.

## A LOGOSPOETIC NEW SACRAMENT

A new era in Exodus 12 begins within the cosmic conflict of nations and their overlords the *Beney ha Elohim*, sons of God. When Israel is brought into the Wilderness, they have become subject to a

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<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101.

<sup>163</sup> This kind of trinitarian amplification is found in Maximus’s predecessor Gregory Nazianzen (*Or. theol.* 2.1, SC 250:100), and has parallels elsewhere in the Confessor’s own writings, most notably *Ad Thal.* 60 (CCSG 22:79, 94–105), and his *Commentary on the Lord’s Prayer* (CCSG 23:30, 91–96). On these kinds of trinitarian enhancements, see Felix Heinzer, “L’explication trinitaire de l’économie chez Maxime le Confesseur,” in *Maximus Confessor: Actes du symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2–5 septembre 1980*, ed. Felix Heinzer and Christoph Schönborn, Paradosis 27 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1982), pp. 160–72.

New Sacrament. This Sacrament is embodied in the Feast of Passover. The Feast of Passover as a Sacrament has several features that define it in its symbolism and its theurgic impact or outcome; (i) A Set of Theurgic Symbols; (ii) Blood as an Ontological Substitution; (iii) A Defined Ritual with Obedience and Disobedience Creating an Outcome and; (iv) A Priestly Representative and; (v) A Command to Exercise the Ritual for Perpetuity.

### **A SET OF THEURGIC SYMBOLS**

The symbolism of the Passover Feast is the first theurgic symbol delivered to Israel as a Nation. Circumcision was denoted to symbolise an ethnicity of belonging. The building of altars as sacred places of the worship of Yahweh were not directly related to the theurgic. The participation with and in the symbols had real life outcomes of healing, atonement, and blessing. This is a participation between God and persons because it is God who commands persons to take a Lamb that, *“shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.”*<sup>164</sup>

There are multiple levels, both literal and allegorical, involved in this command. The taking of the Lamb for sacrifice was costly for persons in terms of monetary value. It was costly for Yahweh to see that His creation, which was not intended to be destroyed, would be

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<sup>164</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Ex. 12:5.

taken and used within a ritual of healing for a people who have rebelled against Him.

## **BLOOD AS AN ONTOLOGICAL SUBSTITUTION**

The cost of the Lamb to both God and persons acts as a stage for a deep level of love to be expressed. God allows His creation to be killed in a ritual form when, *“the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight.”*<sup>165</sup> This is a sombre ritual that involves a deliberate action that at this stage is not concerned with eating the meat of the sacrifice but a ritual of spiritual consequence. The Hebrews were then commanded to, *“take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.”*<sup>166</sup> This ritual action is a sign that involves what becomes a recurring theme in our research. The Blood is placed upon the two doorposts as a sign. A sign for the people, a sign for Yahweh, and a sign for the Angel of death. *“The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.”*<sup>167</sup>

At the ontological level, the concept of propitiation or substitution is established by the physical blood of a Lamb that is

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, Ex. 12:6.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, Ex.12:7.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 13.

without blemish being the means of atonement; (i) The ontological is established in that a person who is in the condition of sin and who exercises the propensity to sin is in real terms separated from God and the harmony of the Sophia; (ii) The Lamb that is innocent is sacrificed as a symbol of punishment that by right, belongs to the person who is separated by sin from God; (iii) It is the Blood that represents that which covers the sin. It is the death of the Lamb that is the act of atonement. And it is the Blood of the Lamb that acts as the means of atonement which God has chosen to acknowledge. In technical terms, it is the death of the Lamb that is for persons, and it is the Blood that is for God; (iv) This is more than symbolic because the ritual of sacrifice is *theurgic*. The theurgic act changes the ontological condition of the person into being that which is defined by the innocence of the Lamb; and (v) Under the safety of the home that has been protected by the covering of the Blood, a participation with the symbol is enacted at the most basic level by a feast which is eaten together. *“They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.”*<sup>168</sup>

## **A DEFINED RITUAL WITH OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE CREATING AN OUTCOME**

The recurring motif in Yahweh’s dealing with His people was

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 8.



that there was no place for initiative or innovation when it came to prescriptions for ritual. This is the perfect example of the Logospoetic principle. The propositions have been placed in a textual form that give direct commands on how the Sacrament should be carried out. The poetic, however, is at work in the creative aspects of taste and smell and actions that are held fully accountable to the Logos as the rooted place of truth. In the first Passover, not circumcising a male, not place blood over the doorposts of one's dwelling would result in the Angel of death not passing over those in the home and would bring death. It is thus possible to prepare the food correctly and make statements of truth but without the full obedience then the sacrament has no efficacy.

### **A PRIESTLY REPRESENTATIVE**

The first Passover was directed by Moses and Aaron. Moses as the Prophetic voice for God and Aaron as the Priestly intermediary. As the principle of the ongoing of *formation, progress, and sustenance* cited above informs our theology it is important to observe that the work of God in and among His people the Hebrews was one that developed. The Initial role of the Priest is of an administrator by the second Passover Feast the Priest has moved into a highly active mediatory role.

## **A COMMAND TO EXERCISE THE RITUAL FOR PERPETUITY**

A passive Sacrament that has one event attached to it is very different from the active Sacrament that takes its symbolism and causes within the people of Israel to recur on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, every seven years and on the fiftieth year. *“This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.”*<sup>169</sup>

This paves the way for what is given to Israel as a gift – a new calendar.

## **A LOGOSPOETIC NEW LITURGICAL CALENDAR**

This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household.<sup>170</sup>

## **A WHOLE LIFE LITURGY**

The Feast of Passover and then the other Feasts and Fasts listed in Leviticus 23 provide a comprehensive structure of spiritual meaning that is built into and embedded within a Luna Annual Calendar. The spiritual meanings and lessons of the New People of God are built into

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<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, Ex 12:14.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, vss. 2–3.

a structure that involved the weekly Sabbath, the once annual sacred holy days of Passover and Unleavened Bread, Feast of First Fruits, Feast of Pentecost, Tabernacles, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Trumpets. As well as these specific events there were monthly and quarterly rituals along with the seven-year cycle of agriculture and the completion of the overall programme in the year of Jubilee in the fiftieth year. The whole of life was influenced by these calendar rituals and festivals. A whole generation was influenced by at least one cycle leading the year of Jubilee. God gave his word in text but taught that word in the form of the ongoing sacramental object lessons provided by the Holy days.

## **A SOCIOLOGICAL ENFORCEMENT**

One of the most important factors in the new people of Israel was that when they left Egypt they moved from a very distinct slave paradigm into a Theocracy that had little or no room for dissent. The various laws in propositional form were delivered to the people but the enforcement in sociological terms came from the primary compass being the liturgical calendar. The sociological enforcement came in a variety of forms. The accepted norms attached to the different Feasts and Festivals took on both a positive and negative role within the community. Positive in that every person within a family unit knew what the expectations were in relation to the calendar. They also knew

the hidden sociological realities of familial roles in terms of work responsibilities. The social standing of women was inferior, not because God had determined it to be so but because the real-life physical realities of upper body strength has defined the roles of Hunter, Protector and Provider. The ultimate destination of male and female was going to be made a real-life notion in the coming of Messiah when Jesus ignored or refused to participate in the familial practices of prejudice. It would be fully consummated in the New Heaven and the New Earth which is a picture of how deep the condition of sin had diseased humanity.

### **A DIDACTIC MODALITY**

Above almost all other aspects of the Calendar was the fact that this was chosen by God to act as a didactic modality for the community. The Sabbath gave clear teaching by example that to contemplate God required periods of time where no work was carried out. This also connects with the idea that work was a result of the curse that came by sin. The feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and the Day of Atonement gave clear teaching about the power of atonement and the covering of Sin with death and Blood as the means of definition. The Festival of First Fruits was an enforcement of the concept of God being the provider yet in this case with the participation of persons. The whole emphasis is upon Praise and

Thanksgiving for the acts of God's provisions. The Feast of Pentecost was symbolic of the "New". For the Jews it celebrated the coming of the Law and for the grafted Olive Branch community of the Church it was a celebration of the coming of the Spirit. In the latter, it acted as a means of understanding the conflict between the Law and the Spirit. When Moses received the first tables of stone and he saw the idolatry of the Hebrews he broke the tables of stone and commanded for the idolaters to be put to death, the words "on that day about 3000 died," were given in Exodus 22:38. With the coming of the Holy Spirit when the Apostle spoke the word with boldness the book of Acts 2:41 records the words, "on that day about 3000 were saved." The Law brought death the Spirit brought Life; This was the overriding didactic application. The Festivals of Booth and Trumpets both have didactic applications, though less specific. The Festival of Booths was a memory producing experience that relates to deliverance from slavery. The Feast of Trumpets speaks prophetically concerning the coming of the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world.

## **A LOGOSPOETIC NEW SCRIPTURE**

To introduce this next section, the giving of Holy Scriptures to the Hebrews, an appropriate starting place is in the future after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Jesus appeared to two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. *"While they were talking and discussing, Jesus*

*himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.*<sup>171</sup> The term “their eyes were kept from recognising him” is important. At the human sensory level, they should have been able to recognise him. God chooses to place a veil over that recognition. In short, He was there but unknown to them. As their conversation continues Jesus uses the Scripture to give understanding to the whole set of questions they had concerning the Messiah of Israel and why events developed in the way they did. “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them the things about himself in all the Scriptures.”<sup>172</sup> The knowledge of truth is communicated to the Disciples later they declared.” *They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”*<sup>173</sup>

The revealing of truth in the Scriptures was something that became a retrospective because they still did not recognise Jesus at this point. When they arrive at their destination and Jesus comes into the house and begins to eat, their eyes were opened. “*When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him*”<sup>174</sup> It was

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<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, Lk 24:15–16.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 27.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 32.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 31.

in the Sacrament that He was revealed and they were enlightened.

This is important to grasp as it relates to the coming of the Scriptures and the role of the scriptures in the common life of Israel and also in the grafted olive branch Church; (i) Truth is very often hidden in the realm of the rational or a reason-based understanding; (ii) The Scriptures when applied give content and substance to a reality that is still unseen; and (iii) It is at the point of revelation that recognition and understanding emerge from what was previously hidden. In very real terms, it was the *presence* of Jesus, that was the revelation. It was not the truth about Jesus in the Scripture that was the critical point of connection.

From a Hebraic standpoint this was always the case prior to the rise of the law-based framework of rabbinic teaching. In short, the Scriptures participate in revelation but are not the revelation itself. It is very possible for Jews in the past and Christians in the present to be fully engaged in the Bible yet completely void of the revelation and engagement with the *presence* of Christ.

For the newly formed Nation of Israel this was a constant battle. The word of God was given to them, but they chose to resist the influence of the Scriptures in desiring to engage with the revelation of the presence of Yahweh. The sin condition was the core of their resistance.

Throughout the period from 1450 BCE, a generally accepted

time for the Exodus up until the first Century CE with the coming of Messiah, the testimony of Israel was that the Law and the Prophets revealed the ethical and moral outcomes of their sin condition but had no power to release them from the condition of sin. Conceptually, this is expressed in the Book of Hebrews, looking to the coming of the Messiah and His New Covenant. *“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”*<sup>175</sup>

This idea is expressed more fully when the Old and New Covenants were identified in God’s plan, *“For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one.”*<sup>176</sup> The writer of Hebrews is not suggesting that God made some kind of mistake at a level of mystery that we can hardly enter into. The period from Exodus 20 and Matthew 1 was a period of preparation whereby the People of Israel were to go through a process, albeit long, to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah when everything that was, would be changed.

From a speculative perspective, it may be stated that integral to the New Covenant, whereby a new and better way is made, true salvation, was to be only available in the New Covenant. A true

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, Heb. 8:10.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 7.



purging, cleansing, and then redeeming of the Sophia could not take place without the hypostasis of the Logos through Mary, the Theotokos, and the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit through the filling of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. Working backwards, there would be no filling of the Apostles with the Holy Spirit *without* the Resurrection of the Son of God. There could have been no Resurrection *without* the work of the Cross, and there could have been no Cross *without* the Hypostasis of the Logos within the womb of Mary the Theotokos.

### **A NEW SACRED SPACE**

The giving of the Sacrament, Liturgy, and Lectionary in the Passover, The Feasts and Festivals and the Scriptures has an added dimension in terms of a New Sacred Space that is given to the Hebrews. The book of Genesis and the early chapters of Exodus have God and persons meeting in various places that by their nature become sacred spaces. In almost every case some kind of monument or point of distinction is given to these sacred spaces. With the removal of Israel from Egypt and new sacred space is granted with multiple levels of purposes and meaning.

### **THE HEBREW TABERNACLE A FOCAL POINT OF WORSHIP**

On Mount Sinai Moses is given very strict instructions concerning the building of a sacred space. There is no room for innovation at any level when building the Tabernacle.

The objective of this sacred space is that, according to Yahweh's own words, "I *may dwell among them.*"<sup>177</sup> The artisans employed to build the Tabernacle were to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft.<sup>178</sup>

Of the eighty-three times in the Old Covenant where the Holy Spirit is spoken of, it is with these artisans building the Tabernacle and in the Prophecies of Ezekiel in reference to the Son of Man, where the term being filled with the Holy Spirit is directly ascribed. In most cases in the Old Covenant Scriptures, the Holy Spirit came upon, rested upon, and other terminology similar to this.

In building the Tabernacle, (i) according to a design determined by Yahweh, and (ii) by the artisan being a chosen person who is filled with the same Holy Spirit who superintends the creative acts of God, there is a strong connectivity to this being a picture of *Logos* and *logoi* within the Sophianic sphere. A space, certainly sacred, is being created

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<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, Ex 25:8.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, Ex 31:2–5.

as a meeting place of God and persons that is fully harmonised, in the meeting of God and His people, by the presence of the incarnation of the Divine Logos. The centre piece of this harmonisation, unification and swelling together is found in the pictures given to us of the Day of Atonement.

### **DAY OF ATONEMENT**

The Day of Atonement is given its most descriptive narrative in Leviticus 16. The title Leviticus as the Priestly accounts of Old Covenant Scripture has meaning in its name, *“As with all the books of Torah, the Hebrew name for Leviticus provides a framework for understanding the entire book. Vayikra means “and he called.”*<sup>179</sup> All through the book of Leviticus, God is calling to Israel, to give direction to their lives in worship and in community. Central to this calling is that they, in opposition to the territorial spheres of the *Beney ha Elohim*, are to present the purity of worship completely separate from the deceptive idolatry of the deceived nations. That worship was focused upon redemption not appeasement and would be the vanguard of the Gospel bringing the whole of the earth to be filled with the Glory of the Lord.

On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the

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<sup>179</sup> Russell Resnik, *Gateways to Torah: Joining the Ancient Conversation on the Weekly Portion* (Baltimore, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2000), p. 105.

names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit.<sup>180</sup>

This Day of Atonement had very clear lines of direction. God tells Moses to instruct Aaron *“not to come just at any time into the sanctuary inside the curtain before the mercy seat that is upon the ark, or he will die; for I appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.”*<sup>181</sup>

There are a series of steps or stages employed for Aaron as the High Priest on the Day of Atonement; (i) Aaron is told not to come into the sanctuary inside the veil at any time. The Tabernacle Sanctuary is divided into two distinct areas. Outside the veil is the Holy Place, inside the veil is the Holiest Place. The focus is upon the Mercy Seat (LXX. ἱλαστηρίου - Hilestarian) rather than the Ark of the Covenant as a whole. To give a more focused translation of this, the Mercy Seat was a sacred space where, *Hilestarian*-propitiation, substitutionary atonement was seated. The High Priest is to be dressed in a certain way on the Day of Atonement.

The set he normally employed was the bigdey zahav or vestments of gold (Mishnah, Yoma 3.4), consisting of eight items: breeches, tunic, turban, and sash in

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<sup>180</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Zec 13:2–6.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, Lev 16:2.

common with the other priests, and four additional garments worn only by the High Priest. These garments all contained gold: breastplate, ephod, robe hemmed with golden bells and pomegranates, and a golden head plate. Only on Yom Kippur would the High Priest wear the second set of garments, bigdey lavan or vestments of white (Yoma 3.6). These were the four garments shared with the ordinary priests, all of white linen.<sup>182</sup>

The allegory is clear. The High Priest as the picture of Christ, takes off his Royal Priestly garments. He carries Blood into the Holiest Place and sprinkles that blood on the “Seat of Substitution”. The presence of God is revealed as, “*I appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.*”<sup>183</sup> The High Priest pours incense into the censor by the Mercy Seat and the smoke of Incense and the cloud of God’s presence become one. In short, the smoke of God and the smoke of persons become fully unified and harmonised; It is united as one. This is one of the clearest presentations of the Day of Atonement being a picture of Theosis.

Thus he has given us, [ ...] great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become

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<sup>182</sup> Russell Resnik, *Gateways to Torah*, 127.

<sup>183</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Lev 16:2

participants of the divine nature.<sup>184</sup>

The whole concept of corruption through lust paints the picture of persons in conflict with the will of God deceived by the *Beney ha Elohim*. *Being participants of the divine nature*, is the central focus of restoration. The new Sacred Place, given to the people of Israel is built upon the perfected creative act of God in Atonement. It is a picture of a people that are destined to be God's instrument for the forming of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

## SUMMARY

God has chosen Israel to be set apart from the other nations and to be under His authority as an instrument of purification for the whole earth. As a people, Israel has no clear confessional boundaries and no sense of culture other than syncretised Egyptian paganism.

As a means of preparation for the Nation of Israel, God gives them a set of cultural spiritual boundaries built into a New Sacrament in The Passover, A New Liturgy in a whole life structure of Feasts and Festivals, A New Sacred Scripture that becomes their moral and spiritual compass, and a New Sacred Space that will act as a symbolic fusion, through atonement for theosis for the person and a Theosis-like reality for the whole of the Sophia to be restored and harmonised.

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<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 Pe 1:4.

**DISCUSSION**

Discuss a counter factual narrative of the world without Israel.

Identify the Logospoetic aspects of the Hebrew Tabernacle.

Discuss Scripture leading to the revelation of the Presence of God in Christ by the Spirit *as opposed* to the Scripture itself being the revelation.

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**TEACHING MODULE FIVE:**  
**THE MESSIANIC INCARNATION**

**WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

The Incarnation is the central and defining moment in eternity and in earth's history. In understanding how this works out upon the earth and in heaven, is the basis of what becomes in the Church its *kerygma* to the watching world. The Logos as the creator of The Sophia is the one who will bring harmony again to the Sophia.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Kingdom in the writings of the Prophet Daniel come to the surface in the first century with the preaching and teaching of John the Baptist. John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Messiah. He prepared the way to the Jewish nation to receive the Messiah. John the Baptist begins his ministry with the public statement, "Repent, for the kingdom



of heaven is at hand,”<sup>185</sup> It is within the early record of Matthew that both the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus is validated in John’s testimony at Jesus’s Baptism.<sup>186</sup> Jerome brings together the concept of salvation and glory as united in the Gospel. He writes, “Consider how the salvation of God, and the glory of the Lord, is preached not in Jerusalem, but in the solitude of the Church, in the wilderness to multitudes.”<sup>187</sup>

The idea of a Heavenly Kingdom was something new to the early hearers of John the Baptist which emphasises not a Messiah coming to rule the earth in the traditional sense of the word.

And he preaches what the Jews had never heard, not even from the Prophets, Heaven, namely, and the Kingdom that is there, and of the kingdoms of the earth he says nothing. Thus by the novelty of those things of which he speaks, he gains their attention to Him whom he preaches.<sup>188</sup>

Thomas Aquinas develops this further as he writes, “The Kingdom of Heaven shall come nigh you; for if it approached not, none would be

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<sup>185</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Matt. 3:2

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 16

<sup>187</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, Collected out of the Works of the Fathers: St. Matthew*, ed. John Henry Newman, vol. 1 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841), 92.

<sup>188</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea*, p. 93.

able to gain it; for weak and blind they had not the way, which was Christ.<sup>189</sup>”

In each of the Gospel accounts the ministry of Jesus is preceded by the account of John the Baptist preparing the way of Jesus as the promised Jewish Messiah. John the Baptist is clearly communicating a Jewish message inside of a fulfilled Messianic Jewish prophetic milieu. In short, there is no contextual authority for the message of Jesus outside of the Jewish milieu of His being the Messiah of Israel.

### **JESUS AS THE SON OF DAVID AS THE AWAITED MESSIAH OF ISRAEL**

The Messianic notion that was conceived in Genesis 3, builds in momentum throughout the Pentateuch but fully explodes into Israel’s consciousness in the massive poetic volume of the 150 Psalms. The poetic continues in much of the prophecies of Isaiah. Towards the end of Isaiah, Chapters 60 to 66, the comprehensive reality of the coming Messiah expresses itself in victorious celebration for both Israel, and by default, the whole earth.

New Covenant Scriptures open with the virgin birth and supernatural events surrounding the Advent. This paves the way for the outlining of the change that has taken place and will continue to take place effecting every molecule of the physical world and every ray of light, string, and quantum mystery within the unseen realm.

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the Babylonian exile are fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian exile until the Messiah are fourteen generations.<sup>190</sup>

The idea of the Jewishness of Jesus was the central feature of His ministry in Israel,

The first two words of Matthews Gospel, Βίβλος γενέσεως, speak of a “Record Of History”. That record, which can refer to the genealogy in Chapter One, the introduction 1:1 - 2 :23 or even the whole Gospel. However this is interpreted it is clearly Jewish.<sup>191</sup>

One of the most prominent descriptors of Jesus is that of being the Royal Son of David with all the implications attached to it. In short, Jesus is manifested as the Son of David and the son of Abraham. Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυιδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ.<sup>192</sup>

## THE INCARNATION

The Incarnation, by its very nature, affirm multiple levels of

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<sup>190</sup> Messianic Jewish Family Bible Society, *Holy Scriptures: Tree of Life Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015), Mt. 1:17.

<sup>191</sup> D. Carson, *Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2017, n.p.

<sup>192</sup> Harris III, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear*, Mt 1:1.

reality; (i) The three-dimensional reality that is locked and constrained within the various laws that make up the seen world as we know it; (ii) Added to this dimension is the realm of the unseen, which can be conjectured about and to some extent apply speculative thinking or theories. The existence of an unseen world that functions under different laws than that of the seen world from a biblical standpoint demands that it is a created realm; (iii) The third dimension being that which is uncreated from a biblical standpoint that points to a pre-existent infinity of three persons united by *perichoresis* into a singular entity. We cannot speculate beyond this outline, but we can be certain, from a biblical standpoint, of God, the created unseen, and the created seen world each with different sets of rules that govern their existence.

According to the Chalcedonian dogma, the structure of the God-Man Christ consists not in a simple relation (as in the case of Divinity or in the case of humanity as such) but in a complex relation, namely the unity of the hypostasis in the case of the duality of the natures. This hypostasis is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Logos.<sup>193</sup>

In the Incarnation all three realms merge together. God chooses to enter the seen world by merging Himself with humanity. This merger is modelled on the same basis as a male and female coming together

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<sup>193</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), p. 182.

and their separate seeds fusing to become one. Likewise, by the Holy Spirit God fuses with the woman's seed and the unity is a new and totally unique person whilst still retaining the individual natures of the Divine and the human person.

The plan was for him to mingle, without change on his part, with human nature by true hypostatic union, to unite human nature to himself while remaining immutable, so that he might become a man, as he alone knew how, and so that he might deify humanity in union with himself.<sup>194</sup>

The eternal Logos incarnated is not produced by God borrowing the woman as a container. It is a genuine fusion of God and Woman as in the case of the fusion of man and woman. With this action and reality all the realms – uncreated God, created unseen, and created seen – are fundamentally and irreversibly effected.

The ontological outcome is simply a mystery. However, one can say with clarity that the Incarnate God, the Eternal Logos as a man as Our Lord Jesus Christ stands as the emulsive unifier between the uncreated God, created unseen, and created seen. This reality means that wherever the Lord Jesus Christ is, there is uncreated God, created unseen and created seen all present in Him. This reality may or may not be evident at the phenomenological level to the observer, but the

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<sup>194</sup> St Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery*, p. 115.

actual ontological reality is unchanged. The Gospel of Matthew bears witness to this reality as it relates to the incarnation at several levels.

Maximus the Confessor writes,

[O]bserving that the end of the ages intended for God's becoming human had already arrived through the very incarnation of the divine Logos, said that the end of the ages has come upon us (1 Cor 10:11). Yet by "ages" he meant not ages as we normally conceive them, but clearly the ages intended to bring about the mystery of his embodiment, which have already come to term according to God's purpose.<sup>195</sup>

## **THE INCARNATION AS A TRANSVALUATION OF THE OLD COVENANT MONOTHEISM INTO A CHRISTO-CENTRIC PERICHORESIS NEW COVENANT MONOTHEISM**

The actual presence of Jesus the Messiah is central to the kerygma of the Gospel within the Missional enterprise of the Church. The redefinition of the monotheism in the Old Covenant scriptures was explosive in nature as it became the basis of the message of the New Covenant people to the NCCS world. The passage to be viewed in Colossians 1:15-20 is the most concise and yet potent unveiling of the Christo-Centric Gospel to the nations of the earth. Scholars and

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<sup>195</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 115–116.

commentators generally agree that this segment is in the form of an early Church hymn that would have made itself available as liturgical expression. The origin, form, style, and rhetorical devices involved in the hymn are the subject of a vast amount of research. For the purposes of this research the focus is upon how this text applies to a Theology of Mission.

Our message to the onlooking NCCS world is also a message that states without compromise that whatever condition the universe was in prior to the Incarnation, it has now been irreversibly altered. No part of the created Sophia is without the controlling presence of the God-Man Our Lord Jesus Christ. “For no part of creation has been left without Him, but He has filled all things everywhere, while present with His own Father.”<sup>196</sup> In real terms this incarnate Christ cannot be ignored, chosen at will in terms of whether He is acceptable to our preconceptions, our demands of a customised deity. What is deeply appealing to those who subscribe to a NCCS worldview is that it is a fully divine person who dwells as the governor of The Sophia. The implications for NCCS are enormous as: (i) The Sophia is not an independent entity. It cannot exist without its creator; (ii) The Sophia has no personality in and of itself, but it has the personality of the incarnate Christ, its creator and who rules and reigns over it, and (iii) The Sophia is good as Christ is good. The universe is not a lonely

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<sup>196</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *Athanasius: On the Incarnation*, p. 55.

uninhabited random collection of energies and bits of matter. It is place that is warm, affectionate, and personal because the Spirit of all that is good inhabits every wave or molecule within it. This does not mean that the universe is uncorrupted because it is corrupted by the rebellion of the *Beney ha Elohim* and the disease and condition of sin caused by the tumultuous acts of the first created persons. The message that the Apostle Paul is communicating to those who received his letter in Colossae was that just as the fundamental aspects of the created world, so the Sophia has been irreversibly changed. Also, the people of God, the nation of Israel need to understand that the notion of Messiah that they longed for so long had now arrived. With His arrival there would be a transvaluation of much of their symbolism but very specifically their cosmology.

## HE IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

The Incarnation, in human form of the incomprehensible and ineffable mystery of the eternal Triune God, is a transvaluation of the Hebraic concept of Yahweh: That concept being that Yahweh was in any way directly accessible to persons. The Sybylline Oracles presents a position that was consistent within Rabbinic writings and teachings that God, “[m]ay not be seen, nor measured by men’s eyes.”<sup>197</sup> One of

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<sup>197</sup> Milton S. Terry, trans., *The Sibylline Oracles Translated from the Greek into English Blank Verse: Translation* (New York; Cincinnati: Hunt & Eaton; Cranston & Stowe, 1890), p. 113.



many examples of the Rabbinic teaching being, “He said to him, ‘I would like to see your God!’ Joseph answered him, ‘Behold, the sun, one of innumerable servants, you cannot look at, so how much less his glory itself!’”<sup>198</sup>

As in the request of Moses to see the face of Yahweh and Yahweh replies, “You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.”<sup>199</sup> The use of the word, εἰκὼν, [Image] in the LXX fits into our recurring motifs concerning the cosmic conflict between the fallen Sons of God deceiving those Gentile pagan peoples, who were placed under the guardianship and then the revelation of Jesus the Messiah as the one who unveils the Glory of God by His own presence. In 2 Corinthians 4:2-4 we read,

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”<sup>200</sup>

εἰκὼν can best be described as a representation and is used in different places in Scripture. When asked about the paying of taxes, Jesus

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Ex. 33:20.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 Cor. 4:2–4.

requested that he be shown a coin, “And they brought one. Then he said to them, ‘Whose head is this, and whose title?’ They answered, ‘The emperor’s.’”<sup>201</sup> The word used for head is εἰκὼν.

The Christo-Centric incarnation model of revelation is ultimately made complete with this image of the invisible God in His Glory being “iconised” in the face of Jesus Christ. “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”<sup>202</sup> The term “knowledge” used in the quote above is important because in this context it is making the revelation personal and experiential.

As for the *kerygma*, it is the presence of Christ that is central. The Lord Jesus as the icon of the Triune is the message to the watching world. For the watching NCCS world this message is important: (i) There is an invisible and incomprehensible God; (ii) Whereas this God has been represented by the forms of gods, in stone, wood, and in nature, in Christ, God is, (iii) revealed in a person that defies the rational logic of reason in that this manifestation is an incarnation of *presence* rather than *representation*.

Sergei Bulgakov writes of this,

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<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, Mk. 12:16.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 Cor 4:6.

God's self-positing in time, His going out from eternity into time, is an unfathomable mystery of His life; all we can do is accept this mystery reverently and with faith, as a given of our religious consciousness. Nourished by revelation, our religious thought arrives at this mystery and stops in awe before it.<sup>203</sup>

## THE FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION

The term Firstborn has been a source of deceptive teaching from the earliest times in Church history. It may be argued that God purposely allowed the deception to exist so that the true reality of the term Firstborn would be thoroughly investigated and defended and as a result give it full power against the arguments for the Incarnation.

Lohse quotes Lightfoot writing

The description of the pre-existent Christ as the “first-born before all creation” (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως) is not intended to mean that he was created first and thereby began the succession of created beings. Rather, it refers instead to his uniqueness, by which he is distinguished from all creation (cf. Heb. 1:6\*). The point is not a temporal advantage but rather the superiority which is due to him as the agent of creation who is before all creation. As the first-born he stands over against creation as Lord.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, p.157.

<sup>204</sup> Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon a Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 48–49.

Like other commentators, Ratchet and Nider define Firstborn as, “in a hierarchical sense, “the begotten One is superior to all creation.<sup>205</sup>”

**IN HIM ALL THINGS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH WERE CREATED,  
THINGS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE, WHETHER THRONES OR DOMINIONS  
OR RULERS OR POWERS**

When considering our thesis concerning the dispossessing of the realms of darkness by Christ and His Church through the Gospel, this statement gives a context. In short, all the enemies of God could be made uncreated or destroyed by the command of the creator. Rather than to defeat force by greater force in the violent sense, He chooses another way. His way is to defeat evil by good. The fact that everything exists by the good pleasure of God, demands there must be some kind of plan in the mind of God,

From the Hellenistic synagogue, this confession of God the creator, formulated in Stoic phrases, was appropriated by the Christian community and joined together with its confession of Christ. Thus 1 Cor 8:6 reads “Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and through whom we exist” [...] Rom 11:36, It praises

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<sup>205</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 22.

Christ as the agent of creation in whom, through whom and for whom all things were created.<sup>206</sup>

### **ALL THINGS HAVE BEEN CREATED THROUGH HIM AND FOR HIM HE HIMSELF IS BEFORE ALL THINGS**

The strength that is attached to this statement is far beyond the scope of this research which is at best a cursory set of observations. Whilst saying that, this statement embodies the full power of the authority of the Lord Jesus in terms of The Sophia. The early Church Father and Apologist Theophilus pours out a paroxysm of superlative statements of worship when referring to the “Him”, the Logos Incarnate.

For if I say He is Light, I name but His own work; if I call Him Word, I name but His sovereignty; if I call Him Mind, I speak but of His wisdom; if I say He is Spirit, I speak of His breath; if I call Him Wisdom, I speak of His offspring; if I call Him Strength, I speak of His sway; if I call Him Power, I am mentioning His activity; if Providence, I but mention His goodness; if I call Him Kingdom, I but mention His glory; if I call Him Lord, I mention His being judge; if I call Him Judge, I speak of Him as being just; if I call Him Father, I speak of all things as being from Him; if

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<sup>206</sup> Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, p.50.

I call Him Fire, I but mention His anger.<sup>207</sup>

Athanasius is similar with his superlative, though condensed, language writes, “He made all things out of nothing through His own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>208</sup> Lohse goes on to write bringing he thoughts on this statement together,

He is “before all things” (πρὸ πάντων), which means that as the pre-existent one, he is Lord over the universe. This refers back to the designation “first-born before all creation” (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως) and it emphasizes once again the unique position of Christ as Lord over the cosmos. Not only is the universe created in him and by him, but it is also established permanently in him alone. In Platonic and Stoic philosophy the verb *συνεστηκέναι* (to be established, to continue, exist, endure) was used to denote the wonderful unity of the entire world.<sup>209</sup>

## IN HIM ALL THINGS HOLD TOGETHER

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<sup>207</sup> Theophilus of Antioch, “Theophilus to Autolykus,” Ed. Philip Schaff. In Vol ANF-02, *Fathers of the Second Century*: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2004; cf. *Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Marcus Dods, vol. 2, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 90.

<sup>208</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *Athanasius: On the Incarnation*, p. 46.

<sup>209</sup> Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon a*), p. 52; cf. Plato, *Republic* 530a, “... that the artisan of heaven fashioned it and all that it contains” (οὕτω συνεστάναι τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ δημιουργῷ αὐτόν τε καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ). [Note the many various English equivalents for this verb, as given in Liddell-Scott.]

The concept of The Sophia being held together in a unified manner is central to Christian teaching. The absolute fullness of the Incarnate Logos within whom the Sophia exists has the mysterious reality attached to it. The mysterious reality is the harmony of all things is executed by this Incarnate Logos. As has been stated earlier, the safety and security that the Lord Jesus created among children whenever He was present is the same safety and security that fills the whole universe. The question of why do we feel afraid in the face of such expanse is answered by the fact that in the most sombre and darkened place that the Lord Jesus ever knew, the Cross of Calvary, the fullness of God was not absent but hidden for a higher cause. So it is today. The sense of the absence of all that is good, true, and beautiful is not the reality. The reality is that the good, the true, and the beautiful are *present* but *hidden*. What is clear is the message that the victory of the Church as the Body of Christ is assured as the process of dispossessing the *Beney ha Elohim* continues towards its completion.

As Sergei Bulgakov writes, “In Sophia is revealed the content of the divine nature, as All and All-unity. In this sense, she is the revelation of the Logos, the Word, saying All: “All things were made by him” (John 1:3).”<sup>210</sup> Lohse follows Bulgakov writing:

The divine Logos, indeed God himself, is the unifying

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<sup>210</sup> Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, p. 108.

bond which includes all things and holds them together: *And by his word all things hold together.* Just as the concept of the mediation of creation was applied to Christ by the Christian community, so too this latter concept was likewise applied. Christ upholds the universe “by his word of power” (τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ). Everything that is, is established in him alone, for He is the Lord, the head of the body.<sup>211</sup>

### HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH

The use of the term Body as being what is meant by the Church of which Christ is head is important to our thesis. In 1 Corinthians 12:12 we read by the Apostle Paul that,

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.<sup>212</sup>

From a Hellenic point of view this was not an alien concept, and it is a picture of how the Apostle Paul contextualised his message to the prevailing NCCS backdrop. Eduard Lohse writes,

The view that the whole cosmos can be compared to a

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<sup>211</sup> Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*), p. 52.

<sup>212</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, 1 Cor. 12:12–13.



body and that macrocosm and microcosm correspond to each other in their relationships is attested very early in ancient times; it appeared in manifold variations. Plato conceives of the cosmos as a living being with a soul and pervaded with reason The cosmos as a body is directed by the divine soul which it follows as it is led In the syncretism of late antiquity Iranian concepts were connected with these Greek concepts.<sup>213</sup>

This is also a picture of the macro view of The Sophia. The Sophia is unified just as the Church is unified. The Sophia has no actual consciousness other than it being a projected personality of the Logos. So it is with the Church. The Church is fully unified and has the personality of Christ imprinted upon it but it is not some kind of collective consciousness. What is precious and powerful to comprehend is that The Sophia has been corrupted by sin and is being made uncorrupted by the Church.

**HE IS THE BEGINNING, THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD SO THAT HE MIGHT COME TO HAVE FIRST PLACE IN EVERYTHING FOR IN HIM ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD WAS PLEASED TO DWELL**

The word “fullness” [πλήρωμα - Pleroma] stands head and shoulders above all else in this verse as the ramifications for those from pre-gnostic pagan background would have read this in a very

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<sup>213</sup> Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, p. 53.

personalised manner. Lohse, helps to give clarification on this as he explains the word *pleroma*,

‘Pleroma’ signifies the uppermost pneumatic world in immediate proximity to God which in turn is separated from the cosmos by a boundary. There exists ‘peace and harmony between all the Aeons within the Pleroma.’<sup>214</sup>

The distortion is that the sphere, *pleroma*, that is close to God is outside of God and that Jesus was just one of many intermediaries that dwelled within the *pleroma*. This teaching is actually a heretical distortion of the Sophia. The Apostle Paul writes that all of this *pleroma*, this fullness is in Christ. There is nothing beyond Christ in terms of fullness. He is the image within which all fullness, *pleroma* dwells.

**THROUGH HIM GOD WAS PLEASED TO RECONCILE TO HIMSELF BY MAKING PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS ALL THINGS WHETHER ON EARTH OR IN HEAVEN**

The incarnation of the Logos in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is given the most dramatic conclusion: (i) Through Christ God chose to bring reconciliation to the whole Sophia; (ii) He made peace, harmonised the Sophia through an act of earthly action, His Blood of the Cross. What is confirmed by this statement is that eschaton is being

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<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

immanentized in as much as the whole of the heavens and the whole of the earth are being redeemed, reconciled, restored, and renewed by the action of the Lord Jesus death on the Cross. What comes out from this is a strong affirmation of the following: (i) The Gospel of Christ will be victorious bringing harmony and peace to The Sophia. (ii) Central to this Gospel message is that sin as a condition and disease and as a falling short of the Glory of God, is dealt with in the substitution of Christ for sin diseased persons with His death on the Cross; (iii) The death of Christ on the Cross was what paved the way for Christ as the second Adam to defeat death by the resurrection, by His being given all authority as the second Adam in heaven and earth; and (iii) To prepare a New Humanity who are marked by the indwelling, by the hypostasis, of the Holy Spirit which qualified them to be called the Body of Christ and to become His instrument for Christ to bring healing and wholeness to the whole Sophia.

## **SUMMARY**

The Incarnation is the turning point for the chosen nation of Israel. Their monotheism has become a perichoresis Triune monotheism. What had been a Messianic notion in the history of Israel is now become a fulfilled aspiration at the moment when John the Baptist baptised Jesus and the revelation of the Triune is made manifest as Jesus is declared by John the Baptist to be the Lamb of God that takes

away the sin of the world. The full index of Incarnation attributes is displayed in the liturgical power of Colossians 1:15-20. The outlining of the Incarnate Logos provides the understanding for the ultimate victory of the Gospel with the role of the Church being central and how through the Church with its message of reconciliation through the Blood of the Cross the dispossession of the territories of darkness is made complete with the bringing into being of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

## **DISCUSSION**

Discuss whether the outline of the above work demands any particular view of eschatology to be a necessary condition.

Discuss how a message of forgiveness of sins can be so central to the reconciliation of all things.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**TEACHING MODULE SIX:**  
**SOPHIANIC COSMOLOGY SPIRITUAL HIERARCHY IN EARTHLY**  
**EXPRESSION**

## WORKING HYPOTHESIS

The overall thrust of the thesis has been that the role of the Church is to dispossess the spiritual territories under the authority of the *Beney ha Elohim*. The means and method of this taking place is explored in the Pauline and Ignatian cosmologies. The central theme being that the will of persons is the action that brings impact upon the heavenlies.

## INTRODUCTION

In this module the primary voice will be that of the various commentators cited as opposed to our own editorial commentary as has been the case in the earlier modules. The idea has been touched upon in the earlier modules concerning the role of the battle in the heavens having an effect upon the earth. The role of the *Beney ha Elohim* in their deception of the nations is the prime example of the argument. In this module the influence of the Church on earth upon the heavenly realm is explored. The basic premise will be on the role of the Common Life of the Church impacting the heavenly realm.

When writing to the Ephesian Church, the Apostle Paul outlines a cosmology that can be summarised as the Church being the means used by God to tutorialize or reveal the wisdom of God to the *rulers and authorities in the heavenly places*.

[...] so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord<sup>215</sup>

This revelation is not a theological principle in times past but is existential in today's world or as Hans Urs von Balthasar writes, "What takes place today is not the reverberating thunder following a lightning flash that occurred two thousand years ago but the Spirit of God manifesting himself here and now."<sup>216</sup> The heavenlies have a thearchy, a celestial hierarchy under God that has meaning and purpose. Bulgakov gives that purpose definition when he writes:

The divine mind, having conceived the angelic ranks first of all, established mirrors which receive in themselves, as much as may be comprehended, the radiance of the thearchic light.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* Eph. 3:10–11.

<sup>216</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, trans. Graham Harrison, vol. 2, *Dramatis Personae: Man in God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 100.

<sup>217</sup> Bulgakov, *Jacob's Ladder*, p. 22.

The celestial realm was created to draw in and reflect out the Divine Light of God’s presence. This reflecting was for a purpose known only to God but was also connected to the earthly thearchy epitomized in the life of persons in the Garden of Eden. In Module One the outline of the relationship between the Sons of God, the *Beney ha Elohim*, was explored. In the case of Job Chapter One, the Satan had authority from God to bring sickness, catastrophe, and suffering to Job. The reason that God chose to allow the suffering of Job was to reveal Job’s righteousness to the Satan. The acts of righteousness on earth impacted the heavens.

The Apostle Paul continues in his letter to the Church in Ephesus to outline the qualities of the Common life of the Church. He writes, “I [...] beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,”<sup>218</sup> If this is projected as being the *wisdom of God* that is being revealed to the heavenly places, it needs to be understood that it is actions or praxis of the Church that *embodies the truth of God* – not a set of *propositions about God*. The Apostle develops this further by giving a specific example of that praxis when he writes, “making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”<sup>219</sup> The fabric of the common life of the Church is

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<sup>218</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* Eph. 4:1–6.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

to be found in ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’<sup>220</sup>

Approximately fifty years after the letter is written by Paul, Ignatius also writes to the Ephesians and uses a similar admonition which as a spiritual consequence is based around the same idea of spiritual unity. However, there is a development here in the Ignatian Epistle. There is a “means of achieving” that same unity. Ignatius uses the term “by unanimous obedience” as the instrumentation of unity. The result is that it can be argued there is a close correlation between obedience in the Church and spiritual unity that is experienced, which I will show goes on to have a cosmogenic effect in both the heavens and the earth. Ignatius writes:

May I always have joy of you, if indeed I be worthy of it. It is therefore befitting that you should in every way glorify Jesus Christ, who hath glorified you, that by a unanimous obedience “ye may be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, and may all speak the same thing concerning the same thing.”<sup>221</sup>

Unity is attached to obedience which in turn results in an action within the Spirit for and by the Church. This concept of the Church is not just

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<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 3.

<sup>221</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, “The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), p. 50.



the visible body of believers. Rather, it is a spiritual entity that exists which effects authority in both heaven and earth,

The Church is the media whereby spiritual rulers and authorities in the heavenly places are shown, taught, and given revelation about the wisdom of God. This “Sophia” of God is explained by Sergei Bulgakov to be the reflection of the nature of God in terms of His dealing with “All” that is the heavens and the earth.

This is the All as unity and unity as All, All-unity. God’s life is this positive All-unity, and the All-unity is God’s nature. In this capacity God’s nature as the absolute content of His life is that which Scripture calls the Divine Wisdom, Sophia (see Prov. 8:22 and parallel texts). Thus, the Divine Sophia is nothing other than God’s nature, His ousia, not only in the sense of power and depth, but also in the sense of self-revealing content, in the sense of the All-unity.<sup>222</sup>

Bulgakov is saying that it is the Church that speaks by its common life, a revelation of God’s nature in His self-revealing content. Ignatius takes this point but develops it and focuses it, in this passage to the Ephesians in a more descriptive manner:

Take heed, then, often to come together to give thanks to God, and show forth His praise. For *when ye assemble*

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<sup>222</sup> Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, p. 102.

*frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed, and the destruction at which he aims is prevented by the unity of your faith. Nothing is more precious than peace, by which all war, both in heaven and earth, is brought to an end.*<sup>223</sup> [emphasis added]

This statement is profound and must be thought through very carefully for (i) When ye assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed (ii) and the destruction at which the Satan aims is prevented by the unity of your faith. Ignatius calls for the Church to come together to ‘give thanks’ in the Eucharist. When they come together for the Eucharist, a spiritual power is released, which has the effect of touching, revealing, and influencing the powers in the heavenly places that Paul has just spoken of. In this case Ignatius is very specific by stating “the powers of Satan are destroyed”. This revelation is an aspect of the Sophia spoken of in Paul’s writing. Ignatius takes this principle one step further.

He writes “I have need of meekness, by which the ruler of this world is destroyed.”<sup>224</sup> He later shares in this text that he is far from perfection. I would suggest that the meekness as an outcome of the spirit by obedience is expressed fully in the Eucharist, however this text does not demand that it be placed specifically there. In short, deeds upon

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<sup>223</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, “The Epistle of Ignatius,” p. 55.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

the earth have a direct impact upon the heavenly powers. This idea is first suggested by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 3:10 – 11) to make the point but the concept of this principle develops further with Ignatius creating specific illustrations of the point. As Vladimir Soloviev writes in the late Nineteenth Century:

Only by will, man can renounce evil, and only by will he can recognize the existence of Good or God. Faith in God, being a secret interaction between the Divine and the human soul, requires the direct participation of the human will.<sup>225</sup>

Ignatius continues with the concept that obedience within an earthly hierarchy has heavenly consequences. He outlines the Church hierarchy as it developed in the late First Century and early Second Century. That hierarchy is made up of Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon.

“Since, then, I have had the privilege of seeing you, through Damas your most worthy bishop, and through your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and through my fellow-servant the deacon Sotio, whose friendship may I ever enjoy, inasmuch as he is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ, [I now write to you].”<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov. *Soloviev VS Spiritual Foundations of Life*, Ed. Nicholas Bjerring. The Offices of the Oriental Church: With an Historical Introduction (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Co., 1884).

<sup>226</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Corpus Ignatianum*: 1849, 231.59.

We see this also affirmed in the earliest writings of the Oriental Church. “In the Hierarchy of the Eastern Church, as we have already said, there are three “Apostolical Orders,” viz., Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.”<sup>227</sup>

As Ignatius writes to the Ephesians, he specifically identifies Onesimus as their Bishop. He in turn speaks highly of the Bishop. If indeed Onesimus was Bishop over several Churches, and Ignatius writes to him *as his Bishop* to whom he (Ignatius) is exercising authority over, we can add another layer to the chain of spiritual leadership. Ignatius did not claim to be an Apostle. It is quite possible that early on in the process there was a clear role for an Archbishop or Metropolitan or another office of a similar nature.

[..] Onesimus, a man of inexpressible love and your bishop in the flesh, whom I pray you by Jesus Christ to love, and that you would all seek to be like him. And blessed be He who has granted unto you, being worthy, to obtain such an excellent bishop.<sup>228</sup>

He then in the same section of his epistle to the Ephesians makes reference to Burrhus your Deacon. He uses the singular term for Deacon.

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<sup>227</sup> Solovyov, *The Offices of the Oriental Church*, xiii–xiv.

<sup>228</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Corpus Ignatianum*: 1849, 49.

As to my fellow-servant Burrhus, your deacon in regard to God and blessed in all things, I beg that he may continue longer, both for your honour and that of your bishop.<sup>229</sup>

The role of Deacon by this point was to assist and serve the Presbyter/Priest who very often would be in training to either stay as a perpetual Deacon or to move into the Presbyter/Priest role. “[A]nd that, being subject to the bishop and the presbytery, ye may in all respects be sanctified.”<sup>230</sup>

The Cosmogenic expression of this order is interesting as the Ephesians are exalted to be subject to those in spiritual leadership so that in all respects they would be sanctified. This form of radical community cannot be over emphasized. There has been so far in the texts that we have looked at a spiritual connection between obedience to authority and the spiritual condition of the individual, the Church, and the heavenly powers. In this next Ignatian text we see the relationship between how that authority is exercised and administered.

Ignatius uses a common Greek rhetorical device where he writes, “I am not telling you that you have to do this but then

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<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

goes on in the same sentence to write but you have to what I am telling you anyway.

I do not issue orders to you, as if I were some great person. For though I am bound for the name [of Christ], I am not yet perfect in Jesus Christ. For now I begin to be a disciple, and I speak to you as fellow-disciples with me. For it was needful for me to have been stirred up by you in faith, exhortation, patience, and long-suffering. But in as much as love suffers me not to be silent in regard to you, I have therefore taken upon me first to exhort you that ye would all run together in accordance with the will of God.<sup>231</sup>

This is very similar to the way Paul writes to Philemon about his slave who has turned up at Paul's house seeking his intercession with his master. What is important in this matter is not the means of communication within its cultural context but the guiding motive behind the use of such rhetorical devices.

For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> Or as an ambassador of Christ Jesus, and now also his prisoner.

N.T Wright speaks of this as a common technique or device in conversation over issues like this. Wright uses the word ‘trick’ but more in a tongue in cheek fashion not placing any duplicity upon the Apostle’s motive but rather the contextualized way in which he communicates.

As in verse 8, Paul uses the rhetorician’s transparent trick of declaring that he will not mention something, thereby of course mentioning it (compare 2 Cor. 9:4). It is this verse that tells us that Philemon had, like Onesimus, become a Christian under Paul’s ministry. He therefore owes Paul his own very self: the true self which he had found, and become, in becoming.<sup>233</sup> [emphasis added]

A similar example is found in the Letter of Pliny the Younger which illustrates this as a common device. Pliny writing at a similar time in the first century has a setting almost identical to Paul and Philemon concerning a run-away slave. He writes:

I am afraid it will look as though I’m putting pressure on you, not simply making a request, if I join my prayers to his. But I’m going to do it anyway, and all the more fully and thoroughly because I’ve given him a sharp and severe talking-to, and I’ve warned him clearly that I

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<sup>233</sup> N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 12, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 195.

won't make such a request again.<sup>234</sup>

The difference in all of these cases is that Ignatius, like Paul, views these exchanges as being connected to a worldview that could be called a Messianic worldview. The goal in Paul and Ignatius is always the unity of the Church and reconciliation of any parties that would be broken in fellowship from each other. The authority that is exercised is not according to the power in the spirit of the age whether it be first or twenty-first century society. The goal of authority is to lead to a unity of worldview in the Messiah or as N.T. Wright notes, “the new symbolic praxis which stood at the heart of his renewed worldview was *the unity of the Messiah’s people*.”<sup>235</sup> [emphasis added]

Ignatius picks up the theme and develops it further by suggesting that the harmony between the Presbyters and their Bishop is like strings on a harp, the emphasis being unity and harmony. This idea of unity as harmony reflects the idea of the Sophia being healed by the return of Christ to establish the New Heaven and the New Earth:

Wherefore it is fitting that ye should run together in

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<sup>234</sup> N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 4, *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), p. 3.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.



accordance with the will of your bishop, which thing also ye do. For your justly renowned presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop as the strings are to the harp.<sup>236</sup>

The fellowship that the Bishop has with his people is of a spiritual nature. The will in obedience which causes harmony and acts not as an earthly principle but a heavenly one impacts the heavenly realm. What appears almost to be hyperbole is in fact an existential reality, “For when ye assemble frequently in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed.”<sup>237</sup>

For if I in this brief space of time, have enjoyed such fellowship with your bishop—I mean not of a mere human, but of a spiritual nature—how much more do I reckon you happy who are so joined to him as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father, that so all things may agree in unity!<sup>238</sup>

The conversation once more becomes that of being beyond the mere structures and boundaries of a three-dimensional worldview. As spoken of before it is the rupture of the Eucharist where both time and eternity meet that the unity between the Bishop and his people is

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<sup>236</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Corpus Ignatianum*, p. 50.

<sup>237</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, “The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians,” p. 55.

<sup>238</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Corpus Ignatianum*, p. 51.

given as an analogy.

Perhaps one of the most difficult areas of life in today's world is authority being presented as a necessary condition for being in the will of God. It is also with doubt one of the most abused areas within all branches of the Church. It has to be stated that Spiritual Authority within the Church is a vital aspect of the Common Life of the Church. It is also a critical factor in the impact upon the unseen world. Ignatius writes thus:

Now the more anyone sees the bishop keeping silence, the more ought he to revere him. For we ought to receive everyone whom the Master of the house sends to be over His household, as we would do Him that sent him. It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself.<sup>239</sup>

The Sacramental becomes involved in this statement as God represents himself through the icon of the Incarnate Christ who by the Spirit represents himself by and through the Church and within the Church. The Bishop represents the Lord in the iconic sense of the word. Obedience to the Bishop is obedience to the Lord. This obedience to the Bishop is, as has been suggested earlier, a spiritual exercise that functions within the rupture of the finite and the eternal.

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<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.

This moves the action out of the realm of time and into a transcendent condition. Bulgakov speaks of this as being a place or space where immanence and transcendence coexist in a form that is beyond anthropomorphic understanding. He writes:

The doctrine of determinism implies an anthropomorphic conception of the first cause: it introduces the first cause in the temporal process and defines it according to the categories of this process. The “first” cause therefore becomes the pre-cause or the cause of all causes, so to speak. It is predestination, a certain cosmic fatum.<sup>240</sup>

In short, there is no causal chain in the way that a three-dimensional worldview operates. One can equally proffer a radical perception that in the eternal, God chooses the end result of the powers of the unseen world to be affected in such a way as to be the *cause* of hierarchical obedience. Authority and submission within the framework of the Church is a teleology based upon eschatological ontology. I would suggest this is the core of Ignatian cosmology.

It is hard to think of any more radical concept of authority than this and one that has implications that are vast at the social and cultural level. One of the main outcomes of this relationship is a form of protection from the false teaching that has plagued the Church from

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<sup>240</sup> Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, p. 213.

its inception and continues to this day. Ignatius writes:

I exhort you to study to do all things with a divine harmony, while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ<sup>241</sup>

Once more we see the Eucharistic aspect of this cosmology. There is direct relationship between ‘Divine Harmony’ and the relationship between the Bishop as the external icon ‘in the place of God’. Authority and submission are not a legal requirement to bring a structure of administration to the Church. Rather Authority and submission is a spiritual principle that brings together the heavens and the earth through the acts of the will of man. One could take this one step further and suggest that the Lord’s prayer that states, “May it be on earth as it is in heaven” is simply a call for authority and submission to be at the centre of the cosmology. This cosmology is seen at work In the Epistle of John: 1 John 3: 8. John writes, “Jesus Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the Devil”. John Stott comments on this:

If the characteristic work of the devil is to sin, the characteristic work of the Son of God is to save. The

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<sup>241</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Corpus Ignatianum*, p. 61.

reason the Son of God appeared (ephanerōthē again, as in v. 5) was to destroy the devil’s work. The Greek text has ‘works’ in the plural, for the devil’s activity is manifold. His works include all those things which he has insinuated into the perfect creation of God, in order to spoil it.<sup>242</sup>

When Stott speaks of “His works include all those things which he has insinuated into the perfect creation of God, in order to spoil it.” He speaks right into the core of Ignatian cosmology. The revealing of Christ within the external form of the Incarnate through the Virgin Mary, the manifestation of Christ externally by the Spirit in the Church, and the external “loosing” of the power of darkness being manifest by the obedience of the Church to their Bishops. This is spoken of by Ignatius as “good order” which he describes in his epistle to the Ephesians:

And indeed Onesimus himself greatly commends your good order in God, that ye all live according to the truth, and that no sect has any dwelling-place among you. Nor, indeed, do ye hearken to any one rather than to Jesus Christ speaking in truth.<sup>243</sup>

Placing this concept into the antithesis one can say with

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<sup>242</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), pp. 127–128.

<sup>243</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Corpus Ignatianum*: p. 52.

confidence that when there is not the exercising of spiritual authority and submission the outcome will be a lack of unity, a tendency to disharmony, disorder in the Church, a tendency towards sectarianism and doctrinal error, as well as, a lack of spiritual power to destroy the works of the Devil.

The implications of this are enormous in terms of the place of the Church within the spectrum of heaven and earth. The most immediate scripture that comes to mind is 1 Sam. 15:23 where rebellion is spoken of as being like the sin of witchcraft. As we look a little deeper at this text, we see with the help from Girdlestone's commentary that an expanded explanation is required. Girdlestone writes:

[‘R]ebellion is as the sin of witchcraft;’ but it would be better to say ‘the sin of divination.’ The word used is Kasam (קסם, LXX244 μαντεύω). It stands for Joseph's divining cup. The original meaning of the word seems to be ‘to divide’ or ‘partition out.’ Its first appearance is where the elders of Moab go to Balaam with ‘the rewards of divination in their hand’ (Num. 22:7), and where the seer announces that ‘there is no divination against Israel’ (23:23). Balaam is directly called a diviner (A. V. soothsayer) in Josh. 13:22. We meet with it among the list of similar practices in Deut. 18:10 and 14, where we are given to understand that it was common among

the Canaanites.<sup>245</sup>

What needs to be understood is that the act of divination is seeking to take rational control, albeit by irrational means, over one's destiny. The refusal to adhere to spiritual authority and submission is in real terms a refusal to trust our lives and futures to God by following His prescribed order. This aspect of rational control that plagues the modern Church has been enhanced by modernity as the individualisation of human consciousness in Enlightenment thinking demands the individual be emancipated from the supernatural structures of spiritual authority.

Ignatius emphasises this again by stating it is the office, not the image of the office of Bishop that is the critical issue. The consecration and ordination of a Bishop is an awe-inspiring responsibility. Endowed into this office is a role like none other in the common life, beliefs, and practices of the Church. Ignatius writes:

Now it becomes you also not to treat your bishop too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield him all reverence, having respect to the power of God the Father, as I have known even holy presbyters do, not judging rashly, from the manifest youthful appearance [of their bishop],<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Robert Baker Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament: Their Bearing on Christian Doctrine*. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1998), p. 297.

<sup>246</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Corpus Ignatianum*, p. 231, sect.60.

Evans and Wright, speak about the role and influence of Ignatius's teaching when they write:

Ignatius' main point is that the community is able to act as one with its minister, that is, that the minister's distinctive function is to unite the Body of Christ. He also emphasises the importance of humility in the Church's leaders.<sup>247</sup>

NT Wright places this whole issue into the framework of a theological worldview:

The study of Paul's worldview leads to a striking, dramatic conclusion: this worldview not only requires a particular 'theology' to sustain it, but also requires that 'theology' itself play a new role, integrated with the worldview itself.<sup>248</sup>

Wright uses Paul's letter to Philemon as an example of this principle when he writes:

For Paul, much as he valued freedom, the mutual reconciliation of those who belonged to the Messiah

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<sup>247</sup> G. R. Evans and J. Robert Wright, *The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Sources* (London: SPCK, 1991), p. 2.

<sup>248</sup> Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, p. 30.



mattered more than anything else. For Philemon to have responded angrily to Paul's letter by giving Onesimus his freedom but declaring that he never wanted to set eyes on him again would have meant defeat for Paul. Reconciliation was what mattered. That is why Paul wrote this letter.<sup>249</sup>

In real terms one could state that the greatest need within the Church worldwide is that there would be a restored understanding of Ignatian cosmology not as a legal framework for administration but as a deeply important spiritual principle that has at stake the spiritual integrity of the Church and its place within the historic flow of orthodox biblical Christianity.

That historic flow being a spiritual power that releases peoples from the deception of the *Beny ha Elohim*. It also tutorializes the authorities of the spiritual realm as the heavens and earth move towards the final day when the Earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord.

## SUMMARY

The Common Life of the Church is presented in both Pauline and Ignatian cosmology as having a direct impact on the powers that function in the realm of the spirit. The idea presented in Ephesian 3:10 is that the wisdom of God is revealed to the heavenly powers through

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<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

the Church. This 'through the Church' concept is connected to the idea that human will has direct spiritual implications. The Ignatian cosmology expands upon the Pauline by directly connecting the gathering for the Eucharist as something that destroys the work of the Devil. Central to this *earthly impacting the heavenly* concept is that the unity of the Church in Christ is a type of the unity within The Sophia. The most potent aspect of the Ignatian cosmology is that the structure of hierarchy in the Church when followed is what impacts the heavenly realm.

## **DISCUSSION**

Discuss how the relationship between obedience to be one in Christ can have such a destructive effect upon the Powers of Darkness.

**CHAPTER EIGHT**  
**TEACHING MODULE SEVEN**  
**A FIRST CENTURY GOSPEL FOR A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY WORLD**

**WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

The paleo-Orthodox Gospel is revealed as a Logospoetic Gospel that involved both multi-sensory experience and propositional truth claims. To emphasise the multi-sensory or propositional truth encounters can lead, and has led, to imbalance. In a pagan dominated world, the Logospoetic Gospel is the most plausible means of retaining historic truth and delivering that truth in terms that persons can consider plausible.

**INTRODUCTION**

Within the last 150 years in the West, the subject of the Gospel has been dominated by two antithetical realities. At one point, it is a

*kerygma*, which is built upon all that is precious, hopeful, and redemptive. From another perspective it has been a place of intense scrutiny where all that is precious, hopeful, and redemptive has been drained out of the *kerygma*. Various proponents have polemicized and weaponized the Gospel in the relentless need to dominate the theological agenda. There are two poles at the core of this reality which the project will term the “*Kerygmamachia*,” – the battle for the essence of the Gospel. Firstly, the Gospel is a message built upon a set of anthropological presuppositions which demand sets of biblical propositions that relate to soteriological outcomes. The second pole is the Gospel as an announcement that incorporates a comprehensive message involving all of life and all of culture; This often is referred to as “The Social Gospel”. This teaching session seeks to find a balance with the Logospoetic model. Propositions are fundamental, but they are delivered in paradigms beyond the narrow rational textualism of Post Enlightenment presuppositions. The poetic is the delivery system of the *Logos Centric aletheia*.

## **THE PALEO-ORTHODOX GOSPEL**

The Gospel of the Kingdom that was preached by the Prophets, The Lord Jesus, The Apostles, The Apostolic Fathers, and the Ante Nicene Apologists had clear distinguishing motifs?: (i) It was an announcement, *kerygma*, concerning the Messiah of Israel being the

Saviour of the World; (ii) It was a message which, within itself, evoked an encounter with the presence of Christ; (iii) It demanded a response from those who encountered Christ; (iv) That response was to obey the commands of Christ, that were delivered through the Apostles doctrine; (v) It involved Baptism as a sacramental act; (vi) It involved following the Sacrament of The Lord's Supper as central feature of the gathering of the people of God and; (vii) It involved a very strong commitment to existential spirituality as a means of participating in the final immanentizing of the eschaton.

These eight primary motifs were the core of the Paleo-Orthodox Gospel. This body of truth was to be communicated to all peoples in all places.

## **THE SIX CONSISTENT WAYS IN WHICH GOD COMMUNICATES**

The aesthetic and essential beauty of the heart and mind of God is given to persons through the overarching reality of the natural world in creation. It is also communicates through direct interventions. These interventions are exemplified in the following: (i) Human Representation. God communicates through the appearance of Himself in some way or other such as Yahweh meeting Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre,<sup>250</sup> Jacob wrestling with the Angel,<sup>251</sup> and the 'Captain of the

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<sup>250</sup> Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version*, Gen. 18:1.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, Gen 32:22-31

Lord of Hosts' to Joshua<sup>252</sup> which are described in the Old Covenant as a Theophany. In short, in different forms God enters our limited space-time environment as a *material presence*; (ii) Invasive Messaging. God communicates or revealed his message through dreams and visions. Some of these dreams and visions needed interpretation whilst others were self-contained in terms of meaning; (iii) Mediation. God communicates by a mediator in various forms such as a Prophet or an Angel. These mediators received the Word of the Lord and then communicates it to an individual or group of individuals such as Moses and the Israelites, Nathan and David, the Prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jerimiah. In the New Covenant this is exemplified by Mary and Gabriel and the angels appearing to the Shepherds; (iv) Divine Text. God communicates through the inspired Text of Scripture that was given to persons by the Holy Spirit. This Scripture was received and accepted by the community of God's people as God's Word and then collected, stored, and retrieved for use in the delivery of, and the hearing of God's voice concerning the full council of God's will for persons; (v) Embedded Within Liturgy. God communicates when He embedded truth that, as a concept, was to be sociologically and spiritually enforced in a repetitive manner through the use of sacramental liturgies such as the liturgical hymn in Colossians 1:15-20; (vi) Semiotic Representation. God communicates when He

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<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, Joshua 5:13-6:5.

embeds His truth in symbols such that the signified and the signifier have a metaphysical unity such as the Cross, the Dove, the ChiRo.

## **THE ENTRANCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE INTO THE PERSON WHO HAS BELIEVED**

The communication through the revelation of God listed above enters into human experience through one of four principal categories and various subsets of categories. These categories have been dominant throughout Church history. They relate to the “heart and mind” of a person receiving new life by conversion: (i) The Sacramental form which proposes that a person is reborn by regeneration through the sacrament of Baptism, (ii) the Augustinian form that proffers that God’s spirit regenerates the human heart and mind prior to conversion due to a person’s inability to respond to God’s call on their lives by anything within themselves and (iii) the Neo-Palagian form which privileges the supremacy of human agency as being that which determines God’s response to a person’s repentance; (iv) The Cosmogenic form which proffers that God in his sovereignty uses man’s freedom to cooperate with Him concerning spiritual transactions.

In each of the latter three positions there is a common factor; There is a place, or space, within human consciousness within which spiritual transactions of an ontological nature are exercised or

executed. That space will be referred to as *interstitial space*. Interstitial space is a concept found in the writings of many theologians and sociologists such as Pentcheva,<sup>253</sup> Mc Clean,<sup>254</sup> and Deleuze.<sup>255</sup> Von Balthasar touches on this when he speaks of the ‘transcendental property of being’:

And since the exact sciences no longer have any time to spare for it (nor does theology, in so far as it increasingly strives to follow the method of the exact sciences and to envelope itself in their atmosphere), precisely for this reason is it perhaps high time to break through this kind of exactness, which can only pertain to one particular sector of reality, in order to bring the truth of the whole again into view—truth as a transcendental property of Being, truth which is no abstraction, rather the living bond between God and the world.<sup>256</sup>

## **ETHICAL COGNITIVISM AND THE EPISTEMIC PARAMETERS OF THE 16TH CENTURY REFORMATION**

The locus of understanding Ethical Cognitivism is to be found

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<sup>253</sup> Bissera V. Pentcheva, ‘The Performative Icon’, *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 4 (2006): 631–55.

<sup>254</sup> Bradley H. McLean, ‘Re-Imagining New Testament Interpretation in Terms of Deleuzian Geophilosophy’, *Neotestamentica* 42, no. 1 (2008): 51–72; cf. Bradley H. McLean, ‘The Exteriority of Biblical Meaning and the Plenitude of Desire: An Exploration of Deleuze’s Non-Metaphysical Hermeneutics of Kafka’, *Neotestamentica* 43, no. 1 (2009): 93–122.

<sup>255</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*, trans. Anne Boyman (OXFORD: Zone Books, 2005).

<sup>256</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics I: Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco; New York: Ignatius Press; Crossroads Publications, 2009), 17–18.



within the discipline of Linguistics. In the case of the 16th Century, the linguistic framework is within the text *without* oral transmissions. In short, *Sola Scriptura*.

The text has no suprasegmental cues, no sense of meaning which is translated via such thing as intonation, stress, length of vowel sounds produced by the voice in speech acts. This is in contradistinction to disembodied orality such as in the telephone or visually supported orality such as a live conversation between a communicator and the receiver. A punctuation marking or added diacritic may enhance emphasis but not meaning. Textual Ethical Cognitivism, through the phenomenology of reading, demands the process of ideas through the brain as the textual semiotic is translated. Therefore, it may be stated that there is an interstitial space between the text and the understanding of that text in a cognitive sorting place within the brain. The ethical aspect of the process is that the parameters of meaning contained within the text rely fully, and only, on the writer and the reader. Even when taking into consideration Barthes's "Death of the Author"<sup>257</sup> hermeneutic, both writer and reader are still dependent upon shared understanding of the interpretation of the semiotic symbols (or the gaps between semiotic symbols) that have been placed within the text by the writer.

Additional to the ethical cognitivism above, is a logical

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<sup>257</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Readings in the Theory of Religion: Map, Text, Body*, ed. Scott S. Elliott and Matthew Waggoner (London: Routledge, 2014), 141–45.

component. Built into this ethical cognitive exercise is the acceptance of the classic laws of logic. The written text functions on the basis of (i) Identity, (ii) Excluded Middle and (iii) non-Contradiction. The cognitive exercise ‘itself’ is based upon ethical logic not the *moral values* of the content.

In terms of Reformation theology, the Gospel was based upon a set of propositions that were interpreted through the rational textualism of ethical cognitivism. The whole concept of Sola Scriptura stands upon the idea that the Gospel is inside of the revealed text and thus it is the encounter with the text that brings the Gospel to the world. This Gospel model was based upon three modalities of knowledge: (i) Notitia, (ii) Assensus and (iii) Fiducia. This three-fold paradigm was the epistemic container for the “Gospel” from the 16th Century onwards. The question of whether *fiducia* can be considered a modality of knowledge is legitimate. For the purpose of this research, it will be presumed as being so.

In short, *notitia* represents raw facts, data, or content: (i) All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God; (ii) the wages of sin is death; (iii) but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Assensus* is the individual assenting to the veracity of that core content. The three propositions made here are deemed to be true based on a textual modality of aletheia, on the basis that the propositions are: Logical necessity, possibility, or impossibility. *Fiducia*

is the cognitive act of trusting and committing oneself to the logical necessity, possibility, or impossibility of the presented content, in terms of its authority over a person's life.<sup>258</sup>

This process within the Reformation model was textual linguistic in its assessment but often communicated through oral interchange. The suprasegmental may be at work within the oral communication but is secondary, one could say inferior, to the rational textualism which is involved. This model does not answer the following question: Within what space or locality in human consciousness do these transactions take place? Various metaphoric terms are used to describe that place such as: heart, mind, soul, and spirit but are never clearly defined in terms of 'locality'. It is however, implicitly assumed in *fiducia* that such a space exists. With the advent of Phenomenology as a discipline the question of space and locality has increased until in the 21st Century this idea of "Cognitive Locality" is now central in any discussion that seeks to give depth to epistemic and hermeneutical studies.

## AESTHETIC COGNITIVISM

Bissera Pentcheva<sup>259</sup> in her seminal article, "The Performative

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<sup>258</sup> Robert Charles Sproul, John Henry Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics* (GRAND RAPIDS: Zondervan, 1984), pp.21-22.

<sup>259</sup> Pentcheva, 'The Performative Icon', pp. 631-55.

Icon,” writes:

The icon is in fact a surface that resonates with sound, wind, light, touch, and smell. This object thus offers us a glimpse into what vision meant in Byzantium: a synesthetic experience in which the whole body is engaged.<sup>260</sup>

Conceptually, synesthetic experience, in this context can be understood as a cognitivism that functions as a process, whereby one cognitive pathway ‘demands’ that other cognitive pathways add to experience. In short, a multi-sensory experience such as just stated above as “sound, wind, light, touch, and smell” cannot be filtered into individual “bits”. Each sense builds, integrates and synthesises to create a singular “experience” made up of many integrated “bits”. The question that must be asked is, what is the experience? Can it be defined as an appreciation of beauty, a joyous representation that nourishes the participants or should this experience be classified as “knowledge” and thus be considered as “knowing”? When attempting to answer these questions, the ethical cognitivism of logic, as spoken of in the section above, may be useful because it is based on the fundamental idea that an interstitial space exists whereby logical assumptions are processed.

In cognitive aesthetics the interstitial space is the locality where the senses are processed but in a non-logical framework. Aesthetic

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<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 631.

cognitivism is, not sorting and sifting semiotic representations through textual symbols, but rather it is a participation of subjective encounter within a multi-sensory spectrum. There is no common ground as in textual linguistics where both writer and reader share common symbols. There is in cognitive aesthetics a grounded two- or three-dimensional structure of artistic expression that to the creator is based upon a pure interiority. For the receiving participant the interstitial space is filled with both interiority and exteriority which are synthesising to uniquely construct 'knowing' at any given moment; It is a totally unique moment in time. The reflected light source will never be repeated, neither the sounds nor smells which 'enter' into the experience of the participant's reception. They are constantly in a state of change which makes each encounter with, in the case of Pentcheva's *icon*, unique and different. The use of the terms of classical logic in relation to the icon as *object* – such as identity, excluded middle, and non-contradiction are meaningless. The experience can only be understood as a pure subjectivity. The proposal is made here that the hermeneutic of which Biserra Pentcheva writes is essentially a *rhizomatic revelation*.

### **MULTI-DIMENSIONAL RHIZOMATIC HERMENEUTICS**

A multi-dimensional rhizomatic hermeneutic is based upon the concept that in the realm of spirituality there are multiple dimensions

at work – most of them unseen – in the realm of spirit. An example of this is found in the book of Daniel and his interaction with the Angel. The angel came to Daniel but the angel's arriving was resisted for twenty-one days by the demonic forces of the Prince of Persia.<sup>261</sup> This passage reveals how a dimension of reality which, though unseen and largely unknown, effects what is both known and seen. The existence of that unseen reality has a direct effect upon the limited scope that the three dimensions provide. The search for discovering verifiable facts to construct reality becomes impossible if multiple layers of facts are hidden in the unseen world and are not discoverable other than through an act of faith.

In the case of Melchizedek there is no historiographic definition of his origin or his end in Genesis. Whereas there is greater content in the book of Hebrews, it is even more opaque than in Genesis concerning that which is verifiable. In short, a hermeneutic that cannot facilitate the vast array of unknown facts about Melchizedek creates a myth which cannot be proven as being either fact or fiction. This obviously causes a problem for exegesis of the text and for drawing theological insights from it as well.

When the Melchizedek narrative is viewed through a Rhizomatic hermeneutical frame which necessarily involves multiple unknown variables, contingencies, and nominative factials, the story is

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<sup>261</sup> Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version*, Dan. 10:10-14.

contained inside the “visual thought patterns” which are drawn from the text. Therefore, the rhizomatic hermeneutic allows the narrative to be placed in a set of multi-dimensional realities of the story. Bradley McLean explains,

[...] what I propose is a dynamic, non-deterministic, non-interpretive model or process that would enable scholars to view complex networks of relations within which biblical texts are situated.<sup>262</sup>

McLean also states:

In the case of the Reformation, the interpretation of the meaning of a particular text consisted of relating it to the meaning of Scripture as a whole, and beyond that, to the whole of classical literature and western Knowledge.<sup>263</sup> [emphasis original to author]

The multi-dimensional rhizomatic hermeneutic gives meaning to the text seen within the locality of the text but does so by relating it to an endless number of possibilities which by default limits the options for definitive interpretation. The locality informed by the text becomes critical to its interpretation. There is the “locus” that we refer to as space and time which has within it a series of factuals that we call

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<sup>262</sup> McLean, ‘Re-Imagining New Testament Interpretation, p. 52.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

historical “facts” for which we establish a feasibility, plausibility, and probability index to determine if those facts are verifiable or not. The locus is the full spectrum of facts that are known or have the capacity to be discovered within our three-dimensional framework. Concerning the facts, this creates a threshold of possibility that either accepts or rejects the facts as having taken place or not inside of the locus.

For example, Neil Armstrong could not have been both on the moon and in Huston Texas at 22.56 hours on July 20, 1969. He could not have been on the Moon at 22.56 hours on July 20, 1969, and then 15 minutes later be back in Huston. His whereabouts would be determined by what this researched will term *threshold of possibility* test. That threshold of possibility can only be applied to facts that we have knowledge of or can discover within our three-dimensional framework.

At the time of Armstrong’s moonwalk, the statement of fact was made that the US astronauts were the first to ‘walk on the moon.’ Hypothetically, though highly improbable, is the possibility that the Russians were already on the Moon but in a different location than the Apollo craft, the details of that “fact” being unknown to everyone in the world except for a small group of Russian scientists. The fact, known solely by the Russian scientists, has no relevance unless the fact moves from a hypothetical possibility to the ‘real,’ which then must pass through our feasibility, plausibility and probability index and then



be placed into the threshold of possibility. What this means is that what we call verifiable facts does not have to reflect truth in a broader context. A negative cannot be proven; yet it may be real. Therefore, truth can only be known inside a set of very limited parameters. In the ultimate sense, as simplistic as the statement is, it may be stated that even within the limited three dimensional “locus” there is no such thing as verifiable history; All historical narrative is ultimately subjective hearsay.

If we place the biblical character Melchizedek into this framework, we create a series of important questions. Is it verifiable that Melchizedek could be a human being without having a mother or father? Can we verify or reject the premise that there were many more ‘beings’ like Melchizedek who existed and continue to exist? The existence of Melchizedek does not fit into the feasibility, plausibility, and probability index and as a result does not pass any threshold of possibility tests that we apply unless there is another interpretation to the locus than the one proffered at the beginning of this illustration. This interpretation can be constructed by linguistic allegory such as when the text refers to Melchizedek having ‘no origin or end’ but there would need to be a requirement of a higher authority *beyond the text* to authenticate the allegorical linguistic interpretation. If we are willing to accept a multi-dimensional view of the universe the whole structure of the possibility threshold can be redefined. The

position of locus throughout the history of ideas has been governed by the concept of a three-dimensional environment. As stated earlier, even within the three-dimensional realm there is still only a “probability factor”, albeit a high probability but no real verifiability.

### **BEYOND THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL THRESHOLD**

Several areas of science have moved outside of the three-dimensional locus. Most specifically quantum mechanics which affirms the existence of a multi-dimensional locus. In the relatively new field of “wave function realism”<sup>264</sup> the attempt is made to reconcile the theoretical aspects of quantum mechanics and our three-dimensional experience of reality.

In short, wave function realism proffers that there is a locus that encompasses all dimensions, known and unknown. We exist at the metaphysical level within one, some, or all these dimensions but can only measure our existence within our three-dimensional realities, that is to say from that which we can perceive. If we place Melchizedek inside of a wave function reality locus, there are multiple applications of a possibility and probability threshold that can be established. If we were able to create a Theological term for a wave function reality locus that fits the multi-dimensional parameters, we could with confidence

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<sup>264</sup> David Z. ALBERT, *Quantum Mechanics and Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); cf. Alyssa Ney and David Albert, *The Wave Function: Essays on the Metaphysics of Quantum Mechanics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

state that such a theological principle has enormous theological implications.

Since Rene Descarte, knowledge has been divided into two areas: that which can be verified which we call fact, and that which cannot be verified which we call faith. Since our understanding of wave function reality, the division collapses. What previously was considered as verifiable has now been expanded into infinity and all knowledge now fits a new epistemic context. This new context has no known method of verifiability and turns all knowledge into Rhizome knowledge. The obvious epistemic implications are vast. From the positive side, this means that new epistemic forms exist and have always existed. From the negative side, we have not accepted them as they did not previously fit our various possibility thresholds, and more pragmatically, they did not fit our various social constructions of reality.

I would suggest that this is not traumatic to a Sacramental Liturgical Christian view of truth. It does, however, have enormous and potentially traumatic implications for both Scholastic Roman Catholicism and Reformed Protestantism. Christianity has always affirmed there is a place that we refer to as ruptured time and space; This is the place at which the three dimensional and the multi-dimensional merge. This locality, as earlier explained in this module, would classically be what is thought of when referencing the Eucharist.

The existence of this locality – the ‘how’ and the ‘where’ that it functions – moves theology into a major paradigm shift.

### **THEURGIC LITURGY AS SALUTAGENESIS**

The Sacrament of the Eucharist is by its nature liturgical; One could say it is the centrepiece of all Church liturgies. What is unique to the Eucharistic liturgy is that it is given as a meeting place between God and persons. The Eucharistic liturgy is given a privileged place in terms of the presence of Christ; Christ is ontologically present in the liturgy. The presence of God, in Christ, by the Spirit has by its essence a power to heal. The sacrament does not nourish at this level; The sacrament heals. The healing of the sacrament is also Theurgic; It is a real and actual healing that takes place. It is of course not a crisis healing, although that does take place on occasion. Rather it is a healing process as the Eucharist itself is a picture of ‘salvation’ being a *process* rather than either a *crisis* or some kind of reified entity to obtain and possess.

Confession of sin has three primary levels in our understanding of salutagenesis: (i) I confess my sins to God privately and in person; (ii) I seek the assistance of a Priest, Pastor or mature Christian who walks with me through the confession of my sins to God; (iii) I join with a group at the Eucharist to confess my sins, make things right with someone I may be out of fellowship with, and receive forgiveness by

faith as the words of absolution are given in the liturgy. It is the latter that is of importance for this study. At the time of the Eucharist liturgy three things are highlighted: (i) I am confessing sins myself; (ii) I am receiving forgiveness for my sins in the midst of a meal between God and persons; and (iii) and that event places its focus upon the healing power of the Blood of the Cross.

The word Cosmogenic is used because this event, the Eucharist, is a place of participation and symbolism. It is a meta participation within which every believer is involved. The outcome of which is the working towards both *theosis* for the person and the restoration and union of the seen and unseen worlds.

## **CHILDLIKE PERCEPTION - THE REJECTION OF THE MECHANISTIC RATIONAL**

The event just described is by nature an experience that does not fit into a mechanistic rational framework. It is an appeal, not to the intellect, but to ‘childlike wonder’ at the phenomenological level. Curiosity demands the subject searches and hunts for a specific thing or objective.<sup>265</sup> Wonder is very much a response to a given aesthetic revelation. Boersma recognizes this in relation to the Cross, a normally sobering event which might engender human (perhaps even morbid) curiosity, yet of the crucifixion he states:

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<sup>265</sup> Nassim Noroozi, ‘Heidegger and Wonder’, in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. Michael A. Peters (Singapore: Springer, 2016), 1–6

The most sacred of moments within the Christian milieu are without doubt [T]he sombre preoccupation with the redemptive suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross. That focus is perceived at its highest with the simplicity of innocence and childlikeness.<sup>266</sup>

The often thought of response, in terms of the childlike, is the idea of small children's stories that have content that does not evoke any form of fear or discomfort. Whereas they may be helpful in certain settings this is not the profile that is proposed in this section. Rather, the very concept of God defies any relationship to mechanistic rational thinking. This forces any concept of God to be bound to, or within the parameters of, ineffable mystery. Sebastian Brock whilst writing on this subject proposes,

God teaches human beings about himself bending down (as it were) and allowing himself to be described in human language in the biblical text—sometimes even using anthropomorphic terms that are totally unsuitable and in no way true of God's real being.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Hans Boersma, *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), p. 21.

<sup>267</sup> Sebastian P. Brock, 'Animals and Humans: Some Perspectives from an Eastern Christian Tradition,' *Journal of Animal Ethics* 6, No. 1 (2016), p. 2.

Childlike wonder is the only authentic attempt at understanding the mystery. St. Ephrem in his poem about a person teaching a Parrot to speak illustrates this,

A person who is teaching a parrot to speak hides behind a mirror and teaches it in this way: when the bird turns in the direction of the voice speaking it finds in front of its eyes its own resemblance reflected; it imagines that it is another parrot, conversing with itself. The man puts the bird's image in front of it, so that thereby it might learn to speak. The bird is related to the man, but although this relationship exists, the man beguiles and teaches the parrot something alien to itself by means of itself; in this way he speaks with it. The Divine Being, who in all things is exalted above all things, in his love has bent down from on high and acquired from us our own customs: he has laboured by every means to turn all to himself.<sup>268</sup>

Brock uses this to illustrate further the unknowing chasm of God by persons:

What is also at issue here is the place of human beings within creation. The human thinks of himself as separate from, and superior to, the parrot, whereas the gap, or "chasm" as Ephrem describes it, between God and both the human and the parrot, each a member of the animal

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<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

world, is immensely greater.<sup>269</sup>

The most exacting aspect of childlike wonder is that it demands that the way of spiritual knowing lays outside of the most sophisticated methods or means of human wisdom. This by default causes the most advanced human mind to be forced relinquish its methodology when seeking to understand God. When a child gazes upon the incense rising and causing the cross on the altar to change its visual form, but not its function, there evokes within that child is a sense of awe within their heart and mind. There is nothing within the rational that can explain what is going on ontologically.

## **ORGANIC AESTHETICS**

It is important to define what could be called the *aesthetic liturgy principle*. Firstly, it demands beauty to be the focal point of the principle. Aesthetics are not artistic renditions but rather the presentation of, the perception of, an object and its relationship to Beauty. In this series of Teaching Modules, Beauty relates to how God and His Word is portrayed to persons. The relationship can be in correspondence to creation itself or even God Himself but very specifically as it connects and interfaces with the concept of Beauty.

The term Organic Aesthetic is used by way of placing the

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<sup>269</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.



Aesthetic within what is real or ontological. Non-Organic Aesthetics could perceivably be constructed by the Beauty attached to ideas. Organic Aesthetics is the interpretation of Beauty through that which actually exists. It does not demand form in the sense of the material, but usually it does involve form. The presence of the Spirit is ontological and yet not material. The presence of the Spirit can have an aesthetic value.

Aesthetics from a Christian standpoint are often multi-sensory in their construction. For example, the Eucharist Liturgy involves the elementary sensory: the presence of incense; the light of the candles; the sound of chants or singing; and the taste in the mouth of bread and wine. This can be enhanced by the reflexive sensory: the reflection of the candles on a brass ornament; the movement of vestments that effect the motion of the incense; the sun or even moon shining through the coloured stain glass window; and the mixing of sounds that are then reflected off the marble pillars in the Church.

Both the primary aesthetic, (the elemental sensory and the reflexive sensory) are experienced within a broader and uniquely personal attitudinal experience. This attitudinal experience is the awareness of, and attitude towards, others momentarily sharing the space of the sacred in a church or place. It is the memories of those departed and yet present as the Body of Christ. And equally, it is the personal attitudes towards those present of both love, or in the case of

ambiguous conflicted relationships, relief that within the liturgy forgiveness has been granted or received.

From the phenomenological standpoint, all these elements are held together into a singularity that is experienced at the existential level. I propose that it is only the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ within the existential experience that authenticates and validates the value that we place upon that experience. Those individual elements are active in a phenomenological locality. Each of the above-mentioned symbols relate to an aspect of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is when they merge and are experienced in the rupture of time and eternity within the ontological presence of Christ that a spiritual reality is formed. The actual event of the liturgy is the meeting of God and persons as promised by our Lord Jesus Christ in the breaking of the bread and taking the wine. That meeting of God and persons travels along or through the aesthetics described.

An example of this is the biblical narrative found in Luke's Gospel in which conversational exchanges take place between our Lord Jesus Christ and one of the two thieves crucified with Him. The thief asks a question in the spirit of repentance when he says, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom". Several observations may be made: (i) In most ancient manuscripts the thief addresses our Lord Jesus Christ simply as Jesus rather than Lord or Master; (ii) He acknowledges that our Lord Jesus Christ is, as the

plaque above the cross declared, “King of the Jews” by using the term “come into your Kingdom.” There is no indication that he knew what “into your Kingdom” actually meant; (iii) Jesus gives clarity to the interchange by saying that the thief will be with Him today in paradise; (iv) The appeal to our Lord Jesus Christ is in the active use rather than passive use of the word “remember.” Asking our Lord Jesus Christ to remember him would be meaningless in this context unless it had an active request of relief from some aspect of the penal sentence that he perceived would be his beyond his imminent death; (v) If this narrative is viewed through a historical literal grammatical hermeneutic it would allow us to identify that there was a time in history when our Lord Jesus Christ forgave the thief on the Cross and acknowledged his repentance as authentic thus qualifying him to be justified by faith. As a result, he would go to heaven; (vi) If the hermeneutic is expanded to take into consideration the multiple dimensions that interface with this narrative a wider cosmological interpretation is applied; (vii) When Jesus speaks to the thief, He is also speaking to the other thief of whom we have no idea whether he responds to Grace or not; and (viii) Jesus is also speaking to the witnesses at the Cross that we know by this time included Mary the Theotokos and the Apostle John.<sup>270</sup> The Roman Centurion was present and heard the dialogue shortly before he

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<sup>270</sup> Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version*, John 19:26-27.

declared “Truly this is the son of God”.<sup>271</sup> The witnesses also included other women disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>272</sup> They in turn all interpreted at their own personal level the implications of the Gospel message that which they would go on to declare to people in situations similar to the thief on the Cross.

Sections (vii) and (viii) could fit into the historical literal grammatical hermeneutic as an expanded exposition. What can be presupposed is that any other witnesses who were there and heard the words of Jesus and are not recorded in the Scripture would still have had their own personal interpretations of the event. The potential commutations and permutations attached to this possibility are endless. This is so because (ix) When our Lord Jesus spoke these words, he was also making a declaration to the unseen creatures, Angels, and Demons. This fits within the Pauline Cosmology of Ephesians 3:10 where it is declared that the Church, embodied by our Lord Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit will tutorialize and reveal to the unseen world the Sophia of God. The intersection of Luke’s narrative and the Pauline cosmology, creates a synthesis that brings enormous implications about ‘knowing’; (x) All of these elements take place on a hill outside of the city wall of Jerusalem within our three dimensions and yet operate correspondingly in a locality that can only be thought

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<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, Matt. 25:54.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, Matt. 27: 55-56.

of as ruptured time and space. Within the phenomenological realm, this space evolves or grows and involves ever-increasing elements in both the eternal and finite realms. This becomes available to individual consciousness as the unique and personalised space or dimension for the meaning, or value of the event. This is the existential spirituality that speaks to the modern world.

Hans Urs von Balthasar has been able to elucidate this principle when he writes,

The form of Jesus Christ does not stand in isolation before the gaze of the believer. On the contrary: in an inextricable manner, Christ's form is imbedded into a context of truths which constitute the content of Jesus' preaching and which, in a variety of ways, situate this preaching both historically and dogmatically.<sup>273</sup>

Within a similar context, Adrienne von Speyr writes of how all the manifestations of God in Christ are connected in some way to the sacramental spiritual meaning of the material:

It is not by chance that water is turned into wine, for later the wine will be turned into blood. In every one of the Lord's miracles, a link with the sacraments become

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<sup>273</sup> von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, p. 198.

visible.<sup>274</sup>

Boersma writes it is within the purpose of the person to seek after the vision of God:

With the philosophical assumptions of Bacon and Descartes, it became impossible to accept that human beings were meant for the beatific vision—or, to put it differently, that it was natural for their rational appetite to long for the vision of God.<sup>275</sup>

## THE ESCAPE FROM PURE UNACCOUNTABLE SUBJECTIVITY

The immediate question that must be raised is, how can any truth be thought of as rooted or grounded. It appears from the above that experience alone is the ultimate test of truth. The Logospoetic principle is critical at this stage. There is a sense that to grasp the Logospoetic principle one must make an existential choice for it to be applicable. However, that can be said of any truth claim. One must believe the Bible to be the *Theopneustos* [God-breathed] inspired word of God in order for the Bible to be the source of authority in the belief and practices of their Christian experience. At one level this is true. A better determination for a 'faith' at this level would be whether that

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<sup>274</sup> Adrienne von Speyr, *The Word Becomes Flesh: Meditations on John 1-5* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), n.p.

<sup>275</sup> Boersma, *Seeing God*, p. 21.

faith could pass the *martyrdom matrix*. Is a person willing to die for their faith: Willing to face martyrdom rather than deny Christ? In short, when reading the Didache a candidate for baptism reaches a point with a Spiritual Director whereby they have received the information concerning the claims of Christ. At this point the candidate and the Spiritual Director spend two to three days in prayer and fasting before the candidate makes the decision to continue or not with the Baptism.<sup>276</sup> The reason this time was required in the first three centuries of the Church was that to be a publicly confessed baptised Christian could very possibly, and at times very probably, involve being martyred for having this faith. Therefore, the existential decision was made in the light of death. One's Personal Christian faith, within the martyrdom matrix, may well have been a reasonable assumption. However, that reasonable assumption was based upon, and decided upon, in the face of possible death.

The Logospoetic is the vast array of potential creative possibilities that are received through, and into, the interstitial space; However, all of that "knowing" is held accountable to the Eternal Logos. The Logos who has created Scripture and has placed within the "sod"<sup>277</sup> of scripture applications to all the infinite possibilities, of all

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<sup>276</sup> G. C. Allen, trans., *The Didache or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles Translated with Notes* (London: The Astolat Press, 1903), p. 5.

<sup>277</sup> Sod "secret" ("mystery") or the mystical meaning, as given through inspiration or revelation. The Kabala belief being that every possible conditional is known by God and that the Spirit of Sod in the scripture allows for and gives direct interpretations to these "all possible worlds."

the infinite dimensions, in all their infinite potentialities.<sup>278</sup> This is only possible within Sophianic cosmology. The Logos dwells in all eternity but represents the *perichoresis* of the Triune God within the created Sophia. There is not one part of “wave function reality” that exists outside of the grasp of the Logos, and it is the Logos who speaks to every infinite possible contingency in and through His word.

## SUMMARY

The actual process of knowledge has been limited to rational textualism in many parts of the Body of Christ.

The interstitial space is where decision-making and processing of information involves both exteriority and interiority.

The realm of ruptured time and space experienced in the Eucharist also speaks to a wider sacramentalism view whereby all experience involves ruptured time and space.

The highest quality of truth is in eschatological time that is held accountable in the three-dimensional world through the Scripture.

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<sup>278</sup> Kedushat Levi, “Deuteronomy, Devarim Kedushat Levi,” translated by Rb. Eliyahu Munk, Sefaria. [Online] [https://www.sefaria.org/Kedushat\\_Levi%2C\\_Deuteronomy%2C\\_Devarim.4?ven=Kedushat\\_Levi\\_translated\\_by\\_Rb.\\_Eliyahu\\_Munk&lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Kedushat_Levi%2C_Deuteronomy%2C_Devarim.4?ven=Kedushat_Levi_translated_by_Rb._Eliyahu_Munk&lang=bi) [Accessed 5-15-2023].



**DISCUSSION**

1. Think through the distinction between multi-sensory revelation and textual rationalism.

2. Is there a *via media* for bringing together these two revelations.

**CHAPTER NINE****TEACHING MODULE EIGHT:****THE NEW HUMANITY AND THE GREAT INTEGRATION IN MISSION****WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

The question to be added to this series is – How do we present a plausible *kerygma* to this group as well as the massive number of Christians and Muslims who are converting to NCCS? This last teaching module will seek to identify the essence of the New Humanity of the Kingdom of God. It will investigate how that New Humanity can dispossess the Divine Council of the *Beney ha Elohim* of their deceptive authority over the nations and territories of the world. The result of this study will focus upon God's intended outcome – that the Earth is filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the seminal moments in studying Agape Love comes in the twelfth century when Peter Lombard in *Four Books of Sentences, Book One Distinction 17* explores the concept of a selfless Love<sup>279</sup> This Love is rooted in, and only possible with, an action of God. This is expressed further when the idea is presented that Agape love is active when God, in Christ, by the Spirit is present. The love of God cannot be separated from His presence. This has obvious implications in areas of broad sacramentalism where Jesus declares that when we as Christians love the poor and oppressed, mysteriously, Christ is *present* in the transaction. "If you did it to the least of these, you did it to me."<sup>280</sup> Isaac of Nineveh writing extensively on the subject states, " God does not have need of anything, but He rejoices when one serves or honours his image (in man) for his sake."<sup>281</sup>

In the case of Isaac, he places emphasis upon the individual Christian accessing Agape love by "imitating" Christ. This act of imitation becomes the transaction which brings co-creation of

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<sup>279</sup> Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, Books 1–4. translator, Giulio Silano, 4 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007-2010). Book 1 Distinction 17.

<sup>280</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Matt. 25:40.

<sup>281</sup> St Isaac of Nineveh, *On Ascetical Life*, ed. John Behr, trans. Mary Hansbury, vol. 11, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), pp. 87–88.

participation. Paul Evdokimov builds on this idea when he writes about the character of Agape love being *Kenotic*.<sup>282</sup> God's Agape love for persons is built on God's emptying Himself in His desires and actions towards those persons He has created; This *kenosis* is sacrificial.

## THE DIVINE DIALECTIC

In modern Western, Protestant and Roman Catholic Theology there is a tendency to view the attributes of God as categories or compartments. This creates a *Divine Dialectic* whereby God is viewed as a God of Divine Agape Love on one hand and on the other hand a God who will never compromise His Justice. The result of this synthesis is a mysterious being who we can never understand fully to be able to love Him. This *Divine Dialectic* is almost always placed within the context of God's response to sin.

One of the reasons that vast numbers of people who were formerly Christian or who are on the edge of Christianity are moving to the NCCS is because in their view or from their perspective, a *love-justice-divine dialectic* embodied in the creator and sustainer of all things is simply not plausible.

I suggest that there is within the essence of God an *action attribute* that can be described as a "justice of Love", which is far more faithful to the Scriptures. Justice in its common English usage has a

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<sup>282</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *L'Amour Fou de Dieu*, (Paris: Seuil, 1973) ; cf. Paul Evdokimov, *Le Christ dans la pensée russe* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), p. 41ff.

general meaning attached to it as *legal vindication* or the application of a legal code. When the term is moved into the theological realm it has various meanings according to the application. In terms of soteriology 'justice' is usually thought of in terms of judgement and legal pronouncements. When the term justice is moved into the realm of the ontology of God the meaning develops into sets of "Euclidian-like" axioms. When relating one attribute, in this case Agape love, justice is used in the same way as the legal, however, it relates to the self-evident axiom by applying the concept of moral and ethical consistency. Just as it is impossible for God to lie, it is impossible for God to not love in a kenotic self-sacrificing way. Considering sin as a disease and a spiritual condition, God is incapable of *not* loving with agape love. It is the justice of God that determines the consistency of His love for His creation. This immediately forces a level of questioning about judgment, both temporal and eternal, being extended from a loving self-sacrificing God. The issue is dealt with in this way. The concept of judgement, being an axiom of sin and love, responds to that condition of sin.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in

the name of the only Son of God.<sup>283</sup>

Condemnation, therefore, is produced by the act of persons in not believing in the name of the only Son of God. The judgement, “you shall surely die” exists by the sin acts of persons. Love is a response to that condition of the person which is a result of their acts of sin rooted in the condition of sin. What is certainly difficult to grasp is that when God allows people to reap the consequences of their sin, and receive judgement as a result, it is not because God’s Agape love has been removed; It cannot be removed. The emphasis is upon God doing everything, even the death of His son on the Cross, to extend Agape love into the lost condition that persons find themselves because of their sin. It is His Agape love that refuses to be compromised in allowing unrepentant judgement to come upon persons in the condition of sin.

It is the justice of God that is the mechanism for his moral and ethical consistency for His “agape kenosis” to be actuated. The implications for this are multiple. The New Humanity has been created by the actions or justice of Agape love. This New Humanity is unified and characterised by Agape love. This New Humanity has a new parentage as the adoption of persons by God the Father based on “The Lamb of God that takes away the Sin (condition) of the world”. The

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<sup>283</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, John 3:17-18.

unity of the New Humanity is based upon the new adopted condition. Fellowship is based upon the parental condition of the New Humanity. In short, unity within the Church is not based on any other factor than whether persons have become part of the new humanity brought into being by the kenotic agape of “The Lamb of God that takes away the Sin (condition) of the world”.

The New Humanity becomes the agency for God’s Agape love for the healing, restoration, and harmonisation of all that is created in heaven and earth. If these propositions can be defended, then the *kerygma* to the modern world dominated by NCCS is one that can be clearly declared as good news. God’s plan, for all that is created, is to be in perfected divine harmony. As has been earlier stated, this concept of the justice of Agape does trespass, and will continue to trespass, the territories of the historic *franchises* of Christianity.

Johnathan Edwards in his Protestant Reformed seminal sermon on hell, *Sinners in the hands of an Angry God* perfectly defines the Divine Dialectic when he writes:

The Bow of God’s Wrath is bent, and the Arrow made ready on the String, and Justice bends the Arrow at your Heart, and strains the Bow, and it is nothing but the meer Pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any Promise or Obligation at all, that keeps the Arrow one Moment from being made drunk with your

Blood.<sup>284</sup>

God is portrayed, due to His Holiness, as being filled with contempt for the person who deserves nothing other than judgement. God has no obligation at any time, to refrain from pouring out His anger and wrath in judgement to fulfil his requirement for satisfaction. Yes, He loves persons, but at the same time he loathes them as Edwards portrays graphically in his next statement:

The God that holds you over the Pit of Hell, much as one holds a Spider, or some loathsome Insect, over the Fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his Wrath towards you burns like Fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the Fire.<sup>285</sup>

Putting this into a wider frame, Edwards taught that persons were unable under any circumstances to seek after God due to their being dead in their trespasses and sins. Therefore, God had to regenerate or save the person before they could respond, so they could respond. He also believed the reason why some were not saved and were thrown into the fires of hell was to reveal to people, whom he did save, how much of God's heart was filled with Agape love. The idea

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<sup>284</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. Church of Christ in Northampton Reiner Smolinski, Editor Georgia State. (University, Electronic Texts in American Studies, 1741), p. 54.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*



being this is what we all deserve but he has chosen some to go to hell so that those who were saved would appreciate the love poured upon them. This is the perfect example of the Divine Dialectic.

### **THE NEW HUMANITY**

This truth concerning the New Humanity, built upon the justice of Agape, is what I believe is moving the universal Church towards a new ecumenism. I do not use the term ecumenism in the sense of all traditions finding things in common and coalescing around what they agree upon and seeking to live with, cope with and accept the disparate cognates that separate them.

The New Ecumenism is rather something very different. It can best be described as unifying around the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as the only saving reality in the modern world. This unification is not based on agreement at the credal level it is rather unification in the face of the Church entering into a new dark age. The New Ecumenism is an issue of survival and aggressive growth and expansion in face of the coming mighty onslaught from the realm of NCCS.

This is where *Logospoetics* gives us the balance between the experiential and the rooted truths within the Logos. If one is fighting a common enemy in the trenches and being bombarded by a barrage of explosives one tends to glance sideways to one's comrades in arms thankful that they are in the trench with you. Warriors tend not to interview each other on their political, religious, social, or racial

identities before agreeing to fight together. It is within the fight, that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has the power to purge, cleanse, and transvaluate.

Lesslie Newbigin wrote in his biography *The Unfinished Agenda*<sup>286</sup> about his graduate studies at Cambridge in which he studied the Book of Ephesians:

I began the study as a typical liberal I ended it with a strong conviction about 'the finished work of Christ', about the centrality and objectivity of the atonement accomplished on calvary.<sup>287</sup>

The Gospel does do that to people. I propose and argue that the Gospel is rooted in space, time, and history. It contextualises to each new generation. I propose there is only one consistent universal locus that integrates into one set of universal values, beliefs and practices that can unveil that rooted Gospel. I argue that it is to be found in the first three centuries of the Church, whilst the Church lived and breathed in the midst of profound and bitter persecution. For Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox, and the various Protestant iterations in the twenty first century to suggest it is rooted anywhere else other than within the first three centuries is a profound mistake. The Paleo-

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<sup>286</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Orthodox common life of the Church is unencumbered by cultural, political, and business models.

## **AVENUES OF CONTACT WITH THE NCCS OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY**

In the same way that the Apostle Paul contextualised his Gospel message to the Pagan culture of Athens, I propose that we need to create a similar contextualisation of the Gospel to today's NCCS cultures. The following are ten categories of spirituality to present to the modern world of the NCCS.

## **COSMOGENIC EUCHARISTIC INTERCESSION AS LOVE FOR THE WHOLE WORLD**

The question of 'who is our neighbour' comes up in three places in the Gospels: Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34, and Luke 10:25-28. In the Matthew account it is a Pharisee (Φαρισαῖοι) that asks the question. In Mark's account it is a Scribe, (γραμματέων) that asks the question. In Luke's account the question is asked of Jesus – What is the greatest commandment? But this questioner, the Lawyer, (more technically a religious Legal Expert, (νομικός) begins by asking the most fundamental question within the Hebraic worldview, "Teacher, he said, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He uses the term "to inherit" (κληρονομήσω) Eternal life. This is the same term used in a similar

narrative earlier on Mark's Gospel, "As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"<sup>288</sup> To inherit eternal life needs to be understood in the Hebraic context as similar to the Hebrews taking possession of the Land of Canaan. The inheritance is based upon the land belonging to the Lord, and He is bequeathing it to His children.<sup>289</sup> To paraphrase, what must I do to possess eternal Life? The question of what is eternal life, is also an important question. With the Hebraic view, it refers to the *quality* of rather than the *length* of life. This also appeals to the earlier mentioned idea of inheritance as referring to inheriting the Land of Canaan.

The response of Jesus was, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" In real terms, this response was, what is written and how do you interpret it? The Law Expert replies, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." The answer is built on two texts; (i) Deuteronomy 6, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God

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<sup>288</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Mk 10:17.

<sup>289</sup> ζωήν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω. The verb is freq. in LXX of the occupation of Canaan by the Israelites (Deut. 4:22, 26, 6:1, etc.), and thence is transferred to the perfect possession to be enjoyed in the Kingdom of the Messiah (Ps. 24:13, 36:9, 11, 22, 29; Is. 60:21); both uses being based upon the original promise to Abraham.

See, Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 1896), p. 284.

with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might<sup>290</sup> and (ii) Leviticus 19, “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.”<sup>291</sup>

The expert of the Law quoted two texts of scripture and then interpreted them as one idea. The response of Jesus was, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”<sup>292</sup> But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”<sup>293</sup> It is at this point that Jesus goes on to describe and illustrate what a neighbour is by evoking the story of the Good Samaritan.<sup>294</sup> The answer reveals that as Jesus is now going to Jerusalem in his final journey towards the Cross He is “teaching that righteousness and salvation are not the exclusive privilege of the Jew.”<sup>295</sup>

The righteous party in this text is a Samaritan, an iconic outcast of the Jews; The religious unrighteous are the Jewish leaders. The story then provides the core message that the Samaritan provides, (i)

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<sup>290</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Dt. 6:4–5.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, Lev. 19:18.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, Lk. 10:28.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 29.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, vss. 30-37.

<sup>295</sup> Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, p. 285.

Healing, (ii) Protection, (iii) Provision for the immediate and; (iv) Provision for the future. These four elements are a working paradigm of care and compassion as expressions of love towards someone or a *people* who are not expecting love to be expressed. Projecting this into a Eucharistic framework, within the Eucharist there is the presence of Christ. That presence is not opaque; It is real. It involves His desires for all peoples in all places. In short, we participate in the desires and agendas of Christ when we meet with Him uniquely in the Eucharist. Present with Christ, in the mysterious sense, is the whole of His body; Where Christ is, His Church is.

The Church as the Communion of Saints participates in the desire of Christ to “love neighbour” with the earlier identified realities of *Healing, Protection, Provision for the immediate and Provision for the future*. The implications of this are unfathomable. Persons’ participation in any economic system that does not bring Healing, Protection, Provision for the immediate and Provision for the future to all peoples everywhere turns persons into the Unrighteous Jewish leaders of the Good Samaritan story. If a person’s labour in a vocation does not have a “love thy neighbour” aspect then its authenticity must be questioned. The same can be said in banking investments, environmental responsibilities, and nationalistic allegiances.

The Eucharistic intercessory reality that involves confession for

not loving neighbour as self that brings repentance with a determination to act according to the heart and mind of Christ is a very conscious act of participation in the Immanentizing of the Eschaton. This love of neighbour is a participation in building for the New Heaven and the New Earth.

### **A COSMOGENIC ESCHATOLOGY OF HOPE**

One of the distinctions Sergei Bulgakov makes when discussing the Book of Revelation is between that which is Apocalyptic and that which is Eschatological. That which is Apocalyptic is events that operate on earth in space, time, and history. These events can be measured and understood within the realm of the finite. He writes, “The parousia lies beyond the borders of the life of this age, and it is not accomplished within its borders, and in this sense, it is generally outside of our time.”<sup>296</sup> In contrast to this is the realm of the Eschatological which by its very nature functions in the realm of ruptured time. In short, the eschatological cannot be measured or even fully understood in finite terms. When using a term such as A Cosmogenic Eschatology of Hope, there is a distinction between hope based upon the infinite aspects of the eschaton and the finite aspects of the Apocalypse. It is quite

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<sup>296</sup> Bulgakov, Sergius. *The Sophiology of Death: Essays on Eschatology: Personal, Political, Universal* (Cascade Books. Kindle Edition, 2021), p. 165.

reasonable to dwell in a place of hope when thinking of the ultimate victory of the Gospel on earth whereby the “Whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”<sup>297</sup> In juxtaposition to this, the Apocalyptic is not hope-producing because in reality it is a record of the tragedy of the finite world filled with disaster and destruction. If, however, we place a Cosmogenic Eschatology of Hope into the earlier Good Samaritan matrix of Healing, Protection, Provision for the immediate and Provision for the future, it requires a relational role in our *kerygma* to persons.

I would suggest that the whole of the primary cosmology of this teaching series can be templated into the three major eschatological models: Premillennialism, Amillennialism and Postmillennialism. If we can keep within the methodology of seeing eschatology as having the differentiation between that which is Apocalyptic and that which is Eschatological, then the focus is not upon the Apocalyptic as bad news for the earth at the historical level but rather good news at the eschatological level which lays firmly in the realm of the Sophianic.

Obviously, these eschatological categories have significant diversity within each system. With the narrowest system being that which Schofield inherited from Derby, it is still possible to see the role of the Church immanentizing the eschaton in a similar way that the

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<sup>297</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Hab. 2:14.



same Dispensational worldview would view personal sanctification. In short, we will not be perfect until the Parousia and yet we strive towards perfection in our daily spiritual disciplines. Even though the tendency for the Dispensationalist to view the earth as being under a curse which increasingly becomes more evil until it is destroyed, there can still be a desire to follow the Edenic mandates concerning the care of creation, in the same way that most Dispensationalist still choose to have children and multiply. It would serve the vision of Mission enormously if we could think in terms of the true eschatological event being the New Heaven and the New Earth which we seek to imitate in our daily lives just as we seek to imitate the Life of Christ in our personal spiritual formation. I would suggest that the key aspect of love for neighbour is that we seek to nourish them with words concerning the future that bring Healing, Protection, Provision for the immediate and Provision for the future. If our eschatological pronouncements do not fulfil that role, then our love of neighbour should be questioned.

### **MULTI SENSORY SEMIOTIC HERMENEUTIC THAT RELEASES LOVE BY WONDER INTO HEARTS HUNGRY FOR BEAUTY**

Modern persons are hungry for beauty. Often that beauty is a simulated counterfeit by the dark logos. The longing remains the same, whether the beauty is of God or the distortion of the realm of the dark logos. It is when a connection is made between the person and beauty that its character is revealed. The measurement is based upon the

outcome. Beauty from darkness leaves the person in a state and condition of unsatiated and deepening hunger whereas Beauty from God satisfies and fills the persons soul. The distinction is to be found between curiosity and wonder. Curiosity is not superintended and can be applied to any form of longing. Wonder in the sense it is being used here is a superintended longing by the Logos. It is the perfect illustration of the Logospoetic principle.

When Jesus refers to the Kingdom of God being a place of childlikeness, he is describing the *wonder* that longs for beauty. A child in this New Testament context is thought of as being in pre-pubescent childhood. The wonder of younger children is marked by a joyful embracing of innocence. When the Scriptures speak of the Beauty of Holiness they speak of Holiness as being without sin. This is a different use of the term Holiness as it is used often in modern theological circles that often denotes the anger and justice of God. In this case, it is innocence of Holiness that is beautiful and that which creates wonder-based longing. A similar reasoning can be employed when defining a beautiful person. The thymotic recognition within a person's consciousness that engages with other persons is drawn in wonder to the beauty of innocence within the other.

Beauty extends beyond these personal boundaries into a more formal context of aesthetics. Visual beauty is, and has always been, an important aspect of Christian representation whether it is in art,

architecture, iconic representation, literature, poetry, or music. Biserra Pentcheva writes, “aesthetic phenomenology, with its focus on the way an object appears and the effect this produces on the spectator, offers a new direction of analysis.<sup>298</sup> The new direction is important. When thinking of the Samaritan matrix of (i) Healing, Protection, Provision for the immediate and Provision for the future, it is a new direction that leans heavily on the power of beauty to both heal and provide. The inner consciousness of modern persons is highly attuned to respond to non-verbal communication and what Pentcheva speaks of is a powerful force in the Gospel for the neighbour. She enlarges on this idea as she writes,

[...] the shimmering surfaces of marble and gold become animate in the shifting natural light, and these transient manifestations trigger the spectator's memory and imagination to conjure up images.<sup>299</sup>

It is this memory and imagination that conjures not just real memories and images but those longed for in life. The Gospel, by its aesthetic qualities, places persons in a new consciousness that evokes hope as well as longing. Pentcheva develops this further as she writes,

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<sup>298</sup> Bissera V. Pentcheva, ‘Hagia Sophia and Multisensory Aesthetics,’ *Gesta* 50, no. 2 (January 2011): 93–111.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p.93

[...] poetry is the effort to capture evanescence, a surface that is translucent and reflective at the same time, shimmering and polychromatic. The language takes on the very character of the phenomenon it describes: it changes in order to depict a polychromatic stone with shifting appearances caused by light.<sup>300</sup>

A Gospel that is built on beauty is a Gospel that is plausible to the beauty-hungry culture that much of the world lives within.

### PROACTIVE ASCETICISM AS ACTS OF LOVE FOR NEIGHBOUR

Historically, Asceticism has generally been a reactive exercise including fasting from food and conjugal sexuality at one level to the extremes within the Roman Catholic milieu involving self-harm through flagellation. This reactive mechanism is designed for the “buffeting of the body”<sup>301</sup> as a process of bringing the passions under control in order to clear the way for a deeper spiritual life and communion with a Holy God. In contradistinction, proactive asceticism is the denying of self as a default mechanism as a means of doing good. The motive is the adoption of a simple lifestyle, not to subdue the passions, but rather as a (proactive) means of *identification* with the poor and the oppressed, and a means by which material resources are generated to

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<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111

<sup>301</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, 1 Cor. 9:27.

provide for those in need. Additionally, a thorough and aggressive commitment to recycling is another form of proactive asceticism. Recycling costs the person in terms of time and discipline in an attempt to love my neighbour, albeit in a disconnected form by not destroying the earth's environment. While this form of proactive asceticism is disconnected from the neighbour in the immediate sense, the outcome is nonetheless an attempt to 'love my neighbour' through the healing and sustaining of the earth's healthier environment – a selfless aesthetic act in support of the *other* who now inhabits and will inhabit the earth in future.

For the onlooking world, it cannot be over emphasised. The lack of concern in certain Christian franchises for a world being consumed by non-biodegradable waste is one of the enormous plausibility gaps for those considering becoming Christian in a NCCS world. When a Christian lifestyle is developed with the whole world in view, it involves making decisions that are clearly characterised as “Denying Self”. It is also a perfect example of the Good Samaritan matrix in that Healing, Protection, Provision for the immediate and Provision for the future is extended to enemies as well as friends. This is certainly at the core of the command of Jesus to “love our enemies.”<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, Lk. 6:27-28.

**SACRAMENT, LITURGY AND LECTIONARY AS A SAFE AND SECURE  
PARADIGM OF LOVE**

Liturgy needs to be thought of in terms of love. The truth of the Gospel is an expression of love, and the dark logos is actively seeking to discredit, disrupt and distort the purity of God's love as expressed within the Gospel. Spiritual deception has grown exponentially in the last 150 years in much of the Western world as sources of authority that previously were narrow and limited have expanded through pluralisation into multiple sources of authority. This phenomenon has led to two insidious conditions being experienced by modern persons: Radical Doubt and Vulnerability to Deception. Radical doubt and a vulnerability to deception in turn have created a pendulum of consciousness which modern persons are experiencing. At one end of the pendulum is a tendency to gravitate towards chaos and disorder; At the other end of the pendulum is the desire for order and stability. Safety and security at the spiritual level are very powerful ingredients in the quest for spiritual authenticity in the modern age. Radical doubt is far more complex than it seems upon the surface. Doubt often causes suspicion that certainty is not within our grasp. Radical doubt is where the very concept of certainty has been removed leaving, as the only options, relativism or nihilism.

Liturgy that is grounded in the historic Logos is a place to dwell that is safe and secure; Its source of authority rests in the historical record

that gives it great depth. I suggest that Sacrament, Liturgy and Lectionary produce the perfect balance in the Christian life. The Sacrament connects person to the presence of Christ as a living reality. The Liturgy gives a form of accountability based upon its historic grounding. The Lectionary allows for the whole Bible to influence a person because its passages are delivered in readings that are spaced throughout each day and throughout the entire year to be engaged with rather than to be heard only at times of worship.

When using the Samaritan matrix, Healing, Protection, Provision for the immediate and Provision for the future, this construct of Sacrament, Liturgy, and Lectionary has all the qualities for loving the neighbour. The balanced Christian experience that grows from Sacrament, Liturgy, and Lectionary is a gift that we pass on through models of Spiritual Formation as acts of love for our neighbour.

## **RENUNCIATION AND THEURGIC REPENTANCE WITHIN THE LITURGICAL RITUAL**

A question that needs to be asked about theurgic renunciation is whether a person is ever fully aware of the need to renounce the works of darkness. The works of darkness themselves are subject a plethora of interpretations. The central factor within any spiritual renunciation in the Church always refers to the centrality of Christ and His Love. The second key factor is that the person in the ritual

understands who the Satan is and how the works of Christ are always focused on redemption and reconciliation. Conversely, the works of the dark logos under the Satan are always designed to reverse and distort the works of Christ. Following one of our recurring themes, the 'Sacraments of God' are always designed to be seen by (i) God, (ii) The Powers of Darkness and (iii) the Community of God's people. This is always the model of liturgy in terms of the three-fold audience. Eucharistic Liturgies invariably identify an anthropological reality concerning the condition of sin that persons are a part of. This is embedded in the various statements about what sin is in terms of rebellion against God and the breaking of laws that were given to persons in love as a means of creating a safe and secure spiritual place for a community to dwell within.

The repeating of the Liturgy which outlines the sin condition is a statement to the powers of darkness that their ways are not God's ways and that the deceptions which lead to idolatry are a work of evil, a work of darkness, and a work of the dark logos. When the person renounces the works of darkness in the form of a confession, it evokes a *metanoia* in the person.

### **PRIESTLY ARISTOS AND IDENTIFIABLE KENOS BASED ON LOVE AND COMPASSION AT THE RELATIONAL LEVEL**

The teaching of the Lord Jesus in John 13 gives some very strong claims that relate to the identifiable marks of the Christian; (i) "If



I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet you should wash one another's feet"<sup>303</sup> and (ii) "By this shall men know you are my disciples the love you have one for another."<sup>304</sup> The comparative is found in the words, "If I then your Lord and Master – You should wash one another's feet."<sup>305</sup> A slave may accept his role of washing a Master's feet. That same slave would find it more difficult if they had to wash the feet of another slave. The act of humility is based on the *Kenotic* principle of emptying-out oneself of all the self-love and pride that spans all cultures and classes. The act of humility breaks the power of prejudice and pride and releases spiritual power into the context wherever that humility is expressed.

This action of 'foot washing', exercised as a sacrament in some circles, is generally thought of as symbolic of humility and service rather than literally about feet washing. It is by its nature, in this context, something that is observed, however in some cases it can be anonymous. The watching world observes the New Humanity in action when humility is embraced. So, it is with the commandment to love one another. The world is watching and has the right to judge us based on the love we have for each other as Christians; To state again, the watching world observes the New Humanity *in action* when we love

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<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, John 13:14.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 35.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 14.

one another.

This New Humanity is an aristocratic community who acts and serves from a humility within their exalted position as being with Christ in the Heavenly places. This New Humanity is held to a high standard of love and humble service that in turn authenticates their words and actions concerning the Gospel of Christ.

### **THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT AS AN OUTCOME OF REDEEMING LOVE WHEN VIEWING THE WHOLE OF CREATION AS LOVE FOR THE WORLD**

Whereas John 13, acts as a litmus test for what it means to be a Christian in terms of the onlooking world, Galatians 5:22-25 gives us much broader understanding to what it means to live the Christian life guided by the Spirit rather than being guided by the Flesh: (i) [...] the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; (ii) There is no law against such things; (iii) And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires and; (iv) If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.<sup>306</sup>

The first three Fruits of the Holy Spirit are attributes that exist at the ontological level. They are the same attributes whether belonging to God or persons. They are also attributes embedded within God and are extensions at the ontological level of the character of God Himself: The Love of God, The Joy of the Lord, and The Peace of God.

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<sup>306</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, Gal 5:22–25.

These attributes in persons are more states of being than actions although they can be extended to that level. The next six fruits of the Spirit are all relational and involve not states of being as in the first three but are actions that connect to persons in relationship with and to their “neighbour”. In this sense neighbour can be generalised to be the “other”. When we apply these six fruits to the Samaritan matrix, Healing, Protection, Provision for the immediate and Provision for the future, there is a release of spiritual energy, into the relationship, that impacts the neighbour. This impact functions within a realm that is outside of the Flesh and is guided by the Holy Spirit. A set of scenarios can be developed to illustrate this process.

A person or persons, has love, joy, and peace embedded into their life or lives as a state of being. From that position the person or persons exercises or extends the practices of patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control into their relationships. This could be positioned in person-to-person relationships as in marriage or with family members, or in the workplace. They could be extended into areas where a person has authority to influence in the realm of culture, economics, politics, or education. The impact would be self-evident in terms of positive outcomes. In other words, by projection as antithesis, it could be claimed with a certain authority that any of the above-mentioned realms that were not marked by patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control would have to be

thought of as not of the Holy Spirit. The implications are enormous.

Historically, the emphasis has been that engagements with culture, economics, politics, or education from a Christian perspective should be built on truth and integrity. The above paradigm shows that truth and integrity could be obtained by discipline or even the Will to Power. Whereas a person whose state of being is based upon, Love, Joy, and Peace with an outflow of patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control defies the model of natural human strength of character. It is and would be a life guided by the Spirit. For the onlooking world, a Christianity, that is populated by people who are marked by their humility in service and the quality of love that they have for one another then marked by lives enriched with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, I believe would be an authentic and importantly plausible *kerygma*. The access to this fruit of the spirit is not found in experiences or formulas, but rather it is found as the text continues to read, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."<sup>307</sup>

This is an explanation of the Christian life in practice. It is also the basis of the life of martyrs and virgins whose lives are not fulfilled in self-actualisation in terms of having their desires in life fulfilled, but rather submitting their lives to a higher reality, to love neighbour as

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<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, vs. 24.

self. A watching world that is lost without a compass is longing for a demonstration of this plausible message that gives wholeness to life and harmony to the cosmos.

## **SUMMARY**

The New Humanity is the agency by which Christ destroys the works of the Devil. As the New Humanity is used to destroy the works of the Devil the domains of the *dark logos* are dispossessed. The New Humanity functions in the realm of the Holy Spirit which in turn creates an action of the Holy Spirit in the conflict with the realm of darkness. The watching world is influenced by the New Humanity when the realm of the Spirit functions in love for *other*.

## **DISCUSSION**

Think of the battle within the realm of the spirit that is based upon propositional truth claims as opposed to a broader paradigm of Spiritual realities that are released in the cosmos by a New Humanity which are given to a humble service, love, and expressions of the Fruit of the Holy Spirit.

## **CHAPTER TEN SO WHAT NOW?**

The research is presented within the context of a Cosmological Theology of Mission. That context is presented in Part One as what is referred to as The Systematic Society. This Systematic Society is the contemporary epoch of the major metropolitan areas of the world that have evolved over the last two hundred years. This context makes clear

the demonstration that the more secularized a culture becomes, the greater the areas of spirituality and religious belief are homogenised out of people's worldviews. This, it is argued, creates modern, post-modern, and the post-secular societies. The term used to define this condition is presented as the Transcendence Vacuum. It is within this Transcendence Vacuum that various spiritualities and worldviews compete for the large number of peoples who have the absence of the transcendent as their primary values, definitions, or markers. Within this milieu, NCCS have been highly successful in winning both secular and also post-Christian persons to their plethora of spiritualities. The research argues that the next great frontier in world missions, irrespective of what Tradition or Confession one may adhere to, is the world of NCCS. The argument is made that the rational textualism of the Protestant World, the forensic scholasticism of the Roman Catholic World, and the inherent nationalistic phyletism of the Eastern Orthodox world puts all the confessions and traditions of the church in a place where their message is not *plausible* to the NCCS watching world.

### **THE PLAUSIBILITY GAP**

The question of plausibility is difficult to address. Overwhelmingly, almost all missions in the Protestant Evangelical world tend to be self-congratulatory in terms of what they do and how they

do it. This is primarily based upon two principle factors: (I) To raise up and recruit personnel and to raise the required funds for their programmes Mission agencies must present and stand by their promotional materials. The real challenge for these groups is that the implausibility of their message becomes linked to the gap between image and reality of their overall profile; (ii) Anglo-phone Missions have almost all tended towards ideological arrogance that becomes hegemony. In short, “we are right and have God’s mind” on the subject and everyone else in the world needs to conform to our thinking. The Colonial Period of English Missions has been replaced by the Corporate Models of American competition and control.

In the Roman Catholic world, it is far more complex and involves the fact the Roman Catholic world is a monolithic hierarchy which means the question of plausibility is decided by those who are in positions of authority. Protestant/Evangelical missions tend towards no hierarchy or corporate expressions of their organisational chains of command. Roman Catholic Missions have the opposite problem that making decisions invariably involves obedience to a hierarchy. The layers of bureaucracy tend towards making evaluation of paradigm shifts difficult. In the Eastern Orthodox world, Mission is driven by the ethnic priorities, very often based upon “status-quoism.” There are some small renewal movements that have been highly effective but in the overall picture Eastern Orthodox Missions are so small as being



almost negligible compared to the Evangelical Protestant world and the Roman Catholic world. The one tectonic shift has come in recent years with the almost stunning aggregation of academic thinking, writing, and speaking on the subject of Orthodox missions. Coupled to this has been the growth of conversions to Eastern Orthodoxy particularly in the United States of those from other Christian traditions. This has created a cross pollination of ideas into a significant potential. The Oriental Orthodox world has been purged by martyrdom and has created the early signs of producing a spiritual vitality that is totally plausible to almost all possible worlds. The next few years will be extremely important in the development of Mission leadership coming from the Middle East and parts of Eurasia.

I would suggest that a Sacramental Evangelical Anglican and Eastern Orthodox fusion or hybrid has, along with Messianic Judaism, the greatest potential for developing a plausible *kerygma* to reach into the NCCS world in the major metropolitan centres of the earth. The Sacramental, The Mystical, The Communion of Saints, A Gospel that Heals, and The Sophia, the loci from which the fullness of our plausibility lays, are all potentially the starting points for viaducts of faith into the NCCS.

The basic content of this thesis seeks to confront these highly complex issues. If serious thought and attention were given to the issues raised here, there would be a potential for significant growth in

all sectors of the Church in the face of the growth of NCCS.

## **THE COSMOLOGICAL AND THE COSMOGENIC**

The Teaching Modules have been based upon a set of Cosmological realities that have eternal consequences. The argument for how these cosmological realities function has been presented in an intentional scheme which builds upon itself throughout the research. The identification of the starting place for the Cosmological and Cosmogenic Theology of Mission is argued as being in the creation of the Sophia. This proceeds with the way in which the Eternal Logos, as creator and sustainer of The Sophia, has desire for The Sophia to be a creative reflection of the uncreated Perichoresis Triune God. This Sophia is structured as a universal sphere that has no consciousness but rather is the space whereby the personality and essence of the Logos is expressed in perfect harmony. The Genesis account of the Garden of Eden acts as a microcosm of the total Sophia. The Sophia is a totally interconnected whole. Both those in the Celestial Hierarchy and those in earthly hierarchies rebel against God, resulting in the whole of the Sophia being affected and wounded.

This whole realm of the Sophia and the grounding of the Missionary vision tends to be purely theoretical. Few would argue with the basic premise of a Sophianic Mission cosmology; Few would know how to integrate the ideas into working models that actually build

avenues of contact with the NCCS as evangelism and outreach.

The research builds on this as the baseline or grounding for all that comes after. In the final analysis the Mission of the Church, under the headship of the Incarnate Christ, is the restoration of the Sophia and the returning of harmony to the Heavens and the Earth. God chooses to allow the Sophia to be violated with the chaos of the Celestial and Earthly realms acting in an unrestrained manner. God allowing this period acts as a picture, lesson, and profile of what is involved when the condition of sin is allowed to spread unabated. God intervenes in two dramatic acts. Firstly, he brings total destruction to all living beings, with the exception of eight persons, by creating a universal flood. The eight persons in the post flood era are still not redeemed despite a level of desire to follow the will of God. This is once more a picture of how God allows sin to reveal the chaos inherent in any alternative worldview to that which is God's desire for His creation. Secondly, three steps are taken by God in light of this condition.

Three steps are taken by God in light of this condition. First, he scatters people throughout the earth into ethno-linguistic groups with specific territories. Secondly, He assigns spiritual guardianship over these territories through a body of celestial beings called The Sons of God or *Beney ha Elohim* as the term used through most of the modules. These spiritual guardians lead the nations into continued

idolatry which causes a complete reversal of God's plan for his creation both Celestial and Earthly. Thirdly, God makes the decision to bring into being a new people and a new territory that are not under the spiritual guardianship of the *Beney ha Elohim* but directly under His, God's own authority.

### **OUT OF BABYLON AND OUT OF EGYPT**

From this point forward a clear project or agenda is established for the dispossessing of the territories and peoples from the idolatry of the *Beney ha Elohim* and a restoration of The Sophia in what is often presented in Scripture as The New Heavens and The New Earth.

God chooses Abraham and draws him out of the centre of the realm of darkness where he lives in what was to become Babylon which is often presented as the antithesis of the Kingdom of God. Abraham goes through a series of, often painful steps, whereby he is tested by God concerning his ability to trust God's promises rather than his own ability to take rational control over his circumstances. It is with and through Abraham that a covenantal system is established that culminates in Abraham trusting God even to the point of being willing to lose his son Isaac to a test that God puts before him. Abraham becomes the father of the nation of Israel that becomes a slave society living in Egypt. In fulfilment of God's promise, Moses is raised up to lead the Hebrew nation out of Egypt and to be taken into a Wilderness

for forty years where they will be fashioned as a cultural entity that would reflect the Glory of the Lord to the nations around them. For this purpose, they are given by God a Sacramental system of Feasts and Festivals. They are given a Liturgical calendar to act as an enforcement of the meanings and mysteries of the Sacramental System. They are given a Constitutional Text in the form of Law, Poetry, Prophetic Announcements, and an Historical Narrative to document God's dealing with them as His people. They were given a Sacred Space where ritual and actions would take place that acted as a multi-sensory Logospoetic paradigm for the people. Proceeding out from these four gifts to Israel a recurring theme developed whereby Messiah would come to bring fulfilment of the promise to Abraham that from him all the nations of the world would be blessed. With the Incarnation of the Eternal Logos as Our Lord Jesus Christ, the system of monotheism that was perceived as being narrow is expanded with the introduction of the Perichoresis Triune God. The Lord Jesus as perfect man is also perfect God, and the use of the term God-man develops in its use in theology and remains throughout history.

## **THE INCARNATION**

With the Incarnation four *New Cosmological Realities* emerge. Firstly, the concept of the Kingdom of God is presented. This Kingdom of God being the fulfilment of Daniel's vision whereby the Kingdom of

God prevails over all other Kingdoms, through kenotic love rather than military power. This Kingdom of God is likened to a mustard seed or leaven in bread in that its genesis is small and its unstoppable growth is secured by the Holy Spirit of God. Secondly, citizenship in this Kingdom is of a spiritual nature and The Lord Jesus is presented by John the Baptist as being the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. These whose sins have been cleansed become citizens of the Kingdom of God. Thirdly, The Lord Jesus declares that he is building a Church, which is then declared to be a fusion of Israel and all nations of those who come to Christ for the forgiveness of sins. He declares that this Church will prevail in the task of the restoring harmony to The Sophia through the Gospel being victorious upon the earth. Fourthly, through His atoning death, literal resurrection, and ascension to the Right hand of the Father, The Lord Jesus sends his Holy Spirit to inhabit and empower the new citizens of the Kingdom. As a Church they bring the message of salvation to all the nations of the earth.

### **A LOGOSPOETIC GOSPEL**

The teaching modules then take a new direction with the Grafted Olive Branch Church being the means of Gods restoring harmony to The Sophia. A clear Cosmological paradigm is presented whereby the spiritual hierarchies of the Church, presented by the Apostle Paul, and then developed by the Apostolic Father Ignatius,

have spiritual power in and of themselves. This theme is developed to the point whereby the Eucharist is presented as being a weapon in the destroying the works of the Devil. The destruction of the Devil's work fits into the earlier mentioned theme of the Church being the agency under Christ as Head in order to dispossess the realms of darkness under the spiritual guardianship of the *Beney ha Elohim*. The authority structure of the Church is presented as a means of creating spiritual covering for the people of God and a structure within which spiritual power is released into the realm of the spirit. Emerging from this Church under Christ as head, an argument is made for a New Humanity that becomes the instrumentality for the fulfilling of God's mind and will upon the earth and also in the heavens. It is in the final analysis, the New Humanity as the spiritual offspring of the Second Adam that brings redemption and reconciliation, through the message of the Cross, to the old Humanity being those who are under the curse of the condition of sin.

There are several places where the conclusions have profound difficulties for the application of the ideas presented. The realm of eschatology is dominated by the various opinions of the place of Revelation 20 within any end-times outlines. The result is that the climactic moment in the history of all things, in the coming day of the Lord, being Theosis for persons and the forming of a New Heaven and a New Earth becomes obscured by the literal and allegorical

interpretations of the last three chapters of the book of Revelation.

The appearance of the schemer in this whole research leans heavily in the direction of post-Millennial eschatology with progressively improving conditions upon the earth. This is a false assumption when reading this material. Personal sanctification or theosis is accomplished on the Day of Judgement when individual Christians will be made whole and complete by the Appearing of the Lord Jesus. This does not stop the Christian person from seeking after, pursuing, being hungry for more of God in their personal lives, knowing that it will only be complete on the last day by an act of God rather than their own ability to be sanctified. So it is with the Church. There will come a point in the future when the heavens and earth will be transfigured into newness. This should not stand in the way of the Church seeking to build for the Kingdom, seeking to destroy the works of the Devil, and to be committed to see the Mustard Seed and Leaven of the Gospel expand and touch the whole of the earth. This is not Dominion Theology nor is it dependent on any eschatological schemer.

Increasingly, the role of Israel in the plan of God for the contemporary world needs to be addressed. There is no such entity of the Church that is not made up of the grafting in of the Gentile to the Chosen people Israel. One can also say quite emphatically, at the ontological level the incarnate eternal Logos did not at any point stop being the Jewish Messiah. To be provocative, one could state that the



God-Man who dwells within and holds together the Sophia is a Jewish Carpenter Rabbi.

The special role of Israel in the last lap of the eschatological marathon is not a dogmatic one. Those of us who tend strongly in the direction of seeing the revitalisation of the Nation of Israel as a central component in what God is doing on the earth and in the heavens do not have to be one hundred percent correct in our speculations. One could hold to a Dispensational view of eschatology or a Preterist position without moving far from the “Big Idea” of this thesis – the Church will be the agency that is used by God to serve His purposes and His will upon the earth.

### **TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY IN LIGHT OF THE THESIS**

There are in any presentations such as this, areas that have not been developed and that also act as a stage for continuing research and study. The following are some of the obvious areas requiring additional in-depth research.

### **THE PALEO ORTHODOX GOSPEL OF JERUSALEM, ANTIOCH, ROME, AND ALEXANDRIA**

With the changes taking place within all the various traditions of the Church, it would be helpful to identify a clear *kerygma* for the onlooking world. Most would agree that there is a purity of faith that

existed, despite the problems, within the Church of the Ante-Nicene Period. A survey of the principal cities Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria to examine ways in which each of those churches individually approached the dissemination of the Gospel as well as an exploration into what constituted its core content.

### **THE HARMONISATION OF THE HEAVENS AND EARTH BY AND THROUGH THE CHURCH**

The concept of the harmonisation of the whole universe is certainly one of the central tenants of much of modern pagan thinking. For many reasons, primarily the dispensational media profiles, show the watching world that the Church tends to see the earth is getting decidedly worse as time goes on and that God intends to destroy the earth and to some extent throw away both heavens and earth in an act of judgement. Whereas the various eschatological views tend to be incompatible, a significant study would be an exploration into how the Gospel is and has been victorious upon the earth when the Church is viewed through an eschatological lens as being *central* to the 'restoration of all things.' A project of this sort would be very challenging to pursue because of the strong convictions existing within the sphere of contemporary eschatological opinion.

### **THE TRUE NATURE OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AS ONE CHURCH**

The many divisions within the Church is its loudest statement to the onlooking world. The call of Jesus for the Church to be One and to be a community of love is evident in many positive ways throughout the world. However, it is minimal in terms of the overall profile of the Church before the watching world. There needs to be far more research done on the unity of Christians being based upon their common parentage. The term Christian must be limited to those who subscribe to a Trinitarian and Incarnational based theology. Common parentage is the principal need within the unity of the Church rather than adherence to the various confessional boundaries that dominate the agenda today.

### **SPIRITUAL FORMATION BASED UPON THE SOPHIANIC COSMOLOGY**

One of the weakest areas in this research project, simply due to the constraints of space, is the lack of detail in terms of the issues of personal spirituality and spiritual formation in light of the Sophianic Cosmology. With the context of today's world being increasingly dominated by NCCS an excellent research project would be the three works of Clement of Alexandria: *The Protreptics – Exhortation to The Pagans*, *The Pedagogues – The Tutor*, and *The Stromata – A theology for the Pagan Convert*.

### **A LOGOSPOETIC MANIFESTO**

This work concludes with a Logospoetic Manifesto that also has a series of points for further discussion and research. These ten points can act as a template for ongoing discussions at the level of developing a Cosmological Theology of Mission.

1. A desire to seek and understand the Holiness of God, The Mystery of the Incarnate Christ and The Power of the Holy Spirit in relation to the uncreated essence of God and the created energies of God in the Cosmos through the Logos.
2. A humble and genuine prostrated submission to the Cross of Christ as the locus for salvation, forgiveness of sins, and the means of spiritual new birth.
3. A Poetic and intentional affection and devotion to the Lord Jesus that moves beyond the narrow confines of rationalistic textual hermeneutics and Epistemology.
4. A desire to rediscover the life and teachings of the early Church as accountability for living prophetically in today's world.
5. Love for all those who love the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ void of nationalist, ethnic and worldview identities.
6. A Sacramental reading of the Bible with an open heart of obedience to the presence of Christ within the sacrament of Bible reading.
7. Existential worship of God as a multi-sensory experience held accountable by historic liturgy.
8. A sacramental serving of the poor and the oppressed whereby the

poor and oppressed are seen as embodying the presence of Christ.

9. A bio-mimetic Sacramental view of nature and the cosmos that drives the desire to see God, in Christ by the Spirit, in creation that leads to a stewardship of all that is created.

10. A deeply committed desire to invest into the future by destroying the works of the devil in the present.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS AND PERSONS

*Note this is a partial Index and will be completed along with the final corrections and peer review inclusions before its publication on December 31, 2023*

**Aesthetic Cognitivism**— Aesthetic Cognitivism is a real hermeneutic: It is a interpretative methodology for engaging Beauty. Unlike the Philosophy of Aesthetics, which interprets Beauty through the lens of values and judgements, the presupposition of aesthetic cognitivism is grounded on the interpretation of anything in the realm of *beauty* through the lens of cognitive functions such as sensory perceptions, reasoning, and interpretations.

**Apophaticism**, also known as negative theology, is a philosophical and theological approach that emphasizes the limitations of human understanding and language when it comes to describing or defining

the nature of God or ultimate reality. The term "apophatic" comes from the Greek word "apophasis," which means "denial" or "negation."

***Beny Ha Elohim* or Sons of God** – These terms (Hebrew and English) refer to the THE DIVINE COUNCIL that is spoken of in Genesis 10, Deut. 32, Job 1, Psalm 82 and Daniel 11. It is a body of beings within the Celestial Hierarchy who were granted guardianship over the nations after the dispersion at the Tower of Babel.

**Brock, Sebastian P.** is a prominent British scholar in the field of Eastern Christianity. He served as a Reader in Syriac Studies at the University of Oxford's Oriental Institute and as a Fellow of Wolfson College until his retirement in the early 2000s. Brock's work has centered primarily on the Syriac language and literature, and he is widely recognized as a leading authority in this field. Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic and was used extensively by early Christian communities in the Middle East. It is the language of a vast body of early Christian literature, including biblical translations, theological treatises, hymns, and hagiographies (saints' lives). Brock has written extensively on Syriac topics, including translations of Syriac texts into English, studies of Syriac exegesis and spirituality, and explorations of the role of Syriac Christianity in the broader context of the Christian Near East. His work has been instrumental in drawing attention to the often-overlooked

contributions of Syriac-speaking Christians to early Christian thought and literature. He is well-known for his work in making Syriac Christian works more accessible to a broader audience, both through his own translations and his support of the Comprehensive Bibliography on Syriac Christianity. This has been crucial in expanding understanding of the diversity of early Christianity and the significant role of Syriac-speaking communities within it.

**Bulgakov, Sergei Nikolaevich** (1871–1944) was a prominent Russian Orthodox Christian theologian, philosopher, and economist. He was one of the leading intellectuals of the Russian religious renaissance in the early 20th century, alongside figures like Pavel Florensky and Nikolai Berdyaev. Bulgakov began his intellectual journey as a Marxist, even writing a notable work on the philosophy of economy titled "Capitalism and Agriculture". However, he gradually moved away from Marxism and, after a religious awakening, joined the Russian Orthodox Church. He is best known for his theological works, particularly his development of the doctrine of Sophiology, the study of Divine Wisdom (Sophia). Influenced by the earlier Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, Bulgakov saw Sophia as the divine energy that linked God and the world, being both divine and creaturely. This concept was controversial and led to tensions with the Orthodox Church hierarchy, which accused him of heresy. Bulgakov was also an ordained priest and



became a prominent figure in the Russian émigré community in Paris, where he helped to establish the Orthodox Theological Institute of St. Sergius. The institute became an important centre for Russian Orthodox theology and continues to be active today. Among his significant works are "The Unfading Light," "The Bride of the Lamb," and "The Comforter". These works deal with complex theological questions about God, the world, and the role of the Holy Spirit and Divine Wisdom in creation. Despite the controversy surrounding his theology, Bulgakov is widely recognized for his contributions to Russian Orthodox theology and his efforts to engage with modern philosophical and religious thought. His works continue to be studied and discussed among theologians and scholars of religion.

**John Chrysostom** (c. 349–407 AD) was an influential Early Church Father and archbishop of Constantinople. He is recognized for his eloquence in preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders, and his understanding of the New Testament. His name "Chrysostom" means "golden-mouthed" in Greek, a testament to his renowned eloquence. Chrysostom is known for his exegesis, or critical interpretation, of Biblical texts and his writings on Christian doctrine. His sermons and writings provide valuable insights into the practices and beliefs of the early Christian church. His "Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles" and

"Homilies on Romans" are considered particularly noteworthy. Among his significant contributions is the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, which is still widely used in the Byzantine Rite today. This liturgy is celebrated in many Orthodox churches and Eastern Catholic churches. Chrysostom faced considerable opposition from both secular and ecclesiastical authorities due to his outspoken stance against corruption and extravagance. He was twice deposed and banished, dying during his second exile. Despite the controversies during his lifetime, he was posthumously recognized and venerated as a saint by the Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches. His feast day is commemorated on various dates depending on the tradition: the Roman Catholic Church celebrates it on September 13, the Eastern Orthodox Church on November 13, and the Church of England on January 27. His eloquent preaching and defence of the Christian faith have made him one of the most esteemed figures in Christian history.

**Cosmogenic** – This term is used in a similar way as in the theology of Sergei Bulgakov; It can be simplified as the “Participation in Spiritual Principles” within the Cosmos. In the Cosmogenic view the Christian is presented as having an *active* rather than passive *participation* in the works of God. Active participation, as a concept, is central to the recent developments in the realm of *ascetical theology* in the writings of Hans Boersma and Martin Thornton.

**Dark Logos** – The term refers to the message and profile of the Sons of God, *Beney ha Elohim* that seeks to deceive and lead the peoples of the world into idolatry.

**The Didache**, also known as "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," is an early Christian writing that provides instructions on moral conduct, the administration of sacraments, and church organization. It's one of the earliest Christian texts outside of the New Testament, likely written in the late first or early second century AD. The Didache is divided into three main sections:

1. The "Two Ways" section (chapters 1-6) presents a choice between the "way of life" and the "way of death," each characterized by certain ethical commands and prohibitions. This section might have been used for teaching and catechism in the early Christian community.
2. The liturgical section (chapters 7-10 and 14) provides instructions about baptism, fasting, prayer, the Eucharist, and Sunday worship. This includes the earliest known written version of the Lord's Prayer.
3. The organizational section (chapters 11-13 and 15) gives directions for the treatment of traveling prophets and apostles,

the recognition of local Christian leaders, and community discipline.

The Didache provides valuable insights into the life and practices of the early Christian community. For example, it illustrates a transition period in which Christianity was starting to distinguish itself from its Jewish roots but had not yet developed the full ecclesiastical structure that we see in later centuries. The text was widely known in early Christianity, but it was lost for centuries until a Greek manuscript was rediscovered in the late 19th century. Since its rediscovery, it has been the focus of much scholarly attention and discussion.

**Ephrem the Syrian** (also spelled Ephraim; c. 306–373) was a theologian, poet, and hymnographer of the 4th century who is venerated in the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, and Catholic Churches. He is especially renowned for his contributions to Syriac Christian literature and hymnody. Ephrem was born in Nisibis, an important city in Mesopotamia (modern-day south-eastern Turkey) that was a centre of Christianity in the region. He spent much of his life there, however, following the transfer of Nisibis to Persian control in 363, Ephrem moved to Edessa (modern-day Urfa, Turkey), another major Christian city, where he continued his theological and literary work. Ephrem's writings include biblical

commentaries, sermons, and especially hymns, which are still used in the liturgy of the Syriac Orthodox Church. His hymns are particularly notable for their rich, symbolic theological imagery and for the beauty of their poetry. Ephrem also developed a distinct form of hymn known as the "*madrassa*" (a teaching hymn), which was sung by women's choirs and used for catechesis. Ephrem's works addressed a wide range of topics, including the Incarnation, the Redemption, the Last Judgment, and the veneration of saints. He is also known for his devotion to the Virgin Mary and has contributed significantly to the development of Marian devotion in Eastern Christianity. Ephrem was declared a Doctor of the Church in the Catholic Church in 1920 by Pope Benedict XV. His feast day is celebrated on June 9 in the Roman Catholic Church and on January 28 in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Ephrem is often depicted holding a scroll, a reference to his many writings, or a harp, in reference to his hymns.

**Ethical Cognitivism** – This term is used in the research to identify how rational constructions function inside human thinking that are able to process information into true and false. This is based on classical logic – the law of identity, the law of the excluded middle, and the law of non-contradiction.

**Gesamtkunstwerk** – This term was developed to describe the art form

philosophy of Richard Wagner that was called “Total Art”.

Gesamtkunstwerk was a *unified* Art expression which made up of many different artistic forms of expression (i.e., dance, music, opera, orchestral, stage design, choreography, costume design, etc.) This evolved into the Post-Modern total art forms of Expressionism that was rooted in the post-World War One artistic movements in Paris, Zurich, and Berlin.

**Grafted Olive Branch** – I use this term to describe the joining of Israel as a Nation, which had an exclusive relationship with Yahweh, to the broader family of nations who came to faith through the Messiah of Israel. This is based on the texts in Scripture that speak of the Gentile Church being *grafted into* Israel.

**Ignatius of Antioch, St.** was an early Christian writer and bishop of Antioch, one of the major centres of Christianity in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. His writings provide some of the earliest clear attestations of key aspects of Christian theology and ecclesiology. Ignatius lived during the reign of the Roman Emperors Trajan and Hadrian, and was martyred around the year 107 AD. According to tradition, he was thrown to the wild beasts in the Colosseum in Rome. Ignatius is primarily known for the seven letters he wrote on his way to Rome, while he was under guard (thus, he's also known as Ignatius

Theophorus, which means "God-Bearer"). These letters were addressed to various local churches (Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrnaeans) and to Polycarp, who was the bishop of Smyrna. In his letters, Ignatius emphasized loyalty to the bishops as the representatives of Christ in the Church, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the value of martyrdom. His writings also contain some of the earliest references to the Church as "Catholic" (meaning "universal"). Ignatius' letters give a valuable snapshot of early Christian belief and practice. For instance, he is one of the first Christian writers to emphasize the Virgin birth and the divinity of Christ. His writings also show a clear belief in the hierarchical structure of the Church, with authority vested in the bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Ignatius of Antioch is venerated as a saint in the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Anglican Communion, and the Lutheran Church. His feast day is celebrated on October 17 in the Roman Catholic Church and on December 20 in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

**Kerygma** is a term that originates from the Greek verb "*kerusso*," meaning "to proclaim" or "to preach." In Christian theology, kerygma refers to the core message or proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is generally understood to include the life, death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus, and the call to faith and repentance.

The term gained prominence in the 20th century, particularly among Protestant theologians associated with the "New Testament theology" movement. Scholars such as Rudolf Bultmann and C. H. Dodd used "kerygma" to refer to the essential message of the New Testament that the early apostles were tasked with proclaiming. Dodd, in particular, identified the following points as the essence of the apostolic kerygma:

1. The prophecies have been fulfilled, and the new age has dawned in Christ.
2. Jesus, anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism, began his ministry.
3. He was crucified, rose on the third day, and is now exalted at the right hand of God.
4. The Holy Spirit is present in the Church.
5. Christ will come again for the final judgement and the consummation of God's kingdom.

In more general usage, "kerygma" can refer to any religious message or preaching meant to persuade or convert the hearer. It's also used to differentiate between the core message (kerygma) and the theological interpretation or explanation of that message (Didache or teaching).

**Logospoetics** – This term I have created specifically for this work. It



speaks of positive dialectical synthesis between the grounded historic truth of the Christian Gospel that in turn holds accountable the full range of multisensory poetic expressions that emerge from the imagination, specifically when speaking of the Spiritual things.

**Lombard, Peter** (c. 1100 – 1160) was a medieval theologian and bishop who is best known for his work, the "Four Books of Sentences" (*Libri Quattuor Sententiarum*), which became a standard text in medieval theology. Because of this important work, he is often referred to as "the Master of the Sentences." Peter Lombard was born in Lombardy, Italy, and later moved to France, where he became a professor at the University of Paris, one of the main centers of learning in the Middle Ages. He was eventually made Bishop of Paris in 1159, a position he held until his death in 1160. His "Four Books of Sentences" is a systematic compilation of theology, drawing on the Bible, Church Fathers, and other Christian writers. The work is divided into four parts: the first book deals with God and the Trinity, the second with creation and sin, the third with the Incarnation and the virtues, and the fourth with the sacraments and the last things. The Sentences became a central text in the theological curriculum of the Middle Ages. It was widely commented upon by many notable theologians, including Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, who each wrote a commentary on the Sentences as part of their academic duties. Through these

commentaries and its use as a textbook, Lombard's *Sentences* had a profound influence on the development of scholastic theology. Peter Lombard's other significant work is his collection of biblical commentaries, known as the "*Magnus Glossatura*" or "Great Gloss." This work, too, had a substantial influence on medieval biblical exegesis.

**Maximus the Confessor**, also known as Maximus the Theologian, was a prominent figure in Byzantine theology and spirituality. He lived from around 580 to 662 AD and made significant contributions to Christian theology, particularly in the areas of Christology and the nature of salvation. One of Maximus' most significant theological contributions was his defence of the doctrine of Dyothelitism against the Monothelites. The Monothelites believed that Christ had only one will, combining the divine and human will into a single

faculty. Maximus, however, argued for the doctrine of Dyothelitism, which maintained that Christ had two wills, one divine and one human, united without division or confusion. This Christological controversy played a crucial role in the development of Orthodox Christology and was eventually affirmed at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 681. Maximus also developed a holistic understanding of salvation known as the "theosis" or "divinization." According to Maximus,

salvation involves the restoration and transformation of human nature through union with God. He emphasized the idea that God became human so that humans could become like God, participating in the divine nature through the grace of Christ.

**Midrash** - Midrash is a term that refers to a genre of rabbinic literature in Judaism. It encompasses a collection of interpretive and narrative texts that expand upon and offer commentary on the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh). The word "midrash" comes from the Hebrew root "*darash*," which means "to seek" or "to inquire." Midrashic literature emerged during the period of the Second Temple in ancient Judaism and continued to develop in the centuries following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. The Midrashic texts take various forms, including exegetical explanations, homiletical teachings, parables, and imaginative narratives. They aim to provide insights, explanations, and moral lessons derived from the biblical texts.

**Mechanistic Rationale** – Mechanistic rationale is used particularly in the context of the Systematic Society. It relates to the essential realities and rationales in place which govern how society should be viewed as a *mechanistic* entity.

**Multi-Dimensional Rhizomatic Hermeneutics** – This term relates to a

methodology of interpretation that involves accepting the existence of *other knowledges* (i.e., intuition, dream, indigenous, angel, demons etc.) that effect the three-dimensional world but are generated within a space *outside* of the three-dimensional world. Multi-Dimensional Rhizomatic Hermeneutics allows for other *knowledges* to generate out from logics other than that of traditional logics (dialectical, classical logic, etc.). The knowledges of Multi-Dimensional Rhizomatic Hermeneutics are interconnected and interdependent.

### **NCCS – Non-Christian Creative Spiritualities**

This is the term that I have created to describe the plethora of New Age, Pagan, and Consumer spiritualities that have become to the dominate realm of “Not Religious but Spiritual” classification that is emerging in the major metropolitan centres of the world. This term in its abbreviated form NCCS is used throughout the research.

**Paleo-Orthodox Gospel** – This term is used interchangeably with the Paleo-Aramaic Gospel and refers to the overall context of the Christian Gospel as took formation in the New Testament Church writings. These writings were commented upon and explained in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers who can generally be thought of as being those persons who were disciples of the Apostles. The Apostolic Fathers were followed on by Second and Third Century Apologists who defended and

corrected this corpus of belief and practice up to the mid-Fourth Century.

**Bissera V. Pentcheva** is a noted art historian and professor in the Department of Art & Art History at Stanford University, where she has taught since 2004. Her research and teaching interests focus on Byzantine, Islamic, and Eastern European art and architecture. She also has a strong interest in aesthetics, phenomenology, and theories of the image. Pentcheva has written several books on Byzantine art and culture, including "Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium," which explores the cult of the Virgin Mary in Byzantine society, and "The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium," which investigates the power and agency of Byzantine art. In her work, Pentcheva often explores the intersection of art and sensory experience, considering how factors like space, sound, and light interact with the visual aspects of artworks to create a holistic, immersive experience. Her multidisciplinary approach to art history incorporates insights from fields like anthropology, religious studies, and musicology. Bissera Pentcheva continues to be active in her field, contributing to the understanding of Byzantine and Eastern European art and its cultural context. Her research provides valuable insights into the complex sensory and symbolic worlds of Byzantine art and its impact on viewers.

**Perichoresis** – A definition for this term is: In the concept of perichoresis, the persons of the Trinity are seen *as eternally coexisting and mutually indwelling* within each other. They share a divine unity and intimacy while maintaining their distinct identities. It signifies the idea that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *interpenetrate and interrelate* in a dynamic and inseparable manner. It portrays a mutual and self-giving love between the persons of the Godhead. The term is often used to express the concept that there is an interweaving and mutual participation among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, wherein they share in each other's being, life, and actions.

**Persons** – I have chosen to use the term persons to define male and female or humans. The reason for this is that persons is a helpful term regarding the spiritual nature of the human male or female. It is also an attempt to find ways of building bridges to other worldviews when it comes to gender issues.

**Pseudo Logospoetics** – This term speaks specifically to the deceptive realm of the Dark Logos whereby simulated transcendence and simulated spiritualities are created to act as an alternative to the historic Gospel of Christ.

**Rational Textualism** – This term is generally used in the interpretation

of legal or historical documents such that the text, in and of itself, delivers its meaning. I have used this term to describe the tendency in Christian circles for the text (Biblical or otherwise) to be approached from the same viewpoint as opposed to the viewpoint that a text provides the *unveiling the presence* of Christ. The presence which is unveiled is generated from so much more than the text itself and involves the *multi-sensory*. This presence-unveiling textual phenomena, or Logospoetics, has the hermeneutic profile of the multi-sensory being based *within the text* but not being the *text itself*.

**Solovyov, Vladimir Sergeyevich** (1853–1900) was a famous Russian philosopher, theologian, poet, and literary critic, who played a significant role in the development of Russian philosophy and poetry at the end of the 19th century. His work is often associated with the broad currents of Russian religious philosophy and Christian mysticism. Solovyov was a strong advocate for the idea of "Godmanhood," which emphasized the divine potential of humanity and the spiritual unification of all existence. He was a strong proponent of the concept of "sobornost," a term often translated as "spiritual community" or "organic unity." He believed that humanity was evolving towards a state of universal brotherhood and unity, where love would be the defining characteristic of human relations. One of Solovyov's most influential works is "The Justification of the Good," where he presents

his moral philosophy. His thought had a significant influence on a range of Russian intellectuals and writers, including Fyodor Dostoevsky and later, the theologians of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the context of Russian religious philosophy, Solovyov is often seen as a precursor to the school of thought known as Russian Sophiology, which posits Divine Wisdom (Sophia) as a central tenet of the divine and creation. His Sophiological concepts deeply influenced Russian religious thought, including figures like Pavel Florensky and Sergei Bulgakov. He also made significant contributions to Russian Symbolist poetry, a movement that emphasized the symbolic representation of ideas and emotions. Despite his death at a relatively young age, Solovyov left a substantial intellectual legacy in Russia and continues to be a subject of scholarly interest. Solovyov remains an influential figure in Russian philosophy and theology. His works are studied both in Russia and abroad, and his ideas continue to inspire philosophical and theological discussions.

**John Chrysostom** (c. 349–407 AD) was an influential Early Church Father and archbishop of Constantinople. He is recognized for his eloquence in preaching and public speaking, his denunciation of abuse of authority by both ecclesiastical and political leaders, and his understanding of the New Testament. His name "Chrysostom" means "golden-mouthed" in Greek, a testament to his renowned eloquence. Chrysostom is known for his exegesis, or critical interpretation, of



Biblical texts and his writings on Christian doctrine. His sermons and writings provide valuable insights into the practices and beliefs of the early Christian church. His "Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles" and "Homilies on Romans" are considered particularly noteworthy. Among his significant contributions is the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, which is still widely used in the Byzantine Rite today. This liturgy is celebrated in many Orthodox churches and Eastern Catholic churches. Chrysostom faced considerable opposition from both secular and ecclesiastical authorities due to his outspoken stance against corruption and extravagance. He was twice deposed and banished, dying during his second exile. Despite the controversies during his lifetime, he was posthumously recognized and venerated as a saint by the Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches. His feast day is commemorated on various dates depending on the tradition: the Roman Catholic Church celebrates it on September 13, the Eastern Orthodox Church on November 13, and the Church of England on January 27. His eloquent preaching and defence of the Christian faith have made him one of the most esteemed figures in Christian history.

**Sons of God and *Beny Ha Elohim*** – These terms, sons of God and *Beny Ha Elohim*, (English and Hebrew) refer to THE DIVINE COUNCIL that is spoken of in Genesis 10, Deut. 32, Job 1, Psalm 82, and Daniel 11. It is a body of beings within the Celestial Hierarchy who were granted

guardianship over the nations after the dispersion at the Tower of Babel.

**The Sophia**— The term is used extensively throughout the research. It refers to all of creation, both seen and unseen, that is unified, harmonised and dependent upon the Eternal Logos for its continued existence.

**Sophianic Logospoetics** – This term describes the concepts of the Logospoetic as earlier described but within the context of Created Sophia as a means of explanation. It can be described as a Logospoetic means or method for describing the Created Sophia.

**Systematic Society** – This research needed a term that would combine the thinking of Lesslie Newbiggin in his term “modern Western culture” and Jacque Ellul’s use of the term *la technique* to define the “Technological Society”. The idea behind the term is that just as there is an algorithm or formula which causes a piece of technology to function to highest efficiency, there is a sociological algorithm or formula that governs how societies function with *maximum* efficiency.

**Transcendence Vacuum** – The Transcendence Vacuum is a sociological spiritual condition that has been formed by the influence of Modernity

whereby the Secularisation of societies has homogenised out all the spiritual paradigms leaving a vacuum.

**Transvaluation** – This term was developed by Nietzsche and involved the radical re- evaluation and transformation of traditional values. The term is helpful when considering the complete *re-defining* of a symbols and themes. Despite its negative association with Nietzsche, I have chosen to use transvaluation to describe how the New Covenant was a redefining of the semiotics of the Old Covenant.

**von Balthasar, Hans Urs** (1905–1988) was a Swiss Roman Catholic theologian and priest who is widely considered one of the most important Catholic theologians of the 20th century. His work covers a wide range of topics, including biblical studies, theology, philosophy, and spirituality, and he is known for his emphasis on beauty as a key aspect of the divine. Balthasar's most significant work is the trilogy "Glory of the Lord," "Theo-Drama," and "Theo-Logic." This trilogy constitutes a comprehensive presentation of Christian truth, with each part focusing on a different aspect of God's self-revelation to humanity.

1. "Glory of the Lord" emphasizes the aesthetic aspect, exploring the beauty of God as revealed in creation, scripture, and the life of the Church.

2. "Theo-Drama" focuses on the dramatic aspect of God's action in the world, particularly in the history of salvation.
3. "Theo-Logic" discusses the logic of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, aiming to present a Christocentric understanding of truth.

Balthasar's theology was deeply Christocentric, emphasizing the centrality of Jesus Christ in the Christian understanding of God. He also wrote extensively on the role of the Holy Spirit and the theological significance of the Church. Additionally, Balthasar was a proponent of the "theology of the laity," emphasizing the importance of laypersons in the life of the Church. He co-founded the international Catholic lay community called the Community of Saint John with Adrienne von Speyr, a mystic and spiritual writer who deeply influenced Balthasar's own theology. Balthasar was named a cardinal by Pope John Paul II in 1988, but he died just a few days before the ceremony that would have officially granted him this status. His work continues to be influential in contemporary theology, contributing to both Catholic and Protestant thought, and his writings have had a lasting impact on theological and philosophical discussions.

**The Zohar** is a foundational work in the literature of Jewish mystical thought, known as Kabbalah. It is a group of books including commentary on mystical aspects of the Torah (the five books of Moses)

and scriptural interpretations as well as material on mysticism, mythical cosmogony, and mystical psychology. The Zohar presents itself as a series of conversations among a group of rabbis, most commonly Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his disciples. Traditionally, the Zohar was considered to be written by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the 2nd century CE, who, according to Jewish legend, hid in a cave for thirteen years studying the Torah under the inspiration of the prophet Elijah and emerged with the Zohar. However, this tradition has been disputed. The majority of scholars today consider the Zohar to have been written in Spain in the 13th century by Moses de León, a Spanish scholar and Kabbalist, who attributed the work to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai to enhance its authority. De León initially claimed to discover the text of the Zohar, but after his death, his wife is said to have confessed that her husband was the author. Regardless of its authorship, the Zohar is a deeply spiritual text that has had a significant influence on Jewish mysticism, philosophy, and theology. It introduces major concepts such as the ten Sefirot, the divine attributes or emanations that God manifested to create the world. These concepts have become central to the belief system known as Kabbalah. In the centuries following its publication, the Zohar was embraced by many Jewish communities and continues to be an important work in the study of Jewish mysticism.

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