

Examples of Lectio Divina

This document represents notes...bits and pieces...jotted down over the years while doing lectio divina. Therefore it has no particular order nor sequence.

John 14.25: "These things I have spoken to you while I am still *with you* (par'humim menon, literally, *remaining with you*)" is a statement implying Christ's presence among people which is partially complete. Such presence needs fulfillment by the Holy Spirit, the *Paraklete*, Para-kletos, whom the Father and Son send to be our constant companion. As Third Person of the Trinity, he represents a completion of the divine life. His proper name is intriguing, for it consists of the Greek preposition para ("in the presence of, before, beside") and the verb kleo ("to summon"). Since the Spirit proceeds from Father and Son, we may say that his task of enlightening persons naturally follows the task of Christ whose presence, as just remarked, is characterized by "remaining with you, par'humim."

In light of these observations, refer to the following distinctly different three passages which help shed light on this mysterious divine presence:

"The soul in its happiness finds itself standing midway in the Embrace and the Kiss of Father and Son. In a manner which exceeds description and thought, the man of God is found worthy to become not God but what God is, that is to say, man becomes through grace what God is by nature." William of St. Thierry, **Epistle to Mt. Dieu** (London, 1930), pp.259-63.

"Now let us look at the nature of this eternal birth of the Son from the Father and see what we have to learn from it. The Father, as Father, turns to Himself with His divine comprehension. He sees Himself with a *luminous understanding* of the *essential abyss* of His *eternal being*, and out of this pure comprehension of Himself, He utters the word which is His Son. The eternal birth of the Son is nothing else than the Father's own knowing of Himself. The Son remains within the Godhead in unity of essence, and proceeds from the Father in difference of Person." John Tauler, *The Birth of God in the Soul*, a sermon in **Spiritual Conferences** (St. Louis, 1961), p.157.

"Any prayer which, even unconsciously, treats god as an *object* cannot be a real prayer in spirit and in truth. God cannot, strictly speaking be an object, since the 'object' essentially depends on the subject who 'puts it before' himself (ob-jicit). One cannot properly speak of God in the third person, even if linguistic conventions can scarcely avoid doing so. God comes first. *I* am only in the *Thou* which God says to me. God alone is the first person. If it is to be true, our inner experience of God should be of him as a first person, the one and only *I*. As long as we try to reach God by forming concepts of him and thereby making him an object, we cannot find him. He is only to be found in the experience of my own *I* which is a participation (and not an outward projection) of the *I* of God. Yet the mystery of the *I-Thou* within the uniqueness of the essential *I* still remains. This is the whole mystery of the Holy Trinity in which man participates by the very fact of his creation and into whose fullness he is taken up by the grace of the divine adoption (cf. John 1.12; Romans 8.14+)" Abhishiktananda, **Prayer** (Philadelphia, 1973) p.73, footnote #1.

* * *

A definition of *inverse insight* which may be of help in getting a better grasp on the principles of the spiritual life in general:

"It distinguishes different degrees or kinds of intelligibility. While direct insight grasps the point or sees the solution, or comes to know the reason, inverse insight apprehends that in some fashion the *point is that there is no point, or the solution is to deny a solution, or that the*

reason is that the rationality of the real admits distinctions and qualifications. While the conceptual formulation of direct insight affirms a positive intelligibility though it denies expected empirical elements, the conceptual formulation of an inverse insight affirms empirical elements only to deny an expected intelligibility." (example: not-red versus Red; position without magnitude versus magnitude). Bernard Lonergan, **Insight** (London, 1957), pp.33 and 44.

* * *

1Corinthians 2.2: "For I judged to *know* in you nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified." The Hebrew verb "to know" is yadah which connotes the *act of giving birth*. Most likely Paul had this definition in mind while writing this verse as well as other references to knowledge within the biblical context.

* * *

A definition of the word *illusion* by Johan Huizinga in **Homo Ludens** (Boston, 1950), p.11: "*Illusion*—a pregnant word which literally means 'in-play' (from inlusio, illudere or enludere)." I was struck by this definition because it helped situate the reflections on this Home Page recorded in the spirit of lectio divina. Lectio is not bound by rules with which we are familiar but has its own logic or procedure. Although discipline is needed to "hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 2.29), lectio has the unique ability to free us up and allow us to "play" with Scripture.

* * *

Two passages worth comparing, each with a different emphasis:

Ezekiel 28.13-14: "You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering. With an anointed guardian cherub I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked."

Wisdom 17.20: "For the whole world was illumined with brilliant light and was engaged in unhindered work, while over those men alone heavy night was spread, an image of the darkness that was destined to receive them; but still heavier than darkness were they to themselves."

* * *

An interesting statement which develops the Hebrew word for "faith," 'emeth: "God is and has 'emeth, he acts in 'emunah, his word is ne'eman and therefore demands he'emyn." **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974) Volume One, p.323.

* * *

Three references from the Song of Songs related to the temptation of Jesus Christ in the desert as recounted in Matthew 4.1: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." Note the action in italics associated with this term:

3.6: "Who is that *coming up* from the wilderness, like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of the merchant?" The "coming up" may refer to Christ's ascent from earth into heaven.

4.3: "Your mouth (literally, *speech*) is lovely." Here we have reference to "speech" which is "comely" or na'wah, from the verb meaning "to rest, dwell abide" as in Psalm 23.2: "He makes me lie down in green *pastures*. He leads me beside by the waters of *rest*."

8.5: "Who is that *coming up* from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" The Septuagint

reads, "Who is that coming up (adorned) *with white* (leukekanthismene)?" Compare this verse with 3.6 above which has the bridegroom alone coming from the desert; verse 8.5 has the bride now coming from the desert, a shift in emphasis. She is *leaning* (raphaq, the only time this Hebrew verb is used in the Old Testament); compare with leukanthizo (the only Septuagint usage except for Leviticus 13.38-9 which pertains to a benign skin rash), on her bridegroom, the beloved. However, both spouses come from the midvar, desert, the site of Christ's temptation.

Since Song 3.6 and 8.5 are questions, we should look for their respective answers. Verse 3.6 contains the element of smoke and aromatic spices; although their meanings will not be developed here, they connote a light, *spirit*-ual sense. The following verse (7) mentions the "*bed* which is Solomon's" which derives from the verbal root natah, "to stretch out." It belongs to Solomon whose name means *peace*, shalom. Thus his *peace stretches* throughout the universe, a figure of Christ's all-pervading presence much like the spices of verse 6.

The word for *desert* is midbar which comes from the same Hebrew verbal root as "speech" as in Song 4.3, "Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your *mouth* (literally, 'speech, midbareyk) is lovely." Thus in a sense the desert is a place of speech as we see in Isaiah 40.3 (which is in Matthew 3.3 as referring to John the Baptist): "A voice calling in the *desert* (midbar)." The mention of a seemingly impersonal *voice* is interesting; only the *voice* is crying which seems to leave no room for the person who is crying as well as an object-to-which that person is crying. The task of this crying is so consequential for salvation that it precludes the limited presence of an individual personality.

What does this voice of Isaiah 40.3 say, keeping in mind its New Testament application to Christ? "Prepare," or in Hebrew panu (from pana), a verb which implies more the notion of *turning* instead of what we normally consider as making ready. From this verbal root comes the word "face" or more accurately, *presence*, peny. Thus the *turning* announced from the desert becomes a face, as it were, a presence transcending what we consider a normal subject or object regard as demonstrated by the impersonal "voice" crying of Isaiah 40.3.

* * *

Hebrews 11.13: "They were strangers and *exiles* on the earth." A better term for "exiles" is "temporary residents." The Greek word for this is parepidemos which is composed of two prepositions, para ("to be about, beside") and epi ("on," "upon"). Thus an exile is one who is both "beside" his or her place of banishment as well as "upon" it. We have here a two-fold way of comporting ourselves in this "land of exile," near it yet in a mysterious fashion, transcending it. Merging both opposites into one mode of life lies at the heart of the Christian message.

* * *

Matthew 17.5: "This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased. Hear him." Compare this verse with Christ's baptism, Matthew 3.17: "This is my beloved with whom I am well pleased" (Luke 3.22 has "the Holy Spirit descended upon him in *bodily form* as a dove."). The Transfiguration scene has no mention of the Holy Spirit, but we have the words "Hear him." The baptism mentions the Spirit but does not impart this command of hearing. However, Luke 9.35 does ("And a voice came out of the cloud saying 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him'"). It is mentioned along with the voice coming from the cloud, symbol of the Father's hiddenness, into which the disciples entered to behold the transfigured Christ. Thus the Transfiguration has a cloud but no Spirit, whereas the baptism scene has the Spirit but no cloud.

It is satisfying to contemplate the transfigured Christ with the words of Psalm 34.6: "Look to him and be *radiant*." More accurately, the Hebrew has "look towards him and *flow*" (that is, as a stream). "Stream" or "river" (nahar) is derived from this same verbal root found in Isaiah 60.5: "Then you shall see and *flow* (naharetha) together." Nahar connotes more a shining or an action which results

from previous activity or interaction. The other Hebrew word for light, 'or, connotes more *being* light. The former term is fluid (although it is a river!) while the latter is more static. Perhaps nahar may be applied to illumine the notion of *awareness* or consciousness often used to express current insights into spiritual reality, that is, as awareness minus a subject-object regard. Another reference alluding to this vibrancy of pure awareness is Psalm 34.5: "Let your faces (penyhem) not be ashamed." Putting together "face" and "be enlightened" we have:

paneh -> pana: to turn

nahar -> nahar: river; to shine

Both are fluid terms. "Face" is meaningful in that it implies viewing or making contact with God as in Exodus 33.11: "The Lord spoke to Moses *face to face* (panym 'el panym) as a man speaks to his friend." The plural form may be taken as "faces to faces." The intimacy recorded here makes more sense if we were to say "awareness to awareness." The process of illumination signified by nahar therefore easily conforms to this biblical notion of face.

* * *

John 7.37: "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his *heart* (literally, 'belly,' koilia) shall flow rivers of living water.'" We see a progression from viewing the transfigured Christ as *light* to viewing him as *flowing water* (refer to the remarks on nahar just above). This flow is a refinement or procession to deeper levels of divine life. The inward procession may be perceived through the use of koilia in John 7.37. First the light of the transfiguration was seen as extending or manifesting outwards in an overpowering fashion. Then through Psalm 34.6 we see this light as becoming water or streams; it is the same light but now is invisible or beyond their range of ordinary sense perception.

The water symbolism of John 7.37 can be taken as a sign of Christ's life or procession from his Father. Notice the subtle connection between the flowing action and the Holy Spirit: rheussousin is used for "flowing" in conjunction with the water. It points to the vibratory nature of water/light which is fully alive. Again, water is a better term here since it is presented as coming right from the source, koilia (belly) before becoming manifest as light or making itself visible.

Another reference is in order here, Proverbs 18.4: "The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream." The use of divrey for "words" shows something greater than simple words; here its use is similar to the Greek logos. Such words are like images... icons...which transmit the reality they stand for by a silent presence, whereas "regular" spoken words must be communicated verbally. The image nature of the verbal root davar is well illustrated by this verse from Proverbs. Reference here to "deep waters" is related to the "light" aspect of nachal found as "brook." In this case the adjective noveah is attached, thereby bringing out a more subtle aspect of nachal. The verbal root navah means "to bubble forth, gush out" which differs slightly from nachal, "stream;" it, in turn, is derived from the verbal root "to receive" (anything as a possession). Thus two paradoxical elements are set side by side:

nachal: stream + to possess

navah: to bubble, gush forth

The former is receptive, whereas the latter is active. We started from the verbal root of mdvr and advanced to that of nahar (as "to flow," Isaiah 60.5) and then to nachal to navah. The trend is from speech to light to water which reveals the fluid quality of reality. One is reminded of Christ's words in Luke 11.34: "If your eye is *simple*, your entire body is full of *light*." The eye is similar to the "face" of Proverbs 18.4 which becomes "simple" or more exactly "uncompounded" (aplous). The image implied is that of a still pond with the bubbling (navah) faintly perceived as nahar, streams as light.

The third part of this Proverbs quote reads "*well* of wisdom." Maqor is the source of water or wisdom which is closely related to naqar, "to bare, pierce," indicating the penetrating aspect of wisdom.

Another important passage pertaining to nahar, Isaiah 60.5: "Then you shall see and *flow together*." The verse preceding this one also has God's command "see...(the people) gather together," whereas verse 5 simply has "see and flow:" no object is hinted at as in the preceding verse, a significant observation. Jesus Christ applies this verse from Isaiah to himself; however, verse 39 tells us that more accurately it applies to the Holy Spirit who is not yet given. The nature of Spirit is wind, breath, something you cannot see, thereby representing a further development, the transition from light to water to breath. Each step is therefore a further refinement of the previous ones.

Two verses develop this theme further, John 16.7: "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." And John 12.26: "and where I am, there shall my servant be also." This second verse takes note of the importance of "where" and "there." They even take precedence, as it were, over the person of Christ himself. When Christ uses these terms elsewhere as here, he puts more importance on them than himself.

* * *

John 12.13: "So they took branches of *palm trees* and went out to meet him crying, 'Hosanna!'" Phoinix means "palm" but can also mean "purple red" in addition to intimating that fabulous bird, the phoenix. The crowd places these palm branches under Christ's path as he enters Jerusalem in recognition of his royal dignity. In preparation for the celebration of this event, the Church burns palm branches left over from the previous Palm Sunday and uses these ashes for Ash Wednesday. Thus we have a close connection between the beginning and end of Lent.

The Song of Songs takes up this intuition and further applies it to the resurrection, Song 7.7 (Septuagint): "You are stately as a *palm tree*." Keeping in mind the context here, the palm tree is similar to the Phoenix which perishes in flames only to be born anew just as the Palm Sunday reference implies just above. Verse 8 of the Song reads "I will climb the *palm tree*," alluding to Christ's resurrection and ascension. Psalm 92.12: "The righteous flourish like the *palm tree* and grow like a cedar in Lebanon." That is, the righteous person will grow or rise like a phoenix from the ashes of this limited, mortal existence and attain the heavenly "cedar" or life eternal.

* * *

An outline of Genesis 2.7 may be used as a three-fold development of lectio divina:

- 1) "Then the Lord God formed man of *dust* from the ground
and *breathed* into his nostrils the breath of life"
"and man became a *living being*."

We therefore have a movement from "dust" to "breath of life" to a "living being."

* * *

The sequence of liturgical events from Easter to Pentecost and beyond as developed by the Church over the centuries is revealing because it shows a progressive spiritualization of matter and a desire to linger over the Holy Spirit's "breath" bestowed at Pentecost. First we have the resurrected physical body of Jesus Christ at Easter. Then there are the appearances until Christ's Ascension, a further rarefaction of his corporeal nature. Nine days lie between Ascension and Pentecost, the latter being a purely "spiritual" feast. Trinity Sunday follows Pentecost which sums up all Christian teaching which is rooted in the three divine Persons. Another feast is offered to complement its grandeur, namely Corpus Christi, which dwells upon the corporeality of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

How does Corpus Christi differ from Advent or Christmas, for both deal in corporeal terms? Advent signifies body-ness before the full flower of the divine seed is revealed. Corpus Christi is a return to this body-ness after the full revelation has been manifested through Easter and Pentecost and is therefore in a sense "greater" than the mystery signified by Advent or Christmas. However, Corpus Christi does not contain that expectation of these two feasts. Corpus Christi points to the spiritualization of corporal existence by which we "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34.8). For every aspect of our material body there is a corresponding "body" which is sensitized to spiritual reality. The humanity of Christ is present "seated at God's right hand" (Psalm 110.1). Such "seating" may be summarized by Heb 1.3 where Christ:

- 1) *reflects* the glory of God
- 2) *bears* the very stamp of his nature
- 3) *upholds* the universe by his word of power
- 4) makes *purification* for sins
- 5) is *seated* at the right hand of the Majesty on high

In other words, a transition: reflect -> bear -> uphold -> purification -> seated.

* * *

Two scriptural references which may pertain to Mary Magdalene:

Song 3.4: "Scarcely had I passed them, when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me."

John 20.17: "Do not cling to me." This clinging takes place in a garden much like Song 6.2 ("My beloved has gone down to his garden"). Instead of bringing Christ into "my mother's house" and "chamber," he now makes these places his ascent to the Father: "I am ascending to my Father and to your Father" (John 20.17).

* * *

An outline to Romans 8.30:

- 1) those whom he *predestined*
- 2) he also *called*
- 3) and those whom he called he also *justified*
- 4) those whom he justified he also *glorified*

Here we have a process of transcendence in the process of evolving into greater comprehension starting from "predestination" and working to "glorification" which finds correspondence in a three-fold outline to Psalm 57.8:

- 1) *awake* my soul
- 2) *awake* O harp and lyre
- 3) I will *awake* the dawn

This verse is in reverse to Romans 8.30, as it were, which starts from "predestination" and works to "glory," whereas Psalm 57.8 starts from "glory" and works to "dawn" which we may take as being synonymous with "predestination." Romans starts from the created realm, proceeding to transcendence; Psalm 57.8 starts from divine transcendence and proceeds to creation. The "glory" is commanded to "awake," that is, to become enlivened or aroused. Next we have the "harp and lyre"

bidden to effect the awakening; it is a stringed instrument symbolic of that transition from transcendence to creation and visa versa.

Next Psalm 57.8 has a progression towards "dawn" on the way up from "glory." Once the comparison between these two references have been made, we can move on to Psalm 57.10-11: "For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!" Note that God's mercy goes to "heaven," that is, it pierces through the clouds to which his truth reaches. In other words, mercy transcends truth and goes right to God's dwelling place, whereas truth does not penetrate that far.

* * *

Chapter two of Luke's Gospel has two types of *revelation*:

- 1) "a light of revelation to (literally, *into*) the Gentiles."
- 2) "and a sword will pierce through your own soul also that the *thoughts* out of many hearts may be revealed." *Dialogismo* means "thoughts" here, literally, "thinking through," which will be revealed to everyone. Mary's "revelation" is not a light as Christ's in verse 32, but her light opens up the way for that which belongs to the Savior. It is interesting to note that this "sword" or *romphaia* is a large, broad weapon as wielded in the hands of Goliath (1Samuel 17.45, Septuagint).

* * *

In John 21: 15-17 Jesus Christ questions Peter three times about his love for him which may be outlined as follows:

- 1) "Simon, son of John, do you *love* (*agapas*) me more than these? Yes, Lord, you know that I *love* (*philo*) you."
- 2) "Simon, son of John, do you *love* (*agapas*) me? Yes, Lord, you know that I *love* (*philo*) you."
- 3) "Simon, son of John, do you *love* (*phileis*) me? Yes, Lord, you know everything; you know that I *love* (*philo*) you."

The first two questions asked by Jesus Christ contain the word *agapo* and the third, *philo*. In response to the first two questions Peter answers with *philo*. Notice that on the third time Christ asks with *philo* instead of *agapo*. Christ wanted Peter to answer his *agape* with the same *agape*. In the third try Christ tries to enlighten Peter by questioning him with *philo*, but "Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you *love* me?'"

While this dialogue was transpiring, we also have St. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved (*agapao*) following them." Peter asks about him. The reason for Peter's question is that John was already adorned with *agape*, however, he realized that Christ was its object, something which Peter did not. John follows them not because he is inferior or timid but because he was the one who "had lain close to his breast" and was *already present* to Christ when he questioned Peter; in other words, John needed no questioning because he was already sensitive to Christ's divinity, having received the grace of *agape*.

* * *

In Luke 1.41-44 John the Baptist leaps in his mother's womb when meeting Mary who was pregnant with Christ: "And when Elizabeth *heard* the greeting of Mary, the babe *leaped* in her womb"... "when the *voice* of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb *leaped* for joy." Notice the italicized words pertaining to a very attentive type of hearing which penetrates the bodies of the two pregnant women.

Now compare John's recognition of Christ at the Jordan River about thirty years later after having resided in the desert for a lengthy period of time. Keep in mind that he most likely never had encountered Christ, only when both were in their mothers' wombs: "*Behold* the lamb of God." Here as an adult we have emphasis upon seeing or more properly beholding the lamb of god which is more comprehensive. It is preceded by John's awareness of "I am a voice *crying* in the wilderness" (John 1.23, from Isaiah 40.3). Hence accent is upon hearing, a necessary precedence to beholding. In other words, John *hears* and we *see* which is why the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than him. We may say that even greater are those who *taste* first and then *see* as Psalm 34.8 states.

* * *

Definition of a *haiku*, a Japanese verse of seventeen syllables: "The art of haiku is not to make poetry or even to see and record poetical things and events as they chance to appear and occur, but rather to seize the inner essence of any commonplace, everyday occurrence, to touch that inner nerve of life, of existence, that runs through the dullest and most unmeaning fact." *Haiku* by H. Blyth (Hokuseido, Japan, 1969) Volume Four, p.252. With this definition in mind, we can readily appreciate the charm and wonder so many of the Church Fathers bring to bear upon their reflections with regard to Christ's incarnation: "A child is born to us, a child is given to us," as Isaiah puts it.

* * *

Genesis 26.19-25: In this section Isaac digs a well twice (verses 19 and 21) which was contended by the herdsmen of Gerar; the first was named esek ("contention") and the second, sitnah ("enmity"). Chaphar is the Hebrew word for "to dig," implying a thorough searching or exploration. Isaac digs a third well called rechovoth ("broad, roomy") in order to make peace with the herdsmen. Then at Beersheba ("well of the oath") he digs a fourth well, verse 25. Isaac digs this well was dug after God promised to bless him as he did Abraham. The term "to dig" used here is carah in the sense of looking for buried treasure; this well was the only one of the five which Isaac did not name.

It is interesting to contemplate this progression of Isaac's well digging. The final well is dug only after God's appearance in a dream when he ratified Isaac's efforts. The others did not have this sanction, even the third one, which served to neutralize the previous two wells characterized by contention, thereby preparing the way for a fourth and final reconciliation. Isaac digs a fifth well (verse 33) after an oath is made with Abimelech. The well is named shevheh, another name for Beersheba. Thus the human covenant can only hold significance after the divine covenant is made, verse 25.

* * *

Towards the end of his life Christ frequently spoke of *peace*, shalom, his special gift to his disciples. Such a peace requires constant attentiveness because we generally prefer chaos over peace, an inclination which gives the illusion of activity and meaning. Perhaps this is the insight behind God commanding Adam to till the ground upon his expulsion from Eden. Such tilling is symbolic of that constant need we have to generate activity which is really a type of distraction, a direct result of our alienation from paradise. However, once a person has been graced with shalom, he or she has a unique awareness of the Father. Totally and fundamentally at peace, this person can look at life's situations in a detached fashion and without undue distress. The "lesser realities" comprising the dualistic aspects of existence are resolved only in that special shalom, that is, they are seen just as they are without further reflection. Such impartiality averts the need to "keep busy" and enables us to remain mindful that we no not fall into that trap of inflicting ourselves with needless chaos. Here is the point where we recover our innate constitution of being made as an *image* or eikon of God; once *aroused*, we become God's *likeness* or homoiosis.

The Father's vision from eternity is one which views all events as already having occurred in the *past*. To a certain degree the Hebrew language bears this out by its emphasis upon the present and

future tenses; in other words, the language stresses different degrees of the past. Perhaps this insight into Hebrew is helpful in that it allows us to appreciate the Father's vision as one which perceives events as already having evolved even as we observe them unfolding. This subtle play occurs in the varying degrees of pastness and their interaction as Hebrews 1.2 points out: "But in these *last days* (ep'eschatou ton hemeron) he has spoken to us by a Son whom he appointed the heir of all things through whom also he created the world." Three degrees of pastness are involved:

1) "in these last days:" "Last" in Greek is in the singular while "days" is plural; it (eschatou) refers to the time following Christ's death and resurrection which also consists of the present and future until Christ comes in glory. The grouping of a plurality of days under eschaton suggests that extension of linear time is gathered up in one insight of pastness as mentioned above with regard to the Hebrew language. Thus all days are as one and already have taken place from this viewpoint. Such an insight needs further expression or manifestation in the second part...

2) "he spoke us *in* the Son" (literal translation): "Spoke" refers to a degree of pastness more anterior than in the first degree, that is, "in these last days." This second stage refers to a past which is before Christ's death and resurrection; in other words, Christ existed in the Father's bosom before the drama of salvation began to unfold. By "speaking" us in the Son, the Father allows us to participate in that eternal present when he begets his only beloved Son.

3) "whom he appointed the heir of all things:" Here is another instance of past action which now shifts to the Son as heir. This degree of pastness consolidates the pastness of eschaton (past time; it can also refer to the future) and the pastness of the present where the Father begets his Son ("spoke us in his Son"). Here God sets the stage for unifying or revolving both into one: "the heir of all things" where "all" means reality as opposed to the infinite.

* * *

Luke 2.21: "And at the end of eight days when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." St. Bernard comments on this text (**In Circumcisione** 1.3) by saying that Christ's name was *called* (vocatum), not imposed or *placed* (impositum). Christ has this name as proper to himself: a natura propria habet, ut sit Salvator; innatum ei hoc nomen, non inditum ab humana vel angelica creatura.

Note in Luke 1.31 where the angel announces to Mary that she will conceive and call the child Jesus: the first word of this verse is "behold" or idou. This beholding is essentially related to the *calling* of the child's name and is inseparable from it. Only a name in the biblical sense can be given with such an effective idou. This places the name as a revelation of the person, not merely as imposed from without.

Also, refer to verse 28: "And he (the angel Gabriel) came *to her* and said, 'Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!'" This coming "to her" (pros auten) implies an inner presence by the angel similar in form as Christ's presence to the Father spoken of in Jn 1.1: "the word was *with God*" (pros ton Theon). The second part of this verse can apply equally to Christ's birth: "and the Word was God" and to our divinization, the mirabile commercium or "wonderful exchange" so dear to the Cistercian tradition.

* * *

Acts 7.55: "But he (Stephen), full of the Holy Spirit, *gazed* into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Such *gazing* (atenizo) which means "to look at intensely" has the connotation of looking *without* (a-tenizo) or beyond the extension of space and time. Stephen did not have an actual "vision" but used this occasion of his death to point to a reality beyond him. The use of atenizo means a special type of seeing without a subject-object relationship where

there is no "I" who is looking. We have an example of this "gazing" with the same Greek verb in Gregory of Nyssa's **Commentary on the Inscriptions of the Psalms** (J.44): "Keeping himself alone for the Alone, he (Moses) *gazed* (atenizo) at unseen realities through silent, concentrated contemplation. An ineffable light illumined Moses, after which he washed the foot of his soul from its coverings of dead skin."

Note too that Stephen was "full of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit is unmanifest, and being *filled* with its presence, Stephen became invisible with the Invisible much like Gregory of Nyssa's Moses, "alone with the Alone." In other words, he disappeared similar to Enoch (cf. Genesis 5.24: Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him"). Huparchon or "being" filled also implies a beginning, a coming into being, a lying under. For another use of this word, refer to Philippians 2.6: "although he *was* (huparchon) in the form of God." In Acts 7.55, Stephen "gazed *into* (eis) heaven," meaning that his *un*-extended vision consisted of heaven itself.

Those who were stoning Stephen "blocked their ears," a fact which points to their unwillingness to accept the new faith "which comes through *hearing*." Faith is dependent upon hearing: "As we have *heard*, so we have *seen*." (Psalm 48.8). Stephen's persecutors could not perceive his vision, his idou or "beholding" of Christ in glory. To a certain degree, the vision may be designated as a *myth* where we have Stephen as a finger pointing towards the moon, to paraphrase a well known Zen expression. This account was written down later as an insight into Stephen's martyrdom. Perhaps Luke, traditionally held to be the author of Acts, received the story from St. Paul who in later years after his conversion, related it to Luke. Recall that Paul or Saul was present at Stephen's death. He could then interpret Stephen's vision of Christ in heaven as obtained from his own ecstasy, 2Corinthians 12.2-4. They both had the same experience but in different ways. Thus we may say that Luke wrote of Paul's interpretation concerning Stephen's myth.

Furthermore, Paul's vision of Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9.3-9) may be paralleled with Stephen's (Acts 7.55-60). I quote both incidents as follows:

STEPHEN: "But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.' But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed 'Lord, do not hold this in against them.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

PAUL: "Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus who you are persecuting; but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'"

In the following outline, note both the similarities and parallels of the two visions:

STEPHEN

-*full* of the Holy Spirit
-*saw* the glory of God and Jesus
-they *stopped* their ears
-they cast him *out of* the city

PAUL

-a *light* flashed about him
-a *voice* spoke to him
-"*Who are you*, Lord?"
-rise and *enter* the city

* * *

The three wise men or Magi (Matthew 2.1-12) were led to Christ by a star, and upon their arrival they open their treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Both this "leading" to Christ and the

"opening" of gifts sets the framework for Christ's manifestation or epiphany. A sure sign that the wise men had foreknowledge of Christ is that "seeing the star they rejoiced exceedingly" (verse 10). This verse is difficult to translate accurately (echaresan charan megalen sphodra), but their immense joy is one of realizing the divinity of Christ. Once this is comprehended, the star disappears, as it were...the wise men open their treasures; no words are involved, and they return home.

* * *

Psalm 27:8: "You have said, 'Seek my face.'" My heart said to you, 'Your face, Lord will I seek.'" The psalmist first repeats God's command to seek the divine countenance but alters this command slightly by saying that his *heart* will do the seeking. Why this distinction on the psalmist's part? The heart or lev is the very essence of a person and transcends the "I" or the individual ego. The psalmist puts more trust in this lev for such an exalted function as revealed by the way he makes this distinction. Note too the use of the future tense indicating an indefinite time for such seeking which implies a continuous search.

* * *

In Matthew's account of the Beatitudes (5.3-12), the first six are in the future tense; the remaining two are in the present tense as follows:

- 8) "Happy are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness because theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven."
- 9) "Because your reward *is* in heaven."

Both beatitudes deal with persecution; however, "heaven" is used only in these references as well as the first beatitude ("kingdom of heaven"). The three suggest that heaven lies in the present, not in the future as indicated by the other references.

* * *

Joseph, husband of Mary, is well-known for not having uttered any words in the New Testament; he teaches by silence. Nevertheless, Joseph had three dreams in which an angel spoke to him as these three references from Matthew's Gospel recounts:

- 1) to take Mary as his wife (1.20-1)
- 2) to flee into Egypt (2.13)
- 3) to return from Egypt (2.19)

In brief, Joseph's silence is bound up with the existence of heavenly beings. Keeping this in mind, we can infer that Joseph was more responsive to understand Mary's experience with the angel Gabriel who communicated to her the impending birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 1.26-33) and therefore was more disposed to be her husband. Thus we have a unique couple, both of whom for the most part are characterized by silence and are familiar with angelic beings.

* * *

In John 16.12-16 Jesus Christ speaks about the Holy Spirit who is to descend on the apostles at Pentecost. The Spirit "will guide you" or better, "will put you on the *way*" which is Christ ("I am the way."). The Spirit lacks power to speak of himself, existing only by what he *hears*. His function is similar to that of faith which comes from hearing rather than from seeing. No mention is made of the Spirit's seeing the Father and Son; the tendency to objectively see something or some person is not implied here. By way of note, "spirit" in Hebrew (ruach) is feminine.

Also, the Holy Spirit will *announce* coming events. Again, he (she?) is simply manifesting his unmanifest role of hearing the Father and Son. Then in verse 14 the Spirit *glorifies* Christ ("speaks" of him) and *takes* from him (in other words, he takes the Image of the Father who is completely transcendent and lacks an image) and announces this to humanity. Such announcing is a transference of the divine Image to our human image.

Finally in verse 14 we have the last "announcing" preceded by "He receives from me." Here the text uses the present tense which suggests that the announcing imparts to us a full penetration into the divine life between Father and Son. We have "he will speak from me" earlier in verse 14 with the future tense. This in turn is preceded by "that one will glorify me," specifically pointing to Christ's glorification on the cross which does not yet show the Spirit's role; this is reserved for Pentecost fifty days later.

* * *

With regard to the interplay of "image" and "likeness" Genesis 1.26 "Let us make man *in* our image and likeness," not "*as* our image and likeness." Only Christ is "*the* image of the unseen God" (Colossians 1.15). Man is made *in* this primal Image and Likeness whose in-ness surpasses yet includes the duality of a subject-object relationship. Thus although we are properly called images of God, this divine inheritance suggests a being-in or an abiding-in God.

* * *

In his **Commentary on the Song of Songs** (iv.5.14) St. Bernard used the term curva, "curve," which intimates a profound insight into Cistercian spirituality. Note that this section of the **Commentary** deals with the regio dissimilitudinis ("land of unlikeness") common among the earlier Cistercian authors (line 9).

Man as image *in* God lost his likeness which is a downward *curve* from God (keep in mind the Platonic concept of "fall;" also note that the Genesis text never mentions such a "fall" but a "horizontal" banishment from the garden) which ends up in the regio dissimilitudinis (cf. the "far country" of Luke 15.13, "Not many days later the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a *far country*."). The importance here lies in the sameness of the curva; although it does not change, we wake up to the possibility that curva is a two-way street. The introduction of curva is thus an important "place" on which the Cistercian authors built their spirituality and biblically orientated anthropology. Man recovers his likeness by an upward ascent described so well by Gregory of Nyssa by employing this very same curva:

"But in our changeable natures, however, good and evil exist by turns, because of the power we have to choose equally either side of a contradiction. The consequent evil becomes the limit of our good. And all the operations of our soul, insofar as they are opposed, terminate in and are limited by their opposites. But the divine nature is simple, pure, unique, immutable, unalterable, ever abiding in the same way, and never goes outside itself. It is utterly immune to any participation in evil and thus possesses the good without limit, because it can see no boundary to its own perfection, nor see anything that is contrary to itself. When therefore it draws human nature to participate in its perfection, because of the divine transcendence, it must always be superior to our nature in the same degree. The soul grows by its constant participation in that which transcends it; and yet the perfection in which the soul shares remains ever the same, and is always discovered by the soul to be transcendent to the same degree." We see the Word, then, leading the bride up a rising staircase, as it were, up to the heights by the ascent of perfection." **Commentary on the Song of Songs** cited from **From Glory to Glory** by Jean Danielou and Herbert Musurillo (Crestwood, NY, 1979), p.190.

Another passage from Gregory of Nyssa's **Commentary on the Song of Songs** (my translation, J.436) shows God's familiarity with what lies at the bottom of thus curva through the symbolism of the

town Jericho:

“When we hear that ‘My beloved has gone down to his garden’ we learn about the Gospel’s mystery whose each word reveals its mystic sense to us. The God made manifest in the flesh and who arose from Judah and received the nations sitting in darkness and the shadow of death is appropriately called ‘beloved’ by the bride betrothed to him for everlasting union. She is a sister of the people of Judah. ‘He descended’ refers to the One who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers. He followed the descent (i.e., the curva) of the one who fell among enemies which signifies his descent from his ineffable majesty to the humility of our human nature.”

St. Bernard links up curva in l.14 with a quote from Psalm 42.7, "I will remember you from the land of Jordan." The Hebrew verbal root of "Jordan," is yarad meaning "to descend." In the context of these remarks it may represent the bottom or terminus of the curva. The notion of *memory*, so essential for the Cistercian authors as well as for the Church Fathers in general, plays the role of waking up to our image or the fact that our true identity lies at the *top* of the curva, and that we have lost it by our likeness (cf. Genesis 28.12, Jacob’s dream of a ladder reaching to heaven; this ladder may represent the top of the curva). This realization offers a framework which makes it easier for us to recover that image blurred in the mire of self-centered concerns. Note that in Luke 15.17 the prodigal son to which I already referred above “comes to himself;” that is, he remembers the dignity of his birth right which sets in motion his return to his father. Note that the Greek for this literally reads, “coming into himself” (eis eauton elthon). In other words, the son enters into his own image-nature, sees that it is essentially intact and leaves his wretched condition.

* * *

Ecclesiastes 3.1: "To everything there is a *season* and a *time* to every purpose under the heaven." The Septuagint makes a good distinction here between chronos and kairos or "secular" and "sacred" time. Despite the distinction, note that both are located “under the heaven;” in other words, God transcends these two types of time.

* * *

Luke 4.13: "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an *opportune time*." Note use of kairos even when referring to the devil. Kairos also relates to Christ's forty days and nights in the desert. These two instances of kairoi can be juxtaposed. Luke is the only synoptic author to state this and includes Christ as "*full* of the Holy Spirit...and he was led by the Spirit into the desert." Christ is both full of the Spirit and led into the desert by the same Holy Spirit. After having received the Holy Spirit in the Jordan River, he experienced a two-fold leading to which I referred. The Jordan and desert thus compose a single unit. Christ did not cross the Jordan as others before him; he *descended* into it much like Joshua who commanded the priests to take twelve stones from its bed, Joshua 4.3: "Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests’ feet stood and carry them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.”

Such taking of stones may be paralleled with Jacob’s dream: “And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep” (Genesis 28.11). And with regard to this same stone, verse 18: “So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone which he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel (house of God).” NB: Refer to my article towards the end of this home page dealing with the consecration of a church for a fuller development of this story.

* * *

Exodus 31:18: "And God gave to Moses when he had made an end of speaking with him upon Mount Sinai the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God." Note that God gave the commandments to Moses *after* he had finished speaking with him, implying a distinction between face to face contact through the medium of speech and a written account of this same conversation. Despite the importance of these commandments, they remain secondary to actual conversation with God.

The Ten Commandments were originally written by God himself. Upon his return from Mt. Sinai, Moses saw the people dancing before the golden calf and broke the tablets "at the foot of the mountain" (32:19). Relate this incident to Exodus 19:12: "Take heed that you do not go up into the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death." In light of this observation, we may say that Moses broke the tablets written by God at the same location which God forbade the people to touch. To counter the people's idolatry, Moses reminded them of the command in 19:12 by an outward gesture. He ascended Sinai once again to receive the renewed covenant: "And (Moses) wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (34:28). Note that God himself wrote the first covenant, whereas Moses wrote the second. The first covenant was too much to handle and had to be destroyed because God wrote it; such writing almost had the same power as God's actual presence. The second written by Moses was an intermediary and was more suitable for the people to accept.

We might say that the practice of lectio divina starts with this second covenant, the written word, and advances backwards, so to speak, to the first covenant where we experience God writing "not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2Corinthians 3:3). It would be more accurate to say that lectio divina alternates between these two covenants, depending upon the action of grace and our disposition to receive it. Such is the flexibility of the "writing" received at Mt. Sinai.

* * *

The notion of *continual prayer* may be interpreted in terms of praying "all the time," that is, without ceasing or doing it in all circumstances. It gave rise in the Eastern monastic tradition to a whole school of the Jesus Prayer and of constantly saying or thinking of the Holy Name. Valid as this practice may be, it is wanting in that to pray *continually* implies a dualism between times of praying and times of not praying. Right away one is forced into a tension which is not necessary. The Greek for "continuously" has dia pantos, literally, "*through all*." A more comprehensive insight is implied here which allows the paying of close attention to details *through all* things and circumstances without implying undue attention upon the thought process or mental activity. Such close attention is akin to pure awareness (another way of expressing God's transcendence) and daily life (the pas or "all" of dia pantos) are unified in such a way that the two are one yet still distinct.

Dorotheus of Gaza rightly links continual prayer with *humility*: "A brother asked an old man, 'What is humility?' He responded, 'Humility is a great divine work. The way of humility are corporeal labors accomplished 'with knowledge' (en gnosei), that is to say, to keep oneself apart from everything and to pray to God without ceasing (dia pantos).' Such is the way of humility, but humility itself is divine and incomprehensible." Note the accent on "incomprehensibility" (akataleptos, literally, "ungraspable"). Translated from *Oeuvres Spirituelles* in *Sources Chretiennes*, #92 (Paris, 1963), p. 203).

* * *

John 14:1: "Do not let your *hearts* be troubled." Literally, "the heart (singular) of yours (plural)." In other words, *one* heart is implied for a *multitude* of believers.

* * *

Matthew 16:24: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross

and follow me." Christ asks would-be disciples to deny their very selves before they follow him. Once this "self" is denied, *some-one* must take up the cross. Who or what is this? In reality it is *nobody* who takes up the cross. Also, *no one* follows Christ, so we have this double "no-body" of cross-taking and of following.

Christ says in verse 25, "He who loses his soul because of me will find it." Once a person "denies himself" and has realized the reality implied by two negatives mentioned in the last paragraph, he or she will suddenly find his *soul* but will find it differently. This person's viewpoint will be that of Matthew 11:27: "No one *knows* the Son except the Father; no one *knows* the Father except the Son." In place of the "self" just mentioned, a person who has denied himself and has taken up his cross has this "knowing" or *epignosis*. Such *epignosis* will be a true *following* (*akolouthia*) of Christ, for it functions in that "space" between Father and Son, the Holy Spirit. When a person "takes up his cross," that cross becomes *epignosis* which literally means "knowledge-upon" (*epi*).

In verse 28 Christ says "There are some standing here who will not taste death *until* they see the Son of man coming into his kingdom." This does not mean that those who see Christ enter his kingdom will not die. The crucial word is "until" (*heos*). First occurs the entrance into the kingdom which is entry into the *epignosis...knowledge upon...of* the Father. After this is knowledge is awakened, there is no death to taste; Christ will be seen in his relationship with the Holy Spirit in his return to the Father.

* * *

Compare Luke 10:39, "And she (Martha) had a sister called Mary who *sat* (*parakathestheisa*) *at* (*pros*) the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching" with 1 Corinthians 7:35, "I say this for your own benefit...and to secure your undivided *devotion* (*euparedron*) to the Lord." Note the use of two prepositions in Luke: *para*, "beside, at, near" and *pros*, "towards, at." Both imply movement towards an object of one's attention. The Corinthians passage implies the same watchfulness by the preposition *para* in conjunction with the word "devotion." St. Bernard treats Luke's quote in his **Commentary on the Song of Songs** (Sermon 23:10) in conjunction with the various positions occupied for each person regarding their relationship with Jesus Christ:

"For we did not choose him but he chose us and appointed places for us; and in the place of each one's appointment there he is too. Thus one repentant woman was allotted a place at the feet of the Lord Jesus, another—if she really is another—found fulfillment for her devotion at his head. Thomas attained to this mystery of grace in the Savior's side, John on his breast, Peter in the father's bosom, Paul in the third heaven."

Therefore we have six places: feet, head, side, breast, bosom and third heaven.

* * *

"*Myth*: a representation or a picturing of spiritual reality. Through images the myth provides an insight into the structure of this reality with its values and dangers and its direction and purpose, showing man how he can and must deal with it. Whenever any religious group is alive and vital, it will use mythological motifs to establish and offer this connection (*ritual*: implementation of a myth)." **Myth, History and Faith** by Morton Kelsey (New York, 1974), p.120.

* * *

When you *imitate* someone into an unfamiliar practice or way of doing things, you become so closely identified with the object under consideration that the subject's awareness of self (that which doing the imitating) ceases to exist. An imitation makes direct appeal to reality, creates its own existence and hence is authoritative, that is to say, one becomes an *author* in the sense of being a

create-or). On the other hand, an idol devises imitations up to a certain point. It may represent something physically or non-physically but fails due the serious intent of the person fashioning the idol. Seriousness implies an autonomous existence, not allowing for an object to imitate and therefore to transcend itself.

In light of these introductory remarks, consider Genesis 1.28: "And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it;...and have dominion over...every living thing that moves upon the earth." This command to rule over creation has been interpreted in many ways. In light of my remarks on the concept of imitation, it can mean imitating God with respect to his creation, not especially having mastery over things but to imitate their spontaneous liveliness. In this fashion we make appeal to the unique existence of an animate thing as well as seeing its relationship to God. It is important to keep in mind that the divinity one is invited to imitate consists of one God in three Persons. Over the centuries theologians have struggled to comprehend such a mystery but often have overlooked this notion of imitation-as-image. We might paraphrase Genesis 1.28 as "God created man in his own *imitation* and likeness." Image as used in Genesis literally means a shadow which *con*-forms to its source...automatically and without reflection.

* * *

Proverbs 3.21: "My son, keep sound wisdom and discretion; let them not *escape* from your eyes." The verbal root in Hebrew for "escape" is luz, "to turn aside, depart, be perverse." Its noun form may be found in Genesis 28.19: "And Jacob called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of that city was called *Luz* at the first." Viewing the Proverbs verse in this light, we see that God extends an invitation for us to keep Bethel...the House of God...before our eyes, not Luz. Of course, the meeting between Jacob and the angel at Bethel is to be noted when taking into consideration the fuller meaning of Proverbs.

Notice the two verses (17 and 18) which precede the statement just above: "Her *ways* are of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a *tree of life* to those who hold her fast are called happy." Verse 17 has derek or "way, path," which can easily be associated with Christ as the Way in John 14.6. Verse 18 has hets for tree with its verbal root meaning "to be hard, firm," from which is also derived "counsel." This hearkens to Proverbs 8.14: "I have *counsel* and sound wisdom, I have insight, I have strength." The speaker in verse 14 may be taken as Jesus Christ inviting seekers according to the words, "I love those who love me, and those who *seek* me diligently find me." The Hebrew verb for "seek" is shachar which relates to another incident in Jacob's life, his wrestling with an angel (Genesis 32.22-32), especially verse 24: "And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day." The angel may represent God's wisdom, and whoever engages the angel during this mysterious shachar will find God.

Referring back to the tree, hets, we see that it is linked to the "knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2.17). I would call this particular tree that of subject-object knowledge; hence the good-evil dualism located at the center of Eden. Note that this hets is the "tree *of* good and evil;" in other words, hets lies at the root of both these qualities yet at the same time exists apart from them. This tree had three qualities:

- 1) good for food
- 2) a delight to the eyes
- 3) to be desired to make one *wise* (sakal)

The third quality, sakal, "to be prudent, intelligent," requires attention with regard to Numbers 13.23, "cluster of grapes" ('eshikol). Sakal is a different word from shakal but one cannot help but compare or interchange the two terms for the purpose of eliciting a fuller interpretation of the text. In the Genesis reference shakal may be substituted for sakal, "to be bereaved, childless." It relates well with the consequences of Eve's decision to take and eat the fruit which is the reverse of Psalm 34.9, "Taste

and see." We may say that the psalmist's command here is an antidote to Eve's choice.

Eve tasted the fruit and her eyes were opened as well as Adam's; now they saw good and evil where it did not exist previously. Notice that Psalm 34.9 presents God as the "object" which we are invited to taste and see; it contains the antidote to Genesis by employing taham, "taste," from which verbal root is derived the noun, "judgment, discernment, intelligence."

Several incidents may be tied in with Genesis 3.1 which recounts the serpent tempting Eve and whom he induces to pluck the forbidden fruit. One is Numbers 21.6-9, the story of the fiery serpents which bit the Israelites. How did Moses cure the people? "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live'" (verse 8). After Moses made an *image* of the very thing that plagued the people, he set it on a pole, nes, which is the inverse of God making man in his image. Both incidents of image making are interesting to compare and juxtapose.

Those Israelites bitten by the serpents were healed once they looked upon the brass image, a parallel to the "taste and see of Psalm 34.9: "...and if a serpent bit any man, he would *look* at the bronze serpent and *live*" (verse 9). The main point of the Numbers story ties in nicely with Genesis through the "tree of life" and "pole" upon which Moses placed the snake's image. Obviously this is a figure of Christ's cross and worthy of further consideration. Eve *raised* her hand to grab the fruit; Moses counters this act of disobedience by his listening. Then he *raises* an image of the serpent (the very thing that afflicted the Israelites) onto a pole: Moses thereby symbolically removes Eve's offenses by setting up the snake which tempted her.

It is not difficult to see Christ's act of obedience when he was lifted up on the cross as the fulfillment of these earlier signs. For example, consider John 12.32: "And if I am *lifted up* from the earth, I will *draw* all things to myself." While Eve *actively* lifted her hand to the tree and while Moses *actively* lifted the snake onto the pole, Christ *passively* gave himself to be lifted upon the cross. By his obedience Christ supplanted the old tree of good and evil through his own tree, thereby recapitulating everything that preceded him: "It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body" (1Corinthians 15.44). Eden represents the bodily plane in which the spiritual realm is rooted; hence, both are intimately related. As verse 46 says, the natural plane is first followed by the spiritual.

"You are from *below*, I am from *above*" (John 8.23). Then verse 28 resumes the theme of "lifting up" as in John 12.32 above: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am and I do nothing from myself." Even though we have here an active lifting, it is really rooted in the Father's lifting.

It is significant that Eve, "mother of all the living," *reached up* for the tree of life, whereas Revelation 21 presents the New Jerusalem, our mother from above, *coming down* from heaven. This city descends, as it were, according to that "below-above" axis established in John 8.23.

* * *

The notion of *play* is important when doing lectio divina because we can be prone to approach this activity with an element of undue seriousness or piety. I gleaned some insights from **In Praise of Play** by Robert E. Neale (New York, 1969) which may be worth relating to lectio:

- Definition of play: any activity not motivated by the need to resolve inner conflict.
- The player never loses awareness of the fact that he or she is playing and always is aware of the difference between the two worlds.
- In the aftermath of play, children will tell great tales, for that is the only way such an experience is communicated to outsiders.

- A game is free from emotion and intellect; it triumphs over causality and history because all players have an equal chance to play a role in the story. Work obligations do not exist.
- The adventurer is aware of himself neither as being a cause nor as being beyond causality but as being a participant in a cause. Success and failure are seen as equals.
- A story must have a beginning and an end; a story without an ending is not really a story.
- Awareness of space is the perspective of objects in motion.
- The conflict resides in the game, not in the player. No one can be forced to play; it is spontaneous.
- The player does not choose his destiny but follows one which is revealed to him during the course of his adventure. A worker complains of this since he seeks to control his destiny.

* * *

Several New Testament passages regarding the notion "to hide:"

- 1Peter 3.4: "But let it be the *hidden* person of the hear with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet sprit, which in God's sight is very precious."
- Colossians 2.3: "in whom are *hid* all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."
- 1Corinthians 2.7: "But we impart a *secret* and *hidden* wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification."
- Ephesians 3.9: "and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery *hidden* for ages in God who created all things."
- Colossians 3.3: "For you have died, and your life is *hid* with Christ in God."
- Revelation 2.17: "To him who conquers I will give some of the *hidden* manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it."

* * *

John 20.22: "And when he had said this, he *breathed* on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" This is the only time in the New Testament which has the verb enephusesan. The Septuagint uses it in Genesis 2.7: "and God *breathed* into his face the spirit of life and the man became a living being." Relate these references to 2Timothy 3.16: "all scripture is *inspired*," that is, *breathed*, theopneustos.

* * *

The feast day of St. Stephen, proto-martyr, occurs the very day after Christmas. While Christ's birth points towards his death, Stephen's death points towards his birth into heavenly life. The positioning of this feast, that is, after the celebration of when Christ had become incarnate, immediately skips to the apostolic years when those who knew Christ in the flesh were still alive. This feast which the Church gives us right after Christmas focuses upon the glorified Christ which Stephen saw and which Paul on the road to Damascus.

* * *

Numbers 12.3: "Moses was very meek from all men on the face of the earth." "Meek" in Hebrew is hanau which implies affliction, singing, answering and in general, receptivity; it comes from the verbal root hanah.

* * *

Matthew 6.3: "Do not let your left hand (aristeros) know what your right hand (dexia) is doing." This statement is in relationship to almsgiving. Usually the word "left" (aristeros) is associated

with evil, but the derivation shows its relationship with aristos, “the best.” One explanation is that the Greeks sought to make deficient things sound or appear good by endowing them with euphemisms. An example of “right” (dexia) is found in Psalm 110.1: “Sit on my right hand.” Thus *left* may equal the active side of being or manifestation of goodness; *right* may equal the passive side or unmanifestation. Both left and right work together in one person who brings them into harmony.

* * *

In the book of Revelation there are eight references to “forehead,” a sign which marks or designates the saints as well as the great harlot, Babylon: 7.3, 9.4, 13.16, 14.1 and 9, 17.5, 20.4, 22.4. In Greek “forehead” is metopon, “between the eyes.” This sign cannot be perceived by those who are marked with it; in other words, you cannot see between your own eyes where God’s name is located. How, then, does a person “see” it? Implied here is the concept of *image* found in Genesis which *reflects* both God and the person formed in his image. Thus in order to see one’s true self, a person must become aware of its position “between the eyes.”

* * *

There is a good description of the Church in St. Bernard’s **Commentary on the Song of Songs**, Twelfth Homily (Spencer, Massachusetts, 1971), p.82:

“The Church’s fragrance is radiated by those who use their money, tainted though it be, to win themselves friends; she intoxicates by the words of her preachers, who drench the earth and make it drunk with the wine of spiritual gladness, and yield a harvest through their perseverance. With the bold assurance of one confident that her breasts are better than wine and redolent of the choicest perfumes, she lays claim to the title of bride. And although none of us will dare arrogate for his own soul the title of bride of the Lord, nevertheless we are members of the Church which rightly boasts of this title and of the reality that it signifies, and hence may justifiably assume a share in this honor. For what all of us simultaneously possess in a full and perfect manner, that each single one of us undoubtedly possesses by participation.”

* * *

Matthew 6.6: “But when you pray, go into your *room* (tameion) and shut the *door* (thura) and pray to your Father who sees in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” The “room” or tameion is the same term used by the Septuagint in Song 1.4: “The king has brought me into his *chambers*.” In Hebrew tameion is cheder. In the following verse (5) we have the “tents of *Kedar*” which are black and comely and may signify the bride’s dual nature. We are invited by Christ to enter this tameion-cheder. The second action subsequent to “entering” is *closing* the door or thura. We are images of God, so this thura is our door, a word to be considered in light of John 10.7: “I am the *door*.” It is this aspect of “door-ness” so essential to our image that we must become aware of. The act of closing is to separate ourselves, that is, our image nature, from the world’s cares and to bring our door-nature to a firm close, open only to the Father “who sees in secret.”

Observe that John 17.15 reads “I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one.” That is to say, the vision offered in Matthew 6.6 when a person is invited to pray in secret, consists in turning the “back parts” of his or her image (cf. Exodus 33.23: “I will take away my hand and you will see my back parts,” achory, or the Septuagint, ta opisomou) to the Father. In so doing, one will automatically be facing the “world” as Christ did in John 17.15. Only when the “door” is firmly closed does it conform to the contour or boundary between God and man. The element of secrecy in Matthew 6.6 refers to that invisibility or lack of contour between man and God.

* * *

In Luke 9.31 (the Transfiguration) Christ is speaking with Moses and Elijah about his coming *departure*: “who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure (exodon) which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Luke is the only synoptic writer to mention exodon which represents the new Exodus. Moses led the first Exodus, and Elijah was “taken up into heaven” (2Kings 2.11) in a second Exodus or an intermediary Exodus between that of Moses and the definitive one of Jesus Christ. It is properly “spiritual” but not glorious as was Christ’s transfiguration and crucifixion.

The feast of the Transfiguration occurs twice in the liturgical year, once formally on August 6 and secondly on the Second Sunday of Lent. Thus it occurs at the two axes of the liturgical year, early spring and late summer. These two antipodes help “revolve” or exert motion, as it were, with regard to the liturgical year’s cycle.

Why is the Transfiguration so important? It is a bodily or earthly this-existence manifestation of Christ’s Trinitarian life which lies *outside* time. In the Transfiguration, Christ, Moses and Elijah converse about the coming exodon or passage *outside* time to the Father. Here is the chief significance of this feast: it is a way for us to participate in Christ’s “going out” or Exodus to the Father of which he speaks more fully at the Last Supper. Peter refers this reality to himself in the same context: “And I will see to it that after my *departure* (exodon) you may be able at any time to recall these things” (2Peter 1.15). Thus Christ’s “going up to Jerusalem” which is frequently mentioned in the Gospels has this exodon in mind, especially with regards to the city of Jerusalem proper. It is interesting to see this exodon in relation to the heavenly Jerusalem, Revelation 3.12 and 21.2. In both cases it is the one which “comes down (katabaino) from heaven.” The ex-odon and kata-basis are similar directions of movement but show different aspects as the italicized prepositions reveal.

A resolution of the tension between matter and spirit, between humankind and God, is found in Philippians 3.20-1: “Our citizenship (politeuma) exists (huparchei) in the heavens.” Politeuma is the human corporate image or koinonia as it pertains to the Holy Spirit. The relationship of politeuma to huparcho (“to begin, come into being”) is significant in that it points to the continual birth which politeuma contains.

Next in verse 21 we have the dynamics of this huparcho: “who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.” A more accurate rendering is “body of lowliness” (tapeinosis) is the human condition’s frailty signified by Ash Wednesday and mentioned in Luke 1.48: “because he has looked *upon* (epi-blepsen epi) the *lowliness* of his servant.”

The Transfiguration occurs when the “disciples were heavy with sleep” (Lk 9.32) and is closely allied to two other passages:

Genesis 2.21: “So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.” The Hebrew text has a play on the words taredemah (“deep sleep”) and ha’adam (“man”) which shows their interconnected importance and reliance upon each other. At this point God makes woman from man, a fact which shows a duality arising from man as image of God. The radam or sleep is an ecstasy or exodos related to Luke 9.31. Here is a splitting-up or making dual the singular image or eikon of God in one person, not two. Male and female are aspects of this one person. The Septuagint has ekstasis for the Hebrew radam. The “casting upon” (epi-ballo) of this ecstasy by God signifies the clothing of the body of dust by God’s image. Luke 1.48 cited above is similar: “Because he has looked *upon* (epiblepsen epi) the *lowliness* of his handmaid.” Thus Mary’s epi is the same as Adam’s. While Adam equals clay or dust, Mary equals “lowliness” or tapeinosis which is distinct from herself: “He has looked upon the *lowliness of his handmaid*.” She thus fuses the bridge between “fallen” humanity and “redeemed” humanity.

Genesis 15.12: “As the sun was going down, a deep sleep (taredemah) fell on Abram; and lo, a

dread and great darkness fell upon him.” Note the similarity of this verse with Genesis 2.21. Here the action is passive, “fell upon him,” while verse 21 has God making Adam fall asleep. This verse occurs before Abram receives the revelation of the promised land, so it differs from 2.21. While the former has God (active role) splitting man into two parts as one person-image, 15.12 has Abram splitting in half (verse 19) sacrificial offerings. Abram does the splitting into two as opposed to God’s splitting in two of Adam.

Note: 1Samuel 26.12 refers to this taredemah when David stealthily entered King Saul’s camp: “So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul’s head; and they went away. No man saw it, or knew it, nor did any awake; for they were all asleep, because a *deep sleep* from the Lord had fallen upon them.”

* * *

Genesis 7.1 and Exodus 2.3 contain the Hebrew word tevah which means both Noah’s *ark* and the *basket* in which Moses was placed when he was born. The element of *passage* through water dominates both references; both Noah and Moses were fathers of the Israelites: Noah, after the flood; Moses, after leading the people through the Red Sea.

* * *

Exodus 3.22: “You (the Israelites) shall *spoil* (nitsaltem) the Egyptians.” The Hebrew verb “to spoil,” (natsal) also means “to snatch, save, deliver.” In this context of the Israelites’ delivery from the bondage of Egypt we may see a hidden, double meaning intended for the Egyptians: not only salvation for the Israelites but an implied salvation for the Egyptians.

* * *

Genesis 3.23-4: “Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. *He drove out the man.*” Note that the text refers only to the expulsion of “the man,” not his wife who presumably remained in the garden. Developing this point further, we may say that woman’s role is to remain within Eden, a symbol of the garden’s security. She rests there like Mary at Christ’s feet (Luke 10.39); man “tills the ground,” a symbol of his active nature which Martha represents who is “busy about many things.” Adam names his wife Chawah or Eve, “mother of all the living.” This occurs in verse 20 prior to man’s expulsion but after they ate of the tree of good and evil. Then in 4.1 Adam “knows” (yadah) Eve in the sense of having sexual intercourse which is the fundamental meaning of this verbal root.

Note that the man was “sent” (shalach) from the garden; this is followed by a “driving out” (garash). Both actions occur on a *horizontal* plane; we have no mention of a “fall” in the Hellenistic or Platonic sense introduced later when Christianity contacted Greek culture. While the driving and sending from Eden occur horizontally, this does not exclude the vertical dimension which virtually all cultures use to symbolize heaven or transcendence in general.

We may say that the horizontal feature just mentioned equals man’s *likeness* to God which has become estranged (cf. The “land of unlikeness,” an important concept in Cistercian spirituality; for an excerpt, refer to the end of this section). Man’s *image* consists in the vertical aspect or openness to transcendence. When the man and woman were in Eden, these two points of image and likeness, of immanence and transcendence, formed a unity. After having been banished from Eden, man “tills the ground (adam) from which he was taken.” It is helpful to divide Genesis 3.23 into two sections to see how this aspect is related to man’s sending out of Eden:

- The Lord God *sent* him forth from the garden of Eden
- to till the ground from which *he was taken*.

The first verse shows man's sending; the second, his taking from the ground. The complementary actions bear a phonetic similarity in Hebrew, laqach and shalach respectively, which presents a vivid description of each appropriate action. Man tills the ground: man as 'adam' and ground as 'adamah'. Thus he tills or *works himself* or tries to find in his own nature the active principle of life left behind in Eden (where presumably Eve still resides, for there is no mention of her banishment). We may say that this tilling action "prepares the way," so to speak, for Christ's revelation or his *descent* into the man's tendency to "dig within himself" in his efforts to recapture the blessedness of Eden. Thus Ephesians 4.9 reads: "In saying 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the *earth* ('adamah)?" Christ is revealed as the descender (as well as ascender) into the place where the man dwells (ta katotera, "lower parts"). The ascending (anabasis) of Christ is the restoration or apokatastasis of man's likeness, not image, which he always had. Christ fuses both man's image and likeness in the sense of Genesis 4.1: "Adam *knew* (yadah) Eve" by making man's disassociation from Eden and Eve's inwardness in Eden one at the point of intersection which is symbolic of the cross or the vertical dimension of Eden and the horizontal dimension of man's expulsion.

In light of later Christian revelation, man's "sending" from Eden may assume an *apostolic* dimension rather than a banishment. Man thus redeemed is *sent* (apostello, as the Septuagint has it) to the "land of unlikeness" to rescue other persons "tilling the soil" or those who remain unaware of their image-ness of God. Thus the necessity for a historical event, Christ's death and resurrection, which enables a *transmission* to occur from a redeemed (divine) man to one not yet redeemed. It is done, though, through linking of the two *movements* already mentioned, not by the utterance of words. When a redeemed person moves on the horizontal or "apostolic" plane from Eden, he or she may go as far away from his or her starting point as desired; this person will not lose his or her image-ness (vertical, transcendent dimension) and is thereby exercising innate liberty.

Two references to "unlikeness" mentioned above, taken from **The Golden Epistle** by William of St. Thierry (Spencer, Massachusetts, 1971), pp.97-8:

"For the limits of human imperfection are never better realized than in the light of God's countenance, in the mirror which is the vision of God. Then in the light of true reality man sees more and more what he lacks and continuously corrects by means of likeness whatever sins he has committed through *unlikeness*, drawing near by means of likeness to him from whom he has been separated by *unlikeness*. And so clearer vision is always accompanied by a clearer likeness."

"When the man who is making progress first begins to fix his desire and aspirations on this object (knowledge of God), he must be on his guard as he ponders on that likeness against the error of *unlikeness*, that is to say, when he compares spiritual things with spiritual and divine things with divine, he must think of them otherwise than they are in reality." Ibid, p. 103.

* * *

Exodus 12.11: "You shall eat it (Passover lamb) *in haste*." Relate this verse to Psalm 116.11: "I said in my *consternation* (vechaphzey), 'Men are all a vain hope.'" The Septuagint has for "consternation" ekstasis or "ecstasy." Such is the description for eating the Passover lamb. Also refer to Psalm 31.22: "I had said in my *alarm* (vechaphzey, ekstasis), 'I am driven far from your sight.'"

* * *

Exodus 17.12: "But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were *steady* until the going down of the sun." Here we have Moses extending his hands while the Israelites were fighting Amalek. Here "steady" reads as 'emunah' which is derived from 'aman', "to be

faithful.” Thus the outstretched arms of Moses is a type of Christ on the cross which represents *faith*.

* * *

Psalm 85:11: “Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky,” a statement which can be related to Jesus Christ as he laid buried in the tomb. He is ‘emeth’ or “faithfulness” springing (tsamach) from the earth. Consider this in light of Genesis 3:23 discussed above: “Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden in order to till the ground.” Here God drives Adam from Eden, a garden similar to the place in which Christ was entombed where his primary task was to “till the ground.” As already noted, “ground” and “Adam” are from the same Hebrew verbal root. Also, Adam is ordered to “till” his own nature, ‘adamah’. Adam thus descends within himself, as it were, and is there buried with Christ who raises him as Psalm 85:11 intimates.

The second part of this verse fulfills the meeting of the first and second Adams: “*righteousness* will look down from the sky.” Christ is depicted now as tsadeq looking down from heaven. He is “above” as the Second Adam viewing the first Adam who is viewing his own nature, ‘adamah’, which has been transformed by ‘emeth’ or truth springing up from the earth. The Septuagint as well as the Hebrew avoids any vertical reference of a Platonically based “fall” by the verbs shaqaph and diakupto which both imply a peeping through or into the nature of ‘adamah’. Shaqaph is the verbal root for sheqeph, “layer of beams, floor, ceiling, plank.” One can link this to Christ’s cross as a *beam* which reconciles the “floor” (earth below) with the “ceiling” (heaven above) into one symbolic unit.

* * *

Genesis 1:31: “God saw all that he made, and behold, it was *very good*.” Note that the phrase “very good” occurs *after* God made creation, not before. The sense of mystery would not be present if God said they were “very good” *beforehand*; in other words, the mysterious process of creation holds everything in suspense...in mystery...until they come into being. Since the Hebrew language lacks a present tense but only degrees of past tenses, it is difficult to convey the sense of “he made.” It is better to say, “He was making,” implying an on-going process of making and therefore a continuous sense of mystery.

By way of a footnote, God did not say that the second day of creation was “good” (Genesis 1.8), whereas all the other days are so designated. This may be due to the introduction of duality symbolized by the creation of night and day, the never ceasing flux between coming into and fading out of existence. Refer to Ecclesiastes 1:5: “The sun *rises* and the sun *goes down*, and hastens to the place where it rises.” Such is that “vanity of vanities” which Ecclesiastes so eloquently bemoans.

* * *

Luke 20:37-8: “But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him.” Christ quotes this reference to the patriarchs from Exodus 3.6 as applicable to himself. All three patriarchs are noted for their questionable behavior, a fact suggested by their names: Abraham, “Father of a Multitude;” Isaac, “Laughter;” Jacob, “Supplanter.” Perhaps a parallel may be drawn with these controversial attributes and Christ’s preference to associate with sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes. Furthermore, Luke 20:37-8 with its mention of dubious characters pertains to the state of a person after death (“they are equal to angels... isaggeloi...and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection,” verse 36), a fact which seems to indicate that this heavenly existence is more lively than we may be willing to admit. Gregory of Nyssa mentions this equality with the angels or isaggelos in his **Commentary on the Song of Songs** (J.134): “After the resurrection we have been promised a life *similar to the angels*, and he who has promised it does not lie. It follows, therefore, that life in this world should be a preparation for the one we hope for later.”

* * *

John 19.26-7: "Woman, behold your son...Behold your mother." These words spoken by Christ on the cross to Mary and John the beloved disciple are reminiscent of Genesis 2.24: "Therefore shall a man leave (hazav) his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Christ is "forsaking" the world, and his words from the cross can be seen in this light. He is going to the Father in the sense of "cleaving" (davaq), that is, referring to the marriage bond between Father and Son. It is also interesting to compare this notion of "forsaking" with the cry of Christ on the cross with reference to Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Matthew 27.46)? Christ wishes to show that he forsakes (hazav in the sense of Genesis 2.24) the Father (rather, is forsaken by him) in the exact same way a man forsakes his parents to marry a woman.

* * *

The relationship between vision, sound and awareness without an object (pure consciousness) may be employed as an image to mirror the Trinity. We may call *vision* the Son who is Image of *awareness*, the Father. The bond between these two Persons is one of *sound*, the Holy Spirit who, after all, is a *wind*. Keep in mind the New Testament references to each of these Persons and their respective qualities. Those pertaining to the Son and Holy Spirit are easy to identify; both speak *from* ...proceed from...pure awareness which is symbolic of the Father. If any one of these Persons were to exist independently from the others, there would be no God; in other words, it is impossible to conceive of God apart from these three elements.

* * *

It is a wholesome desire to long for the spirit of *affliction* which does not necessarily mean a desire to suffer needlessly. Here suffering is used in the sense of the Hebrew word hana. When a person is thus afflicted, he or she enters the present moment where one's awareness is expanded to reveal wonderful things. Such affliction is abiding and coupled with a constant longing for God. "Lord, it is good that you afflicted (henevty) me" (Psalm 119.71). Also, verse 75: "In faithfulness ('emunah) you afflicted (hinevtany) me." Note the connection between hana and 'aman, which brings to attention faith as awareness minus a subject-object regard. Thus the activity of faith produces affliction in the biblical sense.

* * *

Psalm 48.9: "As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord of hosts." The first part of this verse reveals the importance of hearing as obedience which is indispensable with regard to God. Such hearing is to be understood as a form of attentive awareness...verse 9 does not give us an object to the hearing but mentions hearing by itself. Furthermore, this hearing has a specific locality, "in the *city* of the Lord of hosts."

A consequence to hearing is seeing or the bestowal of vision. Vision only comes *after* hearing; it never precedes hearing. However, both participate in the same reality as indicated by the "as"- "so" couplet. Vision, a reward of hearing or obedience, follows the same pattern of manifestation as hearing. In other words, if we get the pattern of hearing, we automatically get the pattern of seeing. Hearing's pattern is readily available but that of vision is less perceptible. To intuit the pattern of vision, faith is needed but faith in the sense of pure awareness which enables us to behold both sound and sight as a unity.

* * *

With regard to the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, we see her, the mother who contained

the child (Christ), enter the temple of God. This temple, still in “Old Testament times,” is a mother which will soon beget the New Testament, Jesus Christ. Mary thus foreshadows Christ’s remarks, “I am the *gate*; if anyone enters by me (at the threshold of the Old and New Testaments), he will be saved and will *go in* and *out* (of the two Testaments) and find pasture” (John 10.9). God is both outside and within her, thus emphasizing Mary as gate.

* * *

The beginning of Advent or the liturgical new year is intriguing when viewed as sacred time (*kairos*), that is, opposed to “secular” time (*chronos*). The last days of the old liturgical year culminate in a point of such fullness that they overflow into an equal fullness at the new year’s beginning. The readings from Mass at these periods reveal the basic sameness, for they deal with “end times;” they point to a mysterious point of connection between the last day of the old liturgical year and the new. A leap takes place here, a true pass-over. We may visualize this by a person walking far enough in a westward direction; if he or she goes far enough, the end will terminate at the point of origin. Such an end-starting point permeates all aspects of the liturgical context, for it is ratified by Christ’s Pass-over which the Church celebrates to one degree or another on a daily basis, in or out of season.

* * *

Luke 16.29-31 contains the parable of Dives, the rich man who died and suffered torment; he is contrasted with the poor man who died and then found rest in Abraham’s bosom. In brief, one’s moral behavior has ramifications not only in this life but after death. Dives wishes Abraham to warn his brothers about their impending doom, but Abraham refuses to let “one go from the dead.” Instead, he says that Moses and the prophets suffice for moral conduct. Abraham says that by *listening* to the Old Testament writings, a person can pass from mortal life to that state beyond death. In other words, we have here a poignant example of *lectio divina*.

* * *

A good text which captures the spirit of Advent: “Yet God my King is from old, working salvation in the midst of the earth” (Psalm 74.12). “Salvation” in Hebrew is *yeshuhoth*, similar in form to the name of Jesus. Thus this “salvation” or “Jesus” is being made in the midst of creation. Refer to the article within this Home Page entitled **The Name of Jesus (*Yeshuah*) and the Psalms**.

* * *

January first, Circumcision of the Lord, may be envisioned better as “feast of the holy name” since it is on this octave of Christmas that Christ receives the name *Jeshua*, Jesus. This giving of the name is of supreme importance, signifying Christ’s future role as *Savior*.

The command of circumcision harkens back to Genesis 17.12 when God made a covenant with Abraham and changed his name from Abram to Abraham.

Note that Luke 2.21 says “And when the eight days *were fulfilled* when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.” This time of naming corresponds to the seven days of creation in Genesis and adds the eighth day when the Second Person of the Trinity was revealed as foretold by the following: “*This* is the *day* which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad” (Psalm 118.24). The seven days of Christ in the womb corresponds to the seven days of creation recounted by Genesis.

Consider the use of *pleroo* (to fulfill) in light of the preceding texts because of importance reference is Colossians 2.9-10: “Because in him dwells all the *fullness* of the Godhead corporeally, and you have come to *fullness* in him.” This second part, verse 10, says that we are *filled*, another way of

saying that we are divinized:

all the *fullness* of divinity
+
you have come to *fullness* in him

Referring back to the “eight days,” we see that the number eight in Hebrew is shemonah, from shaman, “to be fat, fattened.” Again, this sense of completion is equivalent to the pleroma or fullness mentioned just above. In the five names given to the Messiah in Isaiah 9.6 (Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace), not one of them equals the loftiness implied by the name Jesuha. St. Bernard speaks of this in his **In Circumcisione** (Second Sermon) and refers to Song 1.3: “Your name (shem) is as oil (shemen) poured out.” Here shemen and shem sound quite similar in revealing the expansive nature of the Bridegroom’s name. I link shemen as used here with shemenah as used in Luke 2.21. It shows that the eighth day, the day after the Sabbath, is one on which the Second Person of the Trinity pours himself forth. Even a trace of the resurrection is noticed by choosing the eighth day (the first day of the week, John 20.1). Thus as soon as the Christ child was born he was in the process of rising back, so to speak, to his Father.

With regard to St. Bernard’s references, consider two texts:

“But where is that name which is above every name, at which ‘every knee shall bow?’ Where is the name of Jesus? Perhaps we shall find it distributed in a manner (that is, like oil), and poured out in these others. For it is of this name—Jesus—that the Spouse says in the Canticle of love, ‘Your name is as oil poured out.’” **Second Sermon for the Circumcision** (Westminster, Maryland, 1950), Volume One, p.432.

“I doubt if even Moses himself would have grasped its import (referring to ‘I am who am’ of Exodus 3.14) if it had not been poured out. But it was poured and he understood it; and not only poured but poured out, for an inward pouring had already occurred: the citizens of heaven already possessed it, the angels knew it. Now it is sent abroad, and what was infused into the angels as an intimate secret was poured out upon men, so that henceforth they could justly proclaim from the earth: ‘Your name is oil poured out,’ if the obstinacy of a thankless people did not prevent it.” **On the Song of Songs**, (Spencer, Massachusetts, 1971), pp.106-7.

In relating the Circumcision to the law established by God in Genesis 17.12 we see a reference in John 8.56 which has Christ as “the Day” (cf. Psalm 118.24 above): “*Your* father Abraham” (not *my* father but yours) rejoiced that he was to see *my day* he saw it and was glad.” Here “my day” clearly refers to Christ as the eighth day, summing up the true meaning of his circumcision.

By way of conclusion, it should be noted that at God’s invitation, Abraham looked up to heaven to count the stars. This looking *up* is in expectation of Christ’s *descent* or future incarnation. It is Abraham’s rejoicing since he saw that day and was glad: “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad” (John 8.56).

* * *

The only reference to Palestine in the Bible as the “Holy Land” is Zechariah 2.12 (verse 16 in Hebrew): “And the Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the *holy land*, and will again choose Jerusalem.”

* * *

St. Bernard calls St. Joseph “qui pater vocatur, magis autem *nutricius* est.” (**First Sermon for the Circumcision**). That is, “he who is called father, rather, guardian;” nutricius does mean “guardian” but

its derivation is from the Latin verb nutrio which strongly implies the notion of sucking at the breast as a new-born infant.

* * *

When engaging in the act of pretending, one becomes so identified with another person, object or situation that a certain identity of essence emerges spontaneously. A chief characteristic here is a loss of identity, of awareness of oneself as an independently existing person which is exchanged for that which is being imitated. In such a situation we may say that instead of belief or believing, *making believe* is a better expression. Perhaps this insight may be related to a person being made in God's image; rather, such pretending is more a reflection of God's *likeness*. Pretending (note the gerundive, not the more static verb) therefore seems a more natural aspect of human nature which may be put at the service of our relationship with God.

* * *

With regard to the feast of Epiphany: all the Church's feasts throughout her liturgical cycle are allegories of the Christ of the present moment, "the *fullness* of him who *fills* all in all" Ephesians 1.23). Thus each time a feast comes round, we are able to find deeper meaning.

* * *

Matthew 2.11: "and going into the *house* they (the wise men) saw the child with Mary his mother." Note the use of oikia, "house." We do not have here any mention of a crib or manger. This verse is reminiscent of Song 1.4: "The king has brought me into his *chambers*" which is preceded by "in the scent of our good ointments." In the Song, the bridegroom's scent or reych of his ointments draws his bride into the chambers. In Matthew the wise men are drawn to the house (oikia equals the Song's chambers or tameion) by the light of a star. In other words, one is drawn by scent and the other by sight.

We may say that the verse from the Song of Songs just quoted prefigures Matthew 2.11; due to its lofty treatment of human love, the Song may be said to transcend both the Old and New Testaments. The sense of smell is much more sensitive and penetrating than that of sight; in brief, more subtleties are laid bare to its perception. A further refinement of this insight is brought out by Psalm 34.8: "*Taste* and see that the Lord is good" which immediately is followed by "happy is the man who takes refuge in him." This "taking refuge" is none other than the wise men's' entering the house and the bride to her beloved's storerooms or chambers.

* * *

A hymn in 1Timothy 3.16 appropriate to "the mystery of our religion:"

He was *manifested* in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.

* * *

Compare the *approach* of the shepherds (Luke 2.16) and wise men (Matthew 2.11) at Christ's birth with Adam's *flight* before God's coming in the garden of Eden, that is, "in the cool of the day," leruach hayom (Genesis 3.8). Note the use of ruach for "cool" whose fundamental meaning is "wind"

and “spirit.” Like Moses much later, Adam *hears* God’s *voice*, that is to say, he did not *see* God. Emphasis here is obviously upon the faculty of hearing (the “wind”).

* * *

Compare the Baptism of Christ with Pentecost. In Matthew 3.15 we have Jesus responding to John the Baptist’s reluctance to baptize him with the words, “for thus it is fitting for us to *fulfill* all righteousness,” in other words, that the Law must be fulfilled (pleroo), and that Christ’s baptism signifies the inauguration of his ministry. Note verse 16: “He (Jesus) *immediately went up* from the water” and then the words, “the heavens were *opened*.” It seems that the coming-up of Christ from the water and the going-down of the Holy Spirit or Pneuma to the earth meet at a central point and unite. That is to say, Christ ascends from the Jordan River, symbol of the primeval waters of Genesis over which “the spirit was moving” (1.2), and the Holy Spirit descends from above the waters to that place from which had ascended (the Jordan). In other words, we have a double sanctification of created reality through two modes of vertical movement by two divine Persons.

Parallel this “meeting point” between a divine ascent and an equally divine descent with Genesis 8.8-12 where Noah sends out a dove three times to see if the waters had receded from the earth after the recent flood which had laid waste the world. The dove flies on a *horizontal* plane which represents the action of the Holy Spirit (who is also symbolized by a dove) on the human level. Compare the dove’s back and forth motion with the spirit’s “moving” at creation. Noah sends her out again after “another seven days” (verse 10; no mention is made, though, of a prior “seven days”), and she returns with a “freshly plucked olive leaf” indicating that the flood waters were receding. Here is a “second creation” by the dove in imitation of the original creation. Note that if we took verse 7 literally, it is the raven who does all the work of flying back and forth “until the waters were dried up from the earth!”

Acts 2.1-4 contains the story of Pentecost where the verb pleroo (“to fill”) is used three times:
when the day of Pentecost had come (literally, “was *fulfilled*”)
filled the entire house
they were all *filled* with the Holy Spirit

You might say that these three examples of “filling” represent the “fulfillment of righteousness” which Christ said must be accomplished (Matthew 3.15). Pentecost is replete with the realization of Christ’s baptism at the Jordan River since a “triple filling” occurs here. It is prefigured by those three occasions when Noah dispatched his dove, his yonah, from which is derived the proper name, Jonah. This prophet is well known for his reluctance to preach repentance to the inhabitants of Nineveh; moreover, Jonah was swallowed up by a “great fish” where he remained “three days and three nights” (Jonah 1.17). Jonah the “dove” stayed in the “belly of Sheol” (2.2); this time he prefigured Christ’s presence in the tomb for a similar length of time where he was “intricately in the depths of the earth” (Psalm 139.15).

At Pentecost the resurrected Christ was fulfilled (sumpleroo), that is to say, his presence in this glorified yet localized form is to be found no more. We may interpret the house in this fashion which was filled with the Holy Spirit; creation is charged with the presence of the resurrected Christ.

When the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, the above two mentioned presences of the resurrected Christ are consummated in these his first witnesses; in other words, an interior presence is established within the disciples, thereby enabling them more freely to move from familiarity with the “exterior” presence of Christ (while he was still in the body) to an “interior” presence. They can “breathe” the Holy Spirit as he pours himself forth. It is thus helpful to keep in mind this “baptism” of Pentecost when reading Christ’s baptism in the Jordan, for in Greek the word for “baptism” fundamentally means “to dip, be thoroughly soaked” (baptizo). Certainly the same baptizo...thorough dipping...can be applied to the apostles at Pentecost.

John the Baptist could foresee this future outpouring of the Holy Spirit (for example, refer to Acts 8.17-21, quoting Joel 2.28-32) “*coming down* as a dove from heaven.” He was situated in the Jordan River and was baptizing with its water, symbolic of Noah’s dove. The waters here as in John’s account of the baptism prefigured the new ark, Jesus Christ. As the new Noah’s ark to save the world from the flood, Jesus went into the desert...into the waters covering the earth...”full of the Holy Spirit,” or with the *dove* prefigured by the one Noah sent forth (Genesis 8.11) from the ark. Both Noah and Jesus were in this “desert” forty days and nights; the number forty or four may symbolize the four elements of creation which are renewed in the person of Jesus Christ.

John’s position in the Jordan may be compared with his prefigurement in Joshua 3.16 where the priests held the ark in the middle of this same river. We cannot pursue the rich symbolism of this Old Testament story now; suffice it to say that Joshua (Jeshuah, Jesus) took twelve stones from the Jordan and erected a memorial at Gilgal (4.20) in addition to the one in the river itself (4.9). These twelve stones prefigure the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21.12-14) where the number twelve plays a significant role. The heavenly Jerusalem is not made of stone but of crystal, *versell*. The twelve stones of the Jordan *come up*, as it were, from the river, while the crystals of the heavenly Jerusalem *come down* from heaven.

In Joshua 4.3 we read, “Take the twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.” Three injunctions are to be noted: taking the twelve stones, carrying them and laying them at the Israelites’ lodging place. “Night” is a special time of visitation by God who will transform the twelve stones into the heavenly Jerusalem as indicated by Song 1.13 which shows the fulfillment of this action: “My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh, that lies between my breasts.”

A parallel may be drawn between the mention of a dove with regard to Noah and Pentecost:

- Genesis 8.9: “So he put forth his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.”
- Acts 2.1: “When the day of Pentecost had come” (literally, was fulfilled).”
- Genesis 8.11: “and the dove came back to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf.”
- Acts 2.2: “And suddenly a sound...filled all the house where they were sitting.”
- Genesis 8.12: “Then he waited another seven days, and sent forth the dove; and she did not return to him anymore.”
- Acts 2.4: “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”

The three sets of verses are concerned with a *dove*. Each verses represents a progressive unfolding, a deeper penetration of the Holy Spirit into creation for the purpose of anointing it the three-fold presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I would equate Noah with the God the Father whose relationship with the dove develops as he alternately sends out and receives her (note that “spirit” in Hebrew is feminine) from his ark, Jesus Christ.

Observe the corresponding unfolding of pleroo as the Holy Spirit advances towards the disciples. Once he...rather, *she* (ruach being feminine)...rests upon them, he “disappears” in the sense of ceasing to be an object perceived by the senses. Such is the case with Noah’s (Father) dove from his ark (Jesus Christ): the dove does not return after staying with Noah for seven days. Seven naturally equals the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit. Once Noah disembarks from his ark, he walks upon “the face of the earth,” symbolic of a new creation effected by the Spirit. The New Testament parallel of this is the birth of the Church. Witness Peter’s speech at Pentecost and the numerous Old Testament passages which he quotes; they are quite similar to Noah’s bringing out from the ark all the animals which were aboard. Peter in turn brings out scriptural references to Christ and the Holy Spirit. God also blesses Noah and his family (9.10), an action reminiscent of the blessing of Adam and creation (1.28). A New Testament parallel to this is the shared life among believers, Acts 2.43-7.

* * *

Hebrews 2.17: “Therefore he (Christ) had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God (*pros ton Theon*). This passage reveals Christ’s priestly character as related to John 1.1: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was *with* God (*pros ton Theon*.” The use of *pros* in both cases indicates a presence *towards*, an active, continuous turning on Christ’s part as “very stamp (*charakter*) of his nature” (Hebrews 1.3) towards the Father. Such is the meaning of two verses: Romans 8.15, “the spirit of sonship” and Ephesians 1.5, “to be his sons through Jesus Christ.” We may also add 1John 1.2: “and proclaim to you the eternal life which was *with* the Father (*pros ton patera*) and was made manifest to us.”

* * *

According to Charles Dumontier (*St. Bernard et la Bible*, p. 40 and 48), the fundamental characteristic of the Cistercian Order may be summed up in 1Corinthians 6.17: “But he who is united (*kollomenos* literally, “clinging”) to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.” This verse sums up the passionate thirst for God which the early Cistercians had and is a birthright for all its members. You could call this *kollomenos* bond between the monk and *Deus desiderens*, literally, “*desiring* God” (p.40+).

This latter passage reveals the desire of each of the three Persons of the Trinity. As Dumontier rightly said of predestination (*Saint Bernard et la Bible*, p.40, footnote #4): “impossible donc d’adoucer le sens de predestination en ya voyant, par exemple, une simple designation anticipee. St. Bernard a voulu le sense plenier et divin.” It is a predestination of *desire*. Refer to Ephesians 1.5: “He *destined* us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ.”

It may be helpful to add a few quotes to 1Corinthians 6.17 already cited:

- Romans 8.9: “but you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you.”
- John 17.21: “that they may all be one, even as you, Father, are in me and I in you.”
- Galatians 2.20: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

All three passages are to be read in light of *Deus desiderens* and *kollomenos*. Where does this “clinging” of the *Deus desiderens* occur? It is that part of human nature which corresponds most deeply and wholly to God, for example, Isaiah 63.15: “Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and glorious habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The *yearning* of your heart and your *compassion* are withheld from me.” From the Hebrew verbal root of ‘*aphyq* (“to withhold”) derives “channel, bed of a stream, tube” as found in Psalm 42.2: “As a hart longs for *flowing* streams.” In light of this, we can see Isaiah asking where God directs his tender concern, his *zeal*, *might*, *yearning* and *compassion*. These four elements require direction, something Isaiah requests. The direction of these supplications is seen in light of Psalm 42.2 which employs the verb *harag* (yearn) in conjunction with ‘*aphyq*. This verb fundamentally means “to ascend” but is used with a deeper craving, especially of animals for water, so it fits in well with ‘*ayal* or the hart mentioned in Psalm 42.2.

In reference to Song 2.7 we see this ‘*ayal*, “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the *hinds* of the field, that you stir not up nor awaken love until it please.” The hinds are used to swear an oath, having in mind the second verse of Psalm 42, the deer and streams. This naturally leads to Song 5.12 (bride to bridegroom), “His eyes are like doves beside *springs* (‘*aphyq*) of water.” Once again we have the same phrase as in Psalm 42.2. Another mention of “bowels” is Song 5.4: “And my *heart* (literally, bowels) was thrilled within me.”

* * *

Some of the saints claim that understanding follows faith; in other words, a person believes first and then understands what follows from that faith. If we may equate faith with *awareness* minus a subject-object regard, then we see that understanding which tends towards wisdom assumes that special type of transcendental knowledge represented by the words of Psalm 34.8, "Taste and see."

Consider Romans 1.17: The passage referring to the righteous man who lives by faith comes from Habakkuk 2.4. In his **Commentary on the Song of Songs**, 48.6, (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1981, p.17), St. Bernard says that understanding is the other side of faith: "We are in the shadow as long as we walk by faith and not by sight; and therefore the righteous man who lives by faith is in the shadow. But happy is he who lives by his understanding, because he is no longer in the shadow but in the light."

* * *

Gregory of Nyssa speaks of *clinging*, (*killesis*) in his **Commentary on the Song of Songs**: "By *clinging* to the Lord he might become one spirit (cf. 1Corinthians 6.17) through a union with what is pure and free from passion (*apatheia*)...I boldly add to these words, cf. Deuteronomy 6.5), 'be passionate about it.' This affection for incorporeal things is beyond reproach and free from lust." And "he (Moses) sought God as if he had never seen him. So it is with all others in whom the desire for God is deeply embedded: they never cease to desire, but every enjoyment of God they turn into the kindling of a still more intense desire." Refer this passage to St. Bernard's *Deus desiderens*, *desiring* God above.

* * *

Compare Chapter Four of the **Rule of St. Benedict** ("The Instruments of Good Works"): *Vitam aeternam omni concupiscentia spiritali desiderare* ("to desire eternal life with all spiritual *concupiscentia*") with the Vulgate translation of Daniel 9.23: "man of *desires*" (*chamudoth 'tah*).

* * *

The Hebrew verbal root *yahshah* fundamentally means "to be ample, broad, spacious." Compare it with *tsur* "rock," from the root "to press upon, straighten," which is opposite in meaning to *yahshah*. Both words are contained in Psalm 62.3: "My *rock* and my *salvation*" (that is to say, my Jesus). This verse shows that no dualism exists in God; both movements, a *katabasis* (descent) and an *anabasis* (ascent), relate to one person, Jesus Christ, as in Eph 4.10: "He who *descended* is he who also *ascended*."

* * *

The Old Testament uses "amen" (*amen*) always at the *conclusion* of an address to God. In the New Testament Christ alone uses *amen* at the *beginning* of his statements. Thus we have Christ's authority as initiating all statements about God which previously were employed by the Old Testament to conclude or assent to God's revelation. Refer to Revelation 3.14 where Christ is the "Amen:" "The words of the *Amen*, the faithful and true witness, the *beginning* of God's creation." Note a reversal, so to speak, of Genesis 1.1: "In the *beginning* God created..."

* * *

In Exodus all the people readily accepted the Law of God from Moses; their reception occurred after all the various signs took place. At the time of the people's eager consent, such experiences were very much alive in their minds and hearts which is why they said "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exodus 24.3 and 7). The people were still moved by *desire* to follow God before later centuries encrusted their religious belief into a literal observance of the Law. We could say that Christ's claim to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5.17-20) recaptures that desire expressed by the Hebrews in the desert. His presence in the Law is perceived, like the manna, according to each one's *taste* or attentiveness (Exodus 16.17-18).

* * *

The Song of Songs may be excerpted from the Bible and placed at the very end. Thus we have the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Song of Songs or “Third Testament.” We have an element of truth in this claim, for the Song embodies both revelations. One could say that the Song represents what transpires *after* the book of Revelation is completed and once the Spirit and the Bride have said “Come” (Revelation 22.17).

* * *

The Son proceeds from the Father in a fashion unlike natural generation with which we are familiar. The Son is receptive (female), whereas the Father is active (male). However, the Father has a womb: “The only-begotten God who was in the *womb* (kalpos) of the Father” (John 1.18).

* * *

It is interesting to compare the Jews’ attachment to the letter of the Law with the early Cistercians’ attachment to the letter of St. Benedict’s **Rule**. The latter fulfills the former by the passion of loving observance to follow Jesus Christ. Consider Dumontier’s **St. Bernard et la Bible**, pp.77-8: “Les vieux auteurs (Cisterciens) demeurent attaches a cet ideal des anciens jours, des jours du Sinai et de ses daudres, mais embelli, sublime par les deux echos du Sermon sur la Montane.”

* * *

Compare two verses which contain two searchings complementary to one another, one by the Holy Spirit and the other by prophets:

1Corinthians 2.10: “God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit *searches* everything, even the depths of God.”

1Peter 1.10: “The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours *searched* and inquired about this salvation.”

* * *

-Morphe (form): Paul’s “in the morphe of God” (Philippians 2.6) corresponds to John 17.5, “with the glory (in other words, its form) which I had with you before the world was made.”

-Schema (form): “taking the schema of a servant” (Philippians 2.7).

-Hupostasis (substance): “faith is the hupostasis of things hoped for” (Hebrews 11.1) and “the very stamp of his hupostasis (Hebrews 1.3).” Faith is the reality of what is hoped for in the sense in which Christ is called *stamp* of the transcendent God.

In Stoicism, ousia is eternal being, and hupostasis is real being which entered into existence as present in individual phenomena. In Neo-Platonism hupostasis is a manifestation of the transcendent One which is dependent on true being and which is always at a lower stage. These two insights were essential for the early Church’s formulation of her doctrine on the Trinity.

* * *

Christ always spoke of the Father. Similarly, the Spirit speaks of Christ. Observe the delightful busyness of the dialogue going on within the Trinity: the Spirit leads to the Son and the Son to the Father.

* * *

Psalm 30.1: “I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up.” The last words, “draw up,” derive from the Hebrew verbal root *dalah*, “to hang down, deliver.” The word “door” also comes from this root. Therefore the verse may be interpreted as “you have *doored* me,” that is, have made me conform to Jesus Christ as a *gate* who himself is *the* door (cf. John 10.9).

* * *

Exodus 3.4: “When the Lord saw that he (Moses) turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’” This *watching* of Moses by God may be compared to Genesis 2.19 where God brings creatures to Adam to see what he calls them. Notice the anticipation on God’s behalf as he waits for the man to bestow upon creatures their respective names. The process of naming is just as important as the animals’ creation; even more important was the fact that despite this power, man still lacked essential happiness because “there was not found a helper fit for him.”

God’s calling from the bush is equivalent to his calling of Adam in Eden, Genesis 3.9. In contrast to Adam hiding Moses says “Here I am” (Exodus 3.4). Then in verse 5 God says, “Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” Moses’ shoes (*nahal*) represents his tunic of skin which God made for Adam in Genesis 3.21. Note mention of the “holy ground”—Moses finds himself in paradise. This *‘adamath qadesh* is reminiscent of *‘adam* and the *land* God ordered *Adam* to till outside Eden, verse 23. Moses finds himself in a similar situation but is summoned back into paradise instead of being driven out. Compare the “flame of fire out of the bush” in Exodus 3.2 with the “flaming sword” of Genesis 3.24. Each works in an opposite fashion: one to entice and the other to ward off. God gives a new element to paradise in Exodus by calling it “holy ground,” for “holy” is not applied to God nor to paradise in Genesis. God’s identification with Isaac, Jacob and Abraham (Exodus 3.6) traces back through history by mentioning these patriarchs, all the way back to paradise and the first man.

With respect to the “tunic of skin” of Genesis 3.21, refer to Gregory of Nyssa’s remarks:

“Just as if a man, who, clad in a ragged tunic, has divested himself of the garb, feels no more its disgrace upon him, so we too, when we have cast off that dead unsightly tunic made from the skins of brutes and put upon us (for I take the ‘coats of skins’) to mean that conformation belonging to a brute nature with which we were clothed when we became familiar with passionate indulgence), shall, along with the casting off of that tunic, fling from us all the belongings that were round us of that skin of a brute...If that skin is no longer round us, how can its resulting consequences be left behind within us?” **On the Soul and the Resurrection**, from *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, volume v* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972 reprint), pp.464-5.

* * *

In a homily for Lent (**Lenten Sermons on the Transfiguration**, Washington, D.C., 1996, pp.218-24), St. Leo the Great draws a parallel between Matthew 17.1-13 (Transfiguration) and Colossians 3.3: “You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Note the contrast between Transfiguration and hiddenness which has two parts: *with* Christ and *in* God. In other words, a being “with” and a being “in.”

Next verse 4 reads, “When Christ will be revealed, your life, you will be revealed with him in glory.” To counteract the double hiddenness of verse 3, verse 4 has a double “appearing.” Note that both verses have Christ as “*the* life (singular) of *yours* (plural).” This indicates that the element to be glorified is life-ness which is Christ.

Matthew 17.7: “But Jesus came and touched them, saying ‘Rise and have no fear.’” This event occurs after the Transfiguration; Christ *touches* his disciples and *raises* them up, a foreshadowing of the

resurrection where the element of touch, a physical contact, plays an important role.

* * *

Whenever Jesus Christ refers to himself as having been *sent* by the Father, we could substitute *proceed*. An example is John 8.29: "And he who has *sent* me is with me." This sending or proceeding lacks origin of place; in other words, a "from," as can be seen by the words "with me" which indicate an abiding presence. In other words, the point of origin, God the Father, always remains with the person dispatched, his Son.

* * *

The feast of the Annunciation occurs on March 24, nine months before Christmas Eve. Mary's pregnancy of nine months thus fills most of the calendar year, a fact which enables us to become conscious of this pregnancy as a type of *waiting* throughout three quarter of the year. Hence, the value of the Angelus said three times daily which allows this "waiting" to permeate even further into each day. The Annunciation is the beginning of salvation; it always occurs in or near Lent, the period dealing with Christ's life toward its end or passover.

* * *

Although Lent is traditionally a time of denial and fasting, the Church during this time feeds us with the richest portions of scripture which become more focussed as we draw nearer to Easter. By comparison, the readings after Easter are almost anti-climatic and assume a more historical stance, for example, the Acts of the Apostles. Like the synoptic Gospels which begin with the *birth* of Jesus Christ, Acts begins with the *birth* of the Holy Spirit.

* * *

John 3.14: "And *as* Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, *so* shall the Son of Man be lifted up." Contrast the two parts of this verse; Moses actively lifts up the serpent, whereas Christ is passively lifted up or glorified. Such passiveness, if you will, is not blind submission to fate but is representative of his obedience to the Father. It is only natural for a type (Moses) to symbolize or foreshadow the reality, hence the necessity for having the "as" precede the "so."

* * *

"Darkness in a cave is like no other darkness anywhere. Outside, even on the bleakest nights, with the moon down and the stars obliterated by clouds, the human eye can adapt enough to perceive the dim outlines of the world. But in a cave you literally cannot see your hand before your eyes. There is an alien quality to that darkness, a quality that prickles deep in our bones. It isolates us within our skins, shrinking the world to a sphere measured by the length of our arms, which may be the reason why *touch* is the most intimate of senses, because it can only communicate news of what has already invaded our vulnerable immediacy, news of what is already at hand." **The Ozarks** from *The American Wilderness*, Times-Life, by Richard Rhodes, p.47

* * *

Exodus 17.12: "But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were *steady* (emunah) until the going down of the sun." This scene, taken from the battle between the Israelites and Amalek, is a classical figure of Christ's cross. Note that the adjective for "steady" is from the same Hebrew verbal root from which is derived "amen." Thus Moses' hands, which

also held the covenant received from Mt. Sinai, were *faithful*.

* * *

Exodus 20.24: “An altar of earth (‘adamah) you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen.” Such an earthen altar is composed of “*Adam-ness*,” that is to say, of Christ as the new Adam who becomes an altar, thereby revealing his true nature as priest and sacrifice.

* * *

John 8.14: “I know *from where* I have come and *to where* I am going.” Here Jesus Christ does not seem to place importance on the present moment which you would expect since this is a characteristic of all great religions. On closer examination, however, we notice that Christ’s constant reference to his Father, the Holy Spirit, as well as his coming and going set up a field, as it were, which creates the present moment. One is invited to have an eye on this “coming” and “going” simultaneously, a Trinitarian way of viewing things.

* * *

2Corinthians 2.14: “God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the *fragrance* of the *knowledge* of him everywhere.” Note association of smelling with knowing. In the Gregory of Nyssa Home Page, I include a lengthy file of biblical references to the three Commentaries on the Song of Songs by Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Bernard of Clairvaux. This quote from 2Corinthians is one of the most frequently cited from all three authors; it says something about how they perceive Jesus Christ, that is, as a fragrance.

* * *

In a certain sense there is grounds to fast during the forty days of Easter in preference to the forty days of Lent. The time after Easter is when Christ’s resurrected body transcends material reality. Fasting is thus appropriate since our attention is joyfully shifted to another level where the importance of corporeal nourishment assumes second place. General experience shows that when engaged in longer periods of contemplative prayer, the natural appetite for food is lessened because attention is shifted elsewhere. Fasting in Lent makes us aware of our corporeality and mortality; to fast in this time can be difficult, whereas during the Easter season it is easier.

* * *

Compare Joshua’s taking of twelve stones from the Jordan River (Joshua 4.8-9) with Christ’s choosing of his disciples of the same number. Joshua or Jesus takes these stones from “where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood;” Jesus Christ shares his priestly office with the twelve disciples who in turn form the foundation of the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21.14).

* * *

Luke 12.36: “And be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks.” Christ manifests himself in many ways such as priest, teacher and son. Although not specified in the New Testament, his most favored manifestation is that of *bridegroom*. We may base this on the fact that marriage is *the* greatest attraction in life; it is our basic drive which dominates all others, so Christ manifesting himself as bridegroom is significant. Luke’s reference has Christ returning from the marriage feast. Once the festivities are over, it is time to consummate the marriage. Meanwhile, the servants are bidden to be *watchful*...keep themselves *aware*...for the bridegroom.

St. Bernard stresses the importance of perceiving Jesus Christ as a bridegroom in his **Commentary on the Song of Songs** (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1980, pp.183-5) simply because our most natural attraction is to marry a person of the opposite sex:

“Now the Bridegroom is not only loving; he is love. Is he honor too? Some maintain that he is, but I have not read it. I have read that God is love, but not that he is honor (cf. 1John 4.16). It is not that God does not desire honor, for he says, ‘if I am a father, where is my honor’ (Malachy 1.6)? here he speaks as a father, but if he declares himself to be a husband I think he would change the expression and say, ‘If I am a bridegroom, where is my love?’ For he had previously said, ‘If I am the Lord, where is my fear’ (Ibid)? God then requires that he should be feared as the Lord, honored as a father, and loved as a bridegroom...Love is a great reality; but there are degrees to it. The bride stands at the highest. Children love their father, but they are thinking of their inheritance, and as long as they have any fear of losing it, they honor more than they love the one from whom they expect to inherit...Love is the being and the hope of a bride. She is full of it, and the bridegroom is contented with it. He asks nothing else, and she has nothing else to give. That is why he is the bridegroom and she the bride; this love is the property only of the couple. No one else can share it, not even a son.”

With the passage of Luke 12.36 cited above in mind, refer to Gregory of Nyssa’s **Commentary on the Song of Songs** (J.318):

“Those expecting the Lord’s return are watchful at the heavenly gates when he, the King of glory, enters his transcendent blessedness...he has betrothed us, we who had committed fornication with idols, as a virgin through a mystical rebirth, *restoring* our nature (anastoicheiasas ten phusin) to virginal incorruptibility.”

In this excerpt we see reference to the stoicheia or “elements” which constitute creation in Colossians 2.8: “according to the stoicheia of the world and not according to Christ.” Paul urges us to be conformed to the stoicheia of Jesus Christ. Both uses of the term have a certain parallel in that they are constitutive of a given reality but head to opposite ends. The stoicheia of Christ lead like a path to the next verse, 9: “in him dwells all the *fullness* (pleroma) of the divinity in a corporeal fashion.” Here all the stoicheia reside in Christ as indicated by the adverb somatikos which differs from “all the *fullness* of divinity.” Such fullness includes the stoicheia which are “in him.” Paul says that we have the “fullness of life in him;” in other words, we share in Christ’s fullness which exists prior to the stoicheia. Note that Jesus Christ is “head of all rule and authority,” terms related to stoicheia. We share in Christ’s awareness as “head” and look down, as it were, upon the stoicheia as beholding our own bodies.

* * *

1John 1.4: “We write this that *our joy* may be *fulfilled*.” This “our” refers to the apostolic group which now has the authority to transmit chara, joy, a type of authority taken up and developed from John 15.11: “I have spoken to you about these things in order that my *joy* may be *fulfilled* in you.” Even the sentence structure of both verses is similar. Note that Christ says “I have spoken to you about these things:” a direct transmission as opposed to “we write this” or a transmission from the Apostles (Church).

* * *

Judges 6.34: “The spirit of the Lord *clothed* Gideon,” in other words, the Holy Spirit used Gideon as a cloak. Also, refer to 1Chronicles 12.18 and 2Chronicles 24.20 which we may compare with Luke 12.49, “You will be *clothed* with power from on high.” In 1Samuel 16.13 (“and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward”) though there is no mention of clothing, contrast it with Saul in the next verse: “and an evil spirit from the Lord *tormented* him.”

* * *

An outline of Luke 1.44-5, Mary's visitation to her cousin, Elizabeth:

-*behold*

-for as soon as the *voice* of your greeting came *into* my ears

-the babe *in* my womb leaped *for* (literally, "in") joy

-and blessed is she who believed that there will be a *fulfillment* (teleiosis) of what was spoken to her *from* the Lord

This outline begins with "behold," idou, the echo of God's own idou when he is about to do something. Next we have Mary's voice, her idou, which is in perfect accord with God's. Since hers is in such harmony with the Word now taking shape in her womb, she can participate in the Word much as Christ performed miracles, cures, and so forth. Mary's voice echoes out across space into Elizabeth's ears, producing an effect which caused John the Baptist to leap *for* ("in") joy; in other words, sound waves from Mary's voice created the leaping, as it were. John's leaping follows Elizabeth's reception of Mary's greeting "*into* her ears."

We then have a further specification of this whole process by the words "*in* my womb," the place of receptivity for the other examples of eis and en above. This use of prepositions resembles a box within a box..."*in* my Father's house are many mansions" (John 14.2). Such a process may be perceived in terms of "going *from* glory *into* glory" (2Corinthians 3.18) where Elizabeth acknowledges the initial "speaking" by God to Mary by the word teleiosis, fulfillment. What gives such teleiosis its life and mystery is the relationship of the Logos or Word "spoken to her by the Lord." Note too that Elizabeth receives the Holy Spirit by Mary's greeting, "and she was *filled* with the Holy Spirit" (verse 41). Here the use of pleroo means a filling up by the presence of a promise by God, whereas teleiosis in verse 45 it means the perfection of God's promise thy means of the Incarnation. Note the contrast: "fulfillment" for teleiosis. Since Mary had the Word, she alone is worthy to be called blessed, eulogemene. She is therefore truly makaria, the New Testament word for 'ashry (Psalm 1.1).

Next follows Mary's Magnificat: "My soul *magnifies* the Lord." The "magnification" of God means an ongoing increase in awareness of him as Gregory of Nyssa states with regard to his doctrine of eternal progress, epektasis, which is based upon Philippians 3.13: "*straining forward* to what lies ahead.")For information on epektasis, refer to the article and listings in the Gregory of Nyssa Home Page).

Now we have a *reverse* of John's leaping for joy within Elizabeth's womb in verse 47: "and my soul has rejoiced in God my savior." John was leaping within a body. Mary is "without" but truly within God her Savior who is paradoxically within her. Mary states that it is her *spirit* which has leapt since this same spirit is now akin to the Spirit of God which is not subject to a "within" nor to a "without," but freely "goes in and out" and "blows where it wills" (6.18).

Later on in the New Testament narrative we have John the Baptist in prison (cf. Matthew 11.2) hearing about Christ's miracles and cures. We could say that John heard of them not through the aid of persons but by that same power...voice...which made him leap in Elizabeth's womb as transmitted by Mary's idou, her greeting. The external prison resembles the womb. John is hindered because "his joy is now full" (John 3.29) like Elizabeth having been fulfilled. His statement in the next verse, "It is necessary for him to increase and I to decrease" is interesting, for it contrasts John's fullness received at birth through his mother in light of Mary's fullness, her teleiosis.

The Song of Songs may depict the decrease of John the Baptist as follows: "My soul went out at his word." John's "going out at Christ's word shows his release from prison-womb to join Christ's "increase." Mary too partakes of this: "My spirit rejoices *in* (epi, literally, "upon") God my savior" (Luke

1.47). Mary *exits* her body via her pneuma in order to *enter* the epi of God. Such is John the Evangelist's experience of ecstasy in Revelation 17.3: "and he led me into the desert by ("in") the spirit" where this same spirit equals that of 22.17: "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come,'" that is, they bid him to enter an ecstatic condition and to decrease as the Baptist, thus advancing "from glory *into* glory."

* * *

In a certain sense we may say that the Holy Spirit is more knowledgeable of persons than Jesus Christ who was in a human body and could know the thoughts of men (cf. Luke 6.8). On the other hand, the Spirit is present *within* a person and beholds all his or her machinations with an intimacy greater than the person doing the thinking. The Holy Spirit is thus "more incarnate" than Christ yet at the same time is not.

* * *

John 4.12: "Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself and his sons and his cattle?" The Old Testament gives no reference to Jacob digging a well but verse 12 surely has in mind Genesis 29.1-10. Here Jacob rolls a huge stone from the well's mouth which is too big even for the shepherds unless they were assembled together. Where does Jacob get his strength? We find a solution in the verses which immediately follow 28.10-22, Jacob's dream of angels and the ladder reaching into heaven. Jacob received strength to roll the stone away from the dream. He foretells Jesus' words, "a spring of water leaping up into eternal life" (John 4.14).

* * *

The Hebrew verb shawah is interesting from two points of view, meaning "to be equal, like, level, to put, set, fear." Compare 2 verses:

-Psalm 16.8: "I *keep* the Lord ever before me."

-Psalm 131.2: "I have *calmed* and quieted my soul." Shawah thus has the notion of alignment, of participating in divine life as an image of God.

* * *

Compare Genesis 3.16: "your *desire* (teshuqathek) shall be for your husband" with Song 7.10, "I am my beloved's and his *desire* (theshuqathu) is for me." In the Song, *desire* is a fruition as opposed to Genesis where it forms part of a punishment.

* * *

St. Bernard's **Commentary on the Song of Songs** (71.9) has si pie considerare where he is speaking of the unity between Father and Son, and the Son and man. This Latin phrase is important as an indication on how to do lectio divina. The verb considero implies a careful regard and weighting; it is related to the Greek verb eido "to see, appear, look like." Pie is a significant Latin adverb with all the varied meanings such as "acting dutifully, God-fearing, affectionate towards one's family, country, patriotic, obedient." In brief, pie (adjective, pius) represents that quality which the ancient Romans honored highly and was carried over to later centuries in Christian Europe.

When taking the phrase in its full sense, we are put in living contact with what is being described, in this case, the unity of Father and Son. Both a seeing and a listening combined to form one type of perception.

* * *

John 20.22: "Christ...breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Relate this verse to Colossians 1.15: "He is the image (eikon) of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation. Such breathing or sending of the ruach by the historical Jesus we can consider as being bestowed by the transcendent Jesus as the Colossians text suggests. Only now it is he as the "first-born of all creation" who breathes. Such primacy implies anteriority where created beings cannot perceive him in the usual way. One must become attuned to this ruach which comes "from behind" and blows right through you and then returns to the Father. Such an awareness is fulfillment, the new creation, prefigured by the Gen account.

* * *

Revelation 8.1: "When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." This verse culminates with the seven plagues occurring both before and after this divine silence. Silence (sige, not hesuchia) reigns; it is an important silence in such a busy book as Revelation. Actually there is no specific mention of what is contained in the seventh seal. The sige is a solemn pause preceding the final seven plagues and God's advent. Sige "describes a mental condition and its manifestation, especially in speechlessness (silence from fear, grief, wonder), whereas hesuchia describes a quiet condition in general, inclusive of silence." **Thayer's Greek-English New Testament Dictionary** (New York, 1896). Sige fits in well with the context of John's vision since he is en pneumati ("in the Spirit") from 4.1 onwards.

Here are several other references to sige:

-Isaiah 41.1: "Listen to me in *silence*, O coastlands."

-Habakkuk 2.20: "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep *silence* before him."

-Zephaniah 1.7: "Be *silent* before the Lord God!"

-Zechariah 2.17(13): "Be *silent*, all flesh, before the Lord."

In these last three references the Hebrew word has is used much like the English "shh!" The Septuagint reference of eulabeomai (eulabeia) used for "silence" connotes caution, discretion, having a pious reverence for God much like the Latin pietas described above. It is a more reverent term than phobos or "fear" for the Son of God. A good example is Hebrews 5.7: "Christ...was heard for his *godly fear*." I make reference to sige in Revelation since this silent pause is a necessary condition for a prophet speaking in God's name ("Thus says the Lord.").

Chapter three of Zechariah 2.17(13) begins with "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of God," a figure of Jesus Christ. It is curious to see him "clothed with filthy garments" (verse 3), a figure of James 2.2, "If...a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in."

* * *

Christ's' high priestly prayer in chapter 17 of John's Gospel contains the verb tereo occurring 4 times (6, 11, 12, 15) which expresses watchful care and is suggestive of present possession:

Verse 6 says of the apostles, "they have *kept* your word," suggestive of *the Word*.

Verse 11 has the role reversed with Father not being addressed: "*keep* them in your name."

Verse 12 has "I *kept* them in your name which you have given me." Also in this verse is the word ephulaxa, indicating safe custody and after implying possibility of assault from without. That is why tereo here has the addition of "in your name" given by the Father to Christ. Even such a distinction between Christ and his name implies that the name is strictly for mankind and not especially needed for the Godhead. Notice that phulasso has "not one of them is lost but the son of perdition" or Judas who does not fall under the watchful eye of tereo.

The double role of tereo and phulasso is found in Wisdom 10.5:

“Wisdom...recognized the righteous man and *preserved* (tereo) him blameless before God and *kept* (phulasso) him strong.” Compare wisdom here with John 17.12. Both verbs point to a double protection from within and without enabling us to understand the sense of John 10.9: “I am the gate...he will *go in* and will find pasture.”

Note that in addition to verse 11 above, verse 11 is spoken by Christ as “no longer in the world” while the disciples are “in the world.” That is why there is mention of “Keep them in your name which you have given me.” The “position” of Christ here is peculiar since he is “not in the world” yet present with the disciples. It seems his not being in the world...to be comprehended as Christ’s presence after his Ascension...is a fully realized state of pure awareness while in the body.

Verse 15: “I do not pray that you take them from the world, but in order that you guard (tereo) them from evil.” This verse makes sense after verse 12 with Christ as “not in the world” while still with his disciples in the body. Christ wants his disciples to partake of his self-same awareness mentioned just above. To do this requires a teresis from evil. Thus the two-fold function of teresis: from evil and mindfulness of Christ.

* * *

Compare Luke 10.2 (“Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”) with Peter’s request to John, asking him to reveal the betrayer: “So *lying* thus, close to the breast of Jesus” (John 13.25). It is by assuming this *lying* position or anapeso which puts us in a position to ask Christ for laborers for the vineyard.

* * *

When we speak of *inheritance* (nachalah, kleros), we mean taking over the belongings of those who have died. Possession by the inheritor thereby assumes the same status as the original owner. In ordinary life this is often tinged with sadness, for the inheritor is vividly aware that the benefactor has departed from the scene. Something similar happens with God. Through Jesus Christ we inherit the things of God. Christ dies, so we obtain his inheritance; however, the analogy ends here. In a mysterious way we are aware that Christ “is gone,” otherwise, there would be no inheritance; Christ passes off the scene in the manner we are accustomed to viewing him: “We once regarded Christ from a human point of view, though we regard him no longer” (2Corinthians 5.16). This is a result of huiiothesia, “adoption” as mentioned by Ephesians 1.5 and is related to kleros. Now adoption implies that the person adopting is alive; he has not died as in the inheritance just mentioned. A paradox occurs here: we inherit (death) and adopt (life), however, the inheriting person is alive while dead. That is, in huiiothesia (literally, “son-placing”), there is no awareness of Christ because one’s awareness *becomes* Christ, the essence of our inheritance.

Paul awakens our eyes to the reality of inheritance in Ephesians 1.18: “having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” More precisely it is the Holy Spirit who is our inheritance, but refer to this Person in connection with huiiothesia in Romans 8.15: “You have received the spirit of huiiothesia in whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” If we take “in whom” literally, the Spirit is the same as huiiothesia-Christ. In other words, this adoption is a unity of two parts, Son and Spirit. Note that it reads “spirit of adoption.” This “Spiritual-izes” the person of Christ even more, thus preventing us to *grasp* him and further emphasizes the reality of our *being-in* Christ. Here the “being-in” him precludes any subject-object relationship and equates our awareness with being made in God’s image or eikon.

Such is the Holy Spirit’s role, for without him Christ would remain for us an “object” (objective). An example is John 7.39: “For as yet the Spirit had not been given because Jesus was not yet

glorified.” Christ here is very concrete or presented as “in the body.” Obviously people were conscious of Jesus Christ while he was physically in their midst and were completely unable to perceive his divinity, for “the Spirit was not yet given.” In other words, Christ needed to be glorified (crucified, rise and ascend) or “made into an inheritance” for us. Once this first of two stages was accomplished, the second stage could happen, the Holy Spirit’s descent at Pentecost. Then at last our being made in God’s eikon could become one with the Spirit and Christ who “was *with* God” (pros...towards, in the direction of), John 1.1.

* * *

Gregory of Nyssa (**On the Resurrection of Christ**, PG#46.617b-c) speaks of Christ commending himself into his Father's hands, quoting Isaiah 49.16: “Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.” The Septuagint usage *engrave* (zographeo) means “to write from life” or portray in a vivid manner (literally, “write-life”). The only other Old Testament reference to zographeo is Ezekiel 23.14 which describes images of men drawn on walls by women.

* * *

Ezekiel 21.15: “You have despised the rod, my son, all *wood*.” Note that the Hebrew word hetz means both “wood” and “council.”

* * *

Mark 12.28-34: A scribe asks Jesus Christ what is the greatest commandment, and he responds with Deuteronomy 6.4-5 which begins with “Hear, Oh Israel.” When reading this Old Testament passage, we may say that Christ is the “mouth” speaking the famous cry of Judaism. Next, parallel the Deuteronomy verse with Christ speaking as mouth again in Mark which is the same mouth. In the first instance he is hidden, whereas in the second he is revealed.

* * *

Mark 1.6: “Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and had a *leather* (dermatinon) girdle around his waist.” Refer to Genesis 3.22: “And the Lord God made...garments of *skin* (Septuagint, dermatinous) and clothed them.” God made these for Adam and Eve before they were expelled from the garden. John the Baptist was in the desert clothed with these same garments of skin, as it were, in the same desert as Adam upon his expulsion. Now Mark 1.3 makes sense: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare the *way* of the Lord,” that is, make the way or Christ who leads us back into paradise, rather, he *is* paradise. A final note: John baptizes in the Jordan clothed in a garment of skin, whereas Christ seems to be naked when being baptized.

* * *

2Corinthians 5.16: “We regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer.” Here knowing and being in Christ are united. This being-in results in a new creation. Paul continues in verse 18+ to speak of reconciliation (katallage, also “exchange”), that is, a putting-in-front-of-that-which-is-out.

* * *

In the Genesis narrative of creation God is vividly described in the act of bringing life into existence. Verse 2 mentions the Spirit *hovering* over the waters, an activity which invites us to read the entire Gen creation narrative. Such hovering is rachaph, more like a brooding.

* * *

The Old Testament begins with Adam in paradise who shortly lost it due to sin. The New Testament begins with Mary not situated in paradise, but was a woman without sin. Note both similarities and dissimilarities between the beginnings of both Testaments. Mary's sinlessness is guaranteed from the start. She begets a man, whereas Adam begets--once God puts him to sleep--a woman (cf. Genesis 2.21-2). The angels keep Adam out of paradise after he has been expelled, whereas angels announce Christ's birth and invite everyone to visit him.

The Virgin Mary is conceived in the womb of her mythical (anonymous) mother Ann; Ann, symbolic of the Old Testament, realizes Mary, symbolic of the New Testament. Ann's realization is significant. She is that narrow point similar to one we find in a sand timer where the sand rushes down through the narrow opening, grain by grain, into the other side. We could apply to the anonymous Ann (Mary naturally included) Romans 5.12-6.11 which discusses Adam's sin and life in Jesus Christ. The fundamental theme here is correction of our transgression through obedience or through *hearing*. Such hearing was effected by Ann. Apply Christ's words to her, "He who hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not enter judgment but *has passed* (metabebeken) from death to life" (John 5.24). At Mary's conception Ann undergoes this metabasis from the Old to the New Testament. Compare her metabasis with Enoch's; ("Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him," Genesis 4.24). He was strictly an Old Testament figure, whereas Ann lived at the juncture of both Testaments.

* * *