

Allegory of the Body

A Mystical Teaching on the Symbolism of the Human Body

By

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Acknowledgement

The inspiration and the raw material on which this book is based is in large part the fruit of the work of Ruth Bodeen, a lifelong student of the Bible and teacher. After a significant spiritual awakening in her life, Ruth devoted her time toward the study of the scriptures in perhaps a unique way. She sought through the use of allegory to make the Bible personally relevant to every individual.

Rather than rendering a traditionally historical or moral interpretation of biblical stories that took place thousands of years ago, she formulated an approach that made each anecdote of scripture tell the personal story of man as he journeys from a primitive to an advanced soul, the process of sanctification. Her approach was therefore to read a narrative as one's personal story rather than someone else's story who lived long ago. And in this way she has brought much relevance and insight to what might otherwise be obscure biblical texts.

But Ruth was herself significantly influenced by other pioneer spiritual writers of the early 20th century. In particular she drew heavily from the work of mystic Charles Fillmore whose allegorical tradition she adopted in large part. His book entitled "Mysteries of Genesis" formed the basis of much of her work in interpreting the rest of the Bible. Woven throughout this book are many themes and concepts either directly or indirectly attributable to Fillmore, and the interested reader is encouraged to read his material to enlarge on the themes in this book.

Introduction

"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."¹

This very familiar passage comes from the book of Ephesians and outlines the body armor necessary for us to wage war with the devil. Of course, we don't literally put on a helmet or a breastplate or a belt to ready ourselves for battle, but in some spiritual sense we don all of the armor that Paul describes to fight our ancient foe.

¹ Ephesians 6:13-18

Each article of protection that is described in the passage is meant to shield a certain part of the body. A helmet obviously protects the head while the breastplate guards the chest. Special shoes preserve the feet from harm while a belt shields the loins or thigh region. The Apostle Paul instructs that all critical areas of the body be covered for specific reasons. Each body part carries with it a certain spiritual symbolism, and when understood, such information will better enable us to wage war, not with flesh and blood, but with the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms.

With this in mind, the purpose of this teaching is to sketch out the spiritual anatomy of the body. Starting with the head and working our way to the feet, major body parts and organs will be looked at for their spiritual significance. In most cases, the anatomy of a certain area of the human body will be traced through Old and New Testament passages which will either directly or indirectly reveal a deeper spiritual meaning. This will be done in many instances through the use of allegory or analogy.

One may ask why allegory should be necessary to such a study, and for this question there may be several reasons, but among others the use of allegory or analogy provides a tangible platform to attach ideas which being by nature abstract cannot be readily grasped. So when a spiritual concept which is by definition “other worldly” needs to be described, it is best done through earthly images which the student can readily identify with. In addition to this rationale, allegory is a very powerful tool for personal spiritual development. Often the natural mind of man is resistant to new ideas and spiritual truths that would help it make progress. By employing allegory and analogy, we can “bypass” the logical brain which might otherwise reject an idea and appeal directly to the intuitive or spiritual part of us which more readily receives the information.

In this book, allegory will be presented in conjunction with a number of body features, some of which will be straightforward and speak for themselves. In the cases where the symbolism is fairly intuitive, we will go into more detail to round out the picture. In other cases where the symbolism is more cryptic, every effort will be made to demystify and give a depiction that makes sense.

Chapter 1 – The Head (in general)

Starting with the very top of the body we will examine the head for which St. Paul tells us to put on the “helmet of salvation.” Actually the phrase that he uses isn’t exactly original; it comes to us first in the Old Testament in a passage from Isaiah in which the Lord is described as donning the apparel of Ephesians 6. In one clause of the Old Testament prophecy, God is said to put the “helmet of salvation”² on his head.

Perhaps the symbolism of the head is a “no-brainer” to most of us. (Pun intended.) The head is associated with the mind because it contains our brain, the thought center of the body, and it is one of the most critical organs of the body requiring protection. The helmet of salvation is a euphemism for guarding our thinking and the flow of both truth and error thought into and out of the mind. The war that we wage against the evil one is

² Isaiah 59:17

none other than a war over control of the mind and our own thoughts which are often chaotic and unrestrained.

Section 1 – Water

Following the ancient symbols for the four basic elements that make up the natural world, we will begin our study of the mind by considering the element of water which has been linked with the mind and may serve as a symbol of the thought processes of man throughout the bible. In recent years such a link between water and the mind has been supported through the research of Masaru Emoto, a Doctor of Alternative Medicine in Japan. He has studied water extensively in part through photographing ice crystals. Through numerous experiments he has demonstrated that beautiful and symmetric crystals are formed when water is exposed to positive thoughts or ideation whether in the form of a spoken word or a picture. By contrast, water when exposed to negative images formed distorted and warped crystals very unpleasing to the eye.³

As a fluid, the water element represents how our thinking is always on the move, changing and taking new shape. As the universal solvent, this element depicts how our thoughts pick up new ideas dissolving them and incorporating them into our consciousness. Continuing with more imagery, Psalm 23 which we commonly call the Shepherd Psalm paints a picture of the Gentle Shepherd leading his sheep beside “still waters.”⁴ More than just some placid lake or stream, David is illustrating a state of mind that is characterized by calm thoughts and stable thinking. His prayer for still waters is a prayer for peace of mind and serenity.

One of Jesus’ early miracles shows this same idea. When he and his disciples had gotten into a boat and set out into the lake, a furious storm came up without warning and the waves began to sweep over the boat. While the disciples were sorely afraid, Jesus was sleeping down below. They woke him and he rebuked the wind and the waves and the lake became completely calm.⁵ The miracle that Jesus had performed was on the surface level a miracle of nature, but more than that he shows his power to calm the storms that rage within our minds and his ability to bring peace, a skill that we also must learn.

The turbulent waters often threaten to deluge us and we feel like we are going to drown. So were the sentiments of David in Psalm 69 where he writes, “Save me, O God, for the waters are come unto my soul. I sink deep in mire where there is no standing. I am come unto deep waters where the floods flow.”⁶

When we feel like we have become prisoners of our own mind, Jesus bids us to take control and rise above the waves. On another occasion when his disciples were in the lake on a boat by themselves with wind and waves buffeting them, Jesus came to them

³ Emoto, Masaru. “The Hidden Messages in Water”. Hillsboro, OR:Beyond Words Publishing, 2004

⁴ Psalm 23:2

⁵ Matthew 8:23-27

⁶ Psalm 69:1-2

walking on the water during the night.⁷ His gravity defying feat was once again a symbol of having dominion and control over thought. By standing on top of the water he asserts himself as being above it and in control of it, a power that he calls each of us to as well. It was Peter in his fledgling faith who bid the Lord to call him onto the water. Though successful for a little while, when he took his eyes off of the Lord, he began to sink and be overcome by the waves. Peter represents you and me who are in the process of learning this skill and building the faith to command the waves, a skill that is yet not perfect.

We have considered water so far in the form of lakes, streams, and other standing bodies, but we may also think about it in yet another manifestation that we call rain. Water droplets fall from heaven to earth to help things grow here below. They may be regarded as God's thoughts (because they come from heaven) falling to earth to bring us inner revelation and truth. When we are stuck in the "dry" and unproductive periods within our soul, our parched earth cries out for the heavenly water. It is this water which makes the flower growing within us open up its petals and bloom.

The allegory of this process is seen in the prophet Hosea who said "it is time to seek the Lord till he come and rain righteousness upon you."⁸ Just as the Lord sent the rain down hard upon the earth at the time of the flood to purify it, so he sends his high thoughts, his divine revelation to shed righteousness upon us. When God sends his RAIN down upon us, then he can take his REIGN within us.

The rains come at all different periods in our life. Hosea also mentions that God "shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth."⁹ Whenever we are in need of a fresh revelation of God, he sends himself down upon us in due season. Sometimes though there are long periods of dryness in between in which we feel stagnated and unproductive. It is during these times that we are being prepared to receive another downpour and have another big growth spurt.

The connection of water and the mind continues in the powerful sacrament of baptism. We commonly understand this sacrament to be a cleansing from sin signified by the washing with water. It was prefigured in the Old Testament a number of times. When the flood came upon the land bringing salvation to Noah's family, the waters acted as a cleansing agent to purge away all of the evil doers and their sin from the face of the earth.¹⁰ Later at the crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites experienced the power of the cleansing waters when their enemies the Egyptians were drowned while pursuing them into Sinai.¹¹ In another instance, Naaman the Syrian who was a leper came to Israel seeking cleansing from his skin affliction and was purified after dipping himself 7 times in the Jordan.¹²

⁷ Matthew 14:22-36

⁸ Hosea 10:12

⁹ Hosea 6:3

¹⁰ Genesis 6

¹¹ Exodus 14

¹² 2 Kings 5

But the cleansing that baptism brings is not as much an external purification as if to wash away dirt from the body as it is an internal cleansing. And the internal cleansing that is in view is the purification of the mind and our thought processes. Though baptism has been administered at many times in history through full body immersion, it is interesting to note that the predominant form of baptism over the past 2000 years has been the simple pouring or sprinkling of water over the forehead. The church didn't see fit to douse people on the hand or foot or the back, but instead saw it most appropriate to pour water on their heads to administer the sacrament. This is because baptism has to do with cleansing of the mind first and foremost. Ephesians 5:26 says that the Lord sanctifies and cleanses the church by the "washing of water by the word." That is to say, God's word, his divine thoughts purify us by bathing our minds and converting our thinking.

Now by way of analogy, there is a common euphemism that we use in everyday language that expresses this idea. So often when we speak about the members of a cult, we allude to the fact that they have been indoctrinated in a certain way of thinking by saying that they have been "brainwashed." More than just some linguistic accident, this term describes what is true of all of us, that our brain literally gets soaked in whatever waters of thought are prevailing at the time. We might not think of it this way, but we are all brainwashed, as the organ of our thinking is actually floating in a small body of water in the middle of our heads.

There are yet other connections that can be made between water and the mind, and they have to do with the quality or state of the water that is being considered. It was at Jesus' first miracle at the wedding feast of Cana where one such illustration can be made. During the wedding reception, the guests consumed all of the wine so that they ran out before the party was over. Jesus instructed some servants present to fill up 6 large jars with water. After they had done this, they drew out a cup to bring to the master of the banquet. When he tasted it, the water had miraculously been turned into wine, and the master remarked that they had brought out the best wine for last.¹³

More than just a kind gesture to keep people in good spirits at a wedding reception, Jesus' miracle depicts a truth of the spiritual world. Plain water which we drink every day to quench our thirst is a bland liquid without taste or flavor. This insipid fluid is a symbol of the natural thoughts of man. This is corroborated by the number of jars at this banquet, in this case 6 indicating the number of man and his imperfection (1 less than 7.) Such thoughts are low and earthly, separated by a vast chasm from the divine thoughts of God.

In his conversion of the water, Jesus transforms what is bland into a substance which has a "kick" to it. He takes the tasteless water and changes it into something with a zip and some punch. The water becomes charged and alive with some zest to it. In this way, the wine or this charged water becomes the symbol of divine thoughts. It is the symbol of the Holy Spirit who intoxicates on an other-worldly level. This was true of Hannah the mother of the prophet Samuel who was accused of being "drunk" when she was full of

¹³ John 2:1-11

the spirit and in prayer.¹⁴ When the Spirit descends on us and bathes our thinking, we enter into divine joy, a state of ecstasy which is as far apart from human natural joy as the East is from the West.

Is it any wonder that we use the word “spirits” as a metaphor for different types of liquor? “Spirits” mimic a sensation on an earthly level which can only be experienced through the Holy Spirit on a heavenly level. We would therefore do well to follow St. Paul’s advice to Timothy to “drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thy frequent infirmities.”¹⁵

Jesus used this same concept of “charged water” on other occasions to describe the spiritual mind. When he met the woman at the well in Samaria, he told her that if she realized with whom she was speaking, she would have asked him for “living water” to drink. He went on to say to her that whoever drinks the normal well water will continue to thirst, but whoever drinks this special water, it will become a spring welling up in him to eternal life.¹⁶

At another occasion, on the last day of a week long feast, Jesus stood up among the crowds and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”¹⁷ The Apostle John commented on this proclamation of Jesus adding that by living water he was speaking of the Holy Spirit.

Once again, the water that is in consideration is not a dull, stagnant liquid but a living, flowing, bubbling, effervescent substance like wine that intoxicates and brings life and thoughts on a much higher plane. This living water must well up from inside of us as Jesus indicates. The source of the spiritual water is not flowing down a mountain on the other side of the valley but is right inside of us, deep down within the core of our being, and we must only learn to let it flow. For as the writer of Proverbs says, “Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.”¹⁸

Such living or charged water is found elsewhere within the gospels in particular in a passage from John. At the beginning of the 5th chapter is an account of how the blind, the lame, and the paralyzed would gather around the pool of Bethesda waiting for an angel who would periodically come down from heaven and stir the waters. The text tells us that the first one in the waters would receive healing after the pool was troubled. The imagery embedded in this passage is consistent with the idea of living water that brings spiritual refreshment and divine thoughts into the mind.¹⁹ In this context the resultant physical healing of the invalid serves as an analog of the spiritual renewal of the mind.

¹⁴ 1 Samuel 1:12-16

¹⁵ 1 Timothy 5:23

¹⁶ John 4:7-13

¹⁷ John 7:37-38

¹⁸ Proverbs 5:15

¹⁹ John 5:1-7

Several passages in the Old Testament support the usage of running or moving water in ceremonial rituals. In one such rite in Leviticus, there is an instruction that a priest should kill a bird in an earthen vessel over running water.²⁰ Likewise in the book of Numbers, in the account of the sacrifice of the red heifer, it was commanded to take the ashes of the heifer and mix it with running water in a vessel for a purification of sin.²¹ Following this same tradition, in the Church's ancient rite of Baptism it has always been preferred to use running or moving water to stagnant or quiescent water.²² This is once again to illustrate the same principle that running water is living water and represents the divine thoughts of the spirit. Jesus once compared the Holy Spirit to wind which is always on the move.²³ We don't know where it comes from and we don't know where it is going, but we do know that it is in constant motion just like the moving waters.

Section 2 – Gates

As mentioned earlier, the battle for the mind has to do with the control of ideas that cross into and out of the brain. The helmet of salvation is meant to protect the mind from the onslaught of error thoughts and destructive ideas coming from without while guarding the truth on the inside. The spiritual warfare that is involved therefore takes place at the entrance and exit ways of the mind. The struggle happens where the exchange of notions and beliefs takes place.

If we had to use a metaphor to describe the location of this battle, we could probably say that it occurs at the gates of our minds. Like a doorway, a gate can be opened to allow something to pass in or out or can be closed to lock something in or out. We may call someone closed-minded who is rigid in his thinking neither accepting new ideas nor rejecting old ones. For him the gate is closed. Others we call open-minded who are flexible in their thinking allowing ideas to pass in and out freely without inhibition. For those, the gate is wide opened.

Not surprisingly, “gates” are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament with several hundred references. The term is generally used to denote the entranceway to a particular city or a town, and many passages describe important activities that happen at this location. We might not think that anything of any significance can happen in a boring doorway, but the Bible has a number of illustrations to the contrary.

Many of the great characters of the Old Testament were said to sit in the gate of the city. Lot sat in the gate of doomed Sodom²⁴ while Moses stood in the gate of the camp of the

²⁰ Leviticus 14:49-50

²¹ Numbers 19:17

²² The Didache 7:2

²³ John 3:8

²⁴ Genesis 19:1-11 – A significant allegory can be developed from this story. The main point is that Lot welcomed the two angels (spiritual thoughts) at the gate of the city (his mind) and brought them to his house. But this created an uproar among the inhabitants (lower physical thoughts) of the city who demanded that Lot bring out his visitors so that they could be defiled (eliminated.) Whenever we begin to entertain new and higher ideas in the mind, forces of resistance will be quick in an attempt to stamp them out.

Israelites.²⁵ David sat in the gate of Jerusalem²⁶ while Mordecai, hero of the Jews sat in the king's gate.²⁷ (Even the patriarch Abraham sat in the doorway (gate) of his tent.²⁸) In these positions they served as the vigilant gatekeepers watching the traffic into and out of the "city."

The role of gatekeeper was an important position for the city and the book of Chronicles lists those in that role by name.²⁹ They stood watch to herald the approach of enemies from a distance and serve as guardians of the city. We may think of these gates as the portals allowing thoughts and ideas into and out of the city. The city in this context is a symbol of the mind into and out of which this thought traffic occurs.

As alluded to earlier, warfare and conflict often occur at the city gates. Psalm 127 mentions that the faithful people of Israel "will not be ashamed when they contend with the enemy in the gate."³⁰ In the Song of Deborah in the book of Judges, she laments that when Israel "chose new gods, war came to the city gates."³¹ When Israel abandoned the Lord for other gods or foreign notions, a battle began to rage at the entranceway to the city, a conflict at the doorway of the mind occurred between the way of Yahweh and the way of the world.

In the history of Israel, it was the high position of the elders to sit in the gates of the town or city. They were given this role because of their age and acquired wisdom. Such men were best equipped to watch the flow passing in and out of the town. As representatives of wisdom, the elders were given the task of meeting out punishment in the gates. Under the Law of Moses, if a man were to slander his wife saying that she was not a virgin at the marriage and there was proof to the contrary, the elders would punish the man and fine him 100 shekels of silver in the gate of the city.³² Under Mosaic Law, if a man slept with a virgin who was pledged to be married to another man, the elders' job was to purge the sin from Israel and they were to stone both of them in the gate of the city.³³ The regulations signify that our own wisdom needs to be keeping watch at the doorway to the mind to make battle with the enemy and purge away error thoughts. The book of Proverbs speaks of the personification of Wisdom linking her to the person of God. In the first chapter of the book, Wisdom is said to call aloud in the street and make her speech in the gateways of the city.³⁴

²⁵ Exodus 32:26

²⁶ 2 Samuel 18:24

²⁷ Esther 2:19

²⁸ Genesis 18:1-15 – Abraham sat in the open doorway (receptivity) of his tent (mind) when the three visitors (Trinitarian image of God) came to him. It was during the heat of the day (height of religious fervor or zeal) that the men arrived (divine visitation) and promised him that a son (spiritual increase) would be born in a year's time.

²⁹ 1 Chronicles 26

³⁰ Psalm 127:5

³¹ Judges 5:8

³² Deuteronomy 22:13-19

³³ Deuteronomy 22:23-24

³⁴ Proverbs 1:21

During the exile of Israel, the prophets lamented about the sad state of the gates of the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah cries out that the elders are gone from the city gate, no longer to keep their vigil.³⁵ As a result, Obadiah grieves that foreigners have entered the gates and taken over.³⁶ In this context, the Babylonians who were the foreigners represent foreign or strange ideas penetrating into the mind of Israel and ruining the city.

When the Israelites returned to Judah under the leadership of Nehemiah, the gatekeepers were once again established in their job to keep watch and control the opening and closing of the gates. Nehemiah instructed them that the gates of Jerusalem were not to be opened until the sun was hot indicating that the gate of the mind is not to be opened until God's light of truth is available to enter it.³⁷ Likewise, the gatekeepers were instructed to close the gates when the shadows fell to prevent darkness from entering in.³⁸

The idea of closed-mindedness was associated previously with the gates of the city being sealed shut as if to make the town an impenetrable fortress with no flux of beliefs crossing into or out of it. Such was an image made by David when he entered into the city of Keilah when fleeing from Saul and his pursuit to kill David. The passage mentions that David went into Keilah and imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars.³⁹ The impression of the narrative paints a picture of a very closed-minded situation with the presence of bars to block any flow of ideas crossing the border.

So it is with us a lot of the time when God finds it difficult to penetrate with his divine thoughts to bring us life. When we are inflexible and confine our worldview and belief system into a small box, we rob ourselves of the opportunity to expand the truth within us. When the lid is sealed shut on the box, there is no new revelation that can reach us to help us grow and expand to higher consciousness.

Fortunately, God will not allow us to box ourselves in forever, for he states in Psalm 107 that he will "break down gates of bronze and bars of iron."⁴⁰ He will break into our little prison and bring fresh revelation to rescue us from the deadness of our isolation.

Ultimately, the Prophets foretell the end result and the final condition of the mind of the sanctified man. Isaiah reveals that the "gates of the city shall be open continually."⁴¹ Without threat of enemies from without, there will be no more need to bar the doors shut and protect from the attack of erroneous thinking. He speaks of opening the doors before the Anointed One (or Messiah) so that the gates will not be shut.

Section 3 – Punishment

³⁵ Lamentations 5:14

³⁶ Obadiah 11

³⁷ Nehemiah 7:3

³⁸ Nehemiah 13:19

³⁹ 1 Samuel 23:7

⁴⁰ Psalm 107:16

⁴¹ Isaiah 60:11

Now when the mind of man has become hopelessly entrenched in faulty thinking and becomes a stronghold for erroneous ideas, the God “who desires that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth”⁴² begins to take radical action. Because he loves mankind, he inflicts punishment so that people will learn the error of their ways and begin to walk in truth. “For God punishes those he loves and disciplines those he calls a son.”⁴³

In the instructions given in the Law of Moses concerning the Nazirite and the life he was to live, it is written that a Nazirite may not come near any dead body, even that of a family member lest he become unclean.⁴⁴ The code in the book of Numbers goes on to say that if a man die very suddenly by a Nazirite, his head would be defiled, and he would be forced to shave his head and make atonement.⁴⁵ The passage alludes to the fact that defilement of man is not as much in the body as it is in the mind. It is the head and its thinking which becomes defiled and needs atonement [when it comes in contact with what is dead.] In a similar vein, Jesus himself said in the gospel, “What goes into man’s mouth does not make him unclean, but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him unclean.”⁴⁶ For the words of the mouth proceed from the mind and heart which are the source of the contamination.

The punishment of the mind is no better captured than in the image of the crucified Christ. He bore wounds in his hands and feet but also wore a crown of thorns to symbolize the chastisement of faulty ideas. Isaiah mentions a crown of pride that shall be trampled under feet.⁴⁷ The crown of thorns therefore symbolizes humiliation and defeat, a degradation of the natural mind and its pride. The thorns which bit into Jesus’ skull are for the healing and correction of man in his base reasoning.

That the wounds of Christ should be shared by all in God’s discipline, we can find support in the Old Testament account of the wicked Jezebel. The queen who promulgated the worship of Baal in Israel and destroyed the prophets of Yahweh ultimately met her demise at the hands of the newly anointed king Jehu. When he arrived in the town of Jezreel where Jezebel was staying, he called to his servants to throw her out of a high window. Then she was trampled underfoot by the horses.

Later on when they went to bury her they found that her body had been completely devoured by the dogs, and there was nothing left but her hands, her feet, and her head.⁴⁸ The very wounds of Jesus were typified in this story hundreds of years before his crucifixion as a normative pattern. (More will be discussed on the significance of hands and feet later in this book.)

⁴² 1 Timothy 2:4

⁴³ Hebrews 12:6

⁴⁴ Numbers 6:6

⁴⁵ Numbers 6:9

⁴⁶ Matthew 15:11,17

⁴⁷ Isaiah 28:1-3

⁴⁸ 2 Kings 9:35

In another gruesome tale during the time of the Judges, Israel was delivered into the hands of a Canaanite king and his army commander named Sisera. In a decisive battle led by Deborah the Judge, Sisera was routed and fled to the tent of a woman named Jael. This heroine of Israel invited Sisera in and showed him hospitality with food and drink. Then when he was lulled into a deep sleep, she knelt beside him and drove a tent peg through his temple into the ground so that he died.⁴⁹

More than just the peculiar slaughter of Israel's enemy, Jael has demonstrated the destruction of the natural mind of man, a necessary step if he is to rise up to supernatural consciousness. Sleep is often associated in the scriptures with ignorance and low consciousness, a state of being unaware of the spiritual. In this story the deep sleep of Sisera is destroyed that he may awaken to higher realities.

A similar story is found in the second book of Kings regarding the miracle child of a woman from the town of Shunem. She was a well to do woman of the town but couldn't conceive a child. The prophet Elisha had compassion on her and told her that she would bear a son. In the course of time she gave birth and the child grew.

One day, the son went out to the fields where his father was screaming "My head, my head." The boy who had fallen ill was carried back to his mother's lap where he sat until noon. Then he died. Elisha learned about this and in a great miracle resurrected the boy restoring him to his mother.⁵⁰

In this narrative, a mortal wound had occurred in the head of the boy, a blow to the carnal thoughts of man. He sat in the arms of his mother until noon, the point when the sun is the highest in the sky. At was at the point where the divine light or the thoughts of God were pouring down on him the strongest that the death blow came to the natural mind. The resurrection account in the story serves as a type of the resurrection that Jesus would demonstrate for us. He showed us the death of the flesh man and the rise of the spiritual man, and so the rising of the dead child illustrates the same process of conversion.

Another illustration of the transformation of the mind is found in the story of David and Goliath. The giant of the Philistines, Goliath had all of the Israelites sorely afraid. He represented a stronghold of carnal thought that could not be overcome by the Israelites, and he taunted them every day in their weakness. Though Goliath was strong in the natural, the armor that he wore revealed his spiritual weakness. He was clothed from head to foot in bronze. He had a bronze javelin, a bronze coat of armor, and a bronze helmet. What is significant about this metal is that it is an alloy, a combination of copper and tin. In contrast to gold and silver which represent perfection, this metal was impure. The bronze helmet that he wore symbolized his impure erroneous thoughts that needed to be overcome.

David took up the task of defeating this foe. He was also offered bronze armor by Saul but refused. Instead he went out to meet him as himself in his shepherd's clothes and

⁴⁹ Judges 4:21

⁵⁰ 2 Kings 4:18-21

drawing 5 stones from a stream into his sling ran to his enemy. Taking one of the stones, he slung it right between Goliath's eyes so that it sank into his forehead and he died.⁵¹

Here the 5 stones that David gathered are a symbol of the 5 senses of man that need to be overcome before he can progress into the realm of the spiritual. Using one of these, he smote the giant defeating the stronghold of sensual thought that has such a strong power over man. To further underscore this victory, David cut off the giant's head to herald the conquest of the mind.

There are a number of other scriptural analogies that could be made. There is a story around the death of Abimelech who was a Judge of Israel when a millstone was dropped on his head splitting open his skull.⁵² Then there is the account of the treacherous Absalom, son of King David who met his demise when his head got caught in the branches of an oak tree.⁵³

But as a final allusion to the conversion of the mind, we can return again to the scene of the crucifixion, to the hill called Calvary in Latin and Golgotha in Hebrew. Both terms capture the same meaning, "the place of the skull." In reality, the place was actually said to have the appearance of a human skull and so was named as such. And the "place of the skull" was located on a hill, or a high point just like the human skull is located at the highest point in the body.

It is interesting to note that this is the place of the crucifixion. The skull is the place where Jesus was crucified 2000 years ago and where he continues to be crucified within the minds of fallen humanity. Within the skull, we are constantly in the process of accepting or rejecting notions presented to us. We retain some and reject others, killing them off. When we are presented with Truth in the arena of the mind, we make the decision to assimilate it or discard it. In this way Jesus, who is Truth itself either finds a home within us or receives crucifixion once again.

Section 4 – The Temple

Many religions throughout the world have sanctuaries or places of worship. In the Christian world it is called a church, but among other faiths the place of worship is called a temple. This is true for Hindus, Mormons, and also the Jews upon which our own faith is built. Up until the time of its destruction in 70 A.D., the Jerusalem temple was the special place of God's presence. From the time of Moses until the time of Christ, God made a home in the Jewish temple in its inner room called the Most Holy Place.

The temple building was the home of God, and people from all over came to worship him there. Now isn't it strange that human beings also have a part of their body called the temple? On either side of the forehead the temple flanks the front brain. Perhaps more than coincidence, it has been said that the front brain is the part that is associated with

⁵¹ 1 Samuel 17:48-51

⁵² Judges 9:53

⁵³ 2 Samuel 18:9

high cognitive and spiritual thought. The region of the skull that we call the temple area is really in fact the spiritual center of the brain.

The New Testament states that people are temples of the Holy Spirit,⁵⁴ and so we are walking temples of God with the Spirit dwelling within us. And it is not in the knee or the finger or the toe that we commune with God but in the thought processes of the brain which is in the human temple region.

When Mary and Joseph had traveled to Jerusalem one year for one of the Jewish feasts, they lost Jesus. They searched frantically for three days until they found him teaching the elders in the temple.⁵⁵ We also, if we are ever to discover God must search for and find him in our own human temple, the spiritual thought processing center. This is because the essence of God is high thought and consciousness. The Lord says in Isaiah 55, that “as high as the heavens are above the earth so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts and my ways higher than your ways.”⁵⁶ Our relationship with God begins in the mind where our thoughts evolve up to higher and higher levels of communion with the divine.

Since communion with God is something that grows and intensifies over time, we should correctly understand that the inner temple of man is a work in progress ever under construction. The special presence of God which was housed in the Ark of the Covenant didn't start out in Solomon's elaborate house of God with gold and fine embroidery. Rather the Ark had a humble beginning in a flimsy tent in the desert after the children of Israel left Egypt. Such a temporary abode represented the early ephemeral state of man at the beginnings of his spiritual journey. Later on, the Ark was to find a home in a more stable dwelling known as the tabernacle which was a lot larger and more elaborate. It wasn't until the time of Solomon that the Ark finally found a permanent home in the Temple. No longer a transient structure, this golden edifice illustrated the advanced state of spiritual growth and purity where interior changes have become permanent.

We should also consider it more than a coincidence that Solomon, son of David was given the job of constructing the temple. The Lord said that Wisdom would build his house, and so Solomon who is the symbol of wisdom was given the task of the construction.⁵⁷ Likewise, it is divine wisdom from above which allows us to build the inner human temple stone by stone.

The temple of Solomon was fitted with many furnishings that are an outer reflection of the reality of the inner temple of man. One example located in the outer court was a bronze basin or laver filled with water. It was the first object to which a priest would come to wash clean, and it symbolized the washing of water through baptism, the changing of thought from natural to divine. This is always the first step in the spiritual growth process. (Recall that the Church throughout history has predominantly baptized by pouring water on the temple region or the front brain.)

⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:19

⁵⁵ Luke 2:41-52

⁵⁶ Isaiah 55:9

⁵⁷ 2 Chronicles 2

Many times, people and places throughout the Old Testament narratives serve as symbols of spiritual ideas and concepts. If we had to link the front brain to a particular location, it would be the city of Hebron in Israel. In Hebrew, the name means “united” or “alliance.” The word symbolizes concentration and typifies the front brain or conscious thought.

That the word Hebron denotes an alliance or association implies a state of cooperation between 2 or more parties. If an application is made to the front brain, the cooperation is between the two frontal lobes. Recall that the human brain is subdivided into a right and left hemisphere, and there is a frontal lobe on each side in the anterior part of the brain. The left brain has always been associated with logical or analytical thinking while the right brain has been linked with intuitive or subjective thinking.

One side of the brain is more rational and sequential while the other side may be called more creative and artistic. The difference can be seen between the scientists of this world and the actors, two opposite ends of the spectrum, but each fulfilling a needed role in society. To use more metaphorical language, we can say that left brain represents the head or intellect while the right brain represents the heart and feelings. In this way we could also say that one side of the brain is masculine while the other is feminine, because we associate women with heart, emotions, and intuition while we link men with analytical and sequential natures.

Hebron is the union of both brains in harmony, balance, and cooperation, a state that is necessary to achieve the spiritual mind. It is the union of love and wisdom. In such a state one side does not dominate the other, and so there is no conflict or war between the hemispheres. This is in contrast to the natural mind which is plagued by war and disturbances because balance does not yet exist.

To further support the relationship between Hebron and the front brain, we can consider a story from the Book of Judges featuring Samson. One night the often morally weak Samson was spending the night with a prostitute in the Philistine city of Gaza. His enemies lay in wait for him all night at the city gate and decided that they would catch him in the morning. But Samson got up in the middle of the night unbeknownst to the people of Gaza and tore off the doors of the city gates together with their posts and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.⁵⁸

Earlier it was shown how gates serve as a symbol of the entrance and exit ways of the mind. In this narrative Samson tears off these doors to allow the flow of thought into and out of the city. Recall that God himself talks about breaking down the bars and tearing down the gates that block our city from life changing revelation and truth. (And a similar analogy may be derived from this account of Israel’s strongest Judge.) That he carries these doors up toward Hebron indicates the association with the spiritual brain and the progress that has been made by his activity. Each doorpost represents an opposing polarity, in this case the male and female (or wisdom and love) which he reconciles together in his arms and makes to come into balance. And Samson conveyed the same

⁵⁸ Judges 16:3

idea to us at the end of his life when he was blinded and chained in the temple of Dagon of the Philistines. In the climactic moment of his life as he stood between the two great pillars which we understand to symbolize the mind (wisdom) and the heart (love) he pushed with all his might on both and brought the temple down killing 3000 MEN and WOMEN.⁵⁹

In the Bible there are many occasions where a name change takes place, whether of a person or a place. Jacob became Israel, and Abram became Abraham. Sarai became Sarah, and Simon became Peter. In each case the name change indicates that a spiritual advancement has taken place. In terms of locales, the city of Luz was changed to Bethel when Israel took it over. The spiritual improvement connected with this name change is apparent from the Hebrew derivations, for Luz means “turning away, departing” and suggests a disunity or separation from God. Bethel on the other hand means “house of God” and intimates a place of conscious unity with God. The location is famous for Jacob’s dream of a ladder to heaven with angels ascending and descending upon it.

Hebron like Bethel was the recipient of a name change when like other cities Israel conquered it from the Canaanites. Hebron was formerly known as Kiriath Arba which means “city of giant/greatness/strength” or “city of 4-square/cube.” In its primitive meaning, the city prefigured the greatness that the spiritual mind is called to. The 4-square or cube indicated perfection because a cube has the same size walls on all sides indicating perfect balance and harmony. (Such was the geometry of the Holy of Holies.)

The conversion from Kiriath Arba to Hebron signifies the conversion from the natural to the spiritual mind, and it was in the city of Hebron that David was crowned king after the death of Saul. In the city of Hebron, the king began to reign illustrating that the Higher Self or Spiritual Self had taken its dominion of the mind and started to exercise its power there.

David reigned in Hebron for 7 years which implies that a period of perfection had been achieved. From there he went on to conquer Jerusalem which represents the highest goal and ultimate destiny of all mankind. Jerusalem built like a fortress with high walls symbolizes the greatest spiritual state and highest consciousness that people can attain to. In that king of all cities, David reigned 33 additional years for a total regency of 40 years.

Section 5 – The North

It has just been suggested that spiritual principles may be represented by people, places, and things depicted in various Bible narratives. To extend this idea further, it can also be said that the 4 cardinal directions (N,S,E,W) also have an ethereal relevance to them. These bearings may give us a clue when they are mentioned in the context of cities and nations in the Old Testament. Along the same lines, the 4 cardinal directions have significance in relation to the human body itself.

⁵⁹ Judges 16:25-30

If we consider the human frame, we can assign the directions of the compass to it as we would any other map. North would be at the top of the body or the head, while South would be represented by the bottom of the torso or in the bowels of the body. East and West would be represented by the left and right arms respectively.

That the mind or brain region should be linked with the North is supported by a number of passages particularly in the Old Testament. It was asserted a little earlier in the discussion of the human temple that the one place in the body where there is the potential for communion with God is in the brain because it is the center of thought processes. It is in the human temple that we can experience divine dialogue with the Lord.

So we could say that the North is the place within the body where God takes up his residence. In the book of Job there are recorded many discourses of Job and his contemptuous friends. In one such talk, his friend Elihu speaks of the Lord's point of origin when he declares, "Out of the north he comes in golden splendor; God comes in awesome majesty."⁶⁰

In Isaiah there are several references to the direction of the north. Starting with Chapter 40 much of the prophecy is associated with the Messiah. In one such passage, the Lord proclaims, "I have raised up one from the North, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay."⁶¹

Ezekiel also targets the place of the North in his introductory visions. While he was in captivity in the land of Babylon he had a vision of God in the form of 4 living creatures having the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. The images that Ezekiel saw were covered with eyes to underscore the omniscient presence of God. The prophet beheld this spectacle and described it as a whirlwind, an immense cloud with flashing lightning coming out of the north.⁶²

In another passage from Isaiah, there is a prophecy with an immediate context to the King of Tyre though it has also been applied to Lucifer. The language used in the text conveys that the character involved had attempted to usurp the position of God, the sin for which Lucifer had been notoriously charged. The symbolic place of God is again alluded to when Isaiah speaks of the fallen one saying, "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north."⁶³

These readings as well as quite a few others depict the allegorical home of God in the place of the North. The pertinent references wouldn't be complete though without mentioning the direction of the north in conjunction with the temple in Jerusalem. Psalm 48 begins with a praise to God stating, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the

⁶⁰ Job 37:22

⁶¹ Isaiah 41:25

⁶² Ezekiel 1:4

⁶³ Isaiah 14:13

city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”⁶⁴

Mount Zion, of course was the temple mount and the location of Solomon’s golden building. The temple was appropriately positioned on a mountain as high elevations always serve to represent high experiences of God and higher consciousness in the scriptures. (It is for the same reason that the human temple is at the highest point in the body which we call the skull.) We could consider many illustrations of this, but to mention one popular New Testament reference we could consider the mount of Transfiguration upon which Jesus’ inner circle of Peter, James, and John experienced the power of God’s glory.⁶⁵ So enraptured were they by the experience that they did not want to come down from the peak. In connection with the theme of the north, most scholars feel that the location of the Transfiguration was on Mount Hermon which was located in the far north of Palestine near the border with Lebanon.

In the Old Testament, there are a number of locations including Geba, Gibeon, and Gibeah which are all translated as some form of hill. In this way they all represent high spiritual consciousness when a passage is treated allegorically. One example would be Gibeah, the hometown of Saul.⁶⁶ It was in this place that Saul’s heart was changed and the Spirit of God came upon him in power so that he began to prophesy along with the company of the prophets. In this context, Gibeah is appropriately indicated, for it means “little hill.” So we can interpret from this account that the town’s name indicates spiritual aspiration as it was in this place that Saul experienced some kind of conversion and was just beginning to feel the stirrings of the Spirit within him.

Mount Zion was within the city of Jerusalem, and as the account from the Psalms suggests, it was located on the northern walls of the city. Maps of Jerusalem in the era of the kings show the geographic position of the temple on the North end of the city to further support the idea that the mind, the place of God, and the human temple are all symbolically located in the direction we call north.

It should be noted as well that within the Holy Place of the temple on Mount Zion were situated three pieces of furniture including the altar of incense, the table for the bread of the presence, and the golden lampstand. An instruction in Exodus 25 mentions how to set up these items in their sacred room. The direction given to Moses was to arrange the 7 lamps of the lampstand to light up the area in front of it.⁶⁷ In this way, the lamps were tilted forward to cast their light toward the northern wall of the Holy Place signifying the light of God illuminating the mind of man.

If the north is associated with the mind, then within the scope of the biblical Middle East, there is also a nation that can serve as the symbol of the mind. The northernmost nation in the context of most Old Testament narratives is the kingdom of Assyria which was

⁶⁴ Psalm 48:2

⁶⁵ Matthew 17:1-3

⁶⁶ 1 Samuel 10:9-13

⁶⁷ Numbers 8:1-2

always Israel's northern enemy and ultimately the nation that led it into exile. Though a type for the human mind, it should be noted that Assyria as the frequent enemy of Israel is the symbol of the natural or carnal mind of man rather than the spiritual or sanctified mind of God. It is in this context that the Lord's judgment of Assyria comes into play.

As a symbol of the intellect of man, Assyria exemplifies the pride and arrogance that are associated with the unsanctified mind. Intellectual pride is always a great stumbling block on the road to salvation for we shall only enter the kingdom of God if we have the humility of little children. God opposes and judges this nation to punish the sensual mind.

After using Assyria as an instrument to punish Israel in her unfaithfulness, God in turn meted out punishment on this Northern Nation. Isaiah 10 describes how the Lord refused the pride of Assyria announcing, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes. For he says, by the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding."⁶⁸ In this prophecy, Assyria is found boasting of her great wisdom and understanding which she has acquired on an earthly plane. It is a perhaps one of the biggest traps of the devil to those who have a strong intellect to lead them down the road of pride in their worldly understanding which counts for nothing in the realm of the spirit. In this passage, God intends to punish and correct Assyria in her hubris.

Though Assyria carted off Israel into exile and scattered them among the nations, she fell short of doing the same to Judah. In the time of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria besieged Jerusalem planning to dry up their resources until they should surrender to him. But Hezekiah refused to cooperate and sought deliverance from the Lord. In a great miracle, the angel of the Lord put to death 185,000 men in Sennacherib's army during the night. The blow forced the king to withdraw back to his capital at Nineveh, and the citizens of Jerusalem were again free.⁶⁹

The connection of Assyria and the mind of man is reinforced through a few other prophecies of the Old Testament. One such passage again comes out of Isaiah 19 and is a prophecy about the future of 3 Middle Eastern nations. The text reads, "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians will go to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third along with Egypt and Assyria a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, 'Blessed by Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance'"⁷⁰

For this prophecy to make any sense, it is important to understand the significance of each nation mentioned in the passage. In this case we have three nations each of which have been repeatedly condemned and judged by the Lord. Egypt which originally held Israel in slavery is the symbol of the body or the flesh of man which enslaves him to

⁶⁸ Isaiah 10:12-13

⁶⁹ Isaiah 36

⁷⁰ Isaiah 19:23-35

sensual desire and lust. (Mizraim the forebear nation of the Egyptians actually means “limitation” or “besieged” that we can interpret as the confining force of the lower nature.) After Israel was set free from bondage, he still had the craving for the pleasures and gratifications of Egypt. Consider the lament of the Israelites in Exodus shortly after they left where they mourn, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around the flesh pots and had all the food we wanted ...”⁷¹

Israel on the other hand is the perennial symbol of the spirit. In this way it was the purpose of Israel to be a light to the nations around them carrying the message of Yahweh to those countries in darkness. In the context of this prophecy, Egypt, Assyria, and Israel represent respectively the body, mind, and spirit of man. The prophecy is looking ahead to the time when man is made fully holy and enters a state of harmony between these three nations. In that day there will be no longer warfare among them as there had been in the past, but each will fall into his proper role and receive the blessing from God. In this way the Lord addresses all three nations as his people, because they are all part of the integrated trinity within man.

The prophecy of Zechariah reinforces the same theme where in the 10th chapter the Lord speaks of returning the children of Israel from exile. He says, “I will bring them back from Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon, and there will not be room enough for them ... Assyria’s pride will be brought down and Egypt’s scepter will pass away.”⁷² The prophecy like that of Isaiah promises that the natural intellect of Assyria will be humbled and Egypt’s enslavement to sensual desire will be destroyed. Then man will be holy and in harmony within his triune being.

Section 6 – Government

There is something to be said for the significance of numbers in biblical interpretation, and though at times abused, numerology can help make sense of obscure passages. At least this is probably true for some basic numbers. It is fairly common to link the number 3 with the trinity whether the divine trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost or the human trinity of body, mind, and spirit. The number 7 has been universally associated with completion or perfection and is found in numerous examples including the colors of the rainbow and the days of creation.

The number 12 is also of significance and found throughout the scriptures, it denotes the concept of government or ruling power. In Isaiah’s popular Messianic prophecy, he describes the coming of the Christ saying, “For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.”⁷³ What the prophet describes is not only true of Jesus but of all mankind who have a head, the governor of the body sitting on top of the shoulders.

⁷¹ Exodus 16:3

⁷² Zechariah 10:10-12

⁷³ Isaiah 9:6

Anatomically, the number 12 serves as symbol of the governing powers of the mind when considering that the human brain has 12 cranial nerves that innervate it. 12 is a relevant number in relation to the human mind, because it is comprised of 12 faculties or mental powers each of which require the process of sanctification. An immediate reference to this symbolism is found in the Book of Exodus when the children of Israel were in search of water to drink in the desert. After they had left Marah where the waters had been bitter, “they came to Elim, where there were 12 springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.”⁷⁴ And these 12 fountains in the desert are in direct relation to the mind-water connection that was established earlier.

In relation to various ancient cultures, the number 12 has also signified the coming of age rituals where children make a transition to adulthood. This was certainly true in the Jewish culture where a Bar Mitzvah is celebrated around the age of puberty. The significance of this age may be supported by the solitary account of Jesus’ childhood in the scriptures where he was found by his parents teaching the elders in the temple at 12 years old.⁷⁵ In this kind of context, the age symbolizes the full development of each one of the mental faculties to maturity.

By far the most prevalent reference to the number 12 in the Bible is in its relation to the 12 tribes of Israel. The 12 sons of Jacob fathered each tribe to build the emerging nation. An understanding of the interaction between the patriarch Joseph and the rest of his brothers will be useful in developing the mental faculty symbolism.

Of all the sons of Jacob, Joseph was the special one and most loved by his father. He has been regarded by many as a Christ figure of the Old Testament. In many ways Joseph played the part, but among his most important roles were his service as regent and ruler of Egypt and as the savior of the Near East in the time of great famine. Rising up from a slave within Egypt, Joseph was recognized by the household of the Pharaoh and ultimately became the ruler of Egypt typifying the kingship of Christ. In Joseph’s wisdom, he stored away grain every year during the 7 years of plenty to be distributed during the 7 years of famine. So grateful was the Pharaoh at the time that he gave Joseph the title “Savior for the Life of the World” to typify the role that Jesus would play some 2000 years later.⁷⁶

Before Joseph’s illustrious career began however, he had suffered the brutality of his own brothers. After Joseph told them about his dream of 11 stars bowing down to him, the brothers quickly understood that Joseph was picturing his own siblings in subjection to him. For this they hated him and sold him into slavery in Egypt.

Before they did away with him, his brothers indignantly queried him asking, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you rule us?”⁷⁷ Their defiant questioning is very

⁷⁴ Exodus 15:27

⁷⁵ Luke 2:41-52

⁷⁶ Genesis 41:41-45

⁷⁷ Genesis 37:5-9

reminiscent of the Pharisees who emphatically declared before Pilate, “We will not have this man to reign over us” in speaking of Jesus.⁷⁸

In these passages from Genesis, Joseph as Christ-figure is the symbol of the Christ-Self or Higher Spiritual Self that must reign over the entire mind and all of its faculties. In the narrative, the animosity of Joseph’s brothers to his rule is a portrayal of the opposition of the natural unsanctified mind and its members to the spirit having its control. The unholy mind is sensual and warlike which is exemplified well by Joseph’s brothers. They were a rowdy bunch of trouble makers including a couple fornicators and murderers among them.⁷⁹

Though at first intolerant of their brother, Joseph’s siblings would eventually make his dreams come true when they would pay him homage as ruler of Egypt with respect and repentance for their terrible crime against him. And in a fuller sense, the dream of Joseph ultimately comes to reality in the New Testament when the 12 apostles bow down and worship Jesus.⁸⁰

The evolution of the human mind from the natural to the spiritual is therefore the conversion of the 12 hostile patriarchs into the 12 devoted apostles. It is the migration from the Old Testament into the New and is the process that every human being must go through.

Once the conversion is completed, an image from the book of Revelation portrays the reality of the sanctified mind. In the 12th chapter a woman is described to be clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and 12 stars around her head.⁸¹ The woman is Mary who typifies the ultimate state of holiness that mankind is called to. Like Joseph with the stars bowing down to him, the woman has the light of the 12 stars encompassing her mind to illustrate the conversion of the 12 mental faculties.

Until this point, these 12 faculties or mental powers have been spoken of in general. However, each one has a specific function or role to play in the outworking of the mind. Each of the 12 sons of Jacob represents one of these functions. If not implied directly from the Hebrew meaning of the name, the type of faculty can be discerned from the context of the life of the character.

Aspects of the mind that are connected with each patriarch include among others love which is represented by Levi. As the priestly tribe, he represents the highest spiritual calling of man and typifies this faculty. His name means “attached, joined” which signifies the relationship between love and its object. Simeon whose name means “hearing” symbolizes receptivity and openness to new ideas as well as obedience. Joseph about whom we have spoken some was a prolific dreamer his whole life not only in Canaan with his brothers but also in Egypt. It was this aptitude and the skill to interpret

⁷⁸ John 19:15

⁷⁹ Genesis 34:25; Genesis 38:15-16

⁸⁰ Matthew 28:16-17

⁸¹ Revelation 12:1-2

dreams that earned him a way into Pharaoh's household, and so Joseph represents the imagination. Issachar is translated as "he will bring a reward" and symbolizes ambition or zeal, the motivation that comes through knowledge of repayment for our efforts.

Among other faculties inherent to the mind of man are included the vision, praise (prayer,) judgment, strength, power, understanding, order, and faith. All of these are typified by the 12 patriarchs, though it must be said that the Old Testament figures represent them in their primitive undeveloped stages. Each mental power must grow to perfection which is not realized until their embodiment in the New Testament.⁸²

There is another connection that can be made with the 12 tribes of Israel and it pertains to the way in which they would set up camp during the 40 years of wandering in the desert. They would arrange themselves in a square pattern surrounding the tabernacle. Three tribes would order themselves along each of the 4 cardinal directions. According to Jewish tradition, each of the 4 main tribes would set up a standard over its camp, a banner with a particular emblem emblazoned on it. The tribe of Judah had a lion as its standard while the tribe of Dan had an eagle. The tribe of Reuben had a human head as its banner while the tribe of Ephraim had an ox or bull.⁸³

These animals are identical to those seen in the preliminary visions of Ezekiel and are also the 4 primary symbols of the ancient zodiac.⁸⁴ The zodiac which has been a tool of astrologers and soothsayers for many ages also holds within it a clue to the mind of man.⁸⁵ The term zodiac derives from a Greek word that was absorbed into Latin called "Zoon." It is the same word from which we derive "zoo" and so it means animal.

The 12 signs of the zodiac system are representations of the lower or animal nature of man which needs to be supplanted by the spiritual if man is to become holy. In its base nature, the lion symbolizes a territorial or possessive nature as well as ferocity and tendency to anger. The ox or bull represents stubbornness or resistance to change, a tendency to stay the same. The ram is characterized by its prominent horns which tend to "butt in", an inclination toward being the center of attention and adulation.

Though not mentioned in the zodiac, we speak of other aspects of the animal nature like being "proud as a peacock," "sly as a fox," or "stubborn as a mule." We refer to cowards as "chickens," sneaky people as "weasels," and lazy people as "sloths." And then there is the pig which universally represents being dirty, perverted, or ill-mannered. All of these negative attributes need to be sublimated before we can enter the kingdom of God. We must acquire control over these lower forces within before sanctity can be achieved and this was well illustrated by Jesus on his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on

⁸² Fillmore, Charles. "Mysteries of Genesis." Kansas City, MO: Unity School of Christianity, 1936. (It should be noted here that this work by the 20th century American mystic Charles Fillmore has provided the inspiration for a significant amount of allegory in this book whether directly or indirectly.)

⁸³ Numbers 2

⁸⁴ The Eagle was the original zodiac sign later to be replaced by the Scorpion

⁸⁵ The Middle Eastern Zodiac or "circle of animals" was originally derived from the shapes of constellations in the night sky, and eight out of the twelve have an association with animals. However the Chinese Zodiac that emerged in the East is based entirely on animals.

a colt. Riding on the back of the donkey he depicted his dominion over the animal nature, and what is also interesting about the passage is that the colt had never been ridden before. From this we can infer that no one (or perhaps relatively few people) had ever achieved this symbolic feat before he demonstrated it to the people.

Each of the 12 faculties of the human mind start out under the control of the lower nature, but one by one they undergo the process of conversion until at last all of them come under the control of the spirit and a state of peace and wholeness ensues. Such was the case of the woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years. When she had completed this time period, she reached out to touch the hem of Jesus' garment and was healed.⁸⁶ When she completed the conversion of the mind, she experienced wholeness.

The cycle of the 12 is depicted in nature and illustrates this conversion process one faculty at a time. The waxing and waning of the moon from the new moon to full moon depicts the transformation. The new moon rises in darkness and incrementally progresses toward the full moon reflecting the full radiance of the sun. This happens 12 times in a year to mark the entire cycle. Likewise, the shedding of blood by a woman in her menstrual period represents a cleansing or purification process. She also undergoes this purging 12 times a year to mark the complete transformation of the mind.

As a final note on the subject of the transformation of the mental faculties, we can consider a command from the Pentateuch which gave an instruction on worshipping God in the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 12 says that "unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall you seek, and to there you shall come."⁸⁷

The immediate context of the verse is to say that worship shall be at the place that the Lord selects, but understanding that the work of mental conversion is 12 fold, God is saying that he will choose from which of the 12 tribes or mind faculties which one is to be developed. The development of man is under God's guidance and every soul develops at a different rate and according to what he is ready for. We do not develop all of our faculties at one time but God chooses which faculty he would have developed in us and we must find him through the developing of this faculty, for he says, "his habitation shall you seek, and to there you shall come."

Section 7 – Nations

Thus far in our discussion of the mind we have begun to compartmentalize or subdivide it into its constitutive parts. The 12 faculties were briefly explored to describe the fundamental segments of human thought. Further subdivisions of the mind may also be understood through other biblical metaphors such as cities and nations.

⁸⁶ Matthew 9:20-22

⁸⁷ Deuteronomy 12:4-5

As should become clear, the use of cities and nations throughout the Old Testament serve as an allusion to aggregations of thought or patterns of thinking within the mind. As the basic building block of civilization, cities represent smaller collections of thoughts in contrast to nations which are very large gatherings of similar ideas.

The story of the nation of Israel is the tale of a fledgling people who set out from Egypt and drive out the nations before them on the way to and within the Promised Land. This command was given to them by the Lord who went before them on their long journey. They were instructed to utterly decimate all nations, and after crossing the Jordan proceeded to lay waste every city until they came to the final stop on the journey, the city of Jerusalem.

The work of the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan is a pattern for mankind who is called to overthrow all patterns of thinking that are unholy and dominated by carnal ideas. Frequently the children of Israel would set fire to a city and after burning it to the ground would rebuild it again to illustrate that their task represented more the conversion of the mind rather than its ultimate destruction.

Like the 12 tribes of Israel whose names or character roles imply a certain meaning, the names of the cities and nations of the Near East also hint at a certain pattern of thought that is in need of conversion. We could consider the Amorites who represent thoughts of racial or ethnic superiority. Their Hebrew name signifies the idea of prominence or boastfulness and is associated with speaking out publicly or vocally. So we may link them with national pride and thoughts of dominance. The name of the Horites whom the Israelites drove out of their path means “cave-dwellers” or “dwellers in black holes” in Hebrew and denotes the darkness of the subconscious mind which will be discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

Jericho which means “moon” or “moon city” implies an association with the natural mind of man. The moon which is the lesser light in the sky signifies man’s thinking in contrast to the sun which represents the mind of God. The city of Ai which took the Israelites two attempts to finally conquer means “heap of ruins” in the Hebrew and symbolizes the ego of man which must be destroyed before he can make spiritual progress. Gath which was a Philistine city and a commonly cited local in the books of Samuel is interpreted as “winepress” in the original language and may be thought of symbolically as a belief in trial and suffering. It was David who fled for his life to this city to escape from the jealous rage of King Saul.

Shechem, the place where Jacob’s soon to be son-in-law was circumcised in an agreement to marry his daughter Dinah means “neck, ridge, a place to carry a burden (like the yoke of a pair of oxen)” and symbolizes burden bearing thoughts that weigh down. It was the city where Abimelech, the illegitimate son of Gideon treacherously imposed himself as king over the people. The city of Manahaim also has an interesting connotation in its various usages throughout the Old Testament. It is translated as “two camps” and signifies among other things a divided state of consciousness, often understood as the perennial conflict between flesh and spirit. The city name appears

prominently in the conflict between David and his son Absalom when there was civil war within the kingdom.

Other Canaanite nations like the Hittites whose name means “terror” or “dread” symbolize thoughts of opposition or resistance which would be forces of discouragement on the path of spiritual unfoldment, while the name of the Jebusites, the original inhabitants of Jerusalem denotes a city that is “trodden down, polluted, or laid waste,” and we can infer from such a definition that it may signify thoughts of depression. And these are among a small sample of the meanings and implications associated with the many cities and nations in the land of Canaan and neighboring regions.

Certainly it was the role of the Israelites to vanquish all of her enemies on a bloody trail through the Promised Land, but there is another relationship between Israel and the heathen nations that illustrates the conversion process from another angle. As mentioned earlier, Israel represents the one spiritual nation, the one aggregation of thoughts within the mind that is holy and pure. She plays this role in contrast to the unbelieving nations that surround her who epitomize the natural and carnal mind of man.

In contrast to Israel’s role as destroyer of God’s enemies, she was also cast in a position to be salt and light of the earth. This was prophesied early in Genesis where the Lord affirmed that “Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth shall be blessed through him.”⁸⁸ The prophet Isaiah asserted the same promise when he spoke of Israel saying, “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.”⁸⁹ Later in Isaiah’s prophecy, he speaks of Israel again declaring that “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”⁹⁰

Before Israel entered the Promised Land, she was warned several times by Moses about what would happen to her if she failed to be faithful to God and embraced the worship of idols. Moses pledged to her that she would be quickly driven from the land of Canaan and scattered abroad like sand. In Deuteronomy 4, he says, “The Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the Lord will drive you.”⁹¹

Of course this warning turned into a reality at the time of the exile when Israel and Judah were carted off to the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, but what was meant as a curse in an outward way was really a symbol of something much greater with long lasting implications. The scattering of Israel among the nations was like the sowing of the spiritual seed among the heathen. It was the spreading of the godly thoughts of the mind into all the far recesses of the natural fleshly consciousness.

⁸⁸ Genesis 18:18

⁸⁹ Isaiah 42:6

⁹⁰ Isaiah 60:3

⁹¹ Deuteronomy 4:27

In this way Israel grew within all of the nations of the earth transforming them from the inside out. What seemed to Israel as a curse was in the plan of God a great blessing, for the scattering of Israel among the nations was the necessary precursor to prepare the nations to receive the Christ once we come to the New Testament.

In an eschatological sense, all nations of the earth will be converted to holiness. The scriptures prophecy that it must be so. Especially as revealed in the Psalms, the transformation of the nations is foretold. Psalm 72 boldly declares, “Lord, every nation on earth shall adore you ... Every people will call on your name.”⁹² In Psalm 98 a similar proclamation is made announcing that “The Lord has revealed to the nations saving power.”⁹³

In the Messianic prophecy of Psalm 2, The Father tells the Son to “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter.” The ultimate state of all men is the reign of the Christ-Self or Higher-Self within him. This will be accomplished when all of the nations of the human mind come into subjection to him.

The promise to Abraham whom we just alluded to also brings into play the idea of nations. As the father of faith, his name was changed from Abram (meaning “father”) to Abraham (meaning “father of a multitude.”) The Lord affirmed to him that he was going to make Abraham the “father of many nations.” In a literal sense this is true as Abraham sired many of the Middle Eastern peoples, but in the context of allegory and a spiritual meaning, the promise may be understood in a deeper way to suggest that all of the thought aggregations of the mind would come under the rule of faith. Abraham simply represented the beginning of this process which would take much time to come into full manifestation.

As a final illustration of the conversion of the nations, we can consider the Old Testament narrative about the Tower of Babel which appears just before our introduction to Abraham in the Book of Genesis.⁹⁴ It was at the time that all of the peoples were gathering themselves together in defiance of God that he confused their language dividing them up into the many nations of the earth all with their own tongue. In this way, the Old Testament was characterized by a state of confusion among the peoples, a condition of disharmony and war among the nations because they did not understand each other.

Such is the condition of the human mind under the control of the lower nature. The nations within the head are in a state of war and there is no unity among them. They do not speak each other’s language and the lack of understanding creates conflict.

However what was characteristic of the Old Testament saw its redemption in the New Testament. For it was on the day of Pentecost that Babel was reversed. Though there

⁹² Psalm 72:11,17

⁹³ Psalm 98:2, 67:2

⁹⁴ Genesis 11:1-9

were many nations present in Jerusalem that day, they could suddenly understand each other when the Holy Spirit descended. All of the foreigners could hear the disciples speaking in their native tongue.⁹⁵

The Day of Pentecost symbolizes the completion of the conversion of the nations. Where once were discord and a lack of understanding, a state of hostility and conflict between the peoples, there is now harmony and peace. For this reason the Old Testament is replete with narratives about war and skirmishes between peoples. In the New Testament where all comes in subjection to the Christ, there is no longer mention of fighting because the transformation of the mind is now complete.

Section 8 – Meditation

Early in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses reiterated to all of the children of Israel the Ten Commandments which the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. He then proceeded to tell them that the commandments which he was giving them that day were to be upon their hearts. He goes on to say, “Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.”⁹⁶

From that time forward, it was the practice of the Israelites to tie what were known as phylacteries to both their hands and foreheads. This object was a small leather box containing some scriptures, and the symbolic nature of this ritual having to do with the forehead was that the Israelite should meditate constantly on God’s law.

In Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the bible, the writer says, “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.”⁹⁷ Throughout the scriptures a premium is put on meditation or meditative prayer, and this idea if not explicitly stated is cloaked in allegory particularly in the Mosaic Law where clean and unclean foods are discussed. In the Book of Leviticus, there is a precept which allows for eating animals that have a cloven foot and that also chew the cud. An example of a cud chewer is the cow with multiple stomachs. After eating, it generally regurgitates the contents of one stomach back into the mouth where it can chew on it some more to better help digestion. Early church writers understood this qualification for a “clean” animal to symbolize the practice of meditation which is characterized by reflecting and mulling over spiritual truth so that it can be more readily assimilated by the mind.⁹⁸

A huge step above vocal prayer, meditative prayer has been one of the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of those treading the path to perfection. Particularly when it takes the form of mental visualization it is an extremely potent spiritual discipline. Not only is it a mighty defense against the attacks of the Evil One, it is great offensive strategy in the

⁹⁵ Acts 2:1-13

⁹⁶ Deuteronomy 6:1-9

⁹⁷ Psalm 119:97

⁹⁸ Epistle of Barnabas 9:16-18

process of becoming holy. For as the old saying goes, “a great offense is the best defense.”

Linking this form of prayer with one of the 12 mental faculties, we would associate it with Joseph who represents imagination. His great influence in Egypt as second only to Pharaoh ensured the salvation of all the Egyptians as well as his own brothers who would have otherwise starved in the great famine. Through his power, Joseph nourished his brethren and settled them in the best part of the land of Egypt. His preeminence among the twelve siblings should serve to underscore the salvific power of this spiritual faculty. Joseph’s name means “adding” or “increase” which is the result of the development of this portion of the mind. His own prosperity in Egypt typifies the spiritual enlargement that accompanies those who learn to harness the power of the imagination.

When we visualize with our minds, we enter into the arena where God is and can proceed to tap into him in the higher dimensions where he resides. Unlike us, God does not have a body; he is pure spirit and is epitomized by the highest kind of thought form. When we meditate, we meet God in the place where he is and receive tremendous transformational power.

The apostle Paul had said, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.”⁹⁹ The natural mind needs to be reprogrammed or rewired to convert it to the spiritual much like a computer programmer writes code to give instructions to his machine. Paul also tells us how this can be accomplished when he gives the meditative instruction in Philippians. His advice is simple: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – THINK about such things.”¹⁰⁰ Through the practice of good thoughts and images, the mind will be rewired and reoriented in a godward direction.

The effects of mental visualization are potent when practiced on a regular basis. Several accounts in the Old Testament reveal the power of meditation in allegorical language. Way back in the time of the Patriarchs, Jacob wandered the land of Canaan. A crafty man, he fled from his brother Esau after shrewdly stealing his birthright from him. Though cunning, Jacob had his eye on spiritual value. Esau on the other hand saw fit to regard his birthright no more than a bowl of stew after a long day’s work in the fields.

Fearing for his life, Jacob traveled to his mother’s relatives in Paddan Aram further north in the Fertile Crescent. There he met his Uncle Laban who was the brother of Rebekah his mother. Jacob worked a total of 14 years for his uncle to obtain the hands of both of his daughters in marriage – 7 for the older and 7 for the younger. While Jacob lived among his kinsmen, he tended the flocks as many people did in that part of the world at that time. Laban’s herds increased greatly in the time that Jacob was living with him so that Laban realized that God was blessing him because of Jacob.

⁹⁹ Romans 12:2

¹⁰⁰ Philippians 4:8

One day Jacob asked Laban if he could pick up and move back with his family to the land of Canaan where Isaac and Rebekah lived. Reluctant to let Jacob go, Laban offered to pay Jacob for his service if he would agree to stay on.

Jacob decided that his wages would be the small blemished portion of Laban's flock. He elected to take all of the streaked or spotted animals for himself leaving Laban with the great number of pure white lambs and goats. Surely Laban was happy with this idea to purge his flock of the more undesirable creatures.

However, little did Laban know what the crafty Jacob would do next. What seemingly was a humble request on the part of Jacob became Laban's worst nightmare. Jacob continued to pasture the white flocks of Laban after placing his own speckled flock in the care of his sons. In this peculiar passage of the bible we read how Jacob worked a sort of magic with Laban's ivory flock. Jacob took the fresh-cut branches of poplar, almond, and plane trees, all which had a dark colored bark. He made white stripes on these branches by peeling away the dark bark to expose the white inner wood underneath. Then he placed the branches in the watering troughs where the animals would come to drink. When the animals were in heat, they would mate in front of the branches and would bear streaked and speckled animals. In this way Jacob generated a large increase for his own speckled flock which irritated Laban greatly.¹⁰¹

But this account is more than the story of bizarre sorcery. Nor is it a narrative about the first experiment with genetic engineering. The important keyword in this story is WATER, and as described in detail earlier in this chapter, the water is indicating that the mental processes are involved. The striped branches were placed in the water troughs as a symbol of an image formed in the mind. When the image is nurtured and dwelled upon, it begins forming a reality in the spiritual dimension. Jacob used fresh-cut branches indicating that this was to be a practice of regular repetition. Day after day the animals came and the image was impressed upon them when they were drinking. Finally when they were in heat and mated they became pregnant with the image, and in the normal course of time, the offspring were born speckled and the image became a reality in the physical dimension.

Another bible story with a strong message of visualization is found in the books of the Kings. Early in 2 Kings, it is clear that Elijah is finishing his mission and must soon be taken up to heaven. His servant Elisha is aware that his master will soon be departing and is needless to say sad.

Elijah initially attempted to say good-bye to His servant on the road from Gilgal, but His servant insisted that he continue to follow his master to Bethel where God was calling him to go. Once at Bethel, Elijah once again tried to make His servant stay in the city, but His servant pressed to go with him further to Jericho. Once again at Jericho, Elijah tried to leave His servant behind, but His servant persistent as always accompanied Elijah to the Jordan River where God was going to take him up to heaven in a fiery chariot.

¹⁰¹ Genesis 30:25-43

At the Jordan River, Elijah struck the water with his cloak and the two of them crossed over. Now it was the end of the journey for Elijah, and he kindly asked His servant if he could do anything for him before he was taken up to heaven. To this request His servant boldly replied, “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.”

Elijah responded saying, “You have asked a difficult thing, yet IF YOU SEE ME when I am taken from you, it will be yours – otherwise not.” And as the story would have it, His servant did see his master taken up into heaven and received the power of his spirit from him.¹⁰²

Now after the last story we know better than to think that Elijah was making some silly random stipulation to his servant. God doesn't do things on a whim. Rather, the message here is very strong. If we can visualize something, see it in our minds, dream about it, we are sending out a powerful spiritual energy, a prayer that is forming substance in the unseen world. If we are persistent and nurture it like Elisha did, it will break forth into the seen world at the right time and we will receive it. Elijah was simply telling his servant that if he could focus on this goal, this picture it would be his by consequence of a fixed spiritual law. If he couldn't see it or conceive of it or imagine it, he could not receive it by virtue of the same spiritual law.

Throughout the centuries many a soul has followed an age old formula with the Christian Church. The practice of meditating on Jesus' life has been a potent recipe for mental transformation. A sequence of prayers that survive to this day are a meditation around the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Lord.

The beauty of meditation is that it really isn't necessary to understand how it works to convert the mind suffice to say that it does. Though it should be said that the powerful effect of meditating on the life of Jesus is that we begin to identify with him so that his story becomes our story. It was the medieval mystic St Teresa of Avila who taught that in mental prayer we should simply “just look at him.” By this she knew that when we focus on him, face to face and eye to eye, he communicates his love to us and infuses into the soul more than we could imagine.

From the earliest contemplation of his life, we may focus on the events around his nativity. Thinking of Mary who has just been told that she is pregnant with Jesus, we subconsciously form a connection so that we too feel the joy of being pregnant with God. When we meditate on the birth of Christ, we may imagine Mary holding him in her arms gazing intently into his eyes and we also will feel as if we are staring vicariously through her into the face of God. Later we may focus on the story of Jesus' childhood when his parents searched frantically for him and finally found him teaching in the temple. Our reflection will lead us to the realization that we have discovered God in our own human temple which we have described in great detail within the mind.

In further reflection, we may consider the events of his adult life and meditate on his many miracles. Contemplating the Wedding Feast of Cana, we become eyewitnesses to

¹⁰² 2 Kings 2:1-18

his conversion of water into wine and it has its effect on us, a change in our thinking from the bland thoughts of man into the charged thoughts of the divine. We could proceed on to imagine the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus was transformed into the dazzling white glory of God. And looking through the eyes of Peter, James, and John we can receive the warmth of the divine Sonlight illuminating our vision.

Continuing our meditation into the passion of Jesus, we may gaze upon him as a crown of thorns is placed upon his brow and vicariously receive a transformational effect, the punishment of our carnal mind and destruction of the ego-self. As we follow him struggling down the Via Dolorosa with the weight of his cross, we too sense the heavy burden and through the experience learn that we may only enter into the kingdom of God through many trials and tribulations. When we behold him hanging on his cross and drawing his final breath, the natural man, the old self within us also dies and we receive the final mortification of the flesh.

And finally contemplating the resurrection, we remember the words of the Apostle Paul who said that we too have been raised with Christ. Our reflection on his rising from the grave imprints on us the realization that it is only through the death of the natural man that the spiritual man may be born. Later we may see him in the Upper Room sitting among the disciples, and following Thomas putting his finger into the imprints of the nails, we share in Jesus' suffering. For the words of St. Paul again ring clear when he says, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead."¹⁰³ And focusing on the last event of his life, our meditation on the story of Jesus follows him as he ascends high into the heavens and returns to the Father, and the rapture of the image moves us from the low consciousness of the earth plane into high places with Christ.

Chapter 2 – The Head (specific parts)

In the preceding chapter a focus was made on the head of man in a general way. The entire discussion more or less centered on the brain and its relation to the mind, and time was spent illustrating it through biblical imagery and metaphors. In the following discussion, the head will continue to be under consideration, but specific organs and related parts will be analyzed for their spiritual significance.

Section 1 – Hair

Focusing on the very top of the skull, it is worthwhile to take a look at hair which is the covering for the crown of the head. The symbolism around this part of the anatomy is fairly commonly understood and agreed upon. In general it is the symbol of power and strength which can be demonstrated through several biblical texts.

¹⁰³ Philippians 3:10-11

Thick, shiny, beautiful hair has often been an outward sign of internal robust health and strength, while poor, sparse, and lackluster hair can many times be a reflection of being ill. And this is generally true of the aging process when thin hair and color loss indicate a loss of stamina and strength.

That hair is the universal symbol of human power and strength is best depicted in the story of Samson in the Book of Judges. This judge of Israel was a Nazirite which means that he took a vow never to eat anything unclean, to drink any fermented drink like wine, or to ever cut his hair. Through the power of his lengthy tresses, Samson was renowned for killing a lion with his bare hands.¹⁰⁴ On other occasions he broke free from being tied with ropes as if he had been bound with charred straw and struck down a thousand enemy Philistines single-handedly.¹⁰⁵

Unfortunately for Samson, his love interests were his downfall. His companion Delilah who had been cooperating with the Philistines was able to finally wear him down and extract the secret of his strength. And so it was that while Samson was sleeping one night, his enemies cut off the 7 braids of his hair and he became as weak as any other man.¹⁰⁶ This led to his imprisonment and ultimately to his sacrificial death.

Another passage from the Old Testament that is worth mentioning concerns Absalom the son of David who was alluded to in an earlier illustration. This healthy and robust son of the king according to 2 Samuel was in all Israel the most praised and of the most handsome appearance. “From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him. Whenever he cut the hair of his head because it had become too heavy for him, he would weigh it, and its weight was about 5 pounds.”¹⁰⁷ This was to give an indication of how dense and thick was the hair of Absalom.

Due to another unfortunate sequence of events, this beloved son of David was to launch an insurrection against his father. At a point in time where it looked like the rebellion would succeed, Absalom had been riding on his mule through the forest when he passed under a large oak tree. His thick hair got caught in its branches and he was left hanging helplessly. It was then that David’s army found him and cast several javelins through his heart so that he died.¹⁰⁸ Such was the ultimate result of a dependence on human strength which was symbolized not only by Absalom’s thick hair but also by the large oak tree which is the strongest of all trees.

The hair of women is also discussed in the Bible, and in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul says that “if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her for her hair is given to her as a covering.”¹⁰⁹ In this same passage from 1 Corinthians, he goes on to allude to a woman’s hair saying, “for this cause ought the woman to have power on her head

¹⁰⁴ Judges 14:6

¹⁰⁵ Judges 15:14-16

¹⁰⁶ Judges 16:19

¹⁰⁷ 2 Samuel 14:25-26

¹⁰⁸ 2 Samuel 18:9-18

¹⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:15

because of the angels,”¹¹⁰ and so Paul makes a direct link between the object and its symbol.

Hair is also a symbol of an even more elementary idea. It is a type for animals which in distinction from humans are covered from head to toe in thick fur. At times the usage of hair in the Old Testament is a reference to the animal or lower nature of man with its instinctual desires and base appetites.

No better illustration of this concept is to be seen but in the story of Esau and his brother Jacob. They were twins being carried in the womb of their mother Rebekah, and when it was time to give birth Esau came out first and the Genesis account indicates that he was red and hairy all over. Appropriately he was named Esau which means “rough to the touch.” (And not coincidentally, his descendants the people of Seir also have the connotation of “roughness” or “hairiness.”) By contrast, Jacob the younger brother was a smooth skinned man. Esau not only looked like an animal but was close to the animals in his work as a man of the field, a hunter. Jacob on the other hand was said to be a “plain man, dwelling in tents.”¹¹¹ That these contrasts are made in this passage from Genesis supports the beliefs of the Semitic people from which it comes. For the Semites viewed hairiness as tantamount to sinfulness and encouraged depilation as a sign of repentance. The Semites conquered the Sumerians, a people who were largely covered with reddish hair a few centuries before the life of Abraham. The Semitic peoples considered the civilization of Sumer to be inferior and primitive, and along these lines, the person of Esau is painted as the antagonist in these narratives.

Esau’s association with the lower animal nature was best portrayed one day when he returned from the field famished. Dominated by his craving to satisfy his appetite, he quickly sold his birthright to his clever younger brother who shrewdly promised him a pot of stew on the spot if he would turn it over to him. That Esau despised the symbolic spiritual inheritance of his birthright was to indicate his relationship with the animal nature of man which is only interested in satisfying its own desires. The smooth skinned Jacob on the other hand represents an ambition for the spiritual and a cunning desire to achieve it through any means.

Earlier in Genesis, the allegory of man’s fall into sin alludes to the same concept. After eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the Lord pronounced a curse upon both the man and the woman for their defiant act. Immediately afterward, the scripture says that “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”¹¹² That is to say that he dressed them in animal skins to indicate that human beings share an animal body in common with the beasts of the field, and with it all of its associated cravings and desires.

In contrast to the human strength which hair is generally associated with, several passages in the Mosaic Law point out its spiritual significance. Whoever has seen an

¹¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 11:10

¹¹¹ Genesis 25:24-34

¹¹² Genesis 3:21

Orthodox Jewish Man has more than likely taken notice of his hair style. He generally has a shaved head except for the hair at the sides of his forehead and along the edge of his beard. This practice is in accordance with the instruction in Leviticus which commands, “Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.”¹¹³ The injunction was given to the common man as well as to priests.

What is probably obvious at this point in this discussion is that preserving the hair at the sides of the forehead is tantamount to growing long hair over the temple region. And so prominent hair over the human temple is a sign of spiritual strength in the home of God within us. Like the Nazirite, priests were commanded not to shave their heads or clip the edges of their beards at all. This is because the priest who represents the spiritual-self or the higher-self within man needed to epitomize spiritual strength as represented on the head.

As a final note concerning hair, we could consider a prophecy in Daniel regarding the Messiah. “... the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool.”¹¹⁴ Also repeated in the book of Revelation, the implication of white hair is to suggest purity and truth, not on the surface of the head but within the mind that it symbolizes.¹¹⁵

Section 2 – Eyes

As we all know, there are two kinds of blindness in this world, that of the physical eye and that of inner discernment. It is common speech to use the phrase “I see” when something is within physical view as well as when something has been understood or perceived. Inability to see both externally and internally is considered blindness.

Not surprisingly, the Bible’s references to blindness have more to do with lack of inner illumination than they do with external physical vision. Jesus spoke allegorically of the eyes in the gospels when he said, “Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body is also full of light. But when they are bad, your body is also full of darkness.”¹¹⁶

The physical eyes which have been called the “windows of the soul” are both the symbol and the gauge of internal sight. For not all who see clearly have inner illumination. The old saying holds true, because those with much spiritual insight cast a brilliant sheen from their eyes while those in inner darkness and weighed down by many things often appear to have dull lifeless eyes as if a film were clouding their sight.

Along these lines, the conversion of St Paul on the road to Damascus illustrates a reception of spiritual vision. After he had met Jesus on the road, he was overcome by a great light and fell to the ground. The flash of light caused him to be blind and he had to

¹¹³ Leviticus 21:5

¹¹⁴ Daniel 7:9

¹¹⁵ Revelation 1:14

¹¹⁶ Luke 11:34

be led into the city by hand. After three days, the servant of the Lord Ananias who lived in the city placed his hands on Saul's head and prayed. Then immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes so that he could see again.¹¹⁷ A membrane had been removed and external sight was miraculously restored to symbolize the development of inner illumination.

And Paul's was not the only miracle of restored vision recorded in the New Testament; Jesus performed many miracles in the land of Israel and on several occasions restored blind men to sight. He used different methods to cure incorporating both mud and saliva as a salve.¹¹⁸ What was most important about the miracles was not the restoration of the two physical eyes to sight but rather what they signified, the birth of the one spiritual eye which has been called at times the "third eye" of man.

It should be mentioned as well that the symbolic importance of physical vision was at a premium in the Old Testament also. Leviticus 21 makes a laundry list of disqualifications for those entering into the priesthood. Among them is specifically spelled out any defect of the eye or blindness.¹¹⁹ Of course the disqualification was not to be a personal reflection on the individual, but the symbolism behind the imperfection barred any such candidate.

In addition to serving as a symbol of inner vision, the eye has also been synonymous with the lust of the flesh. Returning again to the story of Joseph, when he was initially brought down to Egypt he became the servant of Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officers. The account indicates that Joseph was well-built and handsome, and as a consequence, Potiphar's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph requesting that he lie with her.¹²⁰ Though righteous Joseph refused, the situation unfortunately led to more trouble for him.

The eye is cast euphemistically as the vehicle of all lust and desire in a number of passages. One from the Proverbs relates, "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied."¹²¹ On one occasion the Lord spoke to the prophet Ezekiel using the same kind of language saying, "Son of Man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with one stroke ..."¹²² in foretelling the sudden death of his wife. The Apostle John also makes mention of the organs of sight in one of the popular verses from his first epistle, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."¹²³

Perhaps the very first link of the eye to the lust of the flesh occurred in the Garden of Eden. It was there that Eve first cast her eye upon the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge

¹¹⁷ Acts 9:18

¹¹⁸ Mark 8:23 & John 9:6

¹¹⁹ Leviticus 21:18-20

¹²⁰ Genesis 39:7

¹²¹ Proverbs 27:20

¹²² Ezekiel 24:16

¹²³ 1 John 2:16

of Good and Evil. The Genesis passage says that when the woman saw that it was pleasant to the eyes, she took the fruit and partook of it.¹²⁴

Now the scripture narrative never says what kind of fruit it was that she ate, but traditionally it has been widely held that it was an apple which may be very appropriate. The Hebrew word for apple comes from the Egyptian word Tappuah which signifies evil. In addition to this, the Latin word Malum means both apple and evil. We could also consider the consistency of the apple itself which is a very fleshy fruit with very small seeds to form a link with the desire of the flesh.

Even more than just the lust of the flesh, the eye carries another connotation in the Genesis reading, and it has to do with education. In tempting the woman, the serpent told her that God didn't want her to eat the fruit because in the day that she consumed it, her eyes would be opened, so that she and her husband would be as gods, knowing good and evil. And the woman seeing that the tree would make her wise took of its fruit.

All of this perhaps ties in with an old tradition which has in recent times gone by the wayside. In times past, a child returning to school in the Fall would traditionally bring an apple to the teacher. We could also express the identity of the student as a pupil, a word which is not commonly used anymore. In this way the early school tradition is very analogous to the Genesis account in which we also find two pupils (Adam and Eve) along with an apple and the teacher who would bring them wisdom through eating the fruit. All of this of course happened in the setting which we describe as the "Fall of Man."

It may be more than coincidence to note that several biblical texts make reference to the Genesis fruit in a euphemism which the Lord uses on a number of occasions. In Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Proverbs he refers to Israel as the "apple of his eye."¹²⁵ This is naturally a reference to the eye's pupil, the part of the eye through which light (understanding) enters. It is an appropriate name when we consider that a pupil or a student receives knowledge from his teacher. In this way we may understand a student bringing the teacher an apple as identifying him as being ready to receive knowledge from his instructor.

Section 3 – Ears and Nose

Not unlike the eye which can be associated with spiritual blindness, the ear of man may also be connected with spiritual deafness. Analogous to the eye as symbol of inner illumination and insight, the ear also serves to represent spiritual perception and understanding.

In addressing the hardness of heart that continually plagued the Israelites, the prophet Isaiah spoke to the people saying, "Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving."¹²⁶ His curse upon the children of Israel was as if to say

¹²⁴ Genesis 3:1-7

¹²⁵ Deuteronomy 32:10, Psalm 17:8, Proverbs 7:2

¹²⁶ Isaiah 6:9

that the children of Israel had perfectly working external senses but lacked their spiritual counterparts to make any connection with God.

Jeremiah used the same kind of imagery when he chided the people of God telling them that they have “eyes but do not see” and “ears but do not hear.”¹²⁷ He goes on to characterize their ears by calling them uncircumcised to underscore their inability to perceive anything that God was trying to get through to them before he would cart them off to exile.¹²⁸

Jesus employed the same kind of language in the gospels where after making a teaching said at times, “He who has ears, let him hear.”¹²⁹ He often spoke in parables which made use of shrouded language and would make a statement like this to indicate that not everyone would understand save those who had the spiritual faculties to perceive it.

Miracles of hearing are also analogous to those of sight, and Jesus seemed to heal the deaf as much as he did the blind. When John the Baptist was in prison and sent his disciples to Jesus to inquire if he were really the Christ, Jesus sent back word to him saying, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”¹³⁰

Though the ear is most often associated with hearing, it also may serve as a symbol of obedience. The Hebrew definition of the verb “to hear” implies not only the idea of listening but also obeying. This is embodied in the famous Jewish “Shema” prayer taken from Deuteronomy which says, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord thy God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”¹³¹ In this context, “Hear” has the sense of a command that must be followed.

The connection to obedience may also be seen in the Mosaic Law when instruction is given for the consecration of priests. The ordinance concerning this ritual involved the slaughter of a ram. After it was killed, some of the blood would be taken and applied to the lobe of the priest’s right ear, to the thumb of his right hand and to the big toe of his right foot.¹³² In this way, the blood on the ear was to symbolize the vow of obedience that the priest was making in the consecrated life.

The ear as symbol of obedience may be seen in the law concerning Hebrew slaves as well. In the book of Exodus, Moses tells the Israelites that if they buy a slave, he is to serve for six years and then be released in the seventh year. But if in the seventh year, the servant decides that he would like to continue on with his master continually and shall

¹²⁷ Jeremiah 5:21

¹²⁸ Jeremiah 6:10

¹²⁹ Matthew 11:15

¹³⁰ Matthew 11:5

¹³¹ Deuteronomy 6:4

¹³² Exodus 29:20

say, “I love my master ... and do not want to go free, then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.”¹³³ And in this way, the slave illustrates a perpetual vow of obedience toward the master he loves.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the ear serves as the primary vehicle of faith. In Paul’s message to the Romans, he mentions that hearing is the main way that we receive faith to believe the good news. In speaking of evangelizing the masses, he says, “How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? For “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”¹³⁴

Now to close out this brief section, a few words may be said about the nose. There are few references to this organ in the Bible, but those that exist allude to the nose and its relation to breathing. Early in the Genesis account of creation, the narrative says, “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”¹³⁵

Job, the servant of God also made this connection when he said in one of his many lengthy discourses, “As long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit.”¹³⁶ In both of these passages, breath is equated to spirit in the same way that Jesus related the wind to spirit.

The nose as the organ of breathing is therefore associated with the ability to receive an infusion of God’s life or spirit. In one of the esoteric portions of the Pentateuch, the section which describes disqualifications for those entering into the priesthood, one particular verse draws out the symbolism of the nose. In speaking of body defects that disqualify would-be priests, the verse says, “For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous.”¹³⁷ In this case, the reference to a flat nose alludes to an obstruction to breathing and therefore an inability to draw in the life giving spirit of God.

Section 4 – Tongue

As the eyes are to sight and the ears are to hearing, our first association of the tongue is to the sense of taste. Even the Bible makes use of this sense as a spiritual symbol in the Psalms where it says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.”¹³⁸ The experience of God is related in this kind of a verse to the pleasure of tasting something sweet and wholesome.

¹³³ Exodus 21:6

¹³⁴ Romans 10:14-17

¹³⁵ Genesis 2:7

¹³⁶ Job 27:3

¹³⁷ Leviticus 21:18

¹³⁸ Psalm 34:8

And so it is with all of the senses which serve as earthly types of feeling intimacy with God. In the longest chapter of the Bible, Psalm 119, the author again alludes to the sense of taste where he says, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.”¹³⁹ The writer of the Hebrews uses the same kind of euphemistic language in the Book of Hebrews where it speaks of those who have experienced communion with God as “those who have tasted of the heavenly gift.”¹⁴⁰

But the association of the tongue with taste is by comparison a minor theme when compared with its broader usage in the scriptures. By far, the most common biblical connection of the tongue is to a sharp sword and its use as a fighting implement. In this context it is used in the famous “full armor of God” passage from Ephesians which was introduced at the beginning of this book as the “sword of the Spirit.”¹⁴¹

Many texts link the tongue with a sword if not directly then implied such as in the Apostle John’s vision of Jesus in Revelation. In the first chapter of the book, John sees Jesus with seven stars in his right hand and a sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth.¹⁴² In the Old Testament there is a passage from the prophecies of Jeremiah in which the prophet sees his enemies conspiring to attack him stating, “Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.”¹⁴³ A Psalm of David makes the association directly in speaking of his enemies who surround him. The men that lay in wait to attack him like lions were said to have teeth that were spears and arrows and tongues that were sharp swords.¹⁴⁴

A sword is perhaps a very fitting symbol for the tongue when we consider that they can both cut sharply and slay. For this reason we use an expression for when someone has spoken harshly to say that he had “cutting remarks.” Like a sword which can destroy, the tongue has the power to kill someone’s spirit after a verbal assault. Often the damage that is done is much worse than if the individual had suffered a physical attack. Verbal wounds, especially in childhood can linger for a lifetime if not addressed by the victim.

Like a sword, the tongue also has two sides to cut in both directions. This property ties in well with the Proverb which states that “death and life are in the power of the tongue.”¹⁴⁵ The tongue has the power to speak good or evil and to pronounce blessing or cursing. It is capable of vocalizing both positive and negative remarks.” Along these lines, an expression exists to indicate when someone is uttering conflicting statements with the tongue. We say that “he is speaking out of both sides of his mouth.” It may be more than coincidental to note that of all creatures, the serpent has a forked tongue to underscore the devil’s role in mixing the truth with lies.

¹³⁹ Psalm 119:103

¹⁴⁰ Hebrews 6:4

¹⁴¹ Ephesians 6:17

¹⁴² Revelation 1:16

¹⁴³ Jeremiah 18:18

¹⁴⁴ Psalm 57:4

¹⁴⁵ Proverbs 18:21

That the scriptures proclaim that life and death are in the tongue is no exaggeration for the sake of effect. The power of the spoken word is great with a far reaching impact not only for others who hear our words but for ourselves. Like meditation which is a force that has the power to reshape the mind of man as well as his surroundings, the exercise of the spoken word can accomplish much the same thing when steered in a particular direction.

The command of the spoken word has been illustrated through a string of miracles and supernatural activity in the pages of the Bible. At the dawn of Creation, it was God who spoke and caused all things to come into being.¹⁴⁶ Of course the language of the Genesis account is anthropomorphism, since God does not have a mouth that he should speak. But nonetheless the text establishes a pattern for man's spiritual understanding and portrays the creative energy of the tongue to bring things into being.

When the children of Israel were in the desert of Zin on their long journey to the Promised Land and lacking fresh water to drink, God approached Moses and told him what to do. He instructed him to "speak to the rock before [the eyes of the people,] and it shall give forth his water, and you shall bring forth to them water out of the rock: so you shall give the congregation and their beasts to drink."¹⁴⁷

Then in the New Testament the accounts of Jesus' miracles attest to the potency of the spoken word. It was the faith of the centurion who is still celebrated in many liturgies to this day that reminds us of this power. When his servant lay ill, he determined to find Jesus to solicit healing. Out of humility he refused the Lord's offer to come back to his home to help but in great faith told Jesus, "I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant shall be healed."¹⁴⁸

Jesus also displayed this principle to mankind in his other miracles whether commanding the wind and the waves to die down or casting out demons. He simply said, "Peace! Be still"¹⁴⁹ and the waters became as still as glass, and on another occasion a meager word was all that was necessary to expel a legion of demons out of a person and into a herd of swine.¹⁵⁰ Such was the power and authority of Jesus' spoken word, a model for all of us his disciples. If we have enough faith, we shall according to the master's words be able to say to a mountain, "Go throw yourself into the sea,"¹⁵¹ and it shall be done.

Turning to the Old Testament, a tribute to the power of the spoken word comes to us in imagery from a passage in the Book of Judges and involves Samson, the judge who was often moved by God with superhuman strength. In the story we are considering, Samson had just learned that the Philistines had burnt his wife and father-in-law to death as an act of retaliation. Samson seeking vengeance came to a place called Ramath Lehi where he

¹⁴⁶ Genesis 1

¹⁴⁷ Numbers 20:8

¹⁴⁸ Matthew 8:8

¹⁴⁹ Mark 4:39

¹⁵⁰ Mark 5:13

¹⁵¹ Matthew 21:21

picked up a donkey's jawbone and struck down 1000 Philistines. After this great accomplishment, he was extremely thirsty to the point of death and feared he fall back into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines. So God opened up a hollow place in Lehi, and Samson drank and his strength returned. The spring that God brought forth was then subsequently named En Hakkore.¹⁵²

The first interesting thing to say about this story is that like many biblical accounts, there is pun and double entendre present. The name of the place Lehi means "jawbone" in Hebrew and was appropriately named to commemorate this event and brings with it a connotation of determination or strength. Ramath which is very similar to Ramah, the home town of the prophet Samuel means "heights" and as has been discussed previously, any allusion to high places, hills, or mountains may be understood allegorically as a state of high consciousness in God. The compound place name Ramath Lehi may then be interpreted as a lifting up in consciousness of determination and strength qualities. But whenever one is lifted up close to God, a great spiritual thirst and craving emerges for the living water, the divine thoughts of God which is our spiritual life-force. Without it, one can fall backward on the path (into the hands of the uncircumcised.)

That this narrative ties in with our subject of the tongue and the power of the spoken word may be seen by considering that this spring of water came forth out of Lehi. It is to say that the living water proceeded out of the jaw (or man's mouth) from which words of truth proceed which are renewing and satisfying. The account suggests that this water came up out of the hollows which represent our inner recesses where according to Jesus, "springs of living water will emerge." Finally, we learned that the name of the spring was called En Hakkore which translates in Hebrew as "fountain of one calling." It is therefore a symbol of man calling out to God, the positive affirmative prayer that results in quickening of new life.

The audible word always has an effect whether perceived or not. It ripples out from the speaker and goes to work producing an effect whether proximate or distant. Such is the idea embodied in the words of Isaiah, where the Lord indicates that his word would never be uttered in vain but would follow through on the agenda for which it was sent. In chapter 55, he declares, "So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."¹⁵³

Like meditation which must be practiced as a spiritual discipline before the desired object materializes, the exercise of the spoken word must also be done repetitively until it accomplishes the longed for effect. This is especially true when it comes to the transformation of the mind and spiritual progress.

There is an old saying that suggests that if you tell somebody something enough times, whether it is true or not, eventually by the sheer repetition, he will believe what he has been told. This has always been true in the world of political propaganda where

¹⁵² Judges 15:15-19

¹⁵³ Isaiah 55:10-11

governments desiring the people to buy into something have repeated it continually until it was accepted. That this strategy works is the result of a fixed spiritual law that we all can learn from.

The concept of verbal repetition particularly in prayer is an ancient practice, not unique to the Christian faith but incorporated in many of the world's major religions. We see it employed in the Psalms of David particularly in Psalm 136 where the refrain "His love endures for ever" is echoed over and over again.¹⁵⁴ This style known as litany or mantra has been used in praise and prayer for ages. The idea is that the repetition of phrases attaches a large amount of spiritual power to the words being said, and this is especially true when the words have been in use by many people for a long time.

This principle of repetition can have an enormous transformational effect on a personal level. In reprogramming our own minds, we must stop wondering why we make no spiritual progress when we constantly utter negative statements. Rather than continually saying, "I am not worthy" or "I am not holy" or "I am a terrible sinner," we should shift gears 180 degrees and begin uttering on a regular basis just the opposite. This is not to say that we should be in denial of our current sinfulness. We always need to have the humility before God to realize that we are in reality less than perfect, but we will do very well to say boldly, "I am worthy" and "I am holy" and "I am pure" and "I am loving" because in making these positive affirmations we will eventually believe them and we shall become in reality what we practice by constant profession. Like the power of meditation, the power of the spoken word will go to work in the spiritual realm until the reality of what has been spoken materializes.

This is why vocal prayer is such a beneficial tool for those seeking spiritual gain. For in vocal prayer many often recite creeds and statements of faith that are based in truth. Even though we may not believe them when first we begin these prayers, the constant repetition will make us believe them in the end. This concept has been put no better than by Mother Teresa the great saint of Calcutta in the last century. She said, "The fruit of prayer is faith" and this is of course because we pray what we ultimately desire to believe. The Church has always had a Latin phrase to describe this called "lex credendi, lex orandi" which simply means that the rule of prayer is the rule of faith. The Church prays what she believes (or desires to believe.)

The spoken word that we utter with the tongue is also portrayed using other imagery in the scriptures. John the Evangelist made such an association in the Book of Revelation when he described his heavenly visions. He recounted, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me."¹⁵⁵ A little earlier in the book, he reported a similar experience saying, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Psalm 136

¹⁵⁵ Revelation 4:1

¹⁵⁶ Revelation 1:10

In these contexts, the trumpet is meant to signify a vibratory force which carries with it a certain power. As an instrument the trumpet alludes to the power of the tongue especially in music or singing. Music has always been a great treasure of the church for centuries because of its great spiritual effects. It has the potential to change a mood very quickly and penetrate to the deep places of the heart that the spoken word alone does not go. It was for this reason that the great Saint Augustine said, “Whoever sings prays twice” to indicate the double effect of words carried on the back of song.

The transformational energy of this vibratory force may be seen in several Old Testament passages. Early in Joshua is recorded the conquest of Jericho or the “Moon City.” As alluded to in the last chapter, it is a symbol of the natural mind of man. As a high walled city, it depicts the stronghold that is characteristic of his hardened heart; ever resisting God’s softening hand.

Yet this city was to be given into the hands of the Israelites. It would become the domain of the spiritual man. The Lord commanded Joshua to march around the city with all of the armed men once a day for six days in silence. He was told to have seven priests to carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times with the priests blowing the trumpets. And so it was on the final march around the city that the priests gave a very long blast on the horns and the people began to shout loudly so that the walls of the great city collapsed. Then the Israelites ran in to victory.¹⁵⁷

Like the energy of a high pitched sound to shatter glass and break through some barrier, so the wail of the trumpet and the shout of the people with their vibratory power were able to crack through the walls of Jericho and break down the ramparts of the city. Such is the need of the human heart which so often requires the power of music to penetrate in and effect change.

Similar imagery is seen in the Book of Judges concerning the defeat of the Midianites at the hand of Gideon. At the beginning of the narrative, Gideon plans to attack the enemy with a force of 32,000 men, but the Lord told him that he had way too many. God sifted the men down to a meager 300 for he said that he did not want Israel to boast that her own strength saved her from her foe, and this of course was to demonstrate the power of God.

Rather than with swords and clubs, Gideon and his 300 men would then proceed to overtake the Midianite army with a trumpet in one hand and a torch in another. Sneaking up on the enemy’s camp, Gideon gave the word to the men to blow their trumpets and then smash the clay jars in which they had concealed their torches to light up the night. Then while holding their posts, they shouted, “For the Lord and for Gideon.” By the hand of the Lord, terror was struck in the hearts of the Midianites and they began to flee turning on one another and striking each other down with their own swords. And so without an Israelite lifting one sword, the entire army was defeated.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Joshua 6:15-20

¹⁵⁸ Judges 7:16-21

What is noteworthy about the passage is not just the use of trumpets and the vibratory force that they represent to conquer the enemy, but the mention of the jars in which the torches were kept until the time was ready. Following the Apostle Paul's language in 2 Corinthians, mankind is compared with these vessels where he speaks of the glory of God concealed within people. He affirms, "We have this treasure in jars of clay."¹⁵⁹ Of course this metaphor is very appropriate in light of the Genesis creation account where the body container of man is forged from the earth or the clay. When Gideon's men blasted their trumpets, the jars of clay were subsequently broken to illustrate once again this musical power to break down the heart and mind of man, the process of conversion that all must pass through. Once the jars were smashed the torches that were concealed inside were uncovered. The light that was hidden in the darkness broke forth, a beautiful image of another spiritual truth; for it is the divine spark or flame which is latently buried deep within man, a part of God himself which waits in the darkness until the time it should be revealed.

Now continuing on the theme of the trumpet and the idea of prayer in the form of song that has just been developed, it is important to mention in this context that the organ of the tongue has a natural link with praise. In this way, it can be connected with Judah (meaning "to celebrate") one of the 12 tribes to represent the mental faculty of praise that was alluded to in the last chapter. It is extremely important to develop this faculty for our own spiritual growth, but of equal value is the need to develop this mental power for our own defense when the forces of evil attack and when life throws us a curve ball.

We are amenable to praise when things are going well and when we are feeling in a good mood, but when things are not going our way, it is not our first instinct to begin praising God. Even though we may not feel like worshipping him at times, the words of David in the Psalms as well as numerous other examples of the people of faith encourage us to praise God continually. David says, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."¹⁶⁰ He doesn't discriminate between good times and bad but makes a point of indicating that it should be all the time, a background constant independent of circumstances. In Psalm 42 David appears sad or depressed and he laments, "Why are you downcast O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."¹⁶¹

After David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, she conceived a child and after it was born the child became very ill as a punishment for his sin. During this time David fasted and prayed that God would be merciful to the child, but after seven days it died. The servants of David were afraid to tell him the bad news fearing that the king would be angry but to their surprise when David learned of his son's death, he got up and washed, put on clean clothes, and then went to the house of the Lord to worship. In a time when

¹⁵⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:7

¹⁶⁰ Psalm 34:1

¹⁶¹ Psalm 42:5

the natural response might be to become overwhelmingly sad and depressed, David did the counterintuitive thing and began to worship God.¹⁶²

Perhaps he knew that praising God was not only the right thing to do but also very importantly was the only way that he would be able to weather his own distress without falling into resentment, anger, or depression. But why is this so? What is the nature of praise that it should buoy our spirits in the time of trouble?

We can think of how this works by a spiritual analogy. Each one of us is connected to God by a channel (or aqueduct) like a river or stream. This link to God though always present may at times be like a mighty torrent and at other times like just a small trickle depending on our degree of closeness to God. The water that is flowing is the life-giving force of God (or the flow of divine thoughts) that proceeds from his own eternal being. This idea is depicted in the final chapter of the book of Revelation where the Apostle John sees that “the river of the water of life was flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city.”¹⁶³ It is this channel or link to God that sustains us at all times without which we would sink low and fall. The power of praise lies in the fact that it tends to widen this channel so that what might have been a trickle can turn into a formidable stream. The act of praising God strengthens this link to him and allows us to readily soak up his life force within us.

But how would we define this praise? What do we mean by saying that we are praising God? The definition may be broad but the essence of it may be captured in the name of Judah which we have just defined as “celebration.” And this is none other than the celebration of our connection to God. The act of praise revitalizes and renews our link with the Ancient One from whom we all have our being. And that Judah was such an important tribe in the scheme of God’s plan, one of the largest from whom the Savior descended, we may also infer that praise needs to be a big part of our own spiritual lives.

On an even more fundamental level, praise as a celebration of our link with God may be understood as an affirmation of spiritual truth. It focuses on who God is and his divine nature. It meditates on his mighty deeds and actions. It recalls our own interaction and relationship with the Lord of all creation. The remembrance and reiteration of spiritual truth recharges us and puts everything into right perspective including all of the problems that we have blown out of proportion. Satan often works to blow up our issues much bigger than they really are causing us to despair and lose hope. The recollection of truth that happens in the midst of praise has a way of making us settle down and smile in the midst of our own trials and temptations as we again catch a glimpse of who God is and who we are in relation to him.

Others have experienced the secret of praise through their own crises and in the Old Testament there is probably no better character than Job to epitomize the lesson of praise in the midst of trial. His testing began at the request of Satan who charged that Job was a friend of God because of the material benefits that the Lord bestowed upon him. God

¹⁶² 2 Samuel 12:13-22

¹⁶³ Revelation 22:1-2

gave permission and Satan saw to it that Job lost his enormous wealth of livestock through natural disaster and attacks by raiders. And to make matters worse the roof collapsed upon all of his children while they were feasting together in one of the sibling's homes. The reaction of Job like the reaction of David was once again counterintuitive and perhaps we could even call it unnatural. Rather than raise an angry fist to God for depriving him of his wellbeing and his heirs, the passage says that he fell to the ground in worship and said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."¹⁶⁴

Section 5 – Neck

To close out this study of the head of man and its symbolic imagery, it would not be complete unless we took a quick look at one last important part of its anatomy. Though not prevalently referred to in the Bible, the neck is nonetheless a significant part of man's frame. As the hinge upon which the head turns, the neck determines which way the head moves and in which direction it shall cast its gaze. As such, the neck symbolizes man's seat of power, because it controls every movement of the governor of the body which rests upon it.

A short story that portrays this idea is found in the account of Joshua and his conquest of Canaan. In one episode Joshua conquered five Amorite kings who had made war on him. He defeated their armies, but captured the kings alive. Before putting them to death though, he commanded his captains to come and put their feet on the necks of the kings.¹⁶⁵ In much the same manner that a hunter who shoots a deer will put a foot on its neck as a sign of taking power over the beast, Joshua's captains illustrate the removal of power from the enemies of Israel. The practice of standing on the neck of an enemy was a recognized way of enforcing submission in antiquity, of which there are illustrations in both Mesopotamian and Egyptian records.

A number of times in the Old Testament, the Lord would refer to the neck of Israel in a negative way. From the time that they were in the desert until the time that they were ultimately exiled, he would label them a "stiff-necked" people. Moses addressed the people in the desert before he died saying, "For I know your rebellion, and your stiff neck: behold while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?"¹⁶⁶ Later in Isaiah's prophecy the Lord spoke to Israel before the shadow of exile lamenting, "I knew that you were obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass."¹⁶⁷

In these contexts, the stiff neck of God's people is synonymous with rebelliousness and stubbornness. It refers to their obstinate nature which refused him over and over again in their turbulent history. The stiffness that characterized Israel's neck also carries the sense

¹⁶⁴ Job 1

¹⁶⁵ Joshua 10:22-24

¹⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 31:27

¹⁶⁷ Isaiah 48:4

of inflexibility. As the part of the body that controls the movement of the head, we can picture the people of Israel with their head fixed in one hard and fast direction. Like a horse with blinders on, the people of God had an inflexible iron neck so that they could only look in one way. We could say then that they had “tunnel vision” which is a severe limitation on the road of spiritual progress. It is tantamount to having a closed mind which is stuck fostering and nursing a rigid set of ideas.

The universal truth that God tries to convey to us comes from many different directions and doesn't fit into the one set framework in which we would often like to box it in. Like the diamond which has many different faces, the truth may only be known through the flexibility of seeing new thoughts and ideas from different angles than we are accustomed to. It is through a pliable neck that allows the head or mind to look in new directions and see from a variety of angles that true knowledge of God may be attained.

When a stiff-neck has overtaken us and we become set in our ways, God out of his great love begins to take action to remedy the situation, for he will not sit by and leave us in our hardened way forever. His attempts to cure this ailment of the soul are seen in a few examples in the Old Testament, one of which comes from the Law of Moses found in Exodus. In a section which talks about redemption, the instruction says, “Redeem the firstborn donkey with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck.”¹⁶⁸

The imagery in this short passage indicates that if redemption or spiritual improvement is not possible, the last resort is to break the neck of the animal. When our necks have become as hard as an iron sinew, sometimes God has no choice but to break it. For in breaking it, the neck is released from its frozen state and is once again free to move in all directions. When the neck is loosed from its unpliant state, it gives the head an opportunity to sweep a full 360 degrees and comprehend the eternal truth which is typified by a circle without beginning or end.

One other passage about the breaking of a neck appears in the Old Testament and it concerns the high priest Eli, the man who trained Samuel in the way of the Lord. Perhaps he started out well, but he committed a very large sin of omission regarding the behavior of his two sons Hophni and Phinehas. They served under him and would be his successors except they were a great embarrassment to the priesthood. It was their custom to gorge themselves on the sacrifices offered by the Israelites, and on top of that they would routinely sleep with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

For this great reproach, the Lord condemned Eli and his whole household for turning a blind eye. And in actuality the man was blind as recorded in the text, for “he was 98 years old and his eyes were set that he could not see.” In one day the Lord put to death both of his wicked sons in battle with the Philistines, and at the same time the Ark of the Covenant was captured. When the terrible news reached Eli's ears, he was overwhelmed and “fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died for he was an old man and very heavy.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Exodus 24:20

¹⁶⁹ 1 Samuel 4:14-18

Chapter 3 – The Upper Trunk (or Chest)

Having completed a survey of the head and its constitutive parts, we will now make our way down into man's trunk. In particular we will be looking at the upper torso which we also call the chest. The study will focus on a few of the organs and parts that are found above the diaphragm and contained within the ribs. Before actually looking at those members though, another of the four basic natural elements will be introduced because of its strong relation to those body parts. Back in Chapter 1, the element of water was presented as a symbol for the mind of man and its thought processes. In a similar way the element of fire will be associated as the ancient symbol for the heart and emotions. Fire will be presented as a general biblical device not only in relation to the core of man's being but also to some of the other systems that are housed within the chest.

Section 1 – Fire

Back in the Book of Kings there is recorded the story of the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel. As Israel's faithful man of God he appeared on the mountain with 400 prophets of the false god Baal, a deity of the Canaanites. The occasion of their encounter at this high place was to have a showdown to determine who the real God was. The face-off was to show once and for all if Yahweh was God of Israel or his competition Baal. The followers of Baal were allowed to go first and they cried out to their god, begging and pleading with him to accept the sacrifice that they had erected on their altar. They even went so far as to cut themselves with knives to offer him some incentive to show a sign.

After a long while, their efforts proved futile and it was Elijah's turn to call upon his Deity. The prophet of God really wanted to make sure that Yahweh had to go out of his way to prove himself to the people, and so Elijah ordered that a trench be dug around his sacrifice which lay upon the stone altar. Then he instructed that the sacrifice be drenched with buckets of water, and he so deluged his offering that the water overflowed filling up the trench around the altar. Then he called upon the Lord, and fire fell from heaven consuming up the sacrifice and licking up all the water that soaked the offering and in the moat besides.¹⁷⁰

What was demonstrated that day was not only the superiority of the Lord over Baal, but a spiritual principle that is a recurring theme throughout the scriptures. The illustration of Elijah's duel was to depict that fire always follows water in the process of salvation. John the Baptist who was the forerunner of the Christ said to his followers, "I baptize you with water, but one comes after me who will baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire."¹⁷¹

In a mystical sense, there are two baptisms on the journey to God, one with water which is later followed by one with fire. Using the imagery of Chapter 1, the water of baptism is the infusion of divine thought into the mind, the revelation needed to change the waters

¹⁷⁰ 1 Samuel 18:22-38

¹⁷¹ Matthew 3:11

in the brain from carnal to divine, and this baptism is the necessary precursor to the fire baptism which is celebrated in various forms throughout the scriptures. While water baptism may be equated to the gentle cleansing of the mind, the baptism by fire may be compared to the radical and often painful purification of the heart. (And much more will be said about this shortly.)

John the Baptist did indeed baptize with water throughout his ministry and many of the disciples of the Lord had first received his baptism, but it wasn't until the Day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit descended upon those gathered in the Upper Room. The 120 who were assembled that day felt the powerful rushing wind that filled that place. Cloven tongues of fire appeared over their heads and they began to boldly proclaim the greatness of God as the Spirit gave them utterance. What were formerly sheepish followers of Jesus, fearing for their lives became zealous and bold witnesses of the Lord.¹⁷²

So it is with the fire baptism which we also may call the Spirit baptism, because it brings with it a great power, a great zeal, and an intense love. It is the baptism of holy passion and desire, of great joy and excitement, an experience that only follows after time from the relatively sedated and passive baptism by water.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, imagery surrounding these two baptisms is portrayed under various shadows and types. When the Lord led the Israelites out of Egypt, he promised to be with them as they made their long journey to the Promised Land. It is recorded in Exodus that the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud by day to guide them on their way and then in a pillar of fire to give them light by night.¹⁷³ Clouds are of course made up of water droplets and so we see a cloaked image of the water preceding the fire.

Earlier in our discussion of the mind, we took a look at the temple within man and began to compare it with the physical temple that was used by the Jews in ancient times. It was mentioned that the first object a priest would come to was a bronze basin for ceremonial washing which was a symbol of baptism. After the servant of God cleansed himself in this laver, he would then proceed to go to the bronze altar upon which he would offer up his sacrifice in the perpetually burning fire. And so is depicted again the water preceding the fire.

Finally, there is an eschatological illustration that is very appropriate to highlight the understanding of these two baptisms. Very early on in Genesis, when men had become very wicked, the Lord decided that he would put an end to all flesh. In the first recorded worldwide destruction of mankind, the Flood came upon the land to purify all wickedness and renew the face of the earth.¹⁷⁴ The cleansing depicted by this catastrophic event has historically been understood as a symbol of baptism which washes us clean from sin.

¹⁷² Acts 2

¹⁷³ Exodus 13:21-22

¹⁷⁴ Genesis 6

Though it is important to mention that the Flood is really just the first cataclysmic event to wipe out evil from the face of the earth. The scriptures foretell the second destruction of the earth in an even more potent way. The Apostle Peter prophesied about the Great Day of the Lord when he portended, “The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”¹⁷⁵

So the first time God destroyed the earth with water, but the second time he will do it with fire, and we have embedded once again in some shrouded imagery the concept that water precedes fire on the path to salvation.

Now the fire of love that comes through the baptism of fire is not something that happens overnight. It is not particularly a spontaneous event or a sudden change within an individual after experiencing the waters of baptism. In reality it is a process as all things are a process in which we step by step come closer to God. As the baptism with water is a cleansing event, so too is the baptism with fire but in a much more radical way that often involves much pain. And it should become clear that the infusion of divine thought into the mind that is typified by baptism becomes the necessary precursor of strength to weather the firestorm that ensues.

Jesus taught many parables in the gospels, many of which had to do with punishment. On one occasion he talked about pruning branches off of a tree and casting them into the flames. He said specifically, “Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”¹⁷⁶ By this he meant to indicate that all of us who are yet in a state of imperfection and still working through sin require his chastisement, and it is through the symbolic vehicle of fire that he accomplishes this.

The fire that he sends our way comes in many forms but represents among other things the suffering, the testing, and the trials of this life which prove us and make us worthy to enter into eternal life. The fire is an instrument of purification and cleansing to rid mankind of its attachment to earthly pleasures and worldly longings. And very importantly, it is through the vehicle of trial that we acquire the virtues necessary to function in the heavenly realms among others obedience, patience, and perseverance. For the Apostle Paul tells us that “we must go through much tribulation to enter the kingdom of God.”¹⁷⁷ The illustration of a forest fire which is often seen on the surface as a wild and uncontrolled destructive force should really be interpreted as a great blessing. We know that it consumes all of the old stagnant and dead vegetation and allows new growth to occur which otherwise would be impossible. And so it is with the fires that afflict people in the course of their lives.

The metaphor of a tree to symbolize the members of the human race was not only a device of Jesus’ but was also an image used throughout the Old Testament. More will be said about this in another section, but for the sake of illustration, it is appropriate to consider here a short account from the book of Exodus. Before Moses became leader of

¹⁷⁵ 2 Peter 3:10

¹⁷⁶ Matthew 3:10

¹⁷⁷ Acts 14:22

Israel, he journeyed alone in the wilderness of Sinai and at one point came across the famous Burning Bush. The miraculous tree was a wonder to him as it was ablaze with fire but was not getting consumed.¹⁷⁸ The supernatural event was meant to signify a deeper truth than just a marvelous sign to Moses. The bush is a type of man who goes through the process of purification and the flames that envelope it may be called “friendly fire” because they burn without destroying.

The fire is God himself who in the early years of our spiritual journey [with great imperfections] causes us much pain and torment upon contact. Later, as we advance beyond the power of the lower nature to a higher spiritual state, what was once the fire of pain and trial mutates into the fire of love and zeal. St Francis of Assisi had put this well when he said, “God is a consuming fire; he burns and we burn with him.”

Francis’ mystical observation was not just his unique idea but was rooted in the scriptures for we read in Malachi that “[God] will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap.”¹⁷⁹ In the epistle to the Hebrews, the writer exhorts, “Therefore since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire.”¹⁸⁰

The theme of the Burning Bush continued in various forms throughout the Old Testament, and perhaps one other noteworthy episode to mention was a narrative from the Book of Daniel. When the children of Israel were in Babylon, it was imposed upon them to worship false gods and images made by men. Three brave souls who dared defy this law of the land found themselves in a great deal of trouble. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were sentenced to die in a fiery furnace that was heated 7 times hotter than normal. So overwhelming were the flames that the man who stoked the fire was overcome himself, but as to the fate of the three young men not a hair of their head was singed nor was smoke upon their clothing.

The king who watched the attempted execution noted that beside the three Israelites in the furnace was also one who looked like a “Son of Man.”¹⁸¹ That is to say that the king had a vision of the Son of God. Jesus was in the flames with the men, and he not only walked through the fire with them, he was the fire itself. This supernatural encounter was to corroborate the words of Isaiah who described the period of testing in man’s life. Speaking for the Lord, he says, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”¹⁸²

The purification by fire through which all must pass is associated with a particular time period. It is the span of time that we call night, because we often feel enveloped with darkness when we are suffering intense affliction or are at the heaviest time of testing. It

¹⁷⁸ Exodus 3:1-3

¹⁷⁹ Malachi 3:2

¹⁸⁰ Hebrews 12:29

¹⁸¹ Daniel 3:19-25

¹⁸² Isaiah 43:2-3

is night, because we cannot see our way and often do not know the way out of the bind we find ourselves in. It is in such a time that God is at work more than we realize and inner changes are happening within the soul.

This idea is depicted in a number of passages, but one early in Genesis brings out the point. When Abraham had entered the land of Canaan from his native Babylon, the Lord made a covenant with him and promised him the whole land of Canaan for his descendants. Abraham offered a sacrifice to the Lord, but then as the sun was setting, he “fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.” The Lord spoke to Abraham in his dream foretelling that his descendants would first be slaves for 400 years in Egypt before returning to take the land. Then when the sun had fully set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces of Abraham’s sacrifice.¹⁸³

The narrative illustrates that it is the time when darkness falls and night ensues that the fire comes. It is the time of dread and terror, the period of afflictions and trial when God passes through our midst with his blazing torch. This fire must burn all through the night until the morning comes. In the Mosaic Law found in Leviticus are laid down instructions for a Burnt Offering. Whoever had sinned and was seeking to make atonement would present an animal for the priests to sacrifice. The offering was to be consumed in the fire and was “to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night, till morning, and the fire was to be kept burning on the altar.”¹⁸⁴

A similar notion is also found in the Passover story. It was at twilight that the lamb was sacrificed and the people were commanded to consume it, but not leave any of it until the morning.¹⁸⁵ This is because all of our imperfections and the flaws of our lower nature need to be dealt with during the night. Nothing can linger at the dawn, for when the morning comes, so does the light, and we emerge from our trial to a higher plane which was in formation all throughout the dark night. This idea is reinforced by a single verse from the Psalms which promises, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”¹⁸⁶

A beautiful hymn of the Orthodox Catholic Church may well sum up this concept of night which has also been called the Dark Night of the Soul by famous mystics like St. John of the Cross:

We sought Thee, O God, in the realms of Light,
With Thy Seraph hosts around Thee;
'Mid the radiant forms of Spirits bright,
And lo, in the dark we found Thee.

When sorrow and grief were on the land
And we writhed in the depths below Thee,

¹⁸³ Genesis 15:9-17

¹⁸⁴ Leviticus 6:9

¹⁸⁵ Numbers 9:12

¹⁸⁶ Psalm 30:5

It was under the shadow of Thy Hand
That our souls began to know Thee.

And we found in that hour the key of life,
As we bowed our heads before Thee;
It is only through suffering, toil and strife
That we learn how man should adore Thee.

Amid the darkness, sorrow and pain,
We strove in our hearts to defy Thee,
Or sought from the darkness to flee again,
Or feigned in the world to deny Thee.

Yet we knew in our hearts in the deepest night,
When the shadows were all around Thee,
We needed Thee more in the dark than light,
And therefore it was that we found Thee.

AMEN.

Now the fires of affliction that plague mankind come in a variety of forms, but often it is the trial of deprivation, a period of going without creature comforts and consolations. It is a time of dryness where there is no water, no refreshment for the soul and we survive only by brute force. In this way, it is the desert or wilderness through which the Israelites marched for many years that serves as symbol of the place of trial and affliction. In the barren wasteland we must journey over rugged thorny places without any comfort. In such a place we may not only experience the denial of material benefits but the deprivation of God himself which the advanced soul finds even more painful than earthly gratifications which only satisfy our craving for a short time.

It is in this wilderness that we come to Mount Sinai and to Mount Horeb which means “dryness” or “desolation.” Like the Israelites, we grope around the desert in search of water and stumble upon the place called Massah which indicates “temptation” or “trial.” At Meribah which signifies a “tendency to doubt and complain” we quarrel with the Lord lamenting over our miserable state.¹⁸⁷ We think that no good can come from the barren wasteland and yet it is in reality the place where we really find God the most. It is true of men which also true of a tree, that in the times of drought its roots must go down much deeper into the earth to find water. And so we like the tree become stronger and more resilient in the time of deprivation in what really is our search to find God himself.

This desert that we find ourselves in is the land of fire and as such is the place of our second baptism. It was immediately after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea that they entered the wilderness and wandered the Desert of Sinai for 3 months. At the end of that time they came to the foot of Mount Sinai. From there Moses ascended the peak and

¹⁸⁷ Exodus 17:1-7

spoke with God.¹⁸⁸ This trek of the chosen people represents the stages in the journey of man's pilgrimage to God. For first we must cross the Sea which represents our traversing the waters of baptism. Then we enter into the desert where we experience the fire of God, and after passing through the transformational flames we climb the mountain where we master the spiritual and find the Lord. In this way, it is the Red Sea which symbolizes the water element. It is the desert which represents the fire element. And it is the mountain which signifies the air element, the symbol for the spirit.

It is probably significant to mention that the first desert the children of Israel entered after crossing the Red Sea was the Desert of Shur. The name means "travelling" or "journeying" and symbolizes the seemingly never ending spiritual unfoldment of man. The children of Israel wandered the desert for 40 years, and during that period they went in circles many times. It surely must have seemed to them a waste of time; however during the trial of the wilderness, they were slowly getting stronger and stronger. After the forty years, the period of testing was over, and they were finally able to leave the desert and enter the Promised Land and begin cutting down their enemies. For up until that time any encounter they had with an enemy was met with defeat. The many years in the wilderness had forged the mettle of their souls to the point that they were ready to begin taking on the foe and enter the land of the spirit which was promised to their forefather Abraham centuries before.

At this point in our development of the element of fire as the instrument of transformation we may begin to make an association with the human body which is the central theme of this book. Throughout the pages of the Old Testament there is a thread that winds through the pages around the concept of sacrifice. Early in Genesis this notion is revealed in the story of Noah who after leaving the ark made an offering to the Lord. "Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings upon it."¹⁸⁹ Continuing with Abraham and the other patriarchs the practice continued until it finally became codified under the Mosaic Law as a regular ritual of the priests.

Though in some instances, the sacrifice was offered for thanksgiving or some other purpose, the primary motivation of the sacrifice was to make atonement for one's sins. The Book of Leviticus offers protocol for reparation of transgressions with instructions to use any number of clean animals such as cattle, lambs, goats, and birds. The general practice included the destruction of the animal, the draining of its blood, and the subsequent consumption of it through fire on the altar.

Not that the flesh of bulls and goats could actually remove sin on its own merits, what is significant about the ritual of the sacrifice is the use of the animal itself in contrast to plants or grains of the field. In this way, the penitent's gesture of offering up a sacrifice serves as a symbol of the destruction of the lower or animal nature of man. An animal body is what man shares in common with the beasts of the field and along with it all of the desires and cravings of that nature. The atonement for sin is actually associated more

¹⁸⁸ Exodus 19:1-3

¹⁸⁹ Genesis 8:20

with the internal change in the person rather than the outward ritual itself. And so when we mortify the lower nature, giving up its petty jealousies and anger, its lusts and carnal desires, we are offering up the sacrifice of ourselves to God and making a transition to the spiritual.

This is all in line with what St. Paul exhorts in his epistle to the Romans. The first verse of the twelfth chapter encourages the Christian community saying, “Therefore I urge you brothers in view of God’s mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”¹⁹⁰ It is through the continual practice of offering ourselves to God in sacrifice, the sacrifice of the animal nature, that we will accomplish the goal of holiness and enter into everlasting life.

Now the actual destruction of the animal in the Old Testament sacrifice was only one part of the ritual. The other half consisted of the complete consumption of the animal in the flames upon the altar. In this way a transformation occurred or more specifically a transmutation. The latter word has to do with a change in form or substance and this is accomplished through the fire. After the flames are finished with it, what was once animal flesh rises up in a billow of smoke. What was originally a solid material mutates into a vapor and ascends toward heaven.

The imagery here might already be apparent, but it would be useful to briefly mention the symbolism of two of the ancient natural elements to clarify the transmutation process. The earth element is the symbol of the material or specifically the physical body. The Genesis account of creation mentions that man was created out of the dust of the earth to indicate that the body or life container of a human being is associated with the soil.¹⁹¹ By contrast, the air element represents the spirit. As the invisible substance that we breathe, the air signifies the spiritual which though very real cannot be seen or detected with the senses. Additionally, air which is a light substance forms the canopy over the earth and extends upward into the highest heavens. In this way the vapor state is tantamount to the spiritual, because it is high and lofty entering into the metaphorical domain of God.¹⁹²

When the sacrifice is transmuted on the altar, it implies a sublimation of what is base and earthly to what is heavenly and spiritual. Such is the conversion process that all men must go through in their journey toward holiness. It is their migration from the lower kingdom of the senses to the higher kingdom of love where they will join all of the angels and saints who have gone on before them.

It should be noted that many times in the sacrificial instruction that the Bible uses anthropomorphic language to describe the oblation. Oftentimes it would say that the

¹⁹⁰ Romans 12:1

¹⁹¹ Genesis 2:7

¹⁹² Because they are creatures of the air, birds are often symbols of the spiritual particularly the eagle which flies the highest of all winged creatures. By contrast the quail would be interpreted as the weakest of all spiritual creatures. It follows a very low trajectory over land and cannot sustain flight for very long. Such creatures depicted the weak spiritual state of the Israelites in Numbers 11:31-34 when they complained to God about having to eat the heavenly manna. In response God sent them quail to satisfy their craving and while the meat was still in their mouths struck them down with a plague.

burnt offering was an aroma pleasing to the Lord.¹⁹³ It is hard to imagine how burning flesh could be a sweet fragrance to God apart from understanding that the Lord is really pleased when we sublimate our lower vices and imperfections and rise up to a higher level. While smoldering animal flesh seems a bit rough on the nose, the transmutation process is depicted in other imagery which is more palatable. As is still practiced in many liturgical churches to this day, the burning of incense that was performed by the Jewish priests illustrates the transmutation process and the conversion from what is of the earth to that of the spirit.¹⁹⁴

Frequently, the incense would be offered in conjunction with the sacrifices, its sweet smell signifying how beautiful a spiritual transformation is in the life of a human pilgrim. Like the opening of a blossom to release a delightful fragrance, so is the ascent to a higher spiritual plane.

It is this transmutation process that is depicted by burning incense that turns away Divine Wrath. For it was during the sojourn in the wilderness that Israel had a rebellion against the Lord and grumbled vehemently against Moses and Aaron. The Lord's anger burned against Israel and he began to put to death the masses, but Aaron quickly filled his censer with incense and taking fire from the altar ran to the assembly to make atonement for them. He stood between the living and the dead and the plague stopped at his intercession.¹⁹⁵ And so it is with men when they sublimate their weaknesses and failings to God that his wrath and anger are turned away and there is peace.

There is important spiritual symbolism that is attached to the details of the sacrifice as laid out in the Mosaic Law. In particular, the processing of certain parts and organs of the animal say a lot about what is represented by the oblation. The entire body of the animal wasn't necessarily consumed in the fire on the altar but just some specific parts. Frequently, the meat of the animal could be eaten by the priests as a sacred meal. The hide of the beast was taken outside of the camp and thrown on an ash heap where it would burn on a non-ceremonial wood fire. But on the brazen altar in the tabernacle were offered specific pieces of the creature.

The code concerning the Fellowship Offering in Leviticus is very pertinent. A segment of the instruction reads, "If someone's offering is a fellowship offering, and he offers an animal from the herd, whether male or female, he is to present before the Lord an animal without defect. He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood against the altar on all sides. From the fellowship offering he is to bring a sacrifice made to the Lord by fire: all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the liver which he will remove with the kidneys. Then Aaron's sons are to burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering that is on the burning wood, as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Leviticus 1:9

¹⁹⁴ Leviticus 24:7

¹⁹⁵ Numbers 16:46-50

¹⁹⁶ Leviticus 3:3-5

In the passage are mentioned 3 parts of the viscera with important meaning. What is first mentioned is that the fat of the animal would be burned on the altar. Blubber on a creature indicates that life has been treating him well, and that he has had plenty to consume and meet his needs. Actually, it means that he has eaten more than he requires so that his body has stored the extra nutrients as fat reserves. In this way, fat symbolizes gluttony which is a common weakness of mortal man. It represents excess whether it be with food, sex, or some other sense pleasure that keeps him from the kingdom of God. The consumption of fat in the fire symbolizes the destruction of over-indulgence and the establishment of a temperate and moderate lifestyle, one of balance which is a necessary spiritual attribute. Other passages refer to the burning of fat in the sacrifice such as one found in the Book of Samuel. There is a brief word which says, "Let the fat be burned up first"¹⁹⁷ indicating that the sacrifice of excess is perhaps the first sacrifice that we need to make before we move on to conquering other vices.

Also mentioned in the Leviticus instruction are the kidneys and the liver. These organs as most know are for the purpose of cleansing the body of toxins. Both the kidneys and the liver filter the blood of impurities which are then excreted out of the body. Though the liver is rich in vitamins and nutrients, it is not good to eat this organ too often because it stores up heavy metals and other toxins within its tissue. The sacrifice of these organs of filtration is therefore a symbol of the destruction of impurities within the life of a person. The consumption of these parts represents the transmutation of all that is unholy and impure within us.

Before leaving this introduction to the element of fire and its divine work, it is appropriate to look at one more aspect of the cleansing flames. The transformational work of fire is not only illustrated through trials and tribulations or through sacrifice or through the dry wilderness experience, but it is also portrayed in the purification of earthen metals and stones.

One verse in Isaiah speaks of the glory of Israel after she is restored from exile. The Lord promised her, "Instead of bronze I will bring you gold, and silver in place of iron."¹⁹⁸ It is fairly obvious that the Lord is saying that he will replace the metals of lesser value with those of greater value, but it is important to note the attributes of each metal to understand the contrast. Iron, though strong is nonetheless of comparably lesser value to silver because it corrodes and will rust away when subjected to the elements. Bronze or brass which is not particularly subject to corrosion is inferior to gold because it is an impure alloy, a mixture of copper and tin.

What God suggests in this kind of a verse is that he will replace imperfection and weakness with perfection and stability in the heart of mankind. Of course this is accomplished through fire. We are led to see God as a master alchemist who knows how to convert the lesser metal into the greater metal through the flames. As the "Refiner's Fire" itself, he burns away all dross and impurity from the base metal until it shines like

¹⁹⁷ 1 Samuel 2:16

¹⁹⁸ Isaiah 60:17

the sun. This is true especially of those who purify silver. The metal is heated in the flames until all of the rubbish is burned away. The silversmith knows when the silver has become pure, because at the point of perfection, he can see his reflection in the metal. Likewise God works on us until he can see his reflection in who we are.

What is interesting to note about the heavy precious metals is that they were once forged during the death of a star many eons ago. When a sun collapses upon its own gravity, the heat and pressure are extreme enough to create them out of the lighter elements of helium and hydrogen. So it is as well within the earth itself that what we call precious stones were formed after many ages under similar conditions. It is under great stress that organic matter like coal is converted to diamonds. It is this precious jewel that is the symbol of perfection and for this reason it is given near the time of marriage. When we come to perfection, it is God who takes us as a bride and we become one with him. He says in the Book of Revelation, “To him who overcomes, I will also give a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.”¹⁹⁹

Section 2 – The Heart

Now that we have completed a survey of the element of fire, we are ready to make more applications to the human body and its organs and systems. In the last section there was a brief reference to fire in conjunction with a few vital parts within the chest, but now we will make mention of its relation to the central organ of the body, the heart.

Like water is to the mind, so is fire to the human heart. This element best signifies the core organ of the body because of its connection to love, passion, and the emotions. And in this respect the heart is sometimes called the subjective mind because of its association with feeling in contrast to the intellect which is also known as the objective mind. In religious art, the heart of Jesus also known as the “Sacred Heart” is surrounded by a crown of thorns but is also portrayed as being engulfed in flames. This imagery is meant to indicate that his heart burns with unceasing love and a fiery passion. The heart of God is one unquenchable conflagration that burns up everything in its path.

Not only has Jesus’ heart been depicted as being consumed in the flames, various saints throughout the church age have also been rendered in art with a heart ablaze in one form or another. Such is the case with the “Immaculate Heart” which is attributed to Jesus’ mother Mary in her great love for sinners. It is the heart of the saints on fire with zeal and passion for God that becomes the model and goal for all of us to attain to. As the ancient Seat of the Emotions, the heart is the place within the body where we symbolically feel passion and fervor within us. While Jesus was on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection, he disguised himself while talking with two disciples on the way. They were somewhat reluctant to believe the good news they had heard from the others concerning his rising from the dead, but as they traveled along with the Master, he explained to them from the scriptures why these things had to be so. It was along this route that they felt the fire of conviction, and after the Lord disappeared from their midst,

¹⁹⁹ Revelation 2:17

they knew it to be true and asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?”²⁰⁰

Likewise it was on the Day of Pentecost that Peter was full of the Holy Spirit and began to preach boldly to the crowds. He proclaimed Jesus was the Christ and taught about repentance and the forgiveness of sins. So moved were the people that they were “cut to the heart” and asked the apostles what they needed to do.²⁰¹ After being baptized, around 3000 entered into the Church that day following the conversion of their hearts.

Besides its natural association with fire, this vital organ of the body serves several functions which are alluded to in various passages from the Bible. It is among other things the place of our deep desires. In all writings, secular and spiritual, the heart is the repository of the deep yearnings and longings of man. It is the wellspring of all of our aspirations and hopes. To the first king of Israel Saul, the prophet Samuel promised that he would tell him “all that is in [his] heart” alluding to the new king’s ardent desires and longings.²⁰² In a similar vein, the Psalms promise that if we “delight ourselves in the Lord, he will give us the desires of our hearts.”²⁰³ When we tune into God through regular prayer, he will reveal to us the deep longings that have been implanted inside of us from the time we came into the world. It is our job to listen to the heart and realize what our true dreams and aspirations really are so that we can take steps to make them a reality.

In addition to being the place of man’s desires, the heart is linked with courage and bravery. Though obscured in the English language, the word courage comes from the Latin word “cuore” which means “core” or “heart.” When Joshua began to cut down the people of Canaan, terror seized the Amorite kings, and the scriptures say that “their hearts melted so that they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.”²⁰⁴ Not only can the heart be paralyzed because of fear, it can also be shut down altogether when courage fails completely. Such was the case with the wicked man Nabal who refused to help David when he was a fugitive running from Saul. Nabal’s wife helped the future king in secret, but when she later revealed what she had done to her husband, “his heart failed him and he became like a stone. About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died.”²⁰⁵

Finally, following the Latin word, the heart is in essence the core of our being. It is the symbol of who we really are deep down inside which is only known to God in its totality. It is the place of our inmost thoughts and feelings whether good or bad, and as such is the root cause of all that we do and say. Jesus said that “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.”²⁰⁶ To the Pharisees who were concerned with outward adherence to God’s law, Jesus went on to say that “it is not

²⁰⁰ Luke 24:32

²⁰¹ Acts 2:37

²⁰² 1 Samuel 9:19

²⁰³ Psalm 37:4

²⁰⁴ Joshua 5:1

²⁰⁵ 1 Samuel 25:36-38

²⁰⁶ Matthew 12:34-35

what goes into a man but what comes out of a man that makes him unclean.”²⁰⁷ That is to say that only what proceeds from inside the heart can defile us and not any failure to comply with an external ritual like the ceremonial hand washing that the Teachers of the Law would practice. In Jesus words, we should first try to clean the inside of the cup and then the outside will be clean also.²⁰⁸

It is God who is looking for us to follow him with a pure heart and with our whole heart. All of the commands of the Lord can be boiled down to the one famous Jewish Shema prayer of Deuteronomy where the Israelites were instructed, “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all your strength.”²⁰⁹ This first and greatest commandment ties the law of God inextricably to the heart from which everything good and evil flows.

When Israel made its great exodus out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, the Lord sent his angel ahead of the community and led them on their way. After some time they came to the base of Mount Sinai which was enveloped in thick darkness. Great peals of thunder and bolts of lightning accompanied the cloud that enveloped the peak. “Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder.

Then the people trembled in great fear and requested that the Lord not speak with them lest they should die. Moses proceeded to ascend the mountain and while on the top, the Lord gave him the Ten Commandments and wrote them with his finger on two tablets of stone.²¹⁰

The circumstances surrounding the giving of the law of God are very symbolic of the conditions within man at the beginning of his spiritual journey. It is at the onset of his trek that he first encounters God, but in this early state the Lord appears to him as someone to be greatly feared. The radiant face of God is obscured as with a dark cloud because of his own ignorance and sin, and the voice of God with the thunder, lightning, and earthquakes makes him want to hide and run away from the Lord. This reaction is very natural, because when we begin our spiritual pilgrimage to God, we are very steeped in the carnal existence we have always known with its selfishness and entrenched earthly desires, and we are not yet capable of following the law of love. So the voice of God and the transformation that it brings threatens the only existence we have ever known.

It is at this time that we are still very much in a hardened state, unable to receive the new and higher ways that God has to offer us. For this reason, he writes his law on tablets of stone, a symbol of the human heart in the beginning of its sojourn to God. Hardened and callous, the heart is impenetrable early in the journey and so like stone, the law is only

²⁰⁷ Mark 7:15

²⁰⁸ Matthew 23:25-26

²⁰⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4-5

²¹⁰ Exodus 19:16-25, 20:18-19

etched into the surface. The stony heart of the neophyte cannot be penetrated and the law of the Lord remains only something superficial with little effect.

However, God does not leave us with hearts of stone forever; for the most calloused and hardened heart must ultimately become soft and tender. The heart icy and frozen must finally melt with prolonged contact with the fire of God. The Lord pledges that he will transform what starts out like stone into something that is soft and pliable. Concerning his people Israel, he promises, “I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”²¹¹ The Lord swears to make what is callous and insensitive and a heart that is able to receive and give love and compassion. For this reason the Lord says, “I will write my law upon your hearts.”²¹²

But as most everything is a process, so is the transformation of the human heart. We do not start off one day rebelling against God’s law and the next embracing his way of love. The softening of the heart into compliance and cooperation with the Lord’s ways takes time and to achieve it often requires harsh measures from God.

When Moses received the tablets of stone from God, he continued on the mountain for a very long time, and after many days the Israelites became restless and felt abandoned by him. In their desperation, they descended into idolatry and molded a golden calf that they worshipped as Yahweh. When Moses finally came down the mountain, he was greatly angered at what the people had done and hurled the tablets of stone down so that they were shattered in many pieces.²¹³

But what transpired was more than just a fit of rage by the leader of Israel. The crushing of the Ten Commandments was really a symbol of what the Lord does to the hardened heart of man. The only remedy for a hardened heart is a broken heart, shattered and crushed. The Psalms tell us that a “broken and contrite heart the Lord will not despise.”²¹⁴ It is only a heart crushed to pieces that is pleasing to God and something that he can work with to remold into something conformed to his ways.

It was this apparently random act of Moses that paved the way for the reception of the second tablets of stone under entirely different circumstances than when the first set was received. After the breaking of the first law, Moses’ next encounter with God took on a very different demeanor. Before the giving of the original stone tablets, the Lord only promised to send his angel ahead of the Israelites to guide them on their way. This was to suggest that the people in their early condition were too stiff-necked and the Lord wouldn’t go with them but instead sent a representative. Now, after Moses offers a heartfelt intercession to save the people from God’s wrath, the Lord promises to go with the people himself. This change in disposition indicates a softening of the heart and more

²¹¹ Ezekiel 11:19-20

²¹² Jeremiah 31:33

²¹³ Exodus 32:1-19

²¹⁴ Psalm 51:17

of a compliance to the way of love. As we continue to progress in this way, God will join us more and more on our journey as the stony heart morphs into a heart of flesh.

Not only did God “change his mind” about going with the Israelites on their way, when he called Moses up the mountain the second time to receive the new tablets of stone, it was under a much more docile setting. Gone were the fires and billows of smoke, and no longer was there to be heard the peals of thunder or to be seen the bolts of lightning. The mountain was no longer shaking and convulsing, but the Lord came gently and rather than terrifying, he began to talk to Moses about his divine attributes of compassion, grace, and love.²¹⁵

The circumstances of the second law are to be understood in sharp contrast to the first. It is not that God or his law had changed from the giving of the first tablets to the second, but rather it was the people themselves who had been changed to see the law in a whole new light. The conditions of the second law represent what is true of those who have come to holiness and can follow the way of love and forgiveness. This is the higher law that is described by Jesus.

The first law on the other hand is the law of justice and retribution. It is the lower law of punishment and fear. Together with the higher law they constitute what may be called the Twin Laws of God, two sides of one coin. It has always been the same law, but it depends entirely on the condition of man’s heart which side of the law he will see. The face of God that we perceive depends entirely on our spiritual state, and this reality is summed up well in David’s song of praise in the Book of Samuel where speaking of the Lord he asserts, “To the faithful, you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself SHREWD.”²¹⁶ In the New Testament, the same idea is evident in a passage from the gospel of John in which in the midst of a crowd, Jesus prayed to his Father that he would glorify his name. A voice responded from heaven saying, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” But interestingly the next verse indicates that this voice was perceived differently among those in the crowd. Some people said that the sky had thundered while others said an angel had spoken.²¹⁷ And from this we should interpret that those who are closer to the beginning of their spiritual journey will be given to hearing the voice of God as thunder just as the Israelites did during the giving of the First Law. But those who are far along their spiritual journey and close to sanctity will hear the voice as if an angel had spoken as in the circumstances of the Second Law.

Both of these laws of God are true, and both are real, but the heart must go through the transformation process before it can leave behind an “eye for an eye”²¹⁸ and embrace “turning the other cheek”²¹⁹ as Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount. The human heart must make the transition from the first law to the second law, from the Old

²¹⁵ Exodus 33:12 – 34:7

²¹⁶ 2 Samuel 22:26-27

²¹⁷ John 12:28-29

²¹⁸ Exodus 21:24

²¹⁹ Matthew 5:39

Testament to the New Testament, and from Mount Sinai to Jesus' "Mount" in the gospels.

As a corollary to the heart which we are probing, it would also be beneficial to take a look at the breast which serves as an analogous symbol. In biblical narratives, it is not always a convenient device to use the heart itself but rather the breast which contains the heart. When Jesus told the parable of the Tax collector and the Pharisee in the temple, he contrasted the Pharisee's pride and self-righteousness with the repentant spirit of the Tax Collector. The tax collector who was deeply sorry for his sins would not even lift up his head, but looking down to the ground "smote upon his breast saying have mercy on me a sinner."²²⁰ By this act, we are to understand that he was symbolically rending his heart by beating on the breast that encased it.

Likewise, the analogy is found in the gospel of John at the time when Jesus predicted his betrayal. After he had announced that one of the apostles would betray him, they were all disturbed, but "there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved."²²¹ The allusion is to the writer of the gospel himself, the apostle John who was humanly speaking Jesus' favorite. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and that the disciple lay upon his bosom underscores Jesus' love and the connection with his heart.

As the source of all of our actions good and bad, the heart is linked with the breast in a short narrative from the life of Moses. When the Lord had given Moses a number of miraculous signs to perform to persuade the Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, he taught him one particular "trick" involving the breast. "And the Lord said to him, 'Put your hand into your bosom.' And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold his hand was leprous as snow. And he said, 'put thy hand into your bosom again.' And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and behold, it was turned again as his other flesh."²²²

The miracle suggests that by placing his hand into his bosom, or under his cloak, Moses was equivalently putting his hand into his heart. An evil heart will create a leprous hand or evil actions while a pure heart will produce a clean hand or good actions. For the hand is the symbol of the actions of man (which will be described in more detail in Chapter 6.) And all of this is to once again underscore Jesus teaching that all that we do is an overflow of the heart whether for good or for evil.

Finally, as regarding the breast and its connection to the heart, an illustration from the Mosaic Law is appropriate. Back in Chapter 2, mention was made of the tongue and the vibratory force that was associated with it to effect inner transformation. An allusion was made to this force in various forms like in the mode of music which can penetrate deeply into the heart and effect change. This vibratory force can also be seen in the Levitical instruction regarding sacrifice. For when the priest would sacrifice a ram, he would be given the breast as his portion, and following the Lord's ordinance, he would

²²⁰ Luke 18:13

²²¹ John 13:25

²²² Exodus 4:6-7

ceremonially wave it before the Lord in what is appropriately known as the “wave offering.”²²³ The motion of this wave is in essence equivalent to a vibration having the form of movement up and down and is likewise meant to illustrate this power to break into and transform the hardened heart.

As we are focusing on the symbolism of the heart, it is fitting to continue to talk about the main characteristic that is associated with it which is the love nature of man. As briefly touched on in Chapter 2, the Bible makes use of various personifications to embody the different mental faculties that are inherent to man. The Patriarch Levi was linked to this love faculty which is currently in view. His name means “attached, joined” which signifies the relationship between love and its object. As the greatest faculty that man is called to develop, the love nature is the characteristic within us that is most closely associated with the spiritual, because God describes himself as love itself; so that we can say synonymously that “God is Love” and “Love is God.”²²⁴

Levi represents the love nature of man because he alone of the 12 tribes is separated out to be special and set apart for God. In the Book of Numbers the Lord commands, “Set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine.”²²⁵ To Levi belonged the priesthood which is the symbol of the Higher Self or Spiritual Self within man. The priest carries out many functions which illustrate his higher union with God. He has the privilege of offering sacrifice and that is to say he administers the destruction of his own animal or lower nature. He offers incense to symbolize the transmutation of all that is earthly within him. It is the priest alone who may approach God’s altar and enter into the temple where God is. All others are consumed by fire if they dare to approach. All the other tribes were given an earthly inheritance of land in Canaan, but to Levi there was no inheritance but God himself. Rather Levi was scattered throughout the entire land living amidst every tribe to illustrate that the preeminent love faculty needs to permeate the entire mind of man.

Though Levi symbolizes the love nature, that is not to say that he embodies it necessarily in its highest form. The love nature is something that needs to evolve within man from a humble beginning to a much a higher realization. Often the early stages of human love are emotionally unstable and violent as was the case with Levi in one of the Genesis narratives. After Dinah, the sole sister of the 12 brothers was defiled by a Canaanite man who loved her deeply, Levi and his brother Simeon decided to take revenge. They promised to give their sister to the Hivite man as long as he and his townsmen consented to be circumcised. To this they agreed and when after the ritual they were recovering in much pain, these sons of Jacob took swords and slew all of them. They proceeded to plunder the town and carry ever thing off for themselves so that the name of their father Jacob became a stench to the Canaanites among whom he lived.²²⁶

²²³ Leviticus 7:30

²²⁴ 1 John 4:8

²²⁵ Numbers 8:15-16

²²⁶ Genesis 34

The descendants of Levi portrayed in the Old Testament also illustrate the love faculty of man in its early stages and one portrayal comes to us from the Book of Numbers. While the Israelites were wandering around in the desert for many years they were chronically grumpy. Even Moses' sibling Miriam acted up and began to complain about her brother envying that he had been privileged to be a prophet while she and her brother Aaron had lesser peripheral roles. Miriam in this capacity represents the feminine side of the love nature in its primitive form which is still subject to petty jealousies and rebellion. In fact her name means "rebellion" and for a punishment the Lord struck her with leprosy for 7 days to atone for her sin.²²⁷

The fire of divine love does not burn in the hearts of men in their early stages of development but another kind of blaze is within them in the primitive stages. Such was the case of the two Levites Nadab and Abihu who as sons of Aaron were also priests. In the Book of Leviticus there is recorded a short account of these two men that did not end in a pretty way. "Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."²²⁸

The strange fire that these two priests had to offer was a fire foreign to God. It certainly was not the fire of divine love but was rather the fire of human passion and desire which is strange or unfamiliar to God's kind of fire. In our primitive stages of development, we tend to experience only this kind of flame, human passion which may be limited to sexual love and infatuations. This is the love that we call "Eros" (from which we get erotic) that is the precursor to the higher divine love that is known as "Agape." We need to make the transition from the instinctual natural kind of love to supernatural love which is marked by the ability to love the unlovable and to put others before self without expecting anything in return. God will take all of us there, because he promises in Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament that "He shall purify the sons of Levi,"²²⁹ you and me on our quest for a higher love.²³⁰

But the development of the spiritual faculties is not wholly the responsibility of God. Rather it depends on our cooperation and effort to labor toward the goal of holiness. We might ask then about what we can do to foster the love nature within us. Certainly there are many methods to achieving the goal including the spiritual exercises developed earlier in this book. But there is one approach of interest that was asserted by Mother Teresa whom we quoted earlier in her sentiment that "the fruit of prayer is faith." Her segue to that remark was another link in a chain of virtue giving birth to virtue, for she said, "the fruit of faith is love." And this was not just her idea or an approach that

²²⁷ Numbers 12

²²⁸ Leviticus 10:1-3

²²⁹ Malachi 3:3

²³⁰ As an interesting side note, we can remember that Adam and Eve were barred from reentering the Garden of Eden (Paradise) by a Guardian Cherub wielding a flaming sword in all directions. Traditionally the Cherubim have been known to be one of the highest ranks of angel whose mission it is to dispense the love of God (perhaps typified by the flaming sword) throughout the universe. We may infer from this story the idea that man cannot return again to Paradise until he learns the way of love.

worked in her own efforts toward sanctity, but probably may be seen as a universal strategy to acquire the virtue of love.

In fact it is a method that can be seen in biblical allegory in a story from the gospels. After the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Mary Magdalene was the first to report the good news to Peter and John who immediately started to run to the empty tomb to see for themselves. But the account says that John outran Peter and reached the tomb first.²³¹ Of course traditionally he was younger than Peter and might have been swifter afoot, but the deeper message is that love (John) outruns or succeeds faith (Peter) in the chain of virtues.²³² This should not surprise us because the development of faith is largely the trigger for the entire spiritual life.²³³

But focusing on the elementary spiritual disciplines as either a direct or indirect means to acquire love, there is a beautiful image in the Bible of how love may develop through the exercise of prayer, specifically through meditation. This allegory appears very early in Genesis when Adam was put into a deep sleep and God opened up his side to remove a rib and form his helpmate Eve.²³⁴ Traditionally in biblical symbolism a woman represents the emotional side of man which is also synonymously his love nature. What we see embodied in this passage is the idea that when the soul ceases from outer mind activity and turns inside into the meditative state (enters into sleep,) he makes contact with the inner core of his being in the subconscious. From this deep spring wells up the love nature (the formation of Eve) to become the soul's companion.

Now regardless of the way in which we seek to acquire Divine Love, it needs to be remembered that the process is often long and rocky. Forces of opposition will routinely dog the path in efforts to make us turn back, but at the same time God also provides little forms of encouragement to help us keep going. There is a series of narratives in the Book of Samuel that allows us to catch a glimpse of the process and they center around the character of David. We have identified how Levi and his descendants can symbolize the faculty of love, but other biblical characters serve as strong representations of this virtue as well, and in this context we are looking at David which means "loving" in Hebrew. In the allegorical interpretation of the stories which follow, we will equate David with "Divine Love" which is the target man is aiming to achieve.

The particular chain of narratives that we will take a look at involves David's interaction with his son Absalom who was one of his favorites and a potential heir to the throne. Problems began when Absalom took revenge on his brother Amnon after he raped their sister Tamar. He murdered Amnon, and estrangement between him and the king ensued. David took no strong reprisal against Absalom but left him in exile for a time which undoubtedly sowed the seeds of bitterness. After a tenuous reconciliation of the two,

²³¹ John 20:1-4

²³² Allegorically John the disciple whom Jesus loved has traditionally been associated with love while Peter who was the first to confess Jesus as the Messiah has been linked with faith.

²³³ The concept is also developed in the allegory of the 2nd century apocryphal work The Shepherd of Hermas in Vision III. Verse 90 in particular details the progression from faith to charity (love.)

²³⁴ Genesis 2:20-22

Absalom orchestrated a whole scale rebellion which culminated in civil war and David fleeing for his life. Ultimately David won back the kingdom, but unfortunately Absalom did not survive.

Setting the stage for our metaphorical interpretation, we will associate Absalom with “the soul that is seeking eternal fulfillment.” We derive this meaning from his name which is translated “father of peace” and intimates the quest for contentment that only comes through the full development of the love nature. Absalom will also be associated with the idea of “physical beauty” because of his renowned handsome appearance.²³⁵ In keeping with these symbols, the conflict that is narrated throughout these biblical chapters between Absalom and David may be viewed as the struggle of the soul in embracing the fullness of love into its nature.

There is not time here to consider the entire story of David and his beloved son Absalom with all of its nuances, but we will sketch out several of the anecdotes to give an overview beginning with Absalom’s initial flight into exile. Right after slaying Amnon, Absalom fled to Geshur (meaning “bridge.”) During this time, the king pined for his son but did not send for him to come home. Noticing the king’s sorrow, his captain of the guard Joab devised a way to reconcile the two men and employed a woman from Tekoa (meaning “trumpet”) to spin a parable-like yarn to David that would prompt him to take some action to rectify the estrangement. David, indignant after hearing her story sent for Absalom to return to Jerusalem but refused to see him face to face. Instead he left him under house arrest for a couple of years. Exasperated at David’s refusal to see him, he eventually burned his barley fields which got the attention of David and so Joab brought Absalom to his father who kissed and embraced him.²³⁶

Interpreting the narrative, we see the soul in search of eternal fulfillment (Absalom) looking for a bridge (Geshur) to span to the divine. But Divine Love (David) will not welcome the soul that has acted in revenge and lacks spiritual beauty. Instead it sends out its messenger and executive power (Joab) to work on the soul. The messenger arranges for the power of the trumpet or vibratory force (woman of Tekoa) to begin working on the soul and penetrating its hard heart in preparation to meet with Love. But physical beauty (Absalom) must evolve into spiritual beauty. (Absalom must come to Jerusalem.) But when there is a delay in meeting Divine Love, the imperfect soul attempts to stir up love within (burning the fields.) It greatly seeks divine wisdom (barley)²³⁷ and through fire transmutes its earthly wisdom into that of the spiritual. Then it is ready to meet Love which welcomes it with open arms.

But all was not well in the heart of Absalom and he desired to take the kingship by force. Everyday he would go to the city gate and meet Israelites coming from around the nation with an issue for the king requiring a judgment. But Absalom deceived the people saying that there was no one in the city to help them, but instead carried favor with the Israelites

²³⁵ 2 Samuel 14:25

²³⁶ 2 Samuel 14

²³⁷ Barley and corn are sometimes used as opposite devices with barley representative of masculine wisdom and corn symbolizing feminine love.

stealing their hearts and allegiance. Eventually everything was in place and the coup began. Ahithophel (meaning “brother of folly”) defected from David’s service and became the advisor of Absalom. David fled the city along with his servants the Gittites (meaning “winepress.”) The whole group passed over the Kidron (meaning “dusky place”) into the wilderness where they would remain in hiding. On the way, the entire caravan went up by the way of the Mount of Olives weeping as they went. When David reached the summit of the mount and worshipped, he was met by his servant Hushai (meaning “to be eager with excitement or enjoyment”) whom he sent back to Absalom in an attempt to secretly undermine Ahithophel.²³⁸

Offering an allegorical translation, the soul in quest of eternal fulfillment (Absalom) has stumbled and begins turning away the spiritual thoughts (Israelites) who would attempt to cross the entrance to the mind (city gate) creating a spiritual vacuum of thought. When this happens, physical beauty (Absalom) has taken the upper hand and there is a betrayal of Divine Love (David) which must flee. The soul begins to heed the foolish advice of the lower nature (Ahithophel,) and then old thought forms which believe in trial and suffering return (Gittites or Gath.) But Love does not give up on the soul when it is struggling. The experience of divine joy (Hushai) that is encountered in a high state of consciousness (summit of the mountain) is the means by which the soul in search of eternal fulfillment finds its way. For the ecstatic experiences of God leave an indelible mark on the soul to spur it on toward higher things. Love will periodically send joy to the soul so that it remembers what it is striving for and so that it doesn’t give up what it has started.

Returning to the narratives, we learn that Hushai had made it to Jerusalem and was feigning allegiance to Absalom. The usurper accepted him as a defector from David and then proceeded to ask Ahithophel for advice. He was instructed to sleep with all of David’s concubines on the roof of the house in broad daylight so that all Israel would see. This would be a move to assert royal power and forge an irreversible rift with his father. So a tent was pitched on the roof and Absalom lay with all of his father’s concubines.²³⁹

Symbolically this passage suggests that the joy of the divine self (Hushai) finds itself in competition with the deceptive forces of the lower nature (Ahithophel.) It must vie for the attention of the soul in quest of eternal fulfillment if it is to bring it into the hands of Divine Love. It must do this initially through subterfuge to gain the trust of the soul. (These episodes of joy come as teasers on the spiritual path to keep the soul’s interest in higher things.) But early on, the experience of divine ecstasy is not frequent or prolonged enough to sway it from folly and initially it gives in to the advice of the “brother of folly.” It decides to despise and mock Divine Love through actions that would disgrace it (sleeping with his father’s wives.) This it does on the rooftop (pseudo-high spiritual experience) as if to substitute a true spirituality for the “joy” of a high carnal experience (physical human love.) But it is important to recognize that this act of defiance attempted by the soul takes place in a tent (early spiritual self) suggesting that the soul is yet very immature at this stage in its development.

²³⁸ 2 Samuel 15

²³⁹ 2 Samuel 16

Continuing with the biblical story, Absalom was clearly in control and Ahithophel was now offering advice that would sound the death knell for David in his weakened state. The plan would be to take a band of 12,000 men and pursue David all night. Then singling him out and striking him down, David's people would be returned to Absalom safely. But this time Absalom also wanted to hear the advice of Hushai. He in turn rejected Ahithophel's plan and argued that David and his men were mighty warriors and would not hide among the people see conspicuously. Rather they would be off on their own, and if by chance some of the soldiers of Absalom should fall at David's hand, it would immediately strike fear among the followers of Absalom. And with these reasons he countered the advice of Ahithophel. Hushai further counseled that Absalom should gather all Israel together and personally lead the charge to overrun David, and Absalom favored the advice of Hushai and rejected the advice of Ahithophel. With his advice frustrated, Ahithophel committed suicide and after a final battle east of the Jordan, the kingdom returned to David.²⁴⁰

Wrapping up with a metaphorical rendition, the advice of the lower nature (Ahithophel) aims at destroying Divine Love (David) which it resists at all costs. Its intent is to kill it and then return any "enlightened thoughts" (David's loyal people) back under the dominion of carnality (Absalom.) But divine joy (Hushai) has made an indelible mark on the soul in quest of higher things (Absalom) so that this time it decides to take the higher way and reject the advice of the lower nature (Ahithophel.) The soul in search of eternal fulfillment (Absalom) must seek out love of its own accord (Absalom should lead the charge to overrun David) and not send others in his place (for no one else can find it for him.) Eventually the soul falls into the hands of Love where it is "consumed" (Absalom dies) and the peace that long has been sought for is consummated.

Now as a final point on the subject of the heart to close off this section, we would do well to consider its relation to the mind which was discussed in depth in Chapter 1. That there is a relation between head and heart is evidenced in a number of places in the scripture even early on in Exodus. In speaking of Aaron the first high priest, a passage mentions that he "shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goes into the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually."²⁴¹ Within the breastplate that was constructed for the high priest were fashioned four rows of precious stones, each row holding 3 gems. These jewels were the symbols of the 12 tribes of Israel and each stone was engraved with a name of the sons of Jacob. In this way, the passage conveys the idea that these 12 faculties of the mind are to be in union with or are to reside within the heart of man itself.

That there is a union of head and heart is alluded to in the Proverbs in a verse which says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."²⁴² Not only is there to be a connection between the mind and the heart, but there is to be a balance between the two to bring harmony

²⁴⁰ 2 Samuel 17,18

²⁴¹ Exodus 28:29

²⁴² Proverbs 23:7

within the self. It is the union of the intellect with the emotions and the mind with intuition. We may call it the “inner marriage” within man, because it is the union of the male and female qualities within us. For it is man who has traditionally been associated with the intellect, wisdom, and the mind while woman has been connected with the love nature, the emotions, and the nurturing disposition.

What happens when head and heart are united is depicted in a number of biblical stories, but perhaps one of interest would be the passage in the Book of Kings about Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. There had been no rain in the land for three years as a judgment from God on Israel. Elijah had been drinking from a brook, but that had dried up, so God sent him to the widow for sustenance. Only she had very little herself, just one measure of meal and a little oil. She had been planning to make one more meal for her and her son and then die of starvation. But Elijah asked her to share first with him and then prepare the rest for herself and her son. When she did this a miracle happened and her jar of meal and cruse of oil failed to run dry for many days and so all three of them were sustained.²⁴³

Applying some basic symbolism to the narrative, Elijah as the male figure in the passage represents wisdom. Alone, he is hungry and thirsty and suffering the effects of the drought. The widow on the other hand is a token of the love nature of man, and as a woman who lost a husband she particularly illustrates love bereft of wisdom. She and her son are also about to die of starvation having just a morsel of food left in the house. In isolation from each other, each party is in a state of deprivation, but when she consents to share the little she has with Elijah, suddenly an abundance of food materializes. This indicates that when love and wisdom are at last united in consciousness, increase begins at once. When the male and female are joined, a procreative energy is unleashed and there is an abundant good that results, a synergy that brings the soul closer to God.

It is the job of mankind to reconcile both extremes of love and wisdom within himself and find a balance. The intellect alone can be cold, calculating, and sterile while making decisions purely based on emotion can be a disaster. One force tempers the other, and the union of the two results in a stable, sensible, and loving person.

“A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight,”²⁴⁴ says the Book of Proverbs. That is to say the Lord abhors an unbalanced scale where one side is “hung up” It is interesting to note that when people are out of balance and stuck on some extreme or obsession, we say that he or she is “hung up” on something. What the Lord wants from us is balance and equilibrium within our being which is the only way to proceed on the road to truth and holiness. We would do well to follow the prayer of Job who said, “May I be weighed with an even balance, that God may know my integrity.”²⁴⁵

It was the glorious Undivided Kingdom of David and ultimately of Solomon that represented the perfect union of wisdom and love within man. Particularly Solomon’s

²⁴³ 1 Kings 17:1-16

²⁴⁴ Proverbs 11:1

²⁴⁵ Job 31:6

reign marked the high point of the nation of Israel. But when Solomon turned from God and gave way to sensual interests a division occurred, and some have compared the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the objective mind or intellect while the Kingdom of Judah has been related to the subjective mind or heart of man. The Divided Kingdom represents a divorce between the two, and of course history would show the steady downfall of each kingdom after the split.

The separation between mind and heart would ultimately result in destruction, but it should be noted that the Northern Kingdom slipped a lot faster than the Southern Kingdom. This is because Jeroboam the first king of Israel (Divided Kingdom) feared that Judah would take control again as long as the people of the North continued to make regular pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the spiritual center of the nation. So he put an end to that and erected new places of worship in the North, preventing the people from travelling to the Holy City.²⁴⁶ In this way, the Northern Kingdom represents the intellect cut off from its spiritual center, and as history would show, every king of the North would prove to be wicked. Judah on the other hand would continue to keep its association with Jerusalem, and because of this spiritual link it would fare much better and its subsequent history was marked by a mixture of both good and bad kings.

But even though we rightly interpret the division of Solomon's kingdom in a negative light, there is yet another truth to glean on the positive side from the separation. Each kingdom represents one of two paths of spiritual unfoldment that people take on their journey through life. The path represented by the Northern Kingdom is that of the intellect and represents those who primarily seek to serve God through prayer and contemplation. In the church, these people would be considered the monastics who live a cloistered life of deep prayer and who ascend to great mystical heights. But those who fit into this category are any who gravitate toward the life of meditation and prayer and dedicate themselves to interceding for others. On the other hand, Judah as representing the heart is indicative of those who would serve God in practical ways. It encompasses those who have a passion to relieve human suffering and help others by providing for basic needs. The great humanitarian efforts of the church epitomize those who follow the spiritual path of the heart over the mind.

One route is the way of Mary the sister of Lazarus who preferred to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to his teaching. The other is the way of her sister Martha who busied herself making preparations to serve the company.²⁴⁷ One path is not superior to the other. They each find a place among us, and while it wouldn't be fair to say that anyone is exclusively one way or another, we tend to gravitate toward one path of the other by nature. What is true of both paths though is the premier divine law that all spiritual progress is accomplished by helping others, particularly those who are not as advanced as we ourselves may be.

Section 3 – Blood

²⁴⁶ I Kings 12:25-33

²⁴⁷ Luke 10:38-42

After sketching out the heart and its various forms of symbolism, it is perhaps fitting to lead into an analysis of the blood. Though this body fluid is not specifically confined to man's trunk, because of the blood's association with the heart that circulates it throughout the body, we will include here in this chapter a discussion of this vital tissue.

The symbolism surrounding the blood may not be as straightforward as that which is universally connected with the heart, but within the ancient rituals of men as well as throughout a number of Bible passages there is a common theme. That idea may well be summed up by one chapter in the Book of Leviticus. A very poignant verse proclaims, "The life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is blood that makes an atonement for the soul."²⁴⁸

According to the passage, the life of every creature is within the blood. That body tissue which carries nutrients and oxygen to every cell of our being is responsible for sustaining life within the body and is therefore a symbol of life itself.²⁴⁹ It was the practice of ancient pagans that was consistent with this theme. For the Druids were known for drinking the blood of their dead from which they hoped to derive the deceased's lifeforce. This ancient idea was extended further by Jesus in the institution of the Eucharist in which he gives to his Church his own Body and Blood to feed on and be spiritually nourished. In John 6, Jesus paints this theology very clearly when he said to the disciples, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."²⁵⁰

Jesus' words notwithstanding, both the Old and New Testaments forbid the practice of drinking blood in distinction from the gentiles. A strong directive was spelled in Leviticus concerning this practice where it says, "You shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh; for the life of all flesh is in the blood: whosoever eats it shall be cut off."²⁵¹ So strictly forbidden was the drinking of blood that anyone caught doing it would be cast out from the community of the Israelites, an effective permanent excommunication. Though it is clear that blood is the symbol of life, the blood of animals was certainly not useful to man on his spiritual journey. Since the life of the creature is within the blood, by consuming this fluid the drinker takes upon himself the lifeforce of the animal which is carried within it. In sharp contrast to Jesus' divine blood and its positive effects within us, the blood of beasts can only serve to strengthen the animal or lower nature within man, increasing his desires and fleshly appetites not to mention his lower personality traits. For this reason, it has been the practice within some Eastern religions to not only abstain from blood but also from all meat as to avoid internalizing the animal lifeforce.

²⁴⁸ Leviticus 17:11

²⁴⁹ But the ancients didn't have our modern technical understanding of the function of blood. For primitive man, blood was both the symbol and source of life as he made a connection between menstrual blood and babies which both emerged from the same location.

²⁵⁰ John 6:53,54

²⁵¹ Leviticus 7:26-27

On the subject of the blood, it is important to also briefly mention the bones which make up the framework of the body. Both blood and bone symbolize life, though it might not be immediately obvious what the connection between the two is. To give a quick biology lesson, the bones are the place where blood is created. Most bones are hollow and within the center is a substance called marrow where blood cells are born. From the marrow, the cells make their way into the bloodstream where they run their course of a few months. In ancient mystery religions, it was the practice to break the bones to get to the marrow in conjunction with a fertility rite.

The association of bone as symbol of life is reinforced through several bible narratives namely by one in the Book of Kings. Elisha was the apprentice of the great prophet Elijah and was a holy man himself. Sometime after Elisha had died and was buried, Moabite raiders entered Israel from East of the Jordan as was their custom every spring. "Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet."²⁵²

Likewise, it is very significant that at the time of the exodus from Egypt, the children of Israel carried out with them the bones of Joseph on the way to the Promised Land. Shortly before Joseph died, he made the sons of Israel promise to take his bones with them when they left the land of slavery. He said to them, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place."²⁵³ So Moses many hundreds of years later followed his instructions and bore the bones of Joseph to the Promised Land carrying with him the vital life force that the Israelites needed for their journey.

Returning again to the symbolism of the blood itself, it should be mentioned that within the geography of the Middle East, it is the great river Euphrates that represents the bloodstream of man. The name means "fructifying cause" and is appropriately symbolic of the blood which brings nutrients to the entire body. From its origin in the far North, it waters the entire Fertile Crescent. This mighty stream irrigates the whole land, our land which is the physical body of man bringing life to the whole "region." It is very significant that this river flows out of the North, because it introduces another very important concept that is the connection between blood and water.

In Chapter 1 an effort was made to associate the geographic location of the North with the human mind. That the River Euphrates as symbol of the bloodstream flows from this region illustrates that the thoughts of the mind somehow impact the blood. Biologically this is in some sense true as the bloodstream must pass through the brain as it makes its circuit through the body. Biblically the concept is fairly prominent in a number of miraculous and apocalyptic narratives.

Near the time of the Exodus from Egypt, Moses the servant of God pleaded with Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. After 430 years in slavery, it was time for the people to journey to

²⁵² 2 Kings 13:20-21

²⁵³ Exodus 13:19

the land that was promised to their ancestor Abraham, but the king of Egypt had no intention of releasing his stranglehold on his free labor. He resisted Moses and hardened his heart against his urgent request. In an attempt to make him concede, the Lord sent ten plagues upon Egypt to break down the king until he would finally relent and let the people go. The first plague that was poured out on the Egyptians was the Plague of Blood.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt – over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs’ – and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars.’ Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed to blood.”²⁵⁴

This was not the first time Moses had performed this “trick.” Before the great prophet appeared to Israel, he was given signs by the Lord to perform for the people to prove that he was from the Lord. One of the miraculous signs included a similar change in substance. For the Lord said to Moses that if the people didn’t believe the other signs that he gave him, he should “take some water from the Nile and pour it on dry ground. The water [Moses] takes from the river will become blood on the ground.”²⁵⁵

These mighty signs were commemorated again later in the Psalms where the writer recalled the departure from Egypt.²⁵⁶ They even appear at the end of the Bible in the Book of Revelation where the angels pour out the bowls of God’s wrath upon the earth. “The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water and they became blood.”²⁵⁷ The imagery is even seen cloaked in the Book of Joel which prophesied, “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”²⁵⁸ As pointed out earlier in Chapter 1, the moon is the symbol of the mind of man (the lesser light) which is in sharp contrast to the sun (the mind of God.)

All of these passages establish a connection between the element of water and the blood, and each portrays a conversion of water into blood. Each account symbolizes a process within us, the mapping of human thought into the blood or life force of man. The stories indicate that what we think in our brain literally imprints itself in our blood. From the brain, the blood carries the imprint to the whole body where our thoughts become a part of us whether for good or for evil. The blood travels the whole extent of the body to feed each cell so that the ideas of the mind become incarnate within us, a part of our very flesh. This perhaps makes sense of the Proverb, “As a man thinks, so is he.”²⁵⁹ Said in another way, “What we think is who we are.”

²⁵⁴ Exodus 7:14-21

²⁵⁵ Exodus 4:8-9

²⁵⁶ Psalm 105:29

²⁵⁷ Revelation 16:4

²⁵⁸ Joel 2:31

²⁵⁹ Proverbs 23:7

Jesus himself summarized the entire process of the conversion of water into blood through both his first and last public miracles. At the beginning of his ministry he was at the Wedding Feast of Cana where he initially converted the water into wine. At the end of his ministry he completed the transformation by converting the wine into his own Blood. His entire ministry may then be marked by both of these miracles which encapsule the process which we now have in view.

There is an old saying that is still sometimes in use today. Whenever we want to convey that someone will ultimately be responsible for his own actions, even his own death, we say, "Let his blood be upon his own head." This phrase is most likely of Biblical origin as it is used several times in the scriptures both in the Old and New Testaments. One such case involved Rahab and the spies who visited her in Jericho. They warned that if any of her household should wander in the streets when the city collapsed, "their blood would be upon their own heads."²⁶⁰

Following our current line of reasoning, this expression can be equated with the idea that according to one's manner of thinking, so will his blood be. Whether for good or for bad, the thoughts of man result either in a pure health giving blood or in a contaminated disease prone blood. This idea is supported by numerous verses particularly from the Proverbs. "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."²⁶¹ On the other hand, "pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."²⁶² Toxic thoughts like envy and jealousy are destructive forces within the bones which go on to produce tainted blood. Conversely, peaceful thoughts and pleasant ideas nurture the bones and produce a life giving blood. Much disease could be avoided if we consider the impact of thought on the blood, and it behooves us to know that anger and malice are not only dangerous to the soul but also to the body in which we live.

The effects of human sin are printed in the blood like words are written on a page. Job's friends were always quick to criticize him in the midst of his terrible afflictions. They spoke of wicked men and their ways saying that "their bones are full of the sin of their youth ..."²⁶³ Much like a physician reads the results of a blood test for the health of the body, God reads the blood that flows in our veins as a record of our life in thought and action. What he finds is not always as clean and pure as it should be. In his condemnation of the city of Jerusalem, "the bloody city" the Lord says to the inhabitants in the Book of Ezekiel, "You have become guilty in your blood ..."²⁶⁴ David after reaping the reward for murder and adultery with Bathsheba pleaded with the Lord in Psalm 51, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God."²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ Joshua 2:17-20

²⁶¹ Proverbs 14:30

²⁶² Proverbs 16:24

²⁶³ Job 20:11

²⁶⁴ Ezekiel 22:4

²⁶⁵ Psalm 51:14

Perhaps most vivid is another passage from Ezekiel which is an allegory of the Lord's adopting the nation of Israel as his own in its infancy. He says, "In the day that you were born, your navel was not cut, neither were you washed in water to clean you; you were not rubbed with salt or swaddled with clothes. No eye pitied you to do any of these things, to have compassion upon you; but you were cast out in the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. And when I passed by you, I saw you polluted in your own blood."²⁶⁶ Such is the case with all of us in the human condition that God finds pollution or contamination within the very blood that flows in our veins. However it is the Lord who takes pity on us in this condition and pledges to clean up the blood that has become so toxic.

One way that this is accomplished is by getting rid of the "bad blood" that is circulating through the body. This idiom really isn't a novel phrase but is a figure of speech that is still in common usage today, for we will often say that "bad blood" exists between people who have ill feelings toward each other or who are estranged from one another for a long time. We also use the expression when describing people who are particularly immoral. This kind of contaminated blood needs to be purged from the body to bring wholeness to the individual.

The Book of Hebrews makes clear that "there is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood,"²⁶⁷ and so it is necessary for man to get rid of his impure blood to progress in holiness, for "it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."²⁶⁸ The imagery of this symbolic process is seen both in the scriptures as well as in some natural processes that we are very familiar with. Perhaps the most prominent example of this in the Bible concerns the ritual of sacrifice itself. Levitical butchering required that an animal be slaughtered by slitting its throat and allowing the fleeting beats of the heart to pump all of the blood out of the body. Strangulation was forbidden as it would allow the blood to remain within the flesh. The sacrificial animal is once again a type of man who must make this purging from his own being.

Shedding of blood is also depicted in the ritual of circumcision which was required for all males in the Israelite community. It was the initiation rite into the covenant that was established with Abraham and his offspring and symbolized that the person was now a member of the people of faith. This shedding of blood proved to be a very remedial action on one occasion in the life of Moses when he was making his way back to Egypt. He had taken a wife and had a child in the land of Midian where he was a fugitive and was now on his way back to lead Israel out of bondage. Moses had failed to circumcise his young son and a passage from Exodus records, "At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him. But Zipporah (his wife) took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,' she said. So the Lord let him alone."²⁶⁹ And so it was through a perceptive

²⁶⁶ Ezekiel 16:6-9

²⁶⁷ Hebrews 9:22

²⁶⁸ Leviticus 17:11

²⁶⁹ Exodus 4:24-26

woman and the shedding of blood that divine wrath was turned away and Moses' life was spared. It was through bloodletting that peace with God was obtained.

As a natural process, the shedding of blood is part of the routine of life for an adult woman. She suffers the loss of blood month after month and year after year during her menstrual cycle. The period symbolizes the process whereby she rids her body of bad blood, impurities which have built up within the life fluid. It is necessary for a woman to have her monthly issue as a preparation for conception. Without this purging from her body, no life can begin within her womb, for the womb must be sanctified before it can conceive. And this process that is depicted by a woman is in reality a type for all mankind who must undergo purification in order to have life grow within them.

A gospel story was alluded to earlier in this book regarding the woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years. She had suffered for a very long time and had seen many doctors to no avail. When she saw Jesus being mobbed by the crowds, she thought to herself, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."²⁷⁰ And when she touched the hem of his garment her bleeding permanently stopped. As another account regarding the shedding of blood, the key element in this passage is the number 12 indicating an association with mental government or the faculties of the mind. She had shed blood for 12 consecutive years, each year representing a purification of one power of the mind. After purging bad blood for this period of time, she completed her cleansing and became whole again. This is true of all of us when we conquer every facet of the mind to become holy.

We may turn our eyes to Calvary again for a final illustration of this process. Jesus as the ultimate type and representative of mankind received many wounds in his flesh to serve as an example of the process of conversion. From all of these wounds poured forth blood until finally he shed it all when the spear was hurled into his side. The Savior embodied the process for all humanity who must follow the Master in ridding their bodies of all that is impure.

Returning to the imagery of sacrifice which has been briefly introduced, we see more symbolism for the purification of the blood. When an animal was slaughtered in sacrifice to God, a specific protocol was followed regarding the disposition of the body and the blood of the creature. Harking back to our hallmark verse, we recall the Lord's proclamation that "the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make an atonement for your sins." Specifically, the priests were instructed to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the altar, the place of fire and transmutation where the "life of the creature" would receive purification. It is there that the blood makes AT-ONE-MENT for all sin, for the cleansing of sin (salvation) means nothing more than that we have finally become whole, united in our being, and no longer at war within our members.

Besides this general instruction, the Levitical rule spelled out other directives: "The anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and carry it into the Tent of Meeting. He is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the Lord,

²⁷⁰ Matthew 9:20-22

in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. The priest shall then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is before the Lord in the Tent of Meeting.”²⁷¹ The altar was constructed as a square box with four horns, one in each corner of the altar. What is significant about these four protrusions around the place of sacrifice is their analogy to the horns of an animal. Many male creatures have horns which they display prominently and use to fight other animals especially during mating season for the right to breed. It is for this reason that horns are the symbol of power which is also the figurative meaning of the Hebrew word. Applying the blood to the horns of the altar symbolizes the empowerment of the blood. It is through the power of the horns that our weak and often lifeless blood receives an infusion of divine strength.

It is also significant that there were four horns on the altar, the foursquare place of sacrifice. We have introduced and developed to varying degrees each of the four natural elements and described their symbolic meaning. We have associated water with the mind, fire with the heart, earth with the body, and air with the spirit. In our mortal existence there needs to be a balance between all of these forces to bring harmony to the soul. All four horns receive the blood to empower and equilibrate these four elements within us. The blood is applied to an altar which is square in shape having 4 equally long sides to illustrate the symmetry that is needed among these four players in our game of life.

The Lord has sworn that he will certainly help us along to the end of our cleansing process as he promises at the end of the Book of Joel. In the last verse of the book, he affirms, “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwells in Zion.”²⁷² We have sketched out a few mystical mechanisms whereby the Lord does this work in us including the shedding of blood and the application of blood to the altar. But there is another illustration that can be made to portray this cleansing process.

In the Apostle John’s first epistle, he offers up a cryptic thought for his readers. “There are three that testify: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and the three are in agreement.”²⁷³ This is the trinity of spiritual transformation, for we may understand that it is the Spirit of God which comes first to hover over the waters of the mind imprinting the word of truth. The imprint of the water is then transferred into the blood as we have described earlier. This trinity is hence an order of progression moving from spirit to water and ultimately to blood. This progression is seen in part right at the dawn of creation where the Spirit of God was upon the dark waters of the earth²⁷⁴, a depiction of how God is the first to move in the darkness of man’s mind at the onset of his spiritual journey.

This Spirit that moves upon the waters is tantamount to the divine word making its mark upon the darkness of the mind. For Paul describes in his letter to the Ephesians that “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by

²⁷¹ Leviticus 4:5-7

²⁷² Joel 3:21

²⁷³ 1 John 5:8

²⁷⁴ Genesis 1:2

the washing with water through the word ...”²⁷⁵ It is therefore the pure thoughts of God’s word that washes the mind which in turn purifies the blood.

In the first chapter of John’s gospel he attests to the incarnation of Jesus and asserts his divinity and his humanity. He describes Jesus as the divine “Word” and declares, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”²⁷⁶ What was true of Jesus in his incarnation is also true of humanity on the road to holiness, because it is the divine Word that also becomes a part of our flesh when we read the scriptures with understanding and grasp the power of their meaning. The word makes its way into our blood where it is taken to our cells to become part of our very flesh. In this way, it is like Jesus is becoming a part of our very being as we receive the word of truth into an open mind.

One might speculate that there may be some kind of physiological component within the brain to serve as the conduit between the Spirit and the flesh and effect this transcendental process. On this subject much has been written throughout the ages on a small organ within the brain called the pineal gland. Many writers on the subject, both religious and medical have speculated that it is the vehicle of soul/body connection. Descartes wrote that it is the organ which most directly communicates between body and soul, and there are numerous observations about the gland and its medical function which may suggest a spiritual connection.

The shape of the gland is unusual. It is a small conical body not much bigger than a grain of rice. The shape is similar to an evergreen or a pine tree from which the gland derives its name. This fact is interesting because the evergreen has often been referred to as the ancient “tree of life” back in the Garden of Eden. The evergreen represents the perpetual life of Christ from season to season in contrast to deciduous trees which turn brown or loose leaves. The profile of an evergreen is a triangle representing the three persons of the Blessed Trinity.

Not just to mention shape, the color of the gland is significantly red contrasting against the sea of gray brain matter surrounding it. The color is such because the organ is highly vascularized suggesting a potential function of cleaning the blood like the spleen, kidneys, and liver. It has been noted in many people over fifty years old that the pineal is atrophied and calcified. Such people run a higher risk of cancer than those whose pineal is still alive and active.

The tiny organ is also known to secrete certain hormones like serotonin (the well being, antidepressant hormone.) The pineal regulates a number of hormone cycles such as menstrual, waking/sleeping, puberty, etc. The hormone melatonin is also secreted by the pineal gland and may have some potent medicinal properties. It is worthy to note that melatonin has been suggested to reduce the development of certain cancerous tumors and may also slow down the aging process. In an interesting study, rats preferred to drink alcohol to water in an environment of total darkness. With their pineal glands removed, the preference was reversed. Rats injected with melatonin turned into alcoholics.

²⁷⁵ Ephesians 5:26

²⁷⁶ John 1:14

The pineal is in many creatures an eyelike structure and functions as a light receptor. It has been called a “third eye” in a number of animals because it contains magnetic material and serves as a navigational organ. In this way the pineal gland signifies the divine vision that we often call “insight” as opposed to the normal sense vision we refer to as eyesight.

This tiny gland is apparently fairly large in children but begins to shrink with the onset of puberty. Could it be that the atrophy is from lack of use rather than a normal degeneration with age? Those with strong spiritual or religious orientation have been shown to have active pineal glands way into adulthood, and so we may speculate that if the gland does disintegrate it may be due to inactivity more than anything else.

Section 4 – The Skin

As an addendum to the subject of the blood, it is also appropriate here to briefly sketch out the skin which has a relation to the blood particularly when it is contaminated. The skin as the outer covering of the body has several functions including protection and breathing, but it is also for excretion. As the largest organ in the body, the skin eliminates much waste from the body. In this way, the surface of the body becomes an indicator of the condition on the inside.

There is an old proverb that says, “as within so without” to suggest what is happening on the inside is made manifest on the outside. Applications have been made to the physical world around us which when plagued by earthquakes and natural disasters serve as a symbol of the unrest and problems within mankind itself, for everything in nature is connected. When boils, scabs, and lesions appear on the skin, it is often an external manifestation of some kind of toxicity in the blood. When a certain saturation level is reached within the body, the garbage within the blood needs to be purged and some kind of boil will appear as the body attempts to rid itself of toxins. This is certainly the case with the skin disease psoriasis which has been linked with noxious overload in the bowel. So as was established in the last section, the blood which carries the effects of sin as an imprint within it will also manifest itself on the surface of the body and we will see it reflected on the skin. At least the scriptures employ this idea in passages concerning skin diseases especially in the Pentateuch.

The handling and treatment of skin conditions was a strong theme in the Levitical Law taking up several chapters’ worth of details. The most well known disease in the ancient world was leprosy not only in the Old Testament but in Jesus’ day, and the Lord himself spent time healing lepers who were regularly ostracized from the community. Though leprosy might have been a catchall term for any chronic disease of the skin covering an assortment of outbreaks in the flesh and skin disfigurements, all victims were considered contagious and put outside of the camp. The sufferers were for all intents and purposes treated as dead. That those who had unclean discharges from their flesh could be a source of contagion to others signifies the spiritual principle that those who are spiritually

dead or diseased run the risk of contaminating the spiritually living, for in the words St. Paul, “bad company corrupts good character.”²⁷⁷

All within the same chapters in Leviticus that discuss those with skin conditions are also passages about spreading mildew on clothing and on the walls of houses, and these should be interpreted as additional imagery to describe the surface of the body. In the case of mildew on articles of clothing, the first treatment was to wash the fabric with water and tying this in with our understanding of the symbol of water was as if to say that the individual first needed to undergo a change in thinking to change his condition. Then the passage goes on to say if this is still not effective the piece of clothing must be burned with fire, because the fire of affliction, a more radical cleansing agent than water will purify man when all else fails.²⁷⁸

Finally, regulations were in place for the case of finding mildew on the walls of a house with a litany of protocols to follow when it occurred. This is symbolically akin to the walls of man’s flesh house, the body in which he lives. If mold were found in someone’s home, the priest would come and order the walls scraped. If the substance returned, the next step was to remove the contaminated stones and throw them away. Finally if this didn’t solve the problem, the entire home was destroyed and all of it was carried to an “unclean place” to symbolize that hell is the last extreme of purification for those who do not cooperate with God.²⁷⁹

Section 5 – The Spine

Leaving the subjects of blood and skin which we loosely tied into this analysis of man’s chest, we will now turn our attention to the boney structure that supports man’s whole trunk, the spine. We will consider the nervous system that innervates it as well as the vertebrae themselves. But first by way of background it is useful to consider the biblical significance of trees throughout the scriptures as a type of the human being. Perhaps this is not a foreign idea. Trees are very prevalently mentioned in the Bible with reference to man using a variety of figurative language. The very popular Psalm 1 extols the virtues of the righteous man comparing him to these giant structures of the plant kingdom. It reads, “He shall be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.”²⁸⁰ Later in the Psalms, David compares himself in a similar way when he says, “I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God.”²⁸¹

Isaiah uses similar imagery to describe man as well. He talks about “the trees of the field clapping their hands”²⁸² which is clearly an anthropomorphism, a metaphor for men rejoicing. The prophet later goes on to describe the Lord’s restoration of the captives

²⁷⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:33

²⁷⁸ Leviticus 13:53-55

²⁷⁹ Leviticus 14:33-45

²⁸⁰ Psalm 1:3

²⁸¹ Psalm 52:8

²⁸² Isaiah 55:12

returning from exile and their conversion from sorrow to joy. He declares, “They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord ...”²⁸³

The use of trees as a symbol of mankind was certainly a device used within the gospels and by Jesus himself. The Lord spoke of “knowing a tree by its fruit” to indicate how we should be able to discern between good and evil people. He described the fiery punishment of hell by noting that “every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”²⁸⁴ Perhaps one of the more subtle associations of men with the tree is in the story of Jesus healing the blind man at Bethsaida. The bizarre miracle required two attempts to complete. After Jesus had laid his hands on the man’s eyes the first time, things weren’t quite perfect for him, and he remarked, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.”²⁸⁵ Though it is not clear how a blind man would even know what a tree looked like, we are told that after Jesus’ second attempt the man saw everything clearly. It would seem that this healing required two installments to illustrate once again this connection of man with the wood of the forest.

The book of Deuteronomy is even so bold to say “the tree of the field is man’s life.”²⁸⁶ So many are the similarities between men and trees that this assertion can be made. Both require water and nourishment from the ground. Metaphorically, both bring forth fruit and require pruning to reach their full potential. It is more than coincidence then that we refer to man’s torso as a trunk or to his appendages as limbs. We borrow the same language from our description of an ordinary tree.

Previously we sketched out the story of the Burning Bush which appeared to Moses in the desert before he became leader of Israel. It was a bush on fire that was continuously burning but not getting consumed, and we asserted that the tree was a type of man. To further elaborate on this idea, we may link this bush not only with man in a general way but to the nervous system that is found within him. The bulbous root of the bush which soaks up “water” and nutrients can be thought of as a symbol of the brain which is the foundation and main control center of the whole nervous system. Along this line of thinking, the stem of the bush represents the spinal cord which anatomically is an extension of the brain and its main conduit to the rest of the body. Finally, the branches of the bush signify all of the peripheral nerves which branch off of the spinal cord and reach to the uttermost parts of the body.

The Burning Bush then serves as symbol of the human nervous system which conducts “fire energy.” As described earlier, this fire is God himself that man comes in contact with during his sojourn on earth. This should not be such a strange notion, because as we discussed in Chapter 1, it is within the brain that man makes his primary contact with God. As an extension of the brain, the nervous system is the main place where people experience the physical effects of God first and foremost.

²⁸³ Isaiah 61:3

²⁸⁴ Matthew 7:15-20

²⁸⁵ Mark 8:22-26

²⁸⁶ Deuteronomy 20:19

Frequently people will talk about getting a “chill” down their spine after something happens that is very moving. Often this manifestation will happen after a strong religious or emotional experience. It could be after hearing a miraculous story or hearing a favorite song on the radio that has important sentimental meaning. Whatever the stimulus, the positive thought is conducted down the spinal cord and out to the whole body. This is the physical effect of experiencing God which passes from the brain to the remotest cell. This mechanism is also tantamount to the manifestation of “Goosebumps” which are simply the effect on the skin where the nerve endings terminate.

To connect this nervous system with biblical place names as we have briefly done in prior sections, we can relate this part of the anatomy to a passage early in Deuteronomy. Toward the beginning of this book, Moses recounts the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert tracing over the long and winding path that they made in the wilderness. At one point, he recounts, “we went on past our brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We turned up from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion Geber and traveled along the desert road of Moab.”²⁸⁷ The places known as Elath and Ezion Geber were right at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba, and they were not only geographical neighbors but can also be thought of as anatomical neighbors within the body. For Elath means “trees” or a “grove” and in this context signifies the strengthening of the nervous system which connects the physical and the spiritual or the formed with the formless.²⁸⁸ Ezion Geber on the other hand is translated as “backbone” to illustrate that the vertebrae form the housing for the spinal cord which runs down its length. Earlier a link was made between the Euphrates River and the bloodstream and along these lines similar associations have also been made with the other rivers of the Fertile Crescent. The Euphrates’ neighbor, the Tigris meaning “rapid stream” has been interpreted as a symbol of the nervous system, the river of synapses and nerve impulses that flow through the body at a lightning fast pace. Together with a couple other streams, both of these major rivers are depicted as flowing out of the Garden of Eden which can be metaphorically interpreted as the garden of the physical body.²⁸⁹

This inner tree that we call our nervous system carries the vibratory effects of brain thought throughout the whole body. The energy generated by the brain is carried by the spinal cord to all of the peripheral nerves to vitalize our whole being. In reality, this inner tree that we are describing is not a solitary member within us but is rather a dual system, two trees functioning in parallel. This is supported early on in Genesis in the narrative of the Garden of Eden, for there we learn that there were two trees planted in the Garden.²⁹⁰ The Tree of Life was the neighbor of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and both are metaphorically growing within the garden of the human body.

²⁸⁷ Deuteronomy 2:8

²⁸⁸ A relevant narrative comes from 2 Kings 14:21-22. King Azariah (Uzziah) continued the work of his father by reclaiming back territory held by the Edomites. This brief account tells how Azariah rebuilt Elath and restored it to the control of Judah. Allegorically he strengthened the inner life system by transferring it from the control of the physical (Edom) to that of the spiritual (Judah.)

²⁸⁹ Genesis 2:10-14 (Some have linked the other two rivers, the Pishon and Gihon with the other two “body rivers” – the bilious river (digestive fluid) and the lymphatic river)

²⁹⁰ Genesis 3:3,22

One tree represents the high road and the spiritual side of man to which he is called. The other is the symbol of the flesh nature and man's innate curiosity which drives him to jump into all of the many earthly experiences that life has to offer. Both trees are his tutors, because the one shows him the way of life while the other inflicts the pain of death and destruction. And in man's journey of life he partakes of both trees as part of his learning experience.

The energy generated by the brain can be either positive or negative according to the nature of the thought origin. It has with it the power to either sustain life or undermine it. Good thoughts build up while worry and destructive thoughts attack health. Positive thinking transmitted through our inner tree is the Tree of Life while erroneous thinking, the way of the natural man and flesh represents the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil within. It is this tree that has the serpent winding through its branches to illustrate the temptation of Satan and the power of the lower nature of man which invites him to partake of all that life has to offer. Though there are clearly ill effects from "eating the fruit" of this lower tree, it should not be viewed as necessarily unproductive, for there are important life lessons to be learned from it. Although the serpent is now generally regarded as a symbol of evil, to the ancients it was actually a symbol of knowledge and wisdom. This is captured in the Hebrew word for serpent, Nachash which among other things means to "learn by experience" and which is the main purpose of man's existence.²⁹¹

After a very long journey in this world, man gains all of the "knowledge" imparted by this lower tree and learns through the school of hard knocks to take the high road which leads to life. For this reason, the Genesis account starts off with two trees within the garden, but when we come to the end of the Bible in the Book of Revelation we only find one tree, the Tree of Life.²⁹² Such is the story of man who after finishing his earthly sojourn has arrived at his ultimate goal and the tree within becomes one.

To further capture some of the symbolism that we have discussed there is perhaps no better biblical story than that of Rahab the harlot who lived in Jericho at the time of Israel's conquest. Rahab lived in a house on top of the wall of the city, and she hid the Jewish spies who came to search out the country on her rooftop. When the men of the city inquired about the spies, she told them that they had gone and advised to pursue them quickly. While the pursuers raced after the spies, Rahab made a deal with the Israelites and they gave her a scarlet thread to tie in the window as her protection when the city fell. Then she proceeded to let the men down by a cord through the window down the side of the wall to escape out of the city. From there the spies scurried to the mountain where they remained three days until the time the pursuers should return to the city.²⁹³

²⁹¹ The relevance of the serpent to the ancients is embodied in a few symbols of antiquity that are well known to us today. The mythological Rod of Asclepius which portrays a snake winding along the length of a staff has become the modern emblem of the medical profession conveying that the serpent brings health and wisdom. Also related to this image is the figure of the Brazen serpent of Moses which was raised up on a pole to become an antidote for snake bites when the Israelites were in the desert. (See Numbers 21:4-9) In that application the motif of healing is very evident.

²⁹² Revelation 22:2

²⁹³ Joshua 2

Packed into this narrative is much that rounds out the story of the inner tree. In actuality the fortification that surrounded the city consisted of an inner and outer wall upon which Rahab made her home. This binary system can be thought of to represent the two nervous systems within man. We have outlined the two trees in the garden which serve as an analog to the two parallel nerve systems within the body, for biology breaks down this system into two major components, the autonomic and the somatic nervous systems which work in parallel. One is the involuntary system which makes sure all of the organs are functioning properly while the other is the voluntary enabling all kinds of movement. Both of these systems are found beneath Rahab's house which represents the brain or control center.

In Chapter 1 we alluded to how the nation of Israel was to serve as symbol of the spiritual in contrast to all of the Gentile nations that surrounded her. In this way, we may understand that when Rahab let the Jewish spies down a cord along the wall it was tantamount to the positive or spiritual thought inspiration going down the spinal cord and getting disseminated to the whole body. After their descent down the wall, these spies escaped to the mountain to indicate that this process results in a state of higher consciousness within Rahab and all that she represents. There these "positive thoughts" remained for three days, the creative number until their enemies were no longer a threat. When these spies or spiritual ideas permeate a person, then the sign of the scarlet thread, the life-blood of the individual shall be his saving power, for it is the cleansed purified blood that alone has the power to save and make one whole.

Another meaningful story that ties into this theme comes from the Book of Judges in a narrative involving Gideon, the servant of the Lord who was about to lead the Israelites in battle against their oppressors the Midianites. Gideon was at first unsure if God intended to use him to bring victory to Israel, and in his uncertainty he proceeded to ask the Lord for not just one but two signs to confirm the task that he was about to do for God.

In reality, it was really one sign but in two parts. Initially Gideon proposed that he should put a fleece of wool on the floor overnight and he asked the Lord that if the fleece should be saturated with dew while the ground was dry, he would know that the Lord was leading him into battle. And it turned out that the Lord granted this request, for Gideon rose up early in the morning to find the sign delivered just as he had asked for. He proceeded to take hold of the fleece and wrung out the water with his hands into a bowl. But Gideon was not completely satisfied and asked for the same miracle in reverse on the next night. This time the proposal was that the fleece would remain bone dry while all of the ground was wet with dew, and the Lord once again granted the sign as a confirmation for Gideon.²⁹⁴

This passage frequently stirs about discussion about the propriety of asking God for signs which may appear as bold and inappropriate for the humble servant of the Lord, but beyond this immediate significance lies another meaning regarding the transmission of the effects of thought from the brain to the rest of the body (through the medium of the

²⁹⁴ Judges 6:36-40

spinal cord.) In this story, the dew as a specific manifestation of water symbolizes the creative life force that is replenished within the mind at night when we are sleeping (or even more generally, when we are “unaware” of what God is doing.) That Gideon emptied the dew into a bowl signifies that these thoughts are deposited into the brain which is also a vessel of water in the same kind of shape.

But the miracle that God performed for Gideon was once again twofold to give the whole picture, for in the second part of the sign the Lord kept the fleece dry while all of the ground was saturated. And this was to illustrate that the contents of the mind are subsequently transferred to the whole body which euphemistically is symbolized by the earth, the physical body of man. In this way the story of Gideon’s fleece summarizes the entire process from conception in the mind until the effects are realized in the entire body.

At this point we have begun to develop man’s nervous system and the spinal cord which is the primary conduit of spiritual energy to the body. We may extend our scope now from the cord to the spine itself (or backbone) which encases this vital neural pathway. The two are anatomically connected and also share similar spiritual meanings as should become clear.

One of the main biblical devices to serve as a corollary to the backbone is the rod or staff that was frequently mentioned in the Pentateuch. Both Moses and Aaron possessed one and used it frequently during the time of the Exodus and during the wandering in the desert. On one occasion there was a dispute among the Israelites in the wilderness about which tribe was rightfully ordained to the priesthood. Moses made each tribe take a staff and engrave the tribe’s name on it. Then he took them and placed them all in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Ark of the Lord. The Lord promised that the staff that sprouted would belong to the tribe that he had chosen for this special job. And as it turned out, the next day when Moses entered the Tent, he “saw that Aaron’s staff, which represented the house of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed, and produced almonds.”²⁹⁵

The almond tree which is the earliest tree to awaken after winter and the last to lose its leaves in the fall is the symbol of eternal life and also spiritual development. The blossoming, fruit yielding staff in this narrative indicates the spinal nervous energy which under God’s direction blossoms and brings forth spiritual fruit unto life.

The Hebrew word for almond tree is very similar to the Hebrew word for “I watch.” All 12 rods were placed before the Lord under his vigilant eye, and the one that he had chosen bloomed. The passage also relays a previously mentioned notion that God develops all twelve spiritual faculties within us, but he doesn’t do so all at once. Each faculty is developed one at a time, and this inner unfoldment happens according to his time table and watchful eye.

²⁹⁵ Numbers 17

The backbone as the main structure of support for man's trunk is the symbol of his strength, a power which may be used for either good or evil, a power that may oscillate between heaven and earth. This kind of imagery is seen in the narratives concerning Moses' staff especially near the time of the Exodus. When the Lord was training Moses to perform signs for the Israelites so that they would believe him and receive him as leader, he taught him a particular "trick" that was sure to get attention. "The Lord said to Moses, 'What is in your hand?' 'A staff,' he replied. The Lord said, 'Throw it on the ground.' Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the Lord said to him, 'Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.' So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand."²⁹⁶

What is illustrated by this miraculous sign is more than just an eye-catching prank; it is rather a symbol of the duality of man's nature with which he is in constant struggle. When Moses drops the staff to the earth, it represents the times when our earthly nature and sense consciousness dominate. It is then that the rod becomes a snake, that old symbol of the devil, deception, and evil.

The serpent immediately causes a reaction of terror in Moses which makes him to run away. This underscores the strength of the lower nature which holds us in bondage because of fear, and this fear is due to ignorance and lack of understanding of higher principles. The only way to get out of this vicious cycle is to face fear head on. Unless we confront our enemy, we will always be running from it, for when we confront those things that frighten us, we gain understanding and conquer what had held us a prisoner. It is then that the serpent loses its power which was always only illusory and based on not knowing any better.

This is what Moses learned when he overcame his trepidation and grabbed the snake by the tail. When he lifted it up from the ground toward heaven, it became a solid staff again and the spiritual was empowered. The snake became a rod of power with which he would go on to perform many miracles starting with all of the plagues of Egypt. It is our job to master the snake within so that we can rise up to a higher level. This was depicted back in the story of the Fall of Man when his redemption was prophesied, "You will crush [the serpent's] head, and [the serpent] will strike your heel."²⁹⁷ In religious art this has been portrayed beautifully in statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for if we look closely at her feet, we will see that she is standing on a snake which she has crushed underneath, a sign that she has moved up to higher spiritual places.

The power of the serpent was neutralized when Moses raised it up from the ground to a higher level. The principle of this story is not limited to this passage from Exodus but is seen in other places in the Bible. It comes to us again strongly in the Book of Numbers when the children of Israel were wandering in the desert. At that time, the people were getting impatient and grumbling toward God. As a result, the Lord sent venomous snakes among them which bit them so that they died. When they cried out to God for mercy, the

²⁹⁶ Exodus 4:1-5

²⁹⁷ Genesis 3:15

Lord instructed Moses to fashion a bronze snake and put it on a pole. All who were bitten could then look to the snake and be healed.²⁹⁸

When Moses “lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” he restored life and brought healing to those who were under the dominion of the snakes. When we lift up the serpent within, our lower nature to God, it loses its power and becomes transformed into something spiritual which brings us the redemption and healing that we seek.

When the serpent is lifted up, it becomes transformed into a rod of supernatural power. Moses used his staff for many signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. Like the wand of a magician or the staff of a wizard, his rod was the vehicle by which God brought the many plagues upon the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus. It turned the Nile into blood, filled the land with frogs, and called forth hail to rain down from heaven.

The power that he displayed with his stave is meant to be a type of the power that we are called to wield when the Higher Self has begun to mature. It consists of a number of spiritual skills that we acquire like utilizing the force of the spoken word and mental visualization (that were discussed earlier) as well as many others. It is the power of dominion over ourselves and our surroundings, the mastery over situations and circumstances. God calls us to share in his own divine power, because it is our destiny to be like him in every way.

Especially with the development of the faculty of faith we learn to tap into this power. Faith is in many ways the heart of all spiritual progress. “Without [it] man cannot please God.” Once he learns to start exercising it, he discovers that it is the key to unleash the power of God. If God is a tremendous reservoir held back behind a dam, then faith is access to the water release valve that allows these waters to be siphoned from an infinite supply.

Jesus said, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.”²⁹⁹ He also indicated that if we have enough faith we can command a mountain to move from one location to another. The Lord who exercised the dominion over wind and wave has not only shown these signs to demonstrate his divinity, but rather he is showing us that we also must learn to exercise the divine strength that is latent inside of us to control the circumstances around us.

There is a very appropriate story to recount from the Book of Exodus at this point to drive home this concept. As the Israelites were fleeing from Egypt they came to the Red Sea and saw the Egyptian army racing after them. Realizing that they were trapped, they began to panic and they complained bitterly to Moses. Then the leader of Israel attempted to calm their fears asserting that the “Lord will fight for you; you need only be still.”

²⁹⁸ Numbers 21:4-9

²⁹⁹ Matthew 17:20

This of course sounds like a good plan, placing trust in God to bail out the people from their imminent problem. But this was not exactly the idea that God had in mind to bring salvation to the people. Rather “the Lord said to Moses, ‘Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through on dry ground.’”³⁰⁰ In effect God’s message to Moses and the Israelites was as if to say, “Why are crying out to me? Do it yourself and resolve your own problem. Take action and do not sit idly by waiting for me to help you.”

Because God wants us to discover the power that dwells latently inside of us, he is not as much interested in bailing us out of each and every problem, but rather he wants us to learn how to harness the divine power that has been hidden inside of us all along and work our own miracles. He doesn’t want us to be a victim of things that happen to us but wants us to be able to change our situations. Benjamin Franklin has a famous quote which is perhaps supportive of this idea. He said, “God helps those who help themselves.” However this should not be understood to say that God wants to keep a cool distance and leave us to our own devices. On the contrary, he wants us to develop the maturity and repertoire of spiritual skills to be able to function in the higher realms for which we are destined.

Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing (working miracles.) He will do even greater things than these ...”³⁰¹ In this passage the Son of God asserts that we will not only work the miracles that he has done but will even do greater things than he has displayed during his earthly life. Here he is telling us again that we must learn to tap into and share in his divine power. We must start exercising the power of dominion.

As a final illustration on this subject, we can take a look at a couple of episodes that happened in the desert when the people were in search of water. At the places called Massah and Meribah, the Israelites cried out to God for relief from their thirst. Though parched and dry, there was rock in that place, and the Lord commanded Moses to strike the stone and when he did so water issued forth for the community to drink.³⁰²

Some 40 years later, a similar incident occurred in the desert when the people were thirsty and in search of water. This time the Lord presented the rock to Moses but rather than using his rod to strike the rock, he was told to “speak to the rock and it will pour out its water.”³⁰³

In both cases the staff of Moses is seen as a device of divine power to work a miracle for the community, but there is an important difference between the two instances. In the first case, the rock was to be struck to bring forth its water while in the second case, Moses was simply to speak to the rock. What is demonstrated by these twin stories is the

³⁰⁰ Exodus 14:10-16

³⁰¹ John 14:12

³⁰² Exodus 17:1-7

³⁰³ Numbers 20:1-8

evolution of this power of dominion over the course of time. The divine power is something that must be learned and acquired and does not come overnight. In the beginning of our spiritual journey, we tend to make things happen more by brute force than anything else. We try to make changes with violence and physical force which is depicted by the striking of the rock. Later as we have progressed on our journey to a higher level, we have evolved to a greater place of spiritual refinement. It is at this point that we can simply speak a word and effect changes relying on invisible rather than visible forces, and we have begun to exercise the power of the spoken word that was introduced in our discussion of the tongue in Chapter 2.

Section 6 – The Gland Centers

After just finishing an analysis of the spine and its spiritual significance, it is probably appropriate to take a look at the seven major gland centers of the body which have a relation to the body's nervous system. In the last chapter it was suggested that the inner tree, our nervous system functions as the bridge between the formed (body) and the formless (the spiritual.) Thought energy from the mind was said to make its way from the brain down the spinal cord finally diffusing to the entire body through a myriad of nerve endings.

A number of world philosophies and religions have understood the core of the nervous system, the brain along with the spinal cord to be comprised of several spiritual centers (also known as chakras in the East) that run from the base of the spinal cord all the way up to the top of the brain. Traditionally there are seven such centers and some philosophies link them with the seven glands that are positioned near to them along the center line of the body. Starting from the very bottom are the gonads (the body's sex organs) representing the lowest spiritual consciousness of the individual. In ascending order there follow the Leyden gland, the Adrenal glands, the Thymus gland, the Thyroid gland, the Pituitary gland, and finally the Pineal Gland at the very top which was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Taken as a unit, many philosophies understand the seven as a barometer of progress toward spiritual perfection. The idea is that early in our spiritual journey only the lowest center is activated as a channel to receive divine power from God whereas when we are in an advanced spiritual state all seven centers have been fully turned on. Some religious authorities have asserted that when all are finally turned on, it is equivalent to completing a circuit and a "magical heat" arises from the flow of power through this path. A manifestation has on occasion been witnessed as light emanating from the top of the head and has been compared with the tongues of fire that fell on the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

But regardless of how such an activated circuit would manifest itself, the message is that these spiritual centers indicate the height of spiritual consciousness that an individual has attained, and germane to the objective of this book, we will now cite a few biblical references to present some imagery of the subject matter.

Throughout the bible the number seven appears regularly and has often been seen as a symbol of perfection or completion. The earliest usage of this number occurs in the creation story itself in which God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh signifying that he had finished his work. The number seven has been thought to be significant as it is the sum of two more fundamental numbers (3 & 4) which are respectively the number of heaven (e.g. the triune God) and the number of earth (the four elements of the natural world.) Seven therefore as a symbol of perfection represents the union of the heavenly with the earthly or the spiritual with the physical, and in this vein there is some basis in linking the seven gland centers with the spiritual centers. For there are 3 glands in the head which we could allegorize as typifying the spiritual while there are 4 glands in the torso which could equivalently be seen as representing the body itself.

Not just the Creation story, but other passages within the Book of Genesis itself utilize the number seven, and one such story has to do with the Patriarch Isaac and his dealings with Abimelech, king of the Philistines. Isaac had been living among the Philistines in the region of Gerar and had become very prosperous in the land, so much so that the natives envied him. In an act of malice they filled in the wells that were dug by his father Abraham and the king asked Isaac to move away from them. So Isaac put some distance between himself and his enemies and proceeded to go to work reopening the wells dug by his father which the Philistines had filled with earth. He then went on to dig a new well over which the locals quarreled with him about water rights, so he named it Esek meaning “dispute.” Undeterred he decided to dig another well but had the same strife with the Philistines and so named it Sitnah meaning “opposition.” Pressing forward he dug yet another well for which the people of the land left him alone, so he called it Rehoboth meaning “room” to indicate that the Philistines had given him some space. Finally he dug one more well, and at that time Abimelech king of the Philistines came to him to make a peace treaty with Isaac. So Isaac called his final well “Beersheba” meaning well of seven or well of an oath.³⁰⁴

In commenting on this narrative it should be noted that the idea of a well is a symbol of the hidden springs of life which man must labor (dig) to open within himself. Water as the token of divine thoughts or the divine life force is the substance of this well which may be interpreted as a deep capacity within man to connect to the source of life. In the story we see a struggle occurring between Isaac and the Philistines concerning these wells. Initially Abraham the man of faith had begun to dig them allegorically commencing the spiritual life, but he had only completed three of them in his lifetime. And in the days of his son Isaac forces of opposition were appearing to undo the work (spiritual progress) he had made. Such opposition comes from the lower nature of man represented by the Philistines. As a confederation of five cities, the people represent the man of the five senses which is in conflict with the spiritual. The Philistines began filling the wells with earth which is to say that they were attempting to block the spiritual life force by clogging it up with physical and material distractions. Ultimately through the persistence of Isaac (the Higher Self) all seven wells were successfully dug, and when he had achieved this goal a peace was established with the Philistines (body forces.) And so the passage supplies imagery of the process whereby man achieves holiness, the time

³⁰⁴ Genesis 26

when his spiritual nature has taken full dominion over his lower animal self and there is peace.

Other interesting allusions to the seven spiritual centers occur in the Old Testament and a quick reference to one was in the furnishings of the temple as instructed by Moses. As discussed earlier in this book there was a lampstand of seven lamps or candlesticks to reside in the Holy Place of the Temple.³⁰⁵ Metaphorically when all seven spiritual centers are activated then light floods the body (temple) and brings inner illumination.

The quickening of these seven life centers is also shrouded in a story from the life of Elisha the prophet. He had been called in a hurry to come to the aid of a family that he had visited somewhat regularly for several years. The woman who had one son died suddenly and in her devastation she beckoned Elisha to come see if he could do something miraculously about the situation. Initially he had his staff placed upon the body of the boy where he lay in an upper room, an allusion to the “rod of power” or repertoire of spiritual skills that man must develop and learn to use in dealing with life problems. He also stretched himself out upon the boy “mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, and hands to hands” to indicate that he made the fullest psychic contact with the child as a means of healing. Then the child grew warm and as he revived, he sneezed seven times which could allegorically indicate the quickening of all seven spiritual centers of the body resulting in “life.”³⁰⁶

As a final biblical image focusing on this concept of seven life centers, we could consider the character Hannah the mother of Samuel in the Old Testament. She had been barren and unable to bear a child which caused her much shame in a society that highly valued the proliferation of children. In her desperation she vowed to God that she would dedicate the child he would give her to God’s service if he would but allow her to conceive. The Lord heard her earnest cry and gave her Samuel as a reward, and thereafter she offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God saying, “She who was barren has borne seven children.”³⁰⁷ In reality of course she only had the one that we know of, but her exclamation intimates the transition from barrenness (lack of Christ light within or the activation of none of the spiritual centers) to the fullness of spirituality with a metaphorical seven children to symbolize that all life centers were turned on.

Now it is probably useful to spend a little time speaking of these chakras in reference to Christian religious practice historically and even as it is practiced today in a number of denominations. Again keying off the idea that the nervous system is the connection between the spiritual and the physical or the formless and the formed, the spiritual centers along the spinal cord and in the brain may be understood as places where divine power may be received from outside of the body.

This ancient knowledge persists in the dispensation of sacraments within the traditional Christian churches to this day with particular focus on the highest spiritual center which

³⁰⁵ Numbers 8:1-4

³⁰⁶ 2 Kings 4:29-35

³⁰⁷ 1 Samuel 2:5

we relate to the Pineal Gland and also known as the Crown Chakra because it is located beneath the crown of the head. Anatomically this is the place where the bones of the skull converge and is the soft spot somewhere between the top and the back of the head in babies. In some denominations, after the baptism with water, holy oil known as chrism is used to anoint the baby's forehead (which we have discussed previously) and also the crown of the head which being linked with the Pineal Gland has been understood metaphorically as man's "Third Eye" because of its link with spiritual and psychic intuition. In this way, the anointing is viewed as a means of opening up the spiritual sight of the child.

In terms of the ritual in other sacraments, the rite of Ordination focuses in large part upon the Crown Chakra. In traditional churches, the bishop will lay his hands upon the crown of the head of the person being ordained as a means of transferring the spiritual power needed to make the candidate a deacon, priest, or bishop. Historically, within Christendom, it was traditional for candidates for ordination as well as active clergy to shave the crown of the head and this was known as receiving the tonsure. The idea here is that the chief spiritual center should be "laid bare" to maximize the reception of the spiritual power. This custom has since ceased in most circles but that it was a historical practice within the church betrays a knowledge of ancient wisdom that existed from the Apostolic Age.

Other religious practices also indicate the emphasis on the Crown Chakra as the preeminent place of receiving spiritual power, and to mention one we could consider the almost universal practice of bowing one's head in prayer. In such a posture, the crown of the head is pointed heavenward in the direction of the divine flow. Within Christianity itself, particularly in the traditional churches there is also the practice of the clergy using special vestments including the bishop's mitre. In considering this head garb as it is known in the West, we recognize that it is funnel shaped as if to concentrate spiritual power from above into the head of the bishop.

Returning again to the ordination rites of some churches, it is pertinent to also mention how all seven spiritual centers come into play in one part of the ceremony. In many of the traditional churches, the candidates for ordination will lie prostrate on the floor of the church while the Litany of the Saints is sung. In this posture, they are "laying bare" the entire spinal cord and brain to the reception of divine power from above as the invocation is made for heavenly assistance.

In closing this section on the gland centers, it should be noted that various philosophies offer different suggestions as to the spiritual significance of each gland. What follows is one such philosophy which views each gland center (or related spiritual center) as a behavioral pattern that needs to be crucified (sanctified) in order to achieve holiness. It is offered below with little comment or justification and is provided only for the interest of the reader.

In this particular way of thinking, the Gonads or the lowest spiritual center representing reproductivity are thought to be associated with the dissipation or conversely the

repression of the life energies. The Leyden Gland follows next in ascending order and is considered to be the “birthplace of the soul.” And this is because this is the gland in which gestation takes place at conception and may be thought of as the starting place of the soul’s activity. This gland is linked with the fault of over-confidence or conversely doubt and faithlessness. The Adrenal Glands which appear subsequently are thought of as the emotional seat and are connected with fear, anxiety, and withdrawal or conversely mania. Above these glands appears the Thymus Gland which has been called the “place of love” (probably because of its proximity to the heart.) It has been associated with the idea of superiority in the form of hatred, resentment, irritation, or loathing of others or conversely inferiority in the form of those same emotions toward oneself. Climbing higher, the Thyroid Gland comes as the lowest gland in the head (specifically the neck) and for this reason it is linked with willfulness or conversely willlessness or aimlessness. The Pituitary Gland follows continuing up the ladder and has been called the center of the “superconscious” (which is another way of saying the mind of the Spirit.) It is thought to be related to self-centeredness or rebelliousness against the divine consciousness (God.) Finally at the very top of the chain is the Pineal Gland, sometimes called the Christ Center. It is associated with oversensitivity in all three facets of being (body, mind, and spirit) or conversely insensitivity which can take the form of being narrow-minded or unreasonable.

Chapter 4 – The Lower Trunk (or Abdomen)

Having completed a survey of man’s upper torso with some of the organs and systems associated with that part of the body, we may now descend a little further down to have a look at the lower trunk or abdomen. In the last chapter we spent our time primarily with what is found above the diaphragm. Now we will discuss what lies below that division, namely the intestinal tract and bowels which fill the abdominal cavity.

The symbolism behind the gut is probably not terribly obscure, because our every day speech reveals something about its functionality other than its digestive purpose. The heart of the belly can be said to be a kind of emotional center (though distinct from the heart,) the first place where we feel stressors when under pressure. When someone is anxious, he will sometimes say that he has “butterflies in his stomach” or when something traumatic happens, he may say that it was a “gut wrenching” experience. And we have all heard someone tell us at some point in our life to “trust your gut” which means to trust your feelings and the emotions on the inside rather than just listening to your conscious mind.

This kind of speech is not foreign to biblical language, for the prophet Jeremiah uses this kind of talk as well. Overwhelmed by the imminent punishment of Judah which would soon be exiled, Jeremiah uttered, “My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart ...”³⁰⁸ Later in the book he laments over the Northern tribes saying, “Is Ephraim my dear

³⁰⁸ Jeremiah 4:19

son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him.”³⁰⁹

When Joseph was ruler of Egypt, he was overwhelmed with emotion when his brothers came to seek help from him after many years. When he saw Benjamin his youngest brother and the son of his own mother he was brought to tears and ran away from them to avoid embarrassment. The text says, “Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber and wept there.”³¹⁰

As an emotional center, man’s gut is best described as the storage place for his feelings and emotions, a repository of life experiences. The intestines which resemble long dark and dirty tunnels within the body are like a subterranean place, cold and hidden away from the waking world. For this reason, the gut is the symbol of man’s subconscious mind, the place where all sorts of occurrences and happenings in his life get squirreled away and slip out of conscious thought.

What gets buried in the hidden realm of the subconscious are most often those negative life experiences which were never resolved, understood, or properly dealt with when they occurred. Those happenings which remain unprocessed get locked away, hidden from the conscious mind. They are kept concealed from our waking thought mostly because they are too painful and traumatic to deal with.

Oftentimes these sour experiences are those of a child who is too young and too vulnerable to deal with anything overwhelming in his delicate and impressionable state. The events that might occur in an alcoholic home or a home in the throws of divorce with flares of anger and rage are enough to terrify a young person who is still below the age of reason. Unable to cry about it or feel the magnitude of the pain, the child does what is perhaps instinctual and sets up an emotional defense and hardens himself to those things that are happening around him. But this defense mechanism does little to deflect the fear and anger of the experience, for what the youth is unable to deal with emotionally does not disappear but passes unnoticed from the conscious mind into the depths of the subconscious where it remains until a later time when it might be dealt with. Though seemingly as far away from us as the moon is from the earth, our subliminal thoughts nonetheless have a powerful impact on us and become the hidden underlying force directing all of our actions and behavior.

This subconscious mind is therefore best represented by the gut, because the intestines are biologically a place of putrefaction and waste material. It is an organ full of dark and dirty waters which signifies that it is the domain of unpleasant thoughts which have gone into deep storage within us. The gut is therefore the graveyard of life experience and the repository of all sorts of unclean memories that have gone into hiding.

³⁰⁹ Jeremiah 31:20

³¹⁰ Genesis 43:30

Now we have spent a lot of time in the first chapter of this book illustrating the conscious mind of man citing many biblical passages. It should not surprise us then that the scriptures also spend a comparable amount of time depicting the subconscious mind which is not of any less importance. Both are contrasted in an obscure passage from Joshua regarding Caleb and his family. When Caleb had given his daughter Achsah in marriage to a nephew, she asked him for a field to have as her own from her father's property. She stipulated further that she would like land with "springs of water," so Caleb "gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs."³¹¹ The passage reflects what is true of all humans that they have both a conscious and a subconscious mind working within them. The upper spring is naturally what we would call conscious thought while the nether (or lower) spring implies the water or thoughts that lie hidden in the subconscious.

There are many types of the subconscious mind particularly in the Old Testament and we will proceed to detail several of them. Starting with the subterranean motif of the intestines as long dark tunnels, we will briefly mention caves as a symbol of our hidden thoughts. These underground rooms serve as a figure of the subconscious and are personified in the form of one of Israel's many enemies. The Pentateuch mentions the Horim or the Horites who dwelt in the land of Seir and were eventually succeeded by the descendants of Esau, the Edomites.³¹² Their name means "cave-dwellers" or those who live in a hole.

The root word Hor meaning "cave" in Hebrew is seen in several passages including one from Joshua where the place name Beth-Horon is mentioned meaning "house of the cave" or "place of holes." It was in this vicinity that Joshua was in pursuit of 5 Canaanite kings whose armies were defeated in battle. The five men were said to have fled to a cave to hide, but Joshua was told that they had holed themselves up and he proceeded to roll great stones in front of the cave to lock them in. In this particular context, the five kings symbolize the five senses which epitomize the error thoughts that govern and plague the subconscious mind. Later Joshua opened the mouth of the cave and slew those men securing his final victory.³¹³

Later in the Book of Samuel there is a mention of the time in Israel's history when the Philistines were gathered in great strength against Israel. The people were so afraid that they hid themselves in caves, rocks, thickets, and in pits.³¹⁴ An application can be made to those times in life when people suppress feelings and emotions and hide them underground in holes hoping that they will be permanently forgotten and wiped from memory.

After this short sketch of the cave motif, we will now proceed to some more prevalent and very powerful icons of the subconscious as found in the pages of the Old Testament. But first, by way of background we will take a step back in time to the year 1981 when

³¹¹ Joshua 15:16-19

³¹² Deuteronomy 2:12,22

³¹³ Joshua 10:16-26

³¹⁴ 1 Samuel 13:5-7

the movie world was introduced to perhaps one of the greatest films of all time. Raiders of the Lost Ark hit the theaters and became a blockbuster adventure story. The action packed thriller featured Harrison Ford who played Indiana Jones, an archaeologist on the hunt for the greatest treasure of antiquity, the Ark of the Covenant. With his girlfriend Marion, the couple deftly locates the Israelites' famed object buried in the sands of Egypt only to have the Ark confiscated by the Nazis. They race around the globe, struggling with the Germans for control of the sacred possession.

Hitler was said to be obsessed with the occult and greatly desired the Ark for its divine powers which he sought to use as a war weapon. As the story builds to a climax, Indiana Jones and Marion are captured by the Nazis, tied up, and are escorted with a procession of the villains up to a location where the Ark was to be ceremonially opened. Bound together against a pole the couple helplessly awaits what is to happen next.

The grand opening takes place at night on a lighted hillside on an island in the Aegean Sea. The chief Nazi archeologist takes it upon himself to play priest and standing before the Ark with rabid curiosity has the lid taken off of it. He reaches in fully expecting to see some of the articles that Moses put in the sacred vessel like the tablets of stone, but much to his disappointment, his arm returns only a handful of sand which he disrespectfully throws back into the Ark.

We are led to believe that perhaps the Ark didn't have any great power within it after all (or at least not anymore.) In that anti-climatic moment, when it looks like the Nazis are ready to pack up and go home something begins to stir. Strange glowing spirits begin to emerge from the Ark. Appearing harmless at first they suddenly transform into hideous manifestations of death. Swirling about the soldiers in a terrifying dance, the spirits proceed to put all of the Germans to death in an especially gruesome way. In the aftermath, all of the Nazi debris is swept up in a giant whirlwind and carried in an updraft into the heavens. After cleansing the scene, the lid of the Ark returns again to its resting place on the sacred container with a clap of thunder.

Indiana and his girlfriend are of course unharmed having escaped the carnage by closing their eyes to the horrors. They discover themselves set free of their shackles and the story proceeds to find the ark taking up new residence in a U.S. government building housed in a crate among countless others. It is safe again and will bring no harm in its new hiding spot.

Now the Nazis weren't the first group of people to have a bad encounter with the Ark. Back in the time of Samuel, the Ark fell into the hands of the Philistines and was with them for seven months. Feeling a little divine pressure, they decided to return it to its rightful stewards in Israel. They put it on a cart and hitched it to a couple cows which brought it back across the border into the town of Beth Shemesh. But all did not go well for the people of Beth Shemesh that day as 70 of them died, and in the passage we are told that the people perished after they had looked into the Ark. They had taken the lid

off of the box and met a surprise, not unlike our friend Indiana Jones and his “German friends.”³¹⁵

One might wonder where all of this bad stuff came from to start with. How could this holy box of God be filled with so much malice and evil? The last I checked, good things were placed into the Ark by Moses after it was crafted in the desert of Sinai. Aaron’s rod that budded found its home there as well as the two tablets of stone and the pot of manna.³¹⁶ Somewhere along the way it picked up some unfriendly material, and that is the story that we will continue to develop.

This Ark that we are so familiar with throughout the pages of the Bible is not only a sacred golden vessel treasured by the Jews but is also a part of our own human anatomy. The Ark which is a container that we also call a box is a generic word for many things. Sometimes we use the words “trunk” or “chest” synonymously. That biological object that is attached to two arms, two legs, and a head we also call a trunk or chest and it is filled with many things as well. Like the poles that were used to carry the Ark around from place to place in the Old Testament, we also have limbs which transport our own trunk from here to there.

There are many images of the Ark in the Old Testament. Even veiled in the ceremonial practices in the desert, the Ark can be seen in its relation to man. In the book of Numbers, the Lord gave instruction to Moses and Aaron about packing up the Ark for transport whenever the Israelites were going to break camp and move on. In the beginning of Chapter 4 the Lord directed that “when the camp is to move, Aaron and his sons are to go in and take down the shielding curtain and cover the Ark of the Testimony with it. Then they are to cover this with goatskins, spread a cloth of solid blue over that and put the poles in place.”³¹⁷

It sounds like an elaborate ritual, but it is far from an arbitrary thing. The solid blue cloth is a symbol of the spiritual. Blue is the color of the skies, and the heavens which are high above the earth are meant to illustrate spiritual reality. The goatskins are generically animal skins which are the covering of the flesh. Putting the two ideas together, we have another image of man. This Ark is housed under the skin and within the flesh. It is within man represented by his chest. Over the flesh is a covering of blue, the spiritual nature which ideally rules over the animal nature. So we see in this obscure passage from the desert a kind of hierarchy with the spirit over the flesh which contains the Ark.

Now getting back to the Indiana Jones story and the narrative about the people of Beth Shemesh, we need to ask again about the noxious contents of the Ark. What is the toxic stuff inside that has proven so lethal in both of these stories. It is something within man no doubt, something deep inside that is hidden from him. Stored in man’s box, in his trunk is the stuff of the subconscious mind that we have begun to develop, a very deep

³¹⁵ 1 Samuel 6:7-20

³¹⁶ Deuteronomy 10:2, Exodus 16:32-34, Numbers 17:10-11

³¹⁷ Numbers 4:5-8

well to be sure. Just as the lid keeps the contents of the box isolated from the outside, so does the subconscious remain concealed from the conscious mind.

Whatever these things are, they have gone into hiding and might as well be a million miles away for all that we are aware of them. Because they are subconscious we just don't know that they are there. But this doesn't mean that they aren't having an effect on us. These negative emotions inside of the box are a poison to the whole body. What lays buried deep within festers and rots inside. Instead of housing God, the Ark within becomes a toxic waste dump.

We have already described in the last chapter how the evil thoughts of the mind poison the blood and make it toxic. In much the same way, repressed feelings and sinful dispositions remain in storage within the chest to wreak havoc on soul and body. Like "envy that rots the bones," all sorts of negative thoughts and emotions build up in man's trunk to poison him and cause problems.

Harboring judgment or unforgiveness inside can often be a root of depression and a chronically sad countenance. ("A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit."³¹⁸) Anxiety disorders are many times stemming from episodes of fear and trauma in our childhood. Cancer and arthritis are often diseases of bitterness and resentment. When we are entertaining such feelings, we may say something is "eating us up on the inside" and this is why these are illnesses of consumption. Heart attacks may come from cold and insensitive hearts, frozen over and struggling to keep beating. When we have swallowed a bitter pill we may find ourselves one day suffering from diabetes only because we are not sweet enough anymore.

Continuing with our image of the Ark as the container of human experience and unfortunately filled with more ugliness than we can imagine, we will make an extension to another Old Testament model that carries the same idea.

During the Babylonian exile, the prophet Ezekiel was a captive with his people along the great river Euphrates. One day the Spirit lifted Ezekiel up in a vision and transported him to Jerusalem, to the temple to see what was going on there. The passage says that the Lord brought Ezekiel to the outer wall of the temple and instructed him to dig a hole through the wall. So he dug a hole through the outer court and came to a doorway which he opened. And passing through the door he looked and saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and detestable animals and all the idols of the house of Israel.³¹⁹

What Ezekiel saw on the inside of the temple was another peek on the inside of a human being. Not only can we refer to the Ark as an object within ourselves, but we can likewise look at the temple as a symbol of the house of man's body. When Jesus spoke about the temple in the gospels, he was often talking about himself. Remember that he

³¹⁸ Proverbs 15:13

³¹⁹ Ezekiel 8:7-10

said, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it up again in three days."³²⁰ In the epistles of Paul we are told that we are also the temple of the Holy Spirit.³²¹ This temple always has been the place where we are to find God. Recall that the temple is the place where Mary found her Son Jesus (who is God himself),³²² and it is the same location inside of ourselves that we must find God if we are ever to find him as has been elaborated on in the first chapter.

Ezekiel has dug a hole through the temple wall, like cutting a hole into the human chest, but instead of finding God in the temple, Ezekiel has discovered creepy crawly things and detestable animals. He has seen things that move upon the ground, crawling things meaning that they are things of a lower nature, things of man's lower nature. He has seen animals depicted on the walls referring to the animal nature of man, the sins of the flesh which have cluttered up the temple.

All of the negative thoughts and feelings of the subconscious that clutter up man's box are not only a danger to him physically but more importantly a big problem for him spiritually. Some people may earnestly be trying to draw near to God but find themselves frustrated at developing anything more than a superficial connection with him. Their struggles for intimacy and personal transformation are impeded for unknown causes. This is because their attempt to get closer to God is blocked by the obstacles of the subconscious which are hidden to them. Like an occluded pipe which only allows a trickle of water to pass through, so is the flow of the Holy Spirit in the person who is full of "emotional baggage." Like a jar that has a finite volume, if it is filled with other things there is little room left for God to take up residence. When the human trunk is filled with an overflow of subconscious waste, there is no room left for the stone tablets representing God's law in the heart. When man's chest is full of other stuff, there is neither room for the manna (his spiritual food) or Aaron's staff, the rod of power that we must learn to use in the exercise of dominion. The end result is a powerless spiritual cripple of a soul. Yet with God's help there is always a remedy.

This cure is probably best illustrated in an old tale from ancient times, the story of Pandora's Box from Greek antiquity:

Zeus king of the gods lived on Mount Olympus and men roamed freely there on the Mount and elsewhere amongst the gods. Living at that time was a man called Epimetheus and he was the wisest amongst the men for he knew the secrets of life. Epimetheus took the beautiful Pandora as his wife.

(Now Pandora had been fashioned from water and clay by the gods and sent down among mortal man to punish them for Prometheus's act of stealing fire and giving it to men.)

Pandora moved into the home of her new husband, and took up her wifely duties..." Now, said her husband "you have all my worldly goods. You can take care of the house and all the animals that I have. You can go anywhere on my property and clean and sweep every corner, but I beg of you, never go to the north room. Keep it locked at all times."

³²⁰ John 2:18-21

³²¹ 1 Corinthians 6:19

³²² Luke 2:41-52

Now, Pandora set about her duties and was soon finished. As there was nothing else left to do she became restless and bored and so she began wandering around the house and eventually coming to the north room, she tried the door but it was locked. She went away, but thoughts of the room kept going around inside her head. "Maybe I can just take a little look "she thought to herself, "just take a quick peek; surely there would be no harm in that". After a little while she decided she would get the keys and open the door. She returned to the room and unlocked the door and the door opened noiselessly. Pandora peered into the room, but it was totally empty with the exception of a box in the middle of it. Pandora's curiosity knew no bounds, she felt compelled to open the box, and so she did, and out came hundreds of creatures looking like insects. The insect like creatures bit and stung Pandora all over her body. Then they flew out of the window attacking her husband and the unassuming people in the countryside. Quickly, Pandora shut the lid and sat on it. While sitting there on the box she heard knocking coming from inside it. Now she was reluctant to open the box again thinking that she had already done enough harm. "Let me out", said a tiny voice, "and maybe I can help you". Pandora thought about it and decided to take one more chance. She opened the box and out came a tiny fairy.

"I am Hope," said the fairy,"Pandora due to your curiosity you have let out all possible troubles for mankind. There will be no peace of mind for humans from this day forth. There will be greed and jealousy, insanity and lust, there will be plague and hatred, men will fight each other, wives will be set against husbands, sons against fathers, brother against brother, there will be famine, pestilence, vice and destruction. The world will know great sorrow."

Hearing this Pandora started to cry and sob terribly, for the great harm she had brought upon herself and her fellow humans. "Do not cry so much Pandora," said the fairy, "yes it is true that you have unleashed all manner of afflictions upon the world, but you have also let me out. I will always be there to bring hope to humans, whenever they are in trouble. I will always be there as the promise of Hope!"

And lightly fluttering back and forth on her snowy wings, Hope touched the wounded places on Pandora's and Epimetheus' creamy skin, and relieved their suffering, then quickly flew out of the open window, to perform the same gentle healing for the other victims, and to cheer their downcast spirits.

In another rendition of the story, before the box is opened, Pandora and her husband Epimetheus would blissfully walk hand in hand through the forests refreshing themselves with the luscious fruit, which hung so temptingly within reach. The narrative sounds so very much like another story we are all familiar with ...

It almost sounds like a Greek version of what happened in the Garden of Eden. We have a happy couple enjoying each other and the forest around them. The wife is given full access to all of the material goods of her husband, the full run of the house, and care of all the animals save one small restriction. The woman becomes enamored by the something that was forbidden to her. She gives into her curiosity and decides to experience what has been refused to her. An idyllic untarnished earth quickly gets turned upside down by the one little event and suddenly the world knows pain and sorrow.

It should be pointed out that though in both stories a woman is painted as the antagonist, it is not mere sexism on the part of the authors. What is symbolically in view is that the emotional side of mankind, what we associate with the feminine is the cause of most of the troubles in the world. For it is the emotional nature of men run amok that gives birth to all sorts of problems and sins.

Though clearly an ancient fable that offers an explanation for why there is sorrow and woe in the world, the tale of Pandora's Box carries other significance in relation to what has been discussed in this chapter. The story bears resemblance in certain key elements

to all of the other illustrations that have been made to capture an image of the subconscious mind. Like the Ark of Beth Shemesh and Raiders of the Lost Ark fame, the box of Pandora is portrayed to be equally noxious. At the highpoint of each of the stories, we find evil spirits emanating from the “box” when the lid is taken off. The nasty contents, pent up inside of the chest spring out to harm and kill. What was holed up in these outwardly innocuous containers was something downright toxic and poisonous.

But in the story of Pandora’s Box there is a conclusion to the tale that is not found in the other accounts. In the Greek fable, after all hell breaks loose an angelic type figure finally emerges from the box. She is called Hope and proceeds to heal all of those who have been bitten and bruised by the nasty contents that were in the chest. She touches Pandora and her husband as well bringing healing and pledging to lift their downcast spirits. In this way, we can also say that though the emotional or feminine side of men brought forth trouble originally, when that side encounters redemption it also gives birth to hope and a host of other virtues. This is also true in the Bible when we consider that what was lost through Eve was redeemed by Mary who through love and obedience reversed the original curse.

What is described in this legend of antiquity is the real end of the story to all of the similar accounts that have been presented in this chapter. When man with God’s help purges his trunk of all of its ugly contents, it brings him healing and makes him whole again. When people cleanse the box that is within, they are restored and are free to become the people that God created them to be without the weight of many malignant obstacles blocking the way.

Unfortunately man is not aware of what lies deep within him since what is in the subconscious is by definition hidden from him. He suffers as a result of it in body, mind, and spirit through ignorance. For this reason, the prophet Hosea says, “My people suffer from lack of knowledge.”³²³ Indeed we suffer because we are not aware of what lies within us. We need the truth to be made known to us, and that is where the omniscient God comes in to play.

He who knows all things also knows what lurks in our darkness, and if we seek the interior truth that is obscured to us, he will reveal it to us in the way that he knows is best. In Psalm 51 David speaks of God saying, “Behold you desire truth in the inward parts and in the hidden parts you shall make me to know wisdom.”³²⁴ The Lord wants the truth deep inside of everyone, in the innermost recesses of the chest that they may be healed and become whole.

If we seek this truth we will certainly find it because it is the promise of Jesus in the gospel that “all who seek shall find.” What is necessary on the part of man is to be willing to cooperate with God who can take him to the place where he must go, the ugly place deep inside. This means that we must be willing to feel emotions that have been locked away for a very long time. The feelings that were denied experience for whatever

³²³ Hosea 4:6

³²⁴ Psalm 51:6

reason need to be heard and released, for they must leave the box the same way that they entered. Often they are not rational and not intelligent, but they are real and demand to be expressed in all of their fullness which many times means through ranting, raving, and deep sobbing. Once painful emotions are re-experienced they become forever neutralized and lose their power over us to affect our lives for the negative any longer. Then as in the words of the Psalmist, “those who have sown in tears shall reap in joy.”³²⁵

And it should be said that it is not only deep negative feelings that need to be purged, but anything that is latently blocking the fullness of God in our lives including all manner of hidden sin. It could be a stronghold of judgment in the heart for another individual who mistreated us or it could be the realization that we have mistreated another because of some underlying malice that we were not conscious of. Most of the time it involves coming to a comprehensive forgiveness of those who have injured us or to a deep repentance for how we have hurt others. God knows what must be revealed to us, and whatever it is he will unlayer over time much like peeling back an onion until we reach to core. Then “we will know the truth, and the truth shall set us free.”

Usually when under the load of years of emotional baggage and battle scars, the face of God that we perceive is distorted and hidden in the clouds much like the thunderheads that enshrouded Mount Sinai in the desert. In this condition we perceive a judgmental God, the angry warrior God of the Old Testament, Jehovah. Once the weight of many years evaporates so do the clouds that were blocking the face of the Lord and we may see that he was really smiling at us all along. And so we must choose which face of God that we really want to see.

As has been stated the conclusion to the story of Pandora nicely wraps up the saga of the box that is within man. After all of the creatures had come out from the box, we are told that “all that was left inside was Hope.” And after we cleanse the box of our own chest, all that we will find inside is hope which is the constant expectation of God’s goodness and his face shining down upon us.

Now this completes our study of the Ark as a type of man’s subconscious mind, and we will now proceed to look at a few more representations of the “hidden” mind of man as seen throughout the scriptures. Back in the first chapter there was an assertion that the place of the North served as a symbol of the conscious mind. Illustrations were taken from various passages to support this notion and it was affirmed that not only the location of the North but also its people groups and the compass direction itself were all tokens of the human mind.

Following this train of thought, we can now consider the other end of the spectrum with attention to the place of the South with those who live there along with the compass direction as well. If the North is the place of the conscious mind, then its polar opposite, the South is the home of the subconscious mind. For this reason if we once again think about the cardinal directions superimposed upon the human body, we have the head or conscious mind in the North while the lower end of the trunk, the bottom of the body in

³²⁵ Psalm 126:5

the South. This is why the intestines which are in the “bowels” of the body are the symbol of the subconscious. They represent the deepest, darkest, and lowest place within man.

Like God, man is also a trinity made up of body, mind, and spirit. We can analogously say that he is respectively comprised of a subconscious mind, a conscious mind, and a superconscious mind. The first two terms are part of normal speech and we have developed them a good deal already in this book, but the third term is perhaps lesser known. By the superconscious, we mean to say the “mind of the Spirit,” because this part of our being is associated with the higher consciousness beyond the reach of the natural mind. The mind of the Spirit is superconscious because it represents knowledge and understanding that is communicated through invisible channels descending from God and the community of the angels and saints. For heavenly beings the superconscious is a constant state of mind and a continual experience while for mortal man it is only a part that is under development.

These three parts of the mind are illustrated in mystical language at different points of the Bible, but all three are alluded to in the language of Paul in the Epistle to the Philippians where he says, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.”³²⁶ Right in the beginning of Genesis in the creation account the aspects of the human mind are portrayed when God says, “Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.’ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it.”³²⁷ In this way a distinction is made between the waters of the superconscious mind which are above from the conscious mind which is below. Later there is a notation that after everything was created there was no rain yet available to irrigate the vegetation, so “streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground”³²⁸ which makes an allusion to the waters underground which are euphemistically the subconscious mind.³²⁹

Once again considering a map of the ancient Middle East, we can associate certain nations with the 3 subdivisions of the human mind. As was pointed out in the first chapter, the nation of Assyria which was Israel’s northern neighbor is symbol of the conscious mind. By contrast, the superconscious mind (or mind of the Spirit) is represented by Israel and the Promised Land which was meant to be a light to all nations and a beacon to the Gentiles. To complete the picture, Israel’s southern neighbor and

³²⁶ Philippians 2:10

³²⁷ Genesis 1:6-7

³²⁸ Genesis 2:4-6

³²⁹ An allegory from nature is useful here to appreciate the size of the subconscious mind. If we consider an iceberg floating in the ocean, it may appear like a colossal mountain above the surface of the water. But in reality only 10% of its mass is actually above the surface (conscious mind.) The other 90% is under the water (subconscious mind.) The importance of this notion should become clear as we continue to proceed through this chapter.

originally a scourge to her was Egypt, and this land is the symbol of the subconscious mind of man as it is found geographically in the bowels of the Near East.³³⁰

Though we are now linking Egypt with the subconscious mind, it should be reiterated that the physical body or materiality has always been the perennial anti-type of Egypt. Recall that in this dark land the Israelites were slaves to Pharaoh. In this place of affliction they were metaphorically bondsmen to the lower or flesh nature of man which seeks to keep the spiritual nature in prison lest it rise up and wrest control. Even after the Israelites were liberated from this land of oppression, in their weakness and craving for the things of the lower nature, they cried out to Moses to take them back to “the fleshpots of Egypt.”³³¹ In the desert they were not satisfied with manna, the heavenly food but cried out, “Who shall give us flesh to eat?”³³²

Indeed it is within the land of Egypt (the physical) that Israel (the higher spiritual self) is planted as a seed in its infancy. This was depicted when the fledgling nation (Jacob and his sons) descended into the dark land and took root there, multiplying and increasing greatly in number.³³³ In this land of darkness and ignorance, the spiritual germinates, gets nourishment, and grows until it finally has matured to the point that it is self-aware and no longer can be fully controlled by its mother, the body consciousness. It is then that it makes its “Exodus” and moves on to higher things.

Such allegory is corroborated by the life of Jesus himself who as an example followed the same path of the nation of Israel in this journey that every soul must take. For in his infancy, Jesus (the spiritual) descended into Egypt when escaping from the sword of Herod. There he remained for a couple years until he could go again to Palestine.³³⁴ The Prophet Hosea said, “Out of Egypt I have called my Son,”³³⁵ a verse that has multiple applications to Israel as a nation, to Jesus God’s Son, and to every human being who makes their start in the dark land of ignorance and sin and is called by God to rise up from it. In the Hymn of the Soul, a first century apocryphal work of St. Thomas the Apostle, the same imagery is seen. The hymn tells the story of a boy, “the son of the king of kings”, who is sent to Egypt to retrieve a pearl from a serpent. During the quest, he is seduced by Egyptians and forgets his origin and his family. However, a letter is sent from the king of kings to remind him of his past. When the boy receives the letter, he remembers his mission, snatches the pearl, and returns.³³⁶ All of these allegories corroborate the ancient understanding that we start out as divine sparks sent out by God into the physical world from which we must grow and return to him who sent us.

Now building on the construct of the South as a figure of the subconscious mind, we can allude to several passages in the Old Testament which may intimate this association. In

³³⁰ The nation of Egypt carries a double symbolism for either the body/materiality or the subconscious mind.

³³¹ Exodus 16:3

³³² Numbers 11:18

³³³ Genesis 42:1-5

³³⁴ Matthew 2:13-15

³³⁵ Hosea 11:1

³³⁶ The Acts of Thomas 108-113 (“The Hymn of the Soul”)

the Book of Daniel there is a chapter at the end of the book which prophecies world events as they would unfold in the Middle East in the 500 years before the coming of Christ. Predictions were made to the successive kingdoms of the Babylonians followed by the Persians and then the Greeks. But after the death of Alexander the Great, his kingdom was splintered into various factions which were in conflict. Daniel describes the regents as the King of the South (Ptolomies) and the King of the North (Seleucids) which are metaphorically the ruling power in the subconscious and the ruling power in the conscious mind respectively.³³⁷ Likewise after the splendor of Solomon's reign, the united nation of the Hebrews became divided into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Sometimes interpreted allegorically as man's mind and heart respectively, they may also be seen as the division between the conscious and subconscious minds in a state of conflict.

Jeremiah the weeping prophet who foretold gloom and doom for Judah before the imminent exile spoke the word of the Lord to the people saying, "The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them: Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive."³³⁸ What the prophet is condemning is allegorically much more severe than being carted off to exile, for "shutting up the cities of the south" is euphemistically a way to express that the process of cleansing and healing the subconscious would be suppressed for a season to leave the people of Judah in the miserable state of their own mind.

Earlier a passing reference was made to Psalm 126 which details the Lord's restoration of the people from exile. The Psalmist prays, "Turn again our captivity, O Lord as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goes forth weeping bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."³³⁹ The earlier reference was to "those who sow in tears later reaping in joy" to indicate that the purging of the subconscious is done through the process of sobbing and weeping but ultimately results in joy when the cleansing is completed. This verse is juxtaposed with "streams in the south" to indicate the hidden waters of the subconscious mind, those streams that would flow in the Negev region every winter when the rains came.

It is interesting to note that we still use a popular euphemism in every day language that ties in with the current theme. When something has gone bad, sour, or "down the tubes", we frequently say that "it has gone south" as opposed to any other direction. Perhaps more than coincidence, this expression supports what has been asserted in this chapter, namely that the south is the land of the subconscious and often filled with unpleasant things.

In keeping with a spiritual law, it is first necessary to "go south" before we can ascend to a higher level. This idea is illustrated in the Book of Numbers when the Israelites were only a short while in the desert. As they neared the southern border of the Promised

³³⁷ Daniel 11

³³⁸ Jeremiah 13:19

³³⁹ Psalm 126:4-6

Land, Moses commissioned spies to search out the land and bring back a report to the Israelites. He told them explicitly, “Go up through the south and on into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many.”³⁴⁰ In coded language this is saying that we must first tread through the subconscious before we can rise up the mountain or to higher spiritual consciousness, and this is the normal process of spiritual advancement.

The spies proceeded to search out the entire land, exploring every nook and cranny which is to say metaphorically that they investigated the far recesses of the hidden mind. They went to a brook called Eshcol meaning grapes and cut down a huge cluster that they bore between two men on a pole. Along with this they brought back figs (a symbol of proliferation) and pomegranates to illustrate the ultimate fruitfulness of exploring the subconscious mind.³⁴¹

But when they returned to Moses they gave an evil report of what they found to all of the Israelites. The text says, “They spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, ‘The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim (giants) there. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.’”³⁴² Though bringing back proof of the fruitfulness of the land, the men were sore afraid to try entering it once again and they convinced the Israelites that it was a bad idea as well in spite of the positive evidence. This is to say that early on in our spiritual journey we are too weak and afraid to confront our own personal demons that lie in the inner recesses of our being. We’d rather believe a bad report about a very fertile and fruitful land than confront our own internal enemies. And so Israel could’ve entered Canaan directly from the South, through the subconscious but because of her immaturity, it was necessary to continue to grow through another 40 years of wilderness experience before she would have that opportunity again.

Indeed plumbing the depths of the subconscious is a very liberating process that is equivalent to coming into great fruitfulness and a very fertile country. It is when the subconscious mind is cleansed and the hidden land comes into the light that we finally discover who we really are with all of our latent skills and talents which have been in hiding all along. It is when we have wrested our subconscious from violent emotional forces that we can then realize our true vocation, and our real selves can emerge at last. For it is within this dark place that the substance and spirit of life are stored.³⁴³ When the subconscious bubbles up into the conscious mind³⁴⁴, we come to know our true selves

³⁴⁰ Numbers 13:17-20

³⁴¹ Numbers 13:23-24

³⁴² Numbers 13:31-33

³⁴³ Genesis 40 – This concept is envisioned in the story of the baker (bread) and butler (wine) who after “offending” Pharaoh (ruling carnal power in the subconscious) were imprisoned. The bread is the substance of life and the wine is the spirit of life and they both abide in the deepest recesses of the mind. The narrative also serves as a prototype of the Eucharist foreshadowing the Body and Blood of Christ which carries a similar theme.

³⁴⁴ 2 Kings 3:16-20 – This idea is captured in a narrative from the life of the prophet Elisha in which both the Northern and Southern kingdoms along with Edom set out to fight against Moab which had rebelled

which in the words of Jesus are like “the seed that fell on the good soil.” “They hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times what is sown.”³⁴⁵ When conscious and subconscious finally meet each other, we become unleashed like the saints of all ages who have done tremendous works of good often impacting a large part of humanity.

Not only can we compare this process of discovering the self to coming into great fruitfulness, but we can also say that it is like finding hidden treasure or great riches within. This analogy is utilized in the scriptures as well, for in Isaiah the Lord declares to the Israelites, “I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places”³⁴⁶ to indicate what is latently hidden deep within the self. A treasure is to be found inside of ourselves, but first a light must shine within to reveal what was always there all along.

The treasures of darkness or the treasures of the South are depicted in several Old Testament passages. At the time of the Exodus, the Lord told Moses, “I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave, you will not go empty-handed. Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians.”³⁴⁷ The dark land of Egypt, the country of the subconscious lavished great riches on the Israelites who were departing to portray what happens when the hidden mind is probed. The children of Israel would then go on to take the gold and silver they were given to go and build the temple once they reached the Promised Land. This is to say that they would lavishly adorn the inner temple, the home of God with the treasure that they had received.

A similar parallel can be seen during the life of Solomon the man of wisdom. He was famous throughout the entire known world and received many visitors to revel in his fame. On one occasion he was visited by the Queen of Sheba also known as Queen of the South. She lavished upon him a great caravan load of riches including spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones. This southern ruler most likely brought treasure to the coffers of Israel from the famed mining place which was called Ophir also in the south. It was most likely along the western border of Saudi Arabia and Hiram king of Tyre had also brought gold to Solomon from this place.³⁴⁸

Since we just made a reference to the Exodus from Egypt we can segue into one of our last biblical images of the subconscious mind as we consider the Israelite’s liberation from bondage through crossing the Red Sea. The sea is a fairly prevalent symbol of the

against them. Before the battle the forces were faint as there was no water in the land. So Elisha commanded them to dig ditches and promised them that though there would be no rain, the valley full of ditches would be filled with water. The next morning it was so as water had come up from Edom (subconscious) and filled the holes. The allusion is to how there needs to be contact between the conscious and subconscious minds to release the inner life forces. When all 3 tiers of mind (subconscious, conscious, and superconscious) are united the result is a dynamo of phenomenal spiritual power.

³⁴⁵ Matthew 13:3-9

³⁴⁶ Isaiah 45:3

³⁴⁷ Exodus 3:21-22

³⁴⁸ 1 Kings 10:1-12

hidden mind as seen throughout the scriptures. It is a reasonable figure of the subconscious when we consider some of its characteristics.

Unlike rivers, streams, and lakes, the sea is very broad and very deep so that it can conceal many things in great depths of darkness. In contrast to other landlocked bodies, it is a place of salty waters, of bitter waters, the negative experiences of life that have retained their record in the subconscious. Like the temple of Ezekiel that was described earlier, the sea is a place of many beasts, the home of the animal nature of man. Such are the words of the Psalmist who says, “So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping and innumerable, both small and great beasts.”³⁴⁹

Crossing the Red Sea is tantamount to experiencing the ugliness of the subconscious and the emotional catharsis that ensues. Passing through this sea is like the liberation of great beasts within which have often been suppressed for years and years. These were the words of the prophet Daniel who foresaw “great beasts coming up from the sea.”³⁵⁰ It is also analogous to the release of rotting material which has been festering under the surface for a long time. The Book of Revelation which foresees the completion of this process captures this image when the Apostle John writes, “the sea gave up the dead that were in it.”³⁵¹ For the negative experiences in the inner realms are equivalent to putrefying corpses within that are poisoning the whole body, and they need to be expelled to restore wholeness.

In the Book of Ezekiel the prophet envisions a new temple similar in concept to the one John sees in Revelation. Water was flowing from the SOUTH side of the building and flowed into the Dead Sea. There according to the seer, the waters of the sea were made fresh and swarms of living creatures were living in it as a result of its purification.³⁵² And so we have another picture of the cleansing of the subconscious mind with the life it wholeness that it brings.

The way of God and the way to God are therefore through the waters of the salty sea, for the Psalmist speaking of the Lord maintains, “Your way is in the Sea, and your path in the great waters, and your footsteps are not known.”³⁵³ If we pass through these waters we will find the God who has been hidden from us, and in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “[He] will give [us] the riches of the sea”³⁵⁴ much in the same way that he lavishes on us the treasures of the southern lands.

Continuing with this powerful image of the subconscious, it is useful to note one other attribute of the physical sea that covers the entire earth. It is the ocean that connects all land masses together. The sea is what joins all of the continents commonly. In this way, when we have plumbed the depths of the sea and traversed the breadth of its waters we

³⁴⁹ Psalm 104:25

³⁵⁰ Daniel 7:3

³⁵¹ Revelation 20:13

³⁵² Ezekiel 47:1-10

³⁵³ Psalm 77:19

³⁵⁴ Isaiah 60:5

are metaphorically uniting all of the nations together. As was illustrated in the first chapter, these nations are aggregations of thought within the mind which at the beginning of the spiritual journey are at war with each other and do not speak each other's language. When the sea is searched out from shore to shore or symbolically when the subconscious is raised into the conscious mind, then the inner nations of the mind which were at enmity with each other become unified and harmony results in the inner man. This final outcome was so nicely put in the Messianic Psalm 72. The Psalmist speaks of the reign of the King declaring, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."³⁵⁵ And so it is with mortal man when after encompassing the breadth of the sea that he should have the power of dominion and the rule of all of the nations within his mind under the Christ-Self or Higher Self which is his final destiny.

Wrapping up this vast and deep subject of the subconscious we will look briefly at one final symbol of the hidden thought flow of man. When Israel finished her wandering in the desert after 40 long years, she came to the banks of the Jordan River which formed the western border of Canaan, the Promised Land she was to receive. This was the last barrier the Chosen People had to cross to receive their inheritance, and in fact it represents the same hurdle that we have been describing throughout this chapter. The Hebrew word Jordan means several synonymous things including "the descender," "the south flowing river," or "river of judgment." This south flowing stream is therefore also another figure of man's subconscious stream of thought which needs to be crossed to come into the land of Promise.³⁵⁶

It is the Jordan that flows southward emptying out into the Dead Sea or Salt Sea, that place of bitterness which we have metaphorically described as a body of bad memories and anguish. In the Psalms, this river and the sea are juxtaposed to drive home their common link to the hidden mind. David writes, "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; the sea saw it and fled: Jordan was driven back."³⁵⁷

When Israel came to the banks of Jordan at the end of her long journey, the priests entered first carrying with them the Ark of the Lord. As soon as their feet touched the river, the waters upstream were cut off so that the Israelites walked across on dry ground. 12 men were instructed to each pull a large stone out of the river which were assembled on the other side as a memorial of the event.³⁵⁸ This occurrence was to signify what could be called the "solidification of thought," a precipitation of what was only in the mind into a tangible reality. What was in formation for the Israelites all the years in the

³⁵⁵ Psalm 72:8

³⁵⁶ A relevant passage that ties together this image of the subconscious with the idea of the inner life system or tree discussed in Chapter 3 comes to us from 2 Kings 6. In that story, the Sons of the Prophets, the mystical school of prophets first organized by Samuel took it upon themselves to build a new house for themselves along the banks of the Jordan because the old one was too small. So each man took a wooden beam (or tree) and brought it to the place to construct their new abode. The allegorical message is that these prophets were seeking spiritual expansion (larger house) and so brought their inner life system (tree) to the place of the deepest life forces or the subconscious mind (Jordan river.)

³⁵⁷ Psalm 114:3

³⁵⁸ Joshua 4:1-9

desert, hidden dreams and aspirations, things only in seed form were to become fleshed out once this symbolic river was crossed.

When we enter the Promised Land after traversing the hidden stream of life, we once again come into a very rich and fertile country, a land flowing with milk and honey, one that has been inside of us all along. This is why the Lord told the Israelites toward the end of the Book of Joshua, “I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.”³⁵⁹ By saying this the Lord has indicated that the land of Canaan was not one that needed to be built or planted but simply one that had to be discovered, one that was really there all the while on the inside but was waiting for a light to shine upon it.

When we have fully explored the subconscious and inner self we will discover a good land flowing with milk and honey as did the Israelites of old. When the true self emerges, the treasure of the subconscious is revealed, now free of the false self and façade that once shrouded it. We find that it is something whole and beautiful. Deep down inside we realize that we were good all along; we only had to discover it.

Though Israel could’ve entered Canaan directly from the South as is the way we all must enter into the “Promised Land,” she was too intimidated to face the giants and those frightening things deep in the hidden mind. Though she avoided this entry into Canaan early in her journey she ultimately would not escape passing through the subconscious to reach her inheritance, because in the end it was through the waters of the Jordan that she reaped her final reward.

Chapter 5 – The Pelvic Region

Now we shall continue our study of the human body by dropping just a little lower to the pelvic region. This is the area that encompasses several structures all with the same common symbolic significance. Sometimes we use an old English word to describe this part of the body especially as seen in some older translations of the Bible. The term “loins” is a catchall word to describe this anatomy and incorporates not only the reproductive organs but the hips and thighs as well which are all in the same vicinity. As should become clear, the scriptures employ these structures more or less synonymously.

Developing the basic meaning of the reproductive organs, we are to understand them as the vehicle for the proliferation of life with all of the nuances that are attached to that idea. A premium has always been placed on the ability to reproduce in the scriptures especially in the Old Testament, and those animals or people who could not were given secondary status if not cut off from the Israelites altogether.

In the Book of Leviticus there are several prohibitions against those who have been damaged in the life giving organs. In a section regarding acceptable sacrifices, the Mosaic Law stipulates, “You shall not offer to the Lord any animal whose testicles are

³⁵⁹ Joshua 24:13

bruised, crushed, broken, or cut.”³⁶⁰ Pertaining to the rules about those who qualified to become priests in the Levitical line, all were barred who had their “stones (testicles) broken”³⁶¹ which is to say that all who were physically damaged whether by deliberate castration or through accident were not permitted to enter the priesthood.

In Deuteronomy there are similar regulations for “he that is wounded in the stones or has his private members cut off shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.”³⁶² The emasculated man could not enter into the assembly of the Lord. This is to say that the vehicle of life in the physical is the symbol of the vehicle of life in the soul. If the soul is damaged or cut off it is tantamount to one being cut off from the Lord.

Such a high value was put on the preservation of the reproductive organs that a harsh punishment was meted out against any who would try to injure them. Also in Deuteronomy is presented a scenario of two men fighting together for whatever reason. If the wife of one of the men should come to intervene and aid her husband, and in doing so attempt to grab the other man by the testicles to harm him, then the Mosaic Law requires that her hand be cut off and no eye show her any pity.³⁶³

There is one principle ritual seen throughout the pages of the Bible that focuses on the reproductive organs. It is the rite of circumcision that was given to Abraham and to all of his seed after him as a sign of entering into the covenant community. This religions act was essentially the initiation rite into the Israelite family and was symbolically equivalent to the privileges of baptism in the New Testament. It was required for all male children on the eighth day after birth. What is significant about circumcision is not only the blood that is shed in the event which has been outlined earlier but the effects of circumcision itself. The cutting away of the foreskin was a very good practice to prevent infection and poor hygiene. In this way it symbolized the removal of impurity from the body which was spiritually typical of cutting away impurity from the heart as Moses would tell the people.³⁶⁴ But in the ancient mind, it was also for the purpose of improving fertility and the chances of successful procreation. In this way it is the sign of an increase in the spiritual life within.

Unfortunately while the people of Israel were in the desert for forty years they neglected this duty and had to renew their covenant with God again once they entered into Canaan. At a place known in Hebrew as “Hill of foreskins” the children of Israel had to perform this rite of purification again en masse.³⁶⁵ This is to portray that the rite of circumcision must metaphorically be repeated on the ascending spiral of development. This “second circumcision” represents more cutting away and deeper cleansing to produce more abundant life. The name of the place where this event occurred is also known as Gilgal which in Hebrew translates as a “wheel.” In this regard we may interpret the meaning to

³⁶⁰ Leviticus 22:24

³⁶¹ Leviticus 21:20

³⁶² Deuteronomy 23:1

³⁶³ Deuteronomy 25:11-12

³⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 10:16

³⁶⁵ Joshua 5:2-9

signify a circle or completeness, a total release from the bondage to the sense man. For the Lord says, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.”

High regard for this generative power of the flesh is emphasized time and again in the Jewish scriptures as this people not unlike most cultures valued reproductive prowess as a sign of strength and virility. The procreative mandate was set early in Genesis at the Lord’s command to “be fruitful and multiply.”³⁶⁶ Those who had large families were said to be exceedingly blessed by God as was the case of Heman, the seer of King David. The Lord gave him 17 children to “lift up his horn” (or his power.)³⁶⁷

Likewise Psalm 127 praises those who have the gift of children: “Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them.”³⁶⁸

As the Psalm indicates, the word “fruit” is used euphemistically to denote children, and the term is seen often in the Bible in this manner in such phrases as “fruit of the loins” and “fruit of the womb.” The fruit of procreation in this way is seen as the sign of spiritual abundance and the bounty of the inner man. We have in a preceding chapter linked man with the figure of a tree which ties in well with the First Psalm where a righteous man is compared to “a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper.”³⁶⁹

The idea of bringing forth fruit was a constant of Jesus’ message in the gospels where he compares it to the overflow of a superabundant inner life. In his parable of the seed which is repeated in several of the gospels, Jesus compares those who have come into a deep spiritual place with seed that “fell on ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold.”³⁷⁰ At the end of the gospel of John, Jesus allegorically describes himself as the vine and his followers as the branches and indicates it is our chief purpose to grow to the place where we should produce fruit. He says, “I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” Those branches which do not bring forth fruit are cast into the fire where they receive further refinement before getting “grafted back onto the vine.”³⁷¹

We have illustrated how people, places, and things in the scriptures often serve as symbols of spiritual realities, and if we had to attach a person to this concept of bearing fruit, it would be to the patriarch Ephraim who was the son of Joseph. In Hebrew his name means “double fruit” and indicates this prolific faculty that man is called to. His name is related to the Hebrew word Ephrath which means “fruitful, productive” and

³⁶⁶ Genesis 1:28

³⁶⁷ 1 Chronicles 25:4,5

³⁶⁸ Psalm 127:3-5

³⁶⁹ Psalm 1:3

³⁷⁰ Matthew 13:8

³⁷¹ John 15:5-8

symbolizes a realization of abundant substance (ideas or thoughts) in consciousness. Ephrath was the original name of the town of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. (More will be said about Ephraim as this topic develops further.)

The spiritual fruit that God has in mind is typified by some edible fruits more than others. If we had to name one in particular it would be the pomegranate which is a compound word coming from Latin meaning “apple” and “grained.” It means an apple with many seeds which typify the multitude of life giving seeds in the procreative act. In the Pentateuch it is given preeminence in regards to the priesthood and the temple decorations. Pomegranates of linen and of various colors were sewn to the ends of the high priest’s robe.³⁷² The fruit was also used as a decoration on the pillars of the temple. In the Book of First Kings it is recorded that there were “four hundred pomegranates for the two sets of network (two rows of pomegranates for each network, decorating the bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars.)³⁷³ The pomegranate which we may then call a “spiritual apple” is sharply contrasted with the common apple which we could call “apple of the earth” for the regular apple is a very “fleshy” fruit with just a few small seeds in the core. The common apple as has been described in chapter 2 has been universally associated with the story of the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

Besides the pomegranate, another spiritual fruit is the fig which was also seen in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were said to have sewn fig leaves together to hide their nakedness from God.³⁷⁴ The fig has universally been associated with the sex act and so also symbolizes the “seed of man” which is this life energy. Both the pomegranate and the fig as well as grapes were brought back with the spies after they scouted out the land of Canaan.³⁷⁵ In this way, these fruits are linked together and depict the spiritual fruitfulness of the Promised Land.

Now we have seen how this reproductive region of the body is naturally associated with the physical generation of offspring. It is therefore on a fundamental basis a symbol of the generative power of the flesh, but on a higher level it represents what might be called the generative power of the mind and so is a symbol of one of the 12 mental faculties. In this case it is a figure of the will, what we intend to do that gives birth (fruit) in our actions. The rest of this chapter will focus on the scripture’s use of the thighs, hips, and loins as devices to tell the story of the human will which is in the process of formation.

Starting with the symbol of the thigh, we will look at a few passages which bring out this association with the will of man. In the Book of Genesis there are several references to it and one occurs at the time when Abraham was seeking a wife for his son Isaac. He wanted to get him a spouse from his own relatives who lived in what is now modern day Syria. He wasn’t going to make the trip himself but instead sent his servant who pledged to carry out his directives and fulfill his intentions. As an extension of the will of Abraham this servant placed his hand under the thigh of his master and swore on oath

³⁷² Exodus 39:24

³⁷³ 1 Kings 7:20,42

³⁷⁴ Genesis 3:7

³⁷⁵ Numbers 13:23

that he would not get a wife for Isaac among the Canaanites but would go to his own countrymen.³⁷⁶ Likewise, toward the end of Genesis is another narrative involving Jacob and his favorite son Joseph. Jacob knew his death was imminent and desired to be buried in the land of Canaan rather than Egypt. He made Joseph put his hand under his thigh and swear to him that he would do so, effectively binding him to carry out his will.³⁷⁷

As a part of the sacrificial ritual the thigh was seen as a significant part of the anatomy. Like the breast which was waved before the Lord to symbolize the vibratory force which penetrates the heart, the thigh was presented to God before being given over to Aaron and his sons as their share.³⁷⁸ In this way, the presentation of this part of the body is a symbol of how man must learn to submit and turn his will over to God.

Perhaps the best narrative in the Bible to make use of the thigh as a figure of the will is seen in the life of Jacob, the grandson of Abraham and progenitor of the 12 tribes. At the time when Jacob was about to reconcile with his brother Esau (after he had swindled the birthright from his brother years before) Jacob sent his entire family across the river Jabbok ahead of him in preparation to meet his brother with gifts and peace offerings before he himself would dare stand in Esau's presence.

Jacob was then left alone in the place where he was and the Angel of Lord came to him and wrestled with him all night until daybreak. "When the angel saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh so that his hip was wrenched out of joint as he wrestled with the angel. Then the angel said, 'Let me go for it is daybreak.' But Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go until you bless me.'"³⁷⁹

Packed into this short narrative is not only rich symbolism but a lot of wordplay and pun on the part of the author. The river Jabbok at whose banks Jacob spent the night is a Hebrew word meaning "wrestling" and is therefore an appropriate place setting for this supernatural event. The wrestling that is in mind is the inner struggle necessary to overcome the self and its erroneous habits and ways. This contest between the two parties happened at night to signify that it is within the inner darkness where soul struggle takes place. The wrestling continues all through the night until daybreak when the light comes and man has worked through the interior darkness to a decided victory.

Specifically related to the subject matter at hand, the passage indicates that the angel (who was very well a theophany of God) touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh or hip socket and wrenched it out of joint. By this we are to understand that God overcame his will at the coming of the dawn. (It is the sciatic nerve which runs down the leg that also passes through the hollow of the thigh and the will acts directly through this nerve. And perhaps for this reason we say a person has "nerve" when he is acting willful and demanding.) When God touched Jacob's hip we can glean that the great patriarch's will was finally broken. That he was permanently wounded in this area with a hip out of joint

³⁷⁶ Genesis 24:2

³⁷⁷ Genesis 47:29-31

³⁷⁸ Leviticus 7:34

³⁷⁹ Genesis 32:22-32

signifies a letting go (detachment) of human self will. It was destroyed only to be replaced with a will compliant with the divine. And this is the ultimate goal of human sanctification, a complete transition from serving the ego-self to becoming the servant of God and saying with the Psalmist, “I delight to do your will, O God.”³⁸⁰

The narrative not only underscores the conversion of the will but of equal importance the strengthening of the will through a long hard battle for which Jacob had no choice but to remain in the contest. Jacob sends us a very powerful message when he says to the angel, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” The message is that we need to continue in the struggle with God tenaciously wrestling through all adversity and difficulty in order to reach the final prize, the reward of God himself. The struggle is the heart of the process of the development of the will, because it is the means by which man’s resolve is forged into iron, undeterred, and unbreakable. By contending with God through the obstacles, we acquire the key attribute of perseverance which is an absolutely necessary skill in the kingdom of heaven. We cannot achieve eternal life without it, and this is because it is a required if we are to function successfully in the higher realms of the angels and the saints who learned the skill themselves ages and ages past.

Perseverance was the constant message of Jesus in his ministry, for he warned that no one who gives up can enter the kingdom of God. In the gospel of Luke, a would-be follower told the Lord that he first wanted to go back and say good-bye to his family before joining him. Jesus said to him in reply, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”³⁸¹ This was certainly true of Lot’s wife who “wishing to return to the ways of the world” looked back on Sodom and turned into a pillar of salt.³⁸² In his popular parable of the sower that has already been alluded to, Jesus compares humanity to different kinds of soil each depicting a certain potential to endure. The seed that fell upon the rocky ground describes those who can not put down any roots, for they believe for only a short time and when the time of testing comes, they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns pertains to those who though they have root are distracted by the cares, worries, and pleasures of this world and are unable to mature. But it is the seed that fell upon good rich soil that epitomizes those who have developed what it takes to persevere through every hindrance put in their way. In the words of Jesus, “the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by perseverance produce a good crop.”

God sends us many trials along our earthly journey to develop the will, strengthen it, and forge it into steel so that it may persist along the straight and narrow path to the finish line. Man’s resolve cannot increase without adversity, because the law of nature is that nothing grows or comes to maturity without resistance. This is best illustrated by the butterfly which needs to struggle to break out of its cocoon in the spring. If someone were to try and help the poor critter by cutting a hole in its cocoon to free it, he would do the would-be butterfly a grave disservice. For unless the insect struggles on its own to break out, then its body fluid will not be forced into the wings and it will die helplessly

³⁸⁰ Psalm 40:8

³⁸¹ Luke 9:62

³⁸² Genesis 19:26

on the ground never able to take flight. The adversity that God sends our way is just a normal part of the process. In the words of James, “this testing develops perseverance, and perseverance must finish its work.”³⁸³

Returning again to the story of Jacob, the narrative continues with more dialogue between him and the angel. The Theophany proceeded to ask Jacob his name and then went on to say, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.” Like Abram who became Abraham, and Saul who became Paul, Jacob also received a name change to indicate that a process of conversion had taken place, a graduation to a higher spiritual state. In this case, he becomes Israel which in Hebrew means, “He shall rule as God” to indicate that he had come into a place of dominion as a reward for striving with God and overcoming.

After he had received this new name, Jacob asked the angel his own name, but the angel replied, “Why do you ask me my name?” The words of the messenger of God are very similar to those given to the father of Samson in a similar experience. In that episode, the angel responded, “Why do you ask me my name? It is beyond understanding.”³⁸⁴ to authenticate his divinity. The words of God also depict that the adversary that we have inner struggle with is often nameless. Sometimes we do not comprehend what we fight against not understand it. Nonetheless it is for us to contend with the unknown (even if it doesn’t make sense to us) until the blessing comes.

As the story winds to a close, Jacob goes on to call the place “Peniel” where he wrestled with God. For he said, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.” The Hebrew word Peniel means “within the presence of God” and symbolizes the inner realization of the divine presence. The idea shown here is that it is not important for Jacob to just intellectually hear and know the name of the adversary, but rather he had to come face to face with the Infinite as an experience. This confrontation involved something that overpowered him and knocked out his own will before he could be blessed.

The narrative that we have just examined had as its centerpiece the thigh or hip joint for which we built an allegory for the human will. To continue the study of the pelvic region and its association with this faculty of the mind, we will now take a look at the other term that is used synonymously which particularly in Old English bibles is called the loins.

After Job had suffered his long period of testing and had concluded that God must have wronged him with the brutality of his suffering, he was ultimately visited by God and heard his side of the story. When Job had finished his final diatribe, the Lord spoke to him out of a whirlwind in a bit of a sarcastic tone, “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man; for I will question you and you will answer me.”³⁸⁵ What God was in effect saying is, “Strengthen your resolve, muster your will, and brace yourself. I will question you and you will answer

³⁸³ James 1:3,4

³⁸⁴ Judges 13:17-18

³⁸⁵ Job 38:3

me.” And the Lord proceeded to dwarf Job’s limited understanding with his own infinite knowledge of the world and the inner workings of the universe.

This expression “gird your loins” is seen numerous times in the Bible and carries the same meaning throughout. When Nineveh was about to be overrun by the Babylonian army during the time of the Jewish exile, the prophet Nahum received a message to give the people of that city, the capital of the Assyrian empire. He told them, “He that dashes to pieces is coming up before your face: keep your munitions, watch the way, make your loins strong, and fortify your power mightily.”³⁸⁶ And again the reference to loins was to say that the people of the city needed to be resolute and unwaveringly focused as they confronted the enemy.

At the time of the Passover, when Israel was just about to make her exodus from Egypt she was told to “gird your loins”³⁸⁷ in preparation for the strain of that endeavor. In the final chapter of Proverbs which extols the character of a virtuous woman, a verse says that “she girds her loins with strength”³⁸⁸ to emphasize her unbreakable spirit. Then in Isaiah’s Messianic prophecy about the “Branch to grow out of the stem of Jesse” he speaks of the Anointed One saying that “righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins.”³⁸⁹

To further emphasize that these references to the loins are more than just a physical allusion to clothing/support for the body’s mid-section, we should consider the words of St. Peter in his first epistle when he says, “Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”³⁹⁰ Jesus himself uses the phrase in the gospel of Luke where he wants to emphasize the need for perseverance and constant watchfulness for the time of his coming. He says, “Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning; and you yourselves like men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open the door to him immediately.”³⁹¹

Before introducing a more substantial narrative on this subject of the loins, a reference must first be made to a passage from Ezekiel in which his visionary temple is revealed. In one particular chapter there are instructions regarding the priesthood: “It shall come to pass that when they enter in to the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, while they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen bonnets upon their head and linen breeches upon their loins.”³⁹² The linen garments in this case represent what is pure and clean covering the mind and the will respectively. The contrast is made to wool which was forbidden, and this harkens back to a Levitical law which instructed the Israelites to “never wear a garment mingled with linen and wool.”³⁹³ The prohibition of mixing the

³⁸⁶ Nahum 2:1

³⁸⁷ Exodus 12:11

³⁸⁸ Proverbs 31:17

³⁸⁹ Isaiah 11:5

³⁹⁰ 1 Peter 1:13

³⁹¹ Luke 12:35

³⁹² Ezekiel 44:18

³⁹³ Leviticus 19:19

two fabrics was completely for symbolic reasons over any practical concern. Wool as the hair of a sheep signifies the animal nature or lower nature of man while linen which is made of flax comes from the vegetable kingdom. The wool symbolizes that which is dirty and associated with the flesh while linen which is a plant product represents what is pure and unsoiled, a symbol of the spiritual. It should also be pointed out that while wool was very plentiful and cheap in the shepherding society of the Middle East, linen on the otherhand was more difficult to obtain and consequently more expensive and higher valued.

This background makes for an easier transition to a narrative from the Book of Jeremiah. In the 13th chapter of the book, Jeremiah was instructed by the Lord to carry out a symbolic activity to represent a spiritual truth and describe a condition of the people of Judah who would be exiled after not too long a time. God told him get a linen girdle and put it upon his loins. A second time, the Lord told him to take the girdle which he had worn and take it to the Euphrates river (some 400 miles away) and hide it in a rock there. A third time, the Lord addressed Jeremiah and instructed him to go back to the Euphrates and retrieve the garment that he had hidden. But when he did so, he found the garment was soiled, marred, and completely good for nothing. God spoke to him and said, “Like has been done to this girdle, so shall I do to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. This evil people which refuse to hear m words ... shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.”³⁹⁴

As was just earlier established, this linen girdle which is the main device in this parable is a symbol of righteousness and purity enveloping the will of man. When Jeremiah donned this article of clothing, he was illustrating this concept. Later he traveled to the Euphrates River which in chapter 3 was briefly associated with man’s bloodstream, and there he hid the girdle in a rock. The details of the parable are if to say, “Jeremiah, take this purity which you have put on and make a journey which involves coming to the bloodstream, and this purity is to be in the bloodstream and stems from solid faith in the rock who is God himself.” But after sometime Jeremiah was to go and dig up this garment which no longer portrayed this purity but instead he found it to be soiled and completely worthless. The wrong living and sins of Judah had tarnished the girdle and utterly polluted it. Here a picture is painted of the removal of God’s purity covering the will of man and it is replaced by an image of the evils and sins of Judah polluting the bloodstream and soiling this formerly pure white linen garment.

To continue this analysis of the pelvic or reproductive area of man, we shall look at another symbol that was alluded to earlier in this chapter. And that symbol is the patriarch Ephraim who as one of the progenitors of the twelve tribes represents a mental faculty, in this case the human will.³⁹⁵ Actually in one passage from the Book of Jeremiah, Ephraim is appropriately linked with the region of the body we have been studying. Jeremiah speaks for the Lord who said, “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself saying ‘You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bull

³⁹⁴ Jeremiah 13:1-11

³⁹⁵ Joseph’s allotment among Israel was counted as a double portion divided between both of his sons Ephraim and Manasseh

unaccustomed to the yoke: turn me and I shall be turned for you are the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh ...”³⁹⁶ In the passage Ephraim as representative of all Israel speaks of himself like an ox that is learning to be steered by God’s yoke to paint a picture of the human will coming under divine control. Ephraim speaks of striking his thigh as if to further underscore the conditioning of the will under God’s influence.

Ephraim is often spoken of in the scriptures synonymously with the whole nation of Israel because of his great size. The preeminence of Ephraim is seen in several passages to highlight that the human will is the cornerstone of all the faculties inasmuch as without man’s cooperation and perseverance in spiritual development, none of the other faculties will be able to mature. This notion was depicted near the time of Jacob’s death when he went to bless all of his sons. Though Ephraim was second born to his brother Manasseh and was not entitled to the birthright, Jacob deliberately placed his right hand on Ephraim prophesying that he would be greater than his brother and receive the place of preeminence. Moses later went on to draw the distinction between the brothers proclaiming that their descendants shall be the “ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh.”³⁹⁷

Ephraim is seen as the dominant faculty of the mind and this is further supported by the man who would be Moses’ successor. After the children of Israel had come to the banks of the Jordan, Moses was not permitted to take them over into the Promised Land. Rather his replacement, Joshua an Ephraimite was to take them in.³⁹⁸ This tribe as symbol of the executive mind faculty is the force to take the chosen people into the land of Canaan to receive their inheritance and likewise it is the power within us that will take us to the place of spiritual fruitfulness and maturity.

Of all books in the Old Testament, there is none that employs the tribe of Ephraim more in its prose than the Book of Hosea. As an allegory regarding the people of God, Hosea and his harlot wife portray the Lord and his unfaithful lover, the nation of Israel. Throughout the story, Israel is constantly referred to under the moniker Ephraim once again because of that tribe’s preeminent position in the nation.

In a section of the allegory, Ephraim is depicted under duress with the chastisement of the Lord upon him. Rather than submitting to God, he seeks help and alliances with other nations. “When Ephraim saw his sickness, he went to the Assyrian, and sent to King Jareb but he could not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.”³⁹⁹ In another place Ephraim is compared to “a silly dove without heart who calls to Egypt and goes to Assyria.”⁴⁰⁰ The Lord calls this tribe a “wild ass” who has “hired lovers” having “made a covenant with the Egyptian and the Assyrian.”⁴⁰¹ As was outlined in the first chapter,

³⁹⁶ Jeremiah 31:18-19

³⁹⁷ Genesis 48:17-19, Deuteronomy 33:17

³⁹⁸ Numbers 13:8

³⁹⁹ Hosea 5:13

⁴⁰⁰ Hosea 7:11

⁴⁰¹ Hosea 8:9, 12:1

these neighbor nations of Israel carry their own meaning, and so a picture is painted of the human will or self will seeking alliance with both the intellect and the physical rather than cooperating with God. In another verse, Ephraim is said to “increase lies and desolation”⁴⁰² as a result of the alliance with these nations rather with the Almighty.

This self will is depicted as a vacillating entity completely unstable and elusive. In the twelfth chapter Ephraim is said to “feed on the wind” and “chase after the east wind,”⁴⁰³ the dry wind from the desert that was often laden with sand and was destructive to farming and vegetation. Earlier the Lord refers to the tribe as a “cake not turned.”⁴⁰⁴ Like a confection half-baked, the will in this condition is a mixed state that has not been completely turned from self to God.

Toward the end of the book, there is reference to Moses when Hosea writes, “And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved. Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly.”⁴⁰⁵ What is in view here is Moses as symbol of the law. Ephraim as representative of the will provokes Moses (law) to anger to suggest the inner battle between what man chooses to do and what he should do. Earlier in the chapter Ephraim was equated as a watchman with God to indicate it is the prerogative of the will to be guardian of the choice between good and evil in all decisions of life.⁴⁰⁶

Finally, this eminent tribe of Israel is compared to a tree which ties in with the theme of fruitfulness from which Ephraim derives its name. Though in this case, like the fig tree that Jesus cursed in the gospels, this tree should bear no fruit in its current state. For the Lord says, “Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yet even if they should bring forth any fruit, I will slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.”⁴⁰⁷

Fortunately though, this ill condition of the will should not endure forever, for the Lord promises at the end of Hosea’s prophecy to turn Ephraim back toward him. “Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; ... his splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon ... He will flourish like the grain. He will blossom like a vine ... O Ephraim, ... your fruitfulness comes from me.”⁴⁰⁸

To conclude our study of the will of man, we will now focus fairly extensively on one final allegory that carries a good deal of substance in understanding how this mental faculty is converted from its natural to spiritual state. The story of Saul and David, the first two kings of Israel illustrate through numerous narratives how the natural human will comes under divine control. A number of anecdotes as found throughout the Book of Samuel depict various facets of the process in which self-will (the will directed toward

⁴⁰² Hosea 12:1

⁴⁰³ Hosea 12:1

⁴⁰⁴ Hosea 7:8

⁴⁰⁵ Hosea 12:13-14

⁴⁰⁶ Hosea 9:8

⁴⁰⁷ Hosea 9:16

⁴⁰⁸ Hosea 14:5-8

personal ends) is converted to the Will under Divine direction or more specifically the will under divine love.

Previously we have taken a look at how name changes of people and places in the land of Israel have demonstrated some sort of spiritual advancement. But such transformation may also be seen in the evolution of certain roles or positions in the Old Testament. In particular the role of the king as traced in the Book of Samuel shows the conversion of the will from its base human condition to a spiritual state. As the ruling power within the mind of man, the will is clearly best represented by an autonomous king, and in the case of this analysis we are considering Saul and David.

It probably would be fairly intuitive to suggest that Saul represents Self-Will while David symbolizes the Will under the control of divine love. Saul after all lacked faith and was disobedient, and these two faults ultimately caused him to lose his kingdom. In a time of crisis when the Philistine army was pressing hard on Israel, Saul was in great fear. He had been instructed to wait seven days for Samuel to come and offer a sacrifice on behalf of Israel for a victory, but when Samuel was late, Saul took matters into his own hands and offered the sacrifice himself, something he was not authorized to do. For his lack of faith he received a firm rebuke from the prophet once he arrived.⁴⁰⁹ On another occasion the Lord had instructed Saul to utterly wipe out the Amalekite tribe sparing nothing. But Saul reinterpreted the directive in his favor and spared the best of the livestock of this people, and Samuel conveyed to him that the Lord had consequently rejected him as king.⁴¹⁰ It was this narrative that illustrates Saul's concern with material things and this desire along with his weak faith allow us to interpret him as a soul in the early stages of spiritual development when the will operates in its own interests apart from the divine.

It is this primitive ruling power that needs to be eliminated in favor of one that will follow God's commands. And so we have David, the shepherd boy who depicts the will under divine directive. He was called a man after God's own heart which meant that he operated in love.⁴¹¹ Because of his faithful obedience, the Lord promised that his throne would always endure⁴¹², and so appropriately Jesus Christ comes to us through the line of David rather than Saul. In contrast to his predecessor, David represents a soul in later stages of development in which it is approaching sanctity and has learned to follow God implicitly.

But these brief sketches of the first and second kings of Israel are not the only basis for interpreting them in this way. Pulling in the Hebrew definitions of their names we can attach a strong significance to the will in different stages of development as just suggested. Saul means "asked, demanded, requested, desired" and so appropriately can be seen as an allegorical synonym for self-will which seeks its own interests and gratifications rather than God's. David on the other hand (as we have established in an earlier chapter) means "loving" and we may likewise attach a symbolic significance to

⁴⁰⁹ 1 Samuel 13:1-15

⁴¹⁰ 1 Samuel 15:1-35

⁴¹¹ 1 Kings 14:8

⁴¹² 1 Chronicles 17:12

his character, namely divine love (or the will under divine love.) And in the allegory that we shall develop these two ideas will remain in place.

When we are first introduced to David immediately after Saul is rejected as king, we learn that the Lord has chosen him above Jesse's other seven sons who had more of the outward appearance of a king than a humble shepherd boy. But the prophet Samuel protests that only man looks at outward appearance while God looks at the heart.⁴¹³ The choice of David therefore points to the heart as the center through which the spirit rules and to divine love as the ruling king. Samuel anointed David's head with oil and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power from that day onward. In the next verse we learn that the Spirit of the Lord likewise had departed from Saul.⁴¹⁴ The transfer of power is now in motion and divine love will gradually supplant self-will through a long struggle.

Saul was now rejected and rather than God's spirit, an evil spirit was sent to torment him. Self-will is now in distress because its fate is sealed. It needs soothing and comfort from another source. At this point David is sought out to sing and play the harp for Saul, and whenever he did so, the evil spirit departed.⁴¹⁵ The harp may be seen to symbolize a heavenly instrument producing spiritual music. From this we infer that the harmony (music) produced by love becomes a healing factor in man that will lead him to capitulate to the rule of God in his heart.

After his initial work in the court of Saul, David went on to slay Goliath and become a military hero of Israel, wiping out the Philistines. David's popularity began to grow exceedingly and the women in the streets were dancing and singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." Jealousy seized Saul as he saw his own persona slipping under the radar as David's grew. It is at this point that Saul tried to kill David. When an evil spirit came upon Saul he thrust a javelin at David who twice eluded him.⁴¹⁶ Self-will afraid of losing its power and control now seeks to remove the threat of love which is steadily gaining strength.

Self-will is now undergoing a transformation, being broken down to accept the reign of a higher power. After another attempt to kill David, Saul pursued him as he was told he was at Naioth at Ramah. Saul came to the great cistern of Secu and asked for David's whereabouts. When he reached Ramah surprisingly the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him and he began to prophesy. Strangely, he stripped off his robes naked and lay that way all day and night.⁴¹⁷ Though this episode seems bizarre it can be interpreted allegorically with some meaning if we consider some of the elements of the story. Secu has a connotation in Hebrew of "discerning, separating, observing, and surmounting." The place name brings with it the idea of a separation, a spiritual judgment and cutting off of error. Ramah means "a height, high place" and symbolizes as do mountains and hills a

⁴¹³ 1 Samuel 16:7

⁴¹⁴ 1 Samuel 16:13-14

⁴¹⁵ 1 Samuel 16:17-23

⁴¹⁶ 1 Samuel 18:7-11

⁴¹⁷ 1 Samuel 19:21-24

place of high spiritual consciousness. But it may not be immediately obvious what can be inferred from Saul's stripping off his garments unless we consider how clothing is used throughout the bible. On a basic level, an outer garment is meant to symbolize the condition of the inner man (e.g. what he is clothed with spiritually.) Jesus wore a seamless white robe to indicate his purity.⁴¹⁸ The priests of the Old Testament had elaborate garments of various styles and colors to indicate their holiness.⁴¹⁹ In the book of Zechariah, the priest Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and then given a change in raiment.⁴²⁰ So the changing of our garb has the connotation of some change in our disposition, thinking, or mood whether good or bad. In Isaiah we have described the exchange of "spirit of heaviness" for "a garment of praise."⁴²¹ Returning then to this story of Saul, we may interpret that the king is beginning to have a change in his thinking (Secu) and entering into a higher state of consciousness (Ramah.) The experience of this high frame of mind is causing him to get rid of his old way of thinking (his clothes) and prepare to receive new garments.

Though self-will is beginning to change it is not completely ready to accept the rule of love and abdicate its throne. Love must still remain waiting in the wings until the will can fully accept it. Such ideas are found in an anecdote a short time after Saul's experience at Ramah. It was at this time that Jonathan, son of Saul wanted to feel out his father for his disposition toward David. Jonathan planned a test that would determine if Saul was still hostile toward his best friend. The New Moon festival was upon them and David was expected to dine with Saul and family, but rather than attending an excuse would be made and David would hide in the field for three days until Jonathan could communicate to him how his father felt. He would let David know by shooting three arrows into the field. If the arrows came near to David it would be an indication that he was safe, but if the arrows were deliberately overshot, David was to understand that he was still in grave danger. And as it turned out, Saul was still enraged at David and Jonathan communicated that he should still remain in hiding.⁴²²

We can glean from this story that when man's will is still intent on killing love out of its consciousness, then love must remain in hiding as David did in the field. It was the time of the New Moon which meant that it was not visible in the sky. It is at this time that the moon is in conjunction between the earth and the sun and so all light is blotted out. Appropriately, when the light of God is obscured, man is not ready to receive the reign of love and it must remain in waiting for three days (a period of completion in God.) The arrows that Jonathan fired after this time may be interpreted as young fledgling thoughts that yearn after love. That the arrows overshot their target is to say that our aim is still too high for us and we overshoot because the rule of love is still beyond our abilities in consciousness. At this point our development is not that far progressed and Divine Love (David) cannot yet come out of hiding.

⁴¹⁸ John 19:23

⁴¹⁹ Exodus 28

⁴²⁰ Zechariah 3:3-5

⁴²¹ Isaiah 61:3

⁴²² 1 Samuel 20:18-40

But the struggle continues, and during this time, divine love appeals to the will to let it know its intentions. Self-will fears love because it threatens to take away its control. But love wants to educate the will so that it will become ready to accept it. A few chapters later in the Book of Samuel we have a story about how David spares Saul's life. Saul had been pursuing David once again with several thousand men when the king needed to relieve himself. He went into a cave where David and his men just happened to be hiding. Creeping up slowly, David cut off the corner of Saul's robe unnoticed. After Saul left the cave, David also came out from the cave and cried out to Saul. He told him that the Lord delivered him into his hands and he could have killed him. But David swore that he would never strike down the king, the Lord's anointed. At this Saul was moved and wept. He said, "Is that your voice, David my son?" He recognized that David had been good to him, and then he made a positive confession recognizing that David would be king after his death. He only bid David to swear that he wouldn't kill his descendants from the land of Israel for which David gave him an oath.⁴²³

The first message that is conveyed in this passage is that divine love does not seek to destroy man's will as it was freely given to him by God in the first place. Rather love only wants to remove our erroneous thinking (a piece of the garment.) The will truly rules man (Saul is king) and love (David) recognizes this fact and respects it. Divine love tries to make the will understand that it is not trying to kill it, because the will is God given. Rather God would deliver the will into the hands of love who would only alter it (trim the robe.) Divine love (David) makes a deep impression on the will (Saul) who calls divine love his son. (Love of the divine is born of the will's desire.) The will is now repentant and weeps as it recognizes the goodness of love and the evil in self-will. The will recognizes that divine love is not the enemy it thought it was. The will now knows and submits to the rulership of love and that God's kingdom will be established through this rule, but the will also wants assurance that it will continue to function and not be eliminated and it receives this assurance from divine love.

But as the transformation of self-will is a process, all is not yet happy in the chronicles of Saul and David. Once again Saul would try to hunt down his successor in the wilderness. On another occasion, a similar confrontation between the two men occurred. Saul was encamped out in the open surrounded by his army when David snuck into his camp at night and stole away Saul's spear that he had thrust into the ground near his head. After removing himself to a hill a good distance away, he called out to Saul who once again recognized his folly and spoke kindly to David. David told him that he felt the king of Israel was looking for him like a flea or "as one hunts a partridge in the mountains." David then beckoned the young men to fetch the king's spear from him, and Saul blessed David as he did before.⁴²⁴

The overtones of this allegory are very similar to the preceding account. Divine love once again seeks to educate and convince self-will of its folly. Love tells the will that it will be difficult for it to find which underscores how long and hard a process it is to come into sanctification. The spear which David has confiscated is a symbol of strength, force,

⁴²³ 1 Samuel 24

⁴²⁴ 1 Samuel 26

or power. Love indicates that it doesn't want to take this away from us, but freely yields it back again demonstrating as before that it is not interested in usurping power. But it insists that we must come to love to get it. Then the will blesses divine love once again recognizing that "it will do great things and surely triumph."

Ultimately, we know that Saul with three of his sons perished on Mount Gilboa in a battle with the Philistines.⁴²⁵ It was at that time that David came to the throne as his successor in what symbolically would be the final victory of divine love over the will of man. And at that point in Israel's history we come near to the high water mark of its existence with the glorious reign of Solomon that would shortly follow.

Chapter 6 – The Extremities

Section 1 – Hands

And now coming to the last chapter of this study of the human body with respect to spiritual symbolism, we will look at the body's extremities. We begin first with the hands which represent a good deal more than just our sense of touch and feeling. In the context of the Bible, the hands often are seen as symbols of our actions and deeds, a representation of what have done.

This idea is fairly reasonable and is supported by numerous passages. In the Book of Isaiah the Lord addresses the nation of Israel. He beckons them, "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. My own hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens."⁴²⁶ Later in the book, Isaiah affirms the Lord saying, "We are all the work of your hand."⁴²⁷

Not only in reference to God and his works, the hands are mentioned in conjunction with the actions of man. The Psalmist writes, "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart ..."⁴²⁸ The Lord is interested in the purity of all of our deeds which are symbolized either by the cleanliness or the integrity of the hand. Harkening back to the qualifications of those who were permitted to enter the priesthood in the Levitical law, we see enumerated among the many prohibitions those who have a "broken hand."⁴²⁹ This would signify all those who do not act in a whole manner and lack uprightness in their actions.

As was alluded to in the first chapter, the Lord has a solution for those who do not cooperate, and punishment is necessary for correction in areas where we are deficient. The words of Jesus in the gospel were very harsh when he suggested, "If your hand

⁴²⁵ 1 Samuel 31

⁴²⁶ Isaiah 48:13

⁴²⁷ Isaiah 64:6

⁴²⁸ Psalm 24:4

⁴²⁹ Leviticus 21:19

causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands and be thrown into eternal fire.”⁴³⁰ The illustration of punishment is seen in several passages, namely one that was described in the beginning of this book concerning the wicked queen Jezebel who met an untimely death. After being thrown out of a building, dogs consumed her body leaving nothing but her skull, hands, and feet.⁴³¹ And a comparison was made to the wounds of Jesus who bore the crown of thorns as well as nails through both hands and feet. Always showing us by way of example, Jesus illustrates for us the necessary punishment of these parts of the body, a necessary step to achieve our eternal goal. In the context of this subject, we consider the words of the Psalmist who foresaw that “they have pierced my hands”⁴³² to destroy the works and misdeeds of mortal man.

Now besides serving as a metaphor for man’s deeds, the hands also convey another meaning that is well grounded in the scriptures. In addition to this meaning, the hands are seen as a vehicle of transmission, a conduit to impart many things both good and bad. In the negative, this signification was in view during the ritual of the Day of Atonement as described in the Mosaic Law. Once a year the people would gather to make reparation for their sins in a special way. The high priest was instructed to lay both hands on the head of a goat and confess all of the sins of the Israelites. In this way, he “put them on the goat’s head” and the animal was sent away into the desert carrying away all of the iniquity that had been transferred to it.⁴³³ Through the laying on of hands, the entire rebellion of the Israelites was imparted to this animal who we also know as the scapegoat.

Far more prevalent though are references in the scriptures to the laying on of hands in a positive context, and this for the transmission of spiritual power. Toward the end of Moses’ life, it was clear that a successor was needed to lead the people into Canaan. Joshua was chosen for the job, and the Lord instructed Moses, “Take [him] a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hands on him ... Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him.”⁴³⁴ When Moses had done so, he invisibly transferred to Joshua the spirit and the power that had been with himself to lead Israel for 40 years. Imperceptively, he communicated to his successor the authority that he needed to take over the big job of invading the Promised Land.

This mode of transmission was followed into the New Testament and was mentioned time and time again throughout the Book of Acts as well as the epistles. The laying on of hands became the means by which new converts received the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised the disciples before he ascended into heaven. On one occasion, when the Apostle Paul came upon a group of John the Baptist’s disciples, he baptized them first with water and then “when [he] placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”⁴³⁵ An opportunist named Simon the Sorcerer

⁴³⁰ Matthew 5:30

⁴³¹ 2 Kings 9:35

⁴³² Psalm 22:16

⁴³³ Leviticus 16:20-22

⁴³⁴ Numbers 27:15-23

⁴³⁵ Acts 19:6

saw the reception of the Spirit at the laying on of the apostles' hands and was desirous to make use of it for his own gain. He offered the apostles money for the gift saying, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."⁴³⁶

The power transmitted by the imposition of hands took on a very special significance in the New Testament era as the means of ordination. The apostles received special power from the Lord himself to confect the 7 sacraments which he instituted for the Church. This power they passed on to their successors the bishops, along with their helpers the priests and deacons all who receive the laying on of hands as the vehicle that has transmitted this unbroken chain of authority throughout the ages. When the first deacons were selected to serve the needs of the people in Jerusalem, "these men were presented to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them."⁴³⁷ In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he reminds him about the power he received as a bishop when he says, "Do not neglect your gift, which was given to you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you."⁴³⁸ Later in his epistle he warns Timothy "not to be hasty in the laying on of hands"⁴³⁹ so as not to impart the sacramental power to those who are either unworthy to receive or too weak to handle the precious gift.

Finally the hands are seen in the Bible as the special instruments of transmitting healing energy and blessing. When Paul had been shipwrecked on Malta on his way to Rome, he came across a man who was sick in bed with a fever. "Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him."⁴⁴⁰ And this short account is in addition to the many anecdotes about Jesus touching people wherever he went to bring healing and restoration. For this reason those who have charisms for healing in modern times make great use of their hands as the conduit of divine power for making people well.

Power is not only emanated from the hands through physical contact but can also be transmitted invisibly through the air. A minister will many times raise his hands in blessing over his congregation to impart God's goodness to them. More than just some symbolic gesture, the extension of the hands toward an object is analogous to the transmission from an antenna which radiates outward through the airwaves. This idea is depicted in an Old Testament narrative when Joshua and the children of Israel were fighting the Amalekites. Moses along with his brother Aaron and Hur went to the top of a hill overlooking the battle. "As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning." After a long while Moses arms became tired, and he relied on his two companions to hold them up until the battle was one.⁴⁴¹

Section 2 – Feet

⁴³⁶ Acts 8:18

⁴³⁷ Acts 6:6

⁴³⁸ 1 Timothy 4:14

⁴³⁹ 1 Timothy 5:22

⁴⁴⁰ Acts 28:8

⁴⁴¹ Exodus 17:8-16

We come now to the closing section of this book and before diving into the subject matter at hand, we will first sketch out one of the most important mental faculties that must develop within us if we are to achieve our goal. It is the faculty of understanding which in many ways is the key to all spiritual progress and the glue that binds all of the faculties together. It is a virtue that is praised throughout the entire Bible and the scriptures encourage all to seek attainment of this mental power. Especially in the Proverbs, there are many verses extolling the benefits of understanding. In one verse Solomon writes, “How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!”⁴⁴² Earlier in the book he instructs his son, “Incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding.”⁴⁴³ Then in the Letter to the Colossians, St. Paul expresses his earnest prayer and desire for the people of that city that “[they] might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”⁴⁴⁴

The attainment of understanding is to be desired for many reasons but among them one of the most important is growth in the path of righteousness and the shunning of evil. In the scriptures, a lack of understanding is associated with sin while being full of understanding is equated with uprightness and integrity. To put it another way, what is in view is that ignorance is the cause of sin while knowledge of truth is the source of holiness and right behavior. For this reason, Paul encouraged his protégé Timothy in his searching out of the scriptures “which are able to make [us] wise unto salvation.”⁴⁴⁵

The Proverbs once again support this theme of the destructive nature of ignorance where it says, “Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding.”⁴⁴⁶ Rather it is through spiritual understanding that men learn to keep the commandments of the Lord. For the Psalmist writes, “A good understanding have all they that do God’s commandments.”⁴⁴⁷ In the longest Psalm of the Psalter (119) the writer pleads with the Lord, “Give me understanding and I shall keep your statutes”⁴⁴⁸ as he well knew that his ability to obey was directly linked to the spiritual knowledge he would gain. Even Job, the suffering servant of God knew this truth as he noted to his friends “to depart from evil is understanding.”⁴⁴⁹

This spiritual knowledge takes many forms but among other things it includes the knowledge of self and the journey that we are all on. It is the understanding of our place in the universe and a high view that puts everything in proper perspective. Solomon understood this when he said, “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way.”⁴⁵⁰ Such apprehension of truth helps us to accept what comes our way in life without fighting

⁴⁴² Proverbs 16:16

⁴⁴³ Proverbs 2:2

⁴⁴⁴ Colossians 1:9

⁴⁴⁵ 2 Timothy 3:15

⁴⁴⁶ Proverbs 6:32

⁴⁴⁷ Psalm 111:10

⁴⁴⁸ Psalm 119:34

⁴⁴⁹ Job 28:28

⁴⁵⁰ Proverbs 14:8

against the hand that is dealt to us. It is the source of peace and patience on the long journey of life.

Such knowledge is the understanding that difficulties in life are generally sent by God for the purpose of testing and providing resistance for growth. These are the opening words of the epistle of James who wrote, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”⁴⁵¹ But without this kind of understanding, it is the sad state of many who fall into bitterness and anger as they perceive they have been dealt an injustice in life are being unfairly picked on by God. Sometimes it is true that the Lord may be punishing us for some sin as he desires to correct his children. But unless there is knowledge that this chastisement comes from love, then there is also a tendency toward ill feelings and a turning away from God. We need to remember the words of the Book of Hebrews which say, “The Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”⁴⁵² The understanding of this truth is a safeguard to us imparting the knowledge that God does not hate us and is not abandoning us but is simply correcting out of great love.

To have higher understanding is to have a glimpse of the “big picture” from a bird’s eye view. This is the vantage point of God which is the ultimate source of infinite love and compassion especially for our neighbor. Because we lack the fullness of this viewpoint, we are prone to hostility and difficulties with our fellow man. Rather when we catch a glimpse of God’s knowledge of our neighbor to understand people around us, to know why they do what they do, and to know what brought them to the condition they are in, it releases us from all judgment and condemnation. Such knowledge substitutes compassion and love through the understanding of what makes our neighbor tick.

In addition to comprehending these things, it is the understanding of the process of life that will also make us very patient and forgiving of our fellow man when he commits an injustice against us. For knowing that perfection does not happen overnight and that everyone is at a different place in the journey or at different stage in development helps us to “turn the other cheek.”⁴⁵³ In humility we should remember that the place where our neighbor is now at was a place that we were, albeit in the distant past. He continues in his dark way because of ignorance as once was the case with us.

The scriptures lend support to the effect of understanding on the treatment of neighbor. The Proverbs reinforce this idea, for Solomon writes, “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding.”⁴⁵⁴ In another place he says, “A man of understanding holds his peace”⁴⁵⁵ to signify the patience and the freedom to refrain from spouting off at the mouth at every annoyance or offense from our fellow man. On the other side of the coin, Solomon also

⁴⁵¹ James 1:2-4

⁴⁵² Hebrews 12:5-6

⁴⁵³ Matthew 5:39

⁴⁵⁴ Proverbs 14:29

⁴⁵⁵ Proverbs 11:12

points out that “a man void of understanding strikes hands”⁴⁵⁶ to indicate that a person in ignorance is quick to get angry and show his rage.

Now if we had to link one of the 12 patriarchs with this faculty of understanding it would be Manasseh, the son of Joseph and brother of Ephraim. Though he was the older of the two siblings, as was explained in the last chapter, the preeminence was given to his younger brother through the blessing of Jacob. It was he who placed his right hand on Ephraim’s head and set him before his older brother. In this way we infer that it is the will that must first cooperate with God, and then understanding follows later. The will is the prime mover in seeking the knowledge of God, and in time a harvest of understanding follows.

Manasseh means “out of the forgotten, from oblivion” in the Hebrew language. We could say that the immediate context is forgetfulness or more specifically ignorance which is diametrically opposed to understanding. This is appropriate because as stated previously, the 12 patriarchs of the Old Testament represent all of the mental faculties in their primitive form without development. Lack of understanding or ignorance was particularly embodied by Manasseh who was one of the most wicked kings to reign in Judah. He was even so brazen to sacrifice his own son in the fire to the pagan god Molech. The undeveloped nature of this faculty is also depicted in the tribe itself which was divided in two. One half of the tribe lived west of the Jordan in the Promised Land while the other half dwelt east of the Jordan. In this condition, the tribe represents “divided understanding” or one that is mixed between the carnal and the spiritual. Not until we come to the New Testament are the mental powers seen in their fullness and maturity in the 12 faithful apostles (considering righteous Matthias who replaced Judas, the traitor who proved unworthy to hold this special office.)

Now as can be deduced from the title of this section, the part of the human body that symbolizes understanding is the feet. Anatomically this should make sense as the feet are the UNDER-most part of the body and they are also our STAND-ing. (There is even an old wife’s tale that says that if one has big feet, he also possesses good understanding.) The feet consequently are not only the physical but also the spiritual foundation of man, for as has been just developed, the understanding is the glue that binds everything together. For this reason it should also not be a surprise that in the ancient healing art of reflexology, it is known that the entire sole of the foot serves as a map to all of the other organs and systems in the body. Through the feet are linked all parts of the anatomy and spiritually speaking all of the faculties of the mind.

This notion should not seem outlandish, for the scriptures themselves allude to a mystical understanding of man’s foot that does not make sense without this kind of symbolism. In the beginning of this book, a passage from the Book of Ephesians was quoted regarding “putting on the full armor of God.” In that text is a verse that says we should have our “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”⁴⁵⁷ Now it is obvious that we literally cannot put the gospel of peace on our feet like a shoe. Rather it makes more

⁴⁵⁶ Proverbs 17:18

⁴⁵⁷ Ephesians 6:16

sense to take the verse as suggesting we need to prepare our thinking (our understanding) with this gospel to withstand evil and the fiery darts of Satan. We could more or less go through the entire bible substituting the word foot/feet for understanding and it will convey a truth to us.

A well known verse from the Psalms comes alive with this rendering. The author writes, “Your word is a lamp unto my feet”⁴⁵⁸ to metaphorically say that the scriptures illumine man’s understanding. In the Book of Samuel, the Lord was said to “keep the feet of his saints”⁴⁵⁹ to indicate that God pledges to preserve the understanding of his holy ones, those who seek after him with a whole heart. The Psalmist echoes this promise saying, “He will not let your foot slip.” The angels will be given charge of God’s people lest they “dash their feet against a stone.”⁴⁶⁰

King David speaks of the high, lofty, and sturdy understanding that God gives to him when he proclaims that “[God] makes my feet like hind’s feet, and sets me upon my high places.”⁴⁶¹ In this verse the man after God’s own heart foresees the progress of his own spiritual understanding compared to a deer that has very strong and sure feet that scale into high elevations. Back to the Psalms again, David speaks of the expansion of his comprehension of truth when he says, “You have not handed me over to the enemy but have set my feet in a spacious place.”⁴⁶² Ultimately, the Psalmist prophesies that “Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem”⁴⁶³ to indicate that when spiritual understanding comes into its fullness we will have arrived in Jerusalem, the final destination of the Israelites and the place of highest consciousness. This, the last city to be conquered by David had high impregnable walls and was set on a mountain side to suggest the difficulty of achieving this state which is our highest calling.

There is perhaps no more convincing passage that illustrates this symbolic meaning of feet than John’s account of the Last Supper. During the meal Jesus got up from the table and wrapped a towel around his waist. He poured water into a basin and proceeded to wash all 12 of the apostles’ feet drying them with the towel. Then a very telling dialogue began between the Lord and Peter when Jesus came to wash his feet. “Peter said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’ Jesus replied, ‘you do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’ ‘No,’ said Peter, ‘you shall never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.’ ‘Then Lord,’ Simon Peter replied, ‘not just my feet but my hands and my head as well.’ Jesus answered, ‘A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean.’”⁴⁶⁴

Certainly on a basic level, this narrative depicts Jesus’ humility and his desire to impart this important quality on his disciples. And this has always been the traditional understanding of the passage. Though on the deeper level, the dialogue that goes on

⁴⁵⁸ Psalm 119:105

⁴⁵⁹ 1 Samuel 2:9

⁴⁶⁰ Psalm 121:3

⁴⁶¹ 2 Samuel 22:34

⁴⁶² Psalm 31:8

⁴⁶³ Psalm 122:2

⁴⁶⁴ John 13:1-17

between Jesus and Peter only becomes clear when this mystical understanding of feet is in play. When Jesus first approaches Peter, he is indignant that the Lord of Glory should even consider to stoop so low to perform this menial task, but Jesus counters his objection citing that he does not yet realize (UNDERSTAND) why this must be done but will in the future. This signifies a deeper motivation for the ritual than just the obvious show of humility and suggests that the apostle's comprehension would need to evolve to receive the full import of this deed. When Peter further protests, the Lord tells him that unless he does this action, Peter can have no part with him, and this is to say that unless man's understanding is cleansed by the divine, there can be no spiritual ascent or union with God. Finally Peter concedes but insists that if Jesus should do this kindness he should wash other parts of the body as well to completely cleanse. To this Jesus responds in an outwardly cryptic way explaining that if one's feet are clean, then he is altogether clean. This obviously has no meaning on the literal level; rather it suggests that if the feet or understanding is cleansed then symbolically the entire being is purified. This makes sense when we consider again how the faculty of understanding is the fabric that binds all spiritual progress together. For to understand is to be holy, and comprehension of truth is freedom from sin.

Another important story pertaining to the feet is the account of the Burning Bush which we have celebrated from several different angles throughout this book. Thus far we have concentrated on the bush as well as the fire that was burning it, but now we shift focus to Moses. When the prophet approached the miraculous sign, God called out to him from within the bush and warned him not to come any closer. Then he told him, "Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy ground."⁴⁶⁵

What is depicted in this passage is Moses coming into contact with divine truth as the place where he was standing was holy. That he was instructed to remove his sandals was to indicate that he needed to remove his human and faulty understanding and replace it with the divine. With his feet in direct contact with the holy ground, he was symbolically open to receive the illumination of the Holy Spirit and gain understanding.

This idea was repeated later in the life of Joshua who at the time of the fall of Jericho encountered the commander of the Lord's army while he was scouting around the city. He asked the angel if he were for the Israelites or for the people of Jericho to which he made clear he wasn't taking any sides. Then Joshua fell face down and inquired of the angel if there was a message from the Lord. The messenger replied, "Take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did as he was instructed.⁴⁶⁶

The shoes or sandals upon our feet are meant to symbolize the kind of understanding that we are "clothed" with. In the Book of Revelation, the apostle John saw the Lord's feet which he perceived like "bronze glowing in a furnace"⁴⁶⁷ to indicate Jesus infinite comprehension and high consciousness. John the Baptist said that he was unworthy to

⁴⁶⁵ Exodus 3:5

⁴⁶⁶ Joshua 5:13-15

⁴⁶⁷ Revelation 1:15

untie the strap of Jesus' sandal suggesting that the significance of such an action would be way beyond his understanding.⁴⁶⁸ The sandals of the Lord are in sharp contrast to those of the Gibeonites, a Canaanite people who duped Joshua into thinking that they were a people from a distant land. Fearing for their lives at the entrance of the Israelites into the Promised Land, this people sought out to make an alliance with Joshua lest they be cut down with the sword. The successfully deceived him into thinking that they were foreigners to Canaanite soil by donning old clothing. They saddled worn-out sacks and wineskins on their donkeys and put on old clothes as well as "worn and patched sandals" on their feet.⁴⁶⁹ In this way, the Gibeonites depict the sense man who after a long sojourn in the realm of physical existence comes to the Israelite (spiritual) with his old, worn, and clouded understanding. This is to convey that after a long time of living in the world with limited earth bound consciousness we become bored with what the physical senses have to offer and begin to seek replacing our understanding with something higher than the senses can detect.

We have made many references throughout this book about the qualifications for priesthood, and it should be no surprise that there is also a prohibition regarding feet. For "a man that is broken-footed"⁴⁷⁰ or one who has faulty understanding may not assume this job. It is the Lord's prerogative to punish the erroneous understanding of man in order to correct it and bring it into the light. A narrative from the Book of Numbers depicts this work of God in the story of Balaam the seer, an unsavory man of the peoples east of Jordan who was an opportunist, practicing divination for money. He was hired by the Moabites to attempt to curse the Israelites who were clearly becoming a threat. At one point Balaam saddled up his donkey and prepared to go with the men of Moab to do his dirty work. The anger of the Lord was kindled against him and an angel stood in his path to strike him down. Though concealed from Balaam, the donkey seeing the angel ran off of the road into a field to escape the imposing figure. In anger Balaam beat her, but then the donkey finding herself trapped on a path in a vineyard with a tall wall on either side swayed against one wall and crushed Balaam's foot. For this he beat her again until finally Balaam and the donkey were caught in a very narrow place with no where to turn at which point the donkey decided to lay down in submission.⁴⁷¹

When the angel blocked Balaam's way in the narrow path, it was tantamount to God who confronts man in his own narrow way of thinking and limited understanding. It is when he is hemmed in by tall walls on either side like a horse with blinders on that his foot is crushed against the wall. And this is to signify his mind or understanding being smitten as a result of this confrontation with God. When man can no longer escape to the right or the left having no place to turn, the donkey symbolizing the animal nature of man capsizes to indicate coming into submission to the divine.

Analogous to our discussion of the punishment of the hands, we remember Jesus words in the gospel that "if your foot offends you, [you should] cut it off. It is better to enter

⁴⁶⁸ Luke 3:16

⁴⁶⁹ Joshua 9

⁴⁷⁰ Leviticus 21:19

⁴⁷¹ Numbers 22:21-28

into eternal life maimed that to be bodily whole and cast into hell.”⁴⁷² And with even more meaning than these words impart, we now have a complete picture of the wounds of the crucifixion with not only head and hands but also the feet which were pierced with a long nail to symbolize the punishment of human understanding.

Now the conversion of human understanding into divine is a process that as all things requires the cooperation of man. An illustration can be taken from the old process of making wine. After the grapes were harvested, they were dumped into a large winepress. Those making the wine would then trample out the grapes crushing them with their feet. The scene paints a picture of what was brought out in the first chapter concerning wine as the symbol of the spiritualized thought. What was presented there was the idea that fermented wine represents the intoxicating and exhilarating thoughts of the spirit which is a fitting analogy employed in the gospels. In the case of the winepress, we learn that man’s feet or understanding need to be a part of the transformation process from the natural unfermented grape juice into the spiritual fermented wine.

The conversion process is also depicted by man’s exposure and worship of the divine feet. Psalm 99 exhorts, “Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool for he is holy.”⁴⁷³ If feet represent understanding, then we are to worship at Christ’s feet which represent the epitome of spiritual truth. Many accounts in the gospel intimate the impartation of divine understanding to man such as when Mary of Bethany sat at Jesus’ feet to hear his teaching.⁴⁷⁴ On one occasion she also worshipped him by putting expensive perfume on his feet and wiping them with her hair.⁴⁷⁵

An Old Testament narrative depicts this idea in the story of Ruth the Moabite woman who became the great-grandmother of King David. After her Jewish husband died, she journeyed back to Israel with her mother-in-law with an expectation in faith that a kinsmen would take her as his wife. Ruth worked in the fields of a kinsman named Boaz at the time of the barley harvest. One evening after winnowing the harvest in his fields with his men, Boaz went to sleep in the open fields. Ruth came by night to him while he lay asleep and uncovered his feet, and there at his exposed soles she lay down her head for the night. By Ruth’s action she was signifying to Boaz that she was requesting marriage. As the kinsman-redeemer, he fulfilled this responsibility, and as is traditionally understood he served in the role of Christ figure for his role in this redemption.⁴⁷⁶ In this way Ruth sought the wisdom of the spiritual higher self which often comes in the night (through trials and tribulations) when she laid bare the feet of Boaz, the divine type of Christ.

We may also understand from this narrative that it is the worldly person (the Gentile) who journeys from her homeland to uncover spiritual knowledge (Israel.) The marriage of Ruth to Boaz then represents the achievement of that goal with their offspring the great

⁴⁷² Matthew 18:8

⁴⁷³ Psalm 99:5

⁴⁷⁴ Luke 10:39

⁴⁷⁵ John 12:3

⁴⁷⁶ Ruth 3:7-8

King David a few generations later and then ultimately with the birth of Jesus, the Divine Lord himself around a thousand years later. We can then infer that though the road be long, once we begin seeking the spiritual, we will eventually conceive and bring forth the Christ ourselves achieving perfection as mortals and ultimately coming into union with God himself, our ultimate calling.

Now when human ignorance has finally given way to understanding and the apprehension of truth it is equivalent to acquiring dominion over all enemies and struggles that we have had to contend with throughout life. In a passage from the letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of Christ who “must reign until he has put all of his enemies under his feet.”⁴⁷⁷ Jesus as the great representative of man depicts that the victory is won when all comes into subjection below the understanding, for all of man’s enemies are vanquished through his emergence from ignorance into the light of truth. This language is earlier seen in Psalm 8 which considers the works of God in creation with a special focus on man who is the pinnacle of all that lives on earth. At the end of the Psalm, David writes, “you have made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.”⁴⁷⁸

This kind of imagery is embodied by Jesus when he walked on water with the sea underneath his feet to suggest that all thoughts of the mind are in subjection to the understanding. But it is also depicted by the Virgin Mary who also as a type of humanity is portrayed in a state of victory in the Book of Revelation. In the twelfth chapter she is described as “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.”⁴⁷⁹ The illustration envisions the woman shrouded in light with a crown of twelve stars to portray the perfection of the mental faculties when man has come into his fullness while the moon under her feet indicates that the “lesser light”, the mind of man has come into understanding.

Finally it is religious art that paints a wonderful picture of the finished product of mankind. The protoevangelium of Genesis, the promise that the woman and her offspring should defeat Satan is prophesied under the words, “you will crush his head, and he will bruise your heel.”⁴⁸⁰ As an extension of this idea, depictions of the Blessed Virgin have often been made showing her standing with her right foot on the serpent. And not only of Mary, this is the image of all mankind when it comes into perfection, for then the lower nature embodied by the snake will be ultimately crushed by the power of understanding.

Summary

Now that this book has come to a close, perhaps we can understand St. Paul’s exhortation to “put on the full armor of God” in a more comprehensive way. The battle for sanctity is a real war that every human being is engaged in whether he realizes it or not. To

⁴⁷⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:25,27

⁴⁷⁸ Psalm 8:6

⁴⁷⁹ Revelation 12:1

⁴⁸⁰ Genesis 3:15

extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one, man must protect all vital organs or rather what those organs and systems really symbolize. For he must stand firm “with the buckle of truth around his waist” the shielding of his loins which is continuing in steadfast will and perseverance. He must put on the “breastplate of righteousness” to guard the heart and all of the vital organs protecting the “love center” of the body and guarding it from the poisonous arrows which are set on hardening it. He must then “fit his feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” and put on divine truth as a shoe to increase in understanding. When these are done, he needs to follow Paul’s words by putting on the “helmet of salvation” to guard his thinking, and lastly he must take up the “sword of the spirit” and learn the power of the tongue to wage war and assert the power of dominion.

Through scriptural citation as well as the use of analogy and allegory, this work has set out to draw parallels between the design of the human body and the realm of the spirit. For in the words of St. Paul, “God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.”⁴⁸¹ Therefore it is through the study of the visible world that we come to understand the reality of the invisible world. It is through comprehending all of the little nuances of the created world that we may understand the nature of higher realities. Although the physical universe cannot of itself give us the experience of the spiritual, it can show us what it is like, and for this reason it is every man’s calling to search and find God through “what has been made.”

⁴⁸¹ Romans 1:20