

Bible study

God's Glory and Man's Destiny

By C M White

In the Bible 'light' is generally associated with God, while darkness is with Satan. In fact, Christ is likened to the Sun, the Church to the moon and the angels to stars. In this article we shall explore more about this fascinating typology utilised throughout God's holy Word.

This article is written in praise and appreciation for God and His promise of eternal life – the hope of glorification for all Christians.

Version 4.2



What glories await Christians in the Kingdom?

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The purpose and desire is to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God's message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

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Suggested Reading

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**From the cowardice that shrinks from new
truth,
From the laziness that is content with half-
truths,
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all
truth,
O God of Truth, deliver us**

-Ancient Prayer

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Ps 8:3-6)

"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?
And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.
And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire ...
For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?
Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:
Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with **glory** and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.
For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in **bringing many sons unto glory**, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb 1:5-7; 2:5-10)

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.
Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.
For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.
For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father*.
The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.
For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with **the glory** which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:10-18)

INTRODUCTION: DARKNESS AND LIGHT

Metaphorically, the Bible, in so many places, describes enlightenment to God's truths, Law, doctrines and Way to be light or day. In contrast darkness or blackness is associated with disbelief, wandering from the Way, lack of true knowledge and doctrine and even death. What does darkness do that is so bad and what brings it about, metaphorically speaking?: First of all it comes about due to sin; secondly it gratifies the evils of human nature, provides a cover for disobedience and breaking of God's Law; prevents one from seeing the true doctrines; and lulls a person to sleep. This thick cloud of darkness or blackness of night, keeps one away from God's truths and Law. It prevents one from seeing the truth and the beauties of God's spiritual gifts and future He has offered us.

An example would be in church governance: a system that organises a church should always be subject to open and frank discussion; undertaking its policies and discussions in the light, not the dark; accountable to God, the elders and the membership via open forums to maintain the channels of communication.

Everywhere God shows Himself and those things attributed to Him or associated with Him, as light, fire and so forth. For example, His holy spirit is likened to a fire (Matt 3:11; Acts 2:3) and lamps (Rev 4:5). His Law, too, is likened to a lamp or light (Prov 6:23; Is 51:4; Ps 119:105) as are His words (v 130); and His truths and doctrines are like a light in a spiritually darkened world (Ps 43:3).

When Christ returns as the Messiah, He will bring light to the world both literally and spiritually with His coming looking like another sunrise from the east:

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee [metaphorically we shall emit light and truth; literally we shall shine with energy and power].

For, behold the darkness shall cover the earth,
and gross darkness the people [both literally during the Day of the Lord and spiritually]: but the Lord shall arise upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Is 60:1-3)

“And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east:
and His voice was like a noise of many waters [cp 1:24; Rev 1:15; 14:2]: and **the earth shines with His glory**” (Ezek 43:2)

“For as the lightning [Gr means a light, ie the sun] cometh out of the east,
and shineth over unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt 24:27. See Rev 1:16; Hab 3:3-4; Hos 6:3; John 8:12)

For instance we find that in Genesis 41:8 Pharaoh dreamed in the night while Joseph was released in the morning (verse 14). The Heb here for morning is *boqer* which means “the breaking forth of light”, “dawn” or “daybreak”. In other words the Pharaoh was in darkness while Joseph was released from jail - like we will be freed of these frail human bodies in a

resurrection. The final freedom, the final release from the imprisonment of this body and the final Jubilee which we will experience will be at the glory of the resurrection. And just as Joseph was given a new name (Gen 41:45) we will also be given a new name in the resurrection (Rev 3:12; Is 62:15). One day, probably on the Day of Trumpets, in the morning, we shall experience resurrection to new life and be given a new name.



Darkness will give way to eternal light

Concepts such as daybreak, dawn, in the morning, when the day dawns, arise, shine, glory of the Lord, brightness of your rising etc often refer to the glorification of the Christian at the resurrection. As Christ was the literal Son of God by a resurrection from the dead Who dwells in us via the holy spirit; that He is in us, we in Him; the Father in Him and He in the Father; and they in us, we become part of the Godhead, **literally!** That is why the scripture states:

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and **the day star arise in your hearts**" (II Pet 1:19)

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the **image** of God, should **shine** unto them.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God, who commanded the **light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts**, to give the light of the knowledge of the **glory** of God in the **face** of Jesus Christ ...

For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the **glory** of God.

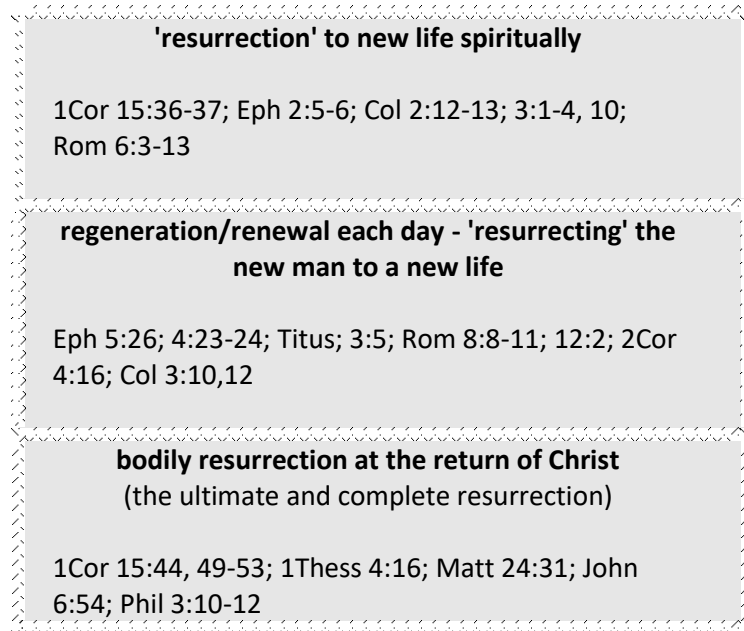
For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of **glory**;

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor 4:4-6).

"But the path of the just is as the **shining light, that shineth** more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov 4:18. See Luke 1: 78-79).

From the above we get the sense that God has already been shining upon us, is shining upon us daily and yet will at the resurrection. In so doing, the resurrection from the dead takes upon 3 forms or aspects. Another way of looking at it is that it is a process in 3 stages:



Of course the true resurrection will occur at Christ's return - for we are a living spiritual embryo at this time, waiting a birth into God's Kingdom.

Back to the subject at hand. Some sample scriptures concerning darkness and light are:

"The way of the wicked is like **darkness**; they do not know what makes them stumble" (Prov 4:19).

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to **awake out of sleep**: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The **night** is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of **darkness**, and let us put on the armour of light.

Let us walk honestly, **as in the day**; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom 13:11-13).

Almost every culture and religion and language uses darkness as a metaphor for evil and error; while light is utilised equally widely for goodness and righteousness - the ways of correctness.

I suppose one could dwell on the subject of the typology of light and darkness over many pages, referring to the scores of scriptures on the subject, but that must wait for a future paper on the spiritual Exodus.

OUR GOD IS LIKE A BLAZING SUN!

One of God's names used in the Bible is "Jealous" (Ex 34:14). The Hebrew is actually *qoma*, meaning in effect to make jealous or zealous – an apparent play on words. Look at the example of Christ who was "eaten up" with zealousness for the House of God. All Christians should be fired up with real ZEAL for the Churches of God and the Work (John 2:17; Ps 69:9). The Greek word has the meaning to be a firmament, hot, heat, zeal. Zeal is not always a silent fervour to do right, as some have portrayed it. It is an unquenchable and unstoppable, raging fire which may be observed by all. No matter the unfairness, inequity and obstacles, zeal will overcome all and continue with energy and might when all else fails. See Num 25:11-12 where God looks upon zeal as a supremely admirable quality.

Thus God's nature is to be proverbially 'fired up' for His things, purposes and plan. And so should we.

When the Angel of the Lord (probably Christ) appeared to Moses and Manoah, He is associated with fire (Acts 7:30; Jud 13:20). Even His eyes are like fire (Rev 1:14) and in other scriptures His presence is like the sun (Mat 17:2; Acts 26:13-16; Heb 1:3; Ezek 36:5; Mal 4:1-3).

This has lessons for Christians of all ages, and in particular these last days. Are we fired up with Philadelphian ZEAL and wishy-washy, watering-and re-defining our beliefs accordance with a modern 3:17-19). God's Spirit with power and abilities, albeit small, to assist us to get through this life, for service to God (Is 40:31).

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps 17:15).

(Rev 3:7-13) or are we lazy down the truth of God and social values in leftist-liberal world? (Rev energises us, providing us

Why should we be all fired up now, in this life, for God and His way and His truths? Because we are undertaking a character development exercise which God is creating in us for His ultimate purpose. If He is fiery, so must we be; if He is passionate about the truth, so must we be; and if we are to be like consuming fires with the inbuilt ability to exude a fiery presence and literally blaze in the resurrection, then we must have zeal in this life, now. The Holy Spirit must be working through us, assisting us to be, in effect, extensions of the Godly character.

Note the following scriptures which tell us about our incredible potential and glory:

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars [which are actually suns] for ever and ever" (Dan 12:2-3. See Mark 12:25)

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt 13:43)

“And thine age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt **shine** forth, thou shall be as the morning” (Job 11:17. See Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Rom 8:17; Col 3:4)

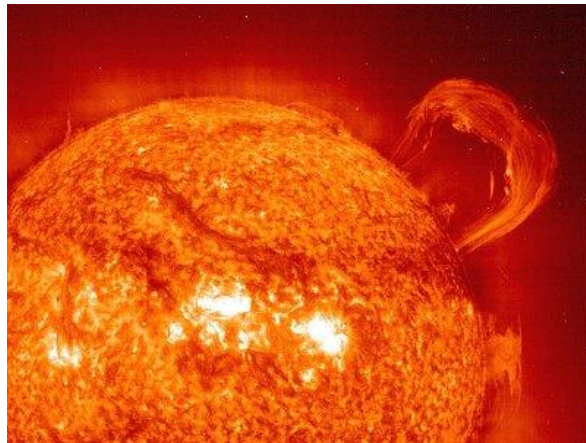
“...we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is” (IJohn 3:2; cp Col 3:3-4) [see what Christ is like in Rev 1:13-18; Matt 17:2,5,9; 24:27; Rev 21:23; Ezek 43:2; Is 60:1-3)

From ICor 15:41-42 and 49 it would appear that there are differences in literal shining glory, brilliance and power in the kingdom. If so, then, it would be awarded us according to our works (ICor 3:13-15; Job 34:11; Rev 22:12).

In Gen 15:17-18, God is likened to a shining lamp and smoking furnace – a bright, shining, glowing Being! We are told in the Psalms that

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath **shined**. Our God shall come and shall not keep silence. A **fire** shall devour before him” (Ps 50:2-3)

“For the Lord God is a **sun** and shield” (Ps 84:11)



The blazing sun!

God is so glorious and wonderful, full of perfection and holiness, that we would surely die in His presence. In some scriptures we are told that for man to look upon God's glory meant instant death! (Gen 32:30; Ex 3:6; 33:18-20; Jud 6:22-23; 13:22) – His holiness and immense purity just envelopes everything and consumes anything. Indeed, He is like a trillion suns at full strength. Moses, being in contact with God, caused his face to shine, radiate or be glorious (Ex 34:29-30). Christians are also supposed to be so happy, filled with the joy of salvation, in the knowledge that they have the seed or spark of eternal life, that they will exemplify the Law of God, the fruits of the Spirit and the Beatitudes. If the big bang theory were true, His glory and power would exceed even that tremendously awesome event by untold-fold. Do you comprehend the magnitude of that?

If indeed God did decide to commence the physical part of his creation in stages (this is not evolution), with the big bang, imagine if you were standing by waiting in anticipation of this awesome, overpowering and intense moment. What if God actually shared some of the

planning with you and were excitedly waiting for that immense moment? What a thrill and exciting experience beyond imagination.

Here is a time, probably the first time ever, that God actually had formed matter. He takes a tiny speck of His very essence or substance, His spirit, and converts it into an energy source that becomes matter. Watching this event, perhaps even being in the very centre of it, would 'blow our minds' and would cause us to rejoice and be filled with praises to God like it did the angels when the earth was created, according to Job 38:7. Perhaps from God Himself thundered the most immense roar that became a sudden flash of white searing light that mushroomed into being, sparkling and glowing with intensity, power, glory, beauty, flashes and colours that became what we puny little humans call the beginning of matter, apparently over 20 billion years ago (see Job 9:1-10; 38:1-41). If God can do that, He can also resurrect us for He is the "power and the glory" (Matt 6:13). He is the source and centre of the universe and all that exists – the ground of all being. Via His spirit, He also has universal consciousness and knows everything everywhere:

"Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?
Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord.
Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord" (Jer 23:23-24. See Ps 139:7-11).

All matter came from Him and all matter – the entire universe - can be extinguished and become part of His essence again:

"If He set His heart upon man, if He gather unto Himself his spirit and his breath;
All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust" (Job 34:14-15. See also Is 40:7-8).

The Father, via Christ, created all that is and upholds all the universe with His glory and power (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3; Ps 104:1-4). Here are a selection of scriptures on the subject of God's shine:

"The Lord make His face to **shine** upon thee" (Num 6:25)

"The Lord ... **shined** forth from Mount Paran" (Deut 33:2)

" ... upon whom doth not His **light rise**" (Job 25:3)

"Lord, lift Thou up the **light** of they countenance upon us" (Ps 4:6)

"The Lord is my **light**" (Ps 27:1)

"Make Thy face to **shine** upon Thy servant" (Ps 31:16)

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath **shined**" (Ps 50:2)

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to **shine** upon us" (Ps 67:1)

"Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth ... cause Thy face to **shine** and we shall be saved" (Ps 80:1,3,7,19)

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; They shall walk, O Lord, in the **light** of they countenance [Heb = face]" (Ps 89:15)

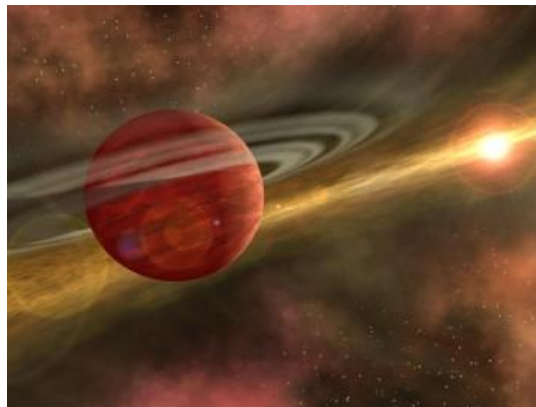
"... the **light** of Thy countenance" (Ps 90:8)

"Make Thy face to **shine** upon Thy servant" (Ps 119:135)

"Cause Thy face to **shine**" (Dan 9:17)

Like so many scriptures, these are probably dual: they talk not merely metaphorically of God's beauty and His showing us the paths of righteousness; but that He literally shines gloriously, emitting rays of light (including various colours) in the most dazzling fashion, that the human mind cannot even begin to comprehend. How great He is! How awesome and magnificent is His form and power! We can only but praise Him and glorify Him in word and deed.

In the words of that old hymn, "How great Thou art".



How great He is indeed!

Further, these scriptures give us a little smattering of what our glorious eternal life will be like. Our very being or existence will be on the same type of plain as God. The *New Dictionary of Theology* states that even Calvin taught that "Christians are admitted, through the Holy Spirit, to participation **in the inner life of the Godhead**" (p. 694).

"The passage which Christ quotes [ie John 10:34] is in Ps. lxxxii.6 ... Christ applies this to the case in hand, that they receive the name of gods, because they are God's ministers for governing the world. For the same reason Scripture calls angels gods, because by them **the glory of God beams forth** on the world" (John Calvin, in his *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids, Wm. Eerdman's Publishing, vol. 1, p. 419.)

God the Father, the Most High God, is called "the Father of lights" (James 1:17); while in IJohn we are told that "God is light" (1:5). He is the Father of lights because light literally exudes from Him; and Christians are meant to be a kind of extension of God - Again, this is no doubt both literal and metaphorical. In the New Jerusalem, we are told by John, that

resurrected saints will be blessed and fortunate enough that they “**shall see His face**; ... And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light” (Rev 21:4-5). God, it is said, covers Himself “with light as with a garment” (Ps 104:2). This has nothing to do with the mystical nonsense of the evangelicals with their bizarre ideas such as the meaningless dribble that we will be staring into God's face for eternity. The meaning in Revelation is three-fold: firstly we will be able to actually see God for the first time, literally; we will be enabled to fully see or understand Him at that time as our communion with Him will be so close; and finally, it signifies His blessings being bestowed upon us.

Concerning God's smiling face which these scriptures infer, psychological studies have shown that the greatest blessing in a child's life is the smile of a parent. But one of the greatest stresses and one which imprints negatively on them for the rest of their lives, is a grumpy parent, sour faced and frowning! Seeing God's face, will be an immensely exciting and wonderful moment (Matt 5:8). Christians will be resurrected at the return of Christ, just before the millenium, and it would seem that they will not see the Father until after the millenium: they, as new born babes, only 1,000 plus years old by the time the millenium is completed, actually seeing their Father! Nothing is more blessed and soothing than for a small child to look admirably upon the warm, smiling face of their father. The glow, the knowledge that He is so happy to see you; that He is well pleased with your achievements; that His smile is not a blessing in itself alone – but that the smile actually means that He has brought with Him priceless and amazing gifts for His children. Wonderful surprises are in store for each and every one of us if we make it into His kingdom. See the other scriptures on God's warm, smiling face: Ps 41:12; 11:7; 42:2; Is 1:12 (original here is “see My face”). Notice Ps 17:15:

“As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness:
I shall be satisfied, when I awake [in the resurrection], with Thy likeness”
(see too Job 14:14-15; IJohn 3:2)

So much for anthropomorphism which teaches that God has not taken upon shape or form, but that He merely uses human language to convey something about His awesomeness. I am afraid that once one starts seeing large segments of the Word of God in a metaphorical way, it begins to snow-ball until most of His Word, including the Law, is spiritualised away. Unless a verse is obviously to be read metaphorically, it would be a fatal mistake to start seeing too much of the Bible that way. It is filled with duality containing literal/physical and metaphorical/spiritual meaning for Christians who are both physical and spiritual.

The *NKJV Study Bible* explains:

“This verse is a key text on biblical immortality in the OT. Having rejected the idea that the pleasures of this life are ultimately fulfilling, David anticipates the day when he will awake in glory and be made in the likeness of God.”

The Australian Aboriginal peoples describe the creation of man thus:

“In the beginning the world lay quiet, in utter darkness. There was no vegetation, no living or moving thing on the bare bones of the mountains. The world was not dead, It was asleep” They then describe how light manifest itself upon the earth. Man was created **“in the bodily and mental form of the Baime ... the Father-God, the Great Spirit”** (*Aboriginal Stories* by A.W. Reed, pp. 11, 8-9).

Now if non-Christian religions can understand that God has take bodily appearance, how much more so should members of the Churches of God! By the way, Aboriginal legends also speak of giants and a great Flood! Sound familiar?

All this about God's face and more from the hidden prophecies found deep within the book of Psalms – it is one of the more neglected books of many Churches of God, yet filled with an amazing amount of information directly relevant to Christians today.



Great mysteries will be revealed to us

THE GLORY THAT SHALL BE – THE INCREDIBLE HUMAN POTENTIAL

Notice what the old Worldwide Church of God taught:

“Man has the potentiality of becoming GOD! ... By the very fact that God, through man, is reproducing Himself, we know MAN, when his spiritual creation is completed, **shall actually become GOD!**” (*The Good News*, Sept 1979, “Your Children—FUTURE GODS?” p.4 – Herbert W Armstrong. More is written about this in his booklet *Why were you born?*).

“WHY did the Creator God put MAN on the earth? For God's ultimate supreme purpose of reproducing himself—of recreating himself, as it were ... ultimately [resulting] in millions unnumbered... children who shall become God beings, members of the God family. ... The sole value of human life lies in ... the potential of being... **born of very GOD, a child in the God Family**” (*Mystery of the Ages*, 1st ed. 1985, pp. 102-103, 111 – Herbert W Armstrong).

“Consider why God created mankind in the first place! God is reproducing Himself through man! He is creating in man God's own perfect holy and righteous spiritual character! And that, in turn, is purposed to restore the government of God over all the earth. And, further, to create billions of God beings to finish the creation of the vast unfinished universe! And, beyond that? Ah! God has not as yet revealed what he purposes beyond that!” (p. 170).

“God is reproducing Himself! ... Anyone who joins the ‘church of his choice’ has not come into God's true Church ... The very first portion of God's spiritual harvest of humans... made God Beings—is the Church! ... But we shall also be, as priests, co-saviors with him in saving the world... The Kingdom of God will be the God Family—a **superbly and highly trained and organized family of GOD BEINGS**” (pp. 226, 229, 240, 270 – Herbert W Armstrong).

“You are offered a sonship in the Kingdom of God to teach other people **how to become God!**” (*Good News*, April 1961 - David Jon Hill).

“**Man was created to literally become God**” (*Tomorrow's World*, May 1971 – Robert Kuhn).

“WE are to someday be ABOVE the angels, ABOVE the cherubim, the seraphim, and ABOVE the 24 elders seated about God's very throne! **WE ARE TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY OF GOD, TO BECOME GOD!**” (*Good News*, December 1957 – Garner Ted Armstrong).

Could the above be our future glory?

I have up to this time, only hinted at the term “glory” utilised in scripture. *The Dictionary of Imagery* explains this concept:

“**Glory** is one of the master images that helps to tell the story of the Bible ... **Glory includes splendor, beauty, magnificence, radiance and rapture.** In the Bible it is primarily a quality ascribe to God and places of his presence, including places of worship and heaven ... Glory is an image of divine transcendence as it makes itself visible to people ... The NT boldly identifies Jesus as glory ... The NT eschatological visions share with the OT ones and emphasis on the motif of future glory ...

“**Glory** is one of the great positive images of the Bible, the language of the mystic and of the believing heart that has glimpsed the greatness of God. It is paradoxically a divine quality that is remote from human finitude and yet is held out to believers as something they will share.” (pp. 330-331) (emphasis mine)

That term is perhaps illuminated best in FJ Meldaus’s work *Why we believe in Creation, not in Evolution*. Under the heading “The Continuous Display of a surpassing Glory” (pp. 60-61) he writes:

“A look into the night sky is a fascinating sight; this inherent **glory** of the skies is greatly enhanced by the discoveries of modern Astronomy. When viewed in a telescope, the colour of stars become decidedly more pronounced. As a matter of fact, many stars glow with a brilliance more dazzling than a cut and polished gem. The difference in colour in stars is due to their temperature! Very hot stars are blue-white or white, colder ones are orange or red. Through the telescopes many stars can be seen as green, orange, violet, pink, and many other colours. It is a most inspiring spectacle!

“Here are some wonder of the heavens.

“In the constellation Aquarius is a magnificent globular cluster of stars like a swarm of glittering bees. Not far away (on a stay photograph that is) is a lovely pale blue Nebula.

“The star Beta Ononis is a prodigious sun having a luminosity 13,000 time that of our Sun. The chief star in Canes Venatici is seen through a telescope to be actually two great suns, one yellow and the other a gorgeous lilac.

“As you know, stars are classified according to their brightness; the brighter being those of the first magnitude or less. Those which are just visible, without the aid of a telescope, are the sixth magnitude. A first magnitude star is 100 times as bright as one of the sixth magnitude. Stars of the 22nd magnitude have been photographed by larger telescopes. Think of what marvels are to be seen in a cluster of 100,000 stars each a pinpoint of **glory** ... !” (emphasis mine)

This quote has been useful to illuminate the meaning of glory which has to do with power, brightness, lightness, purity, cleanliness, holiness, righteousness and perfection. In other words, to be just like God, mirrors of His being and life. The ancient Egyptian Pharaohs

possessed a corrupt belief in the afterlife. In their belief system they became stars after death, dwelling in the constellation of Orion with their god and father, Osiris. It may be that this belief stemmed from the early truths which were expounded by God's servants - the Egyptians may well have corrupted the truth as other religions have done.



An exciting new spiritual realm awaits us!

This brings me to the resurrection chapter, ICor 15:

“There are also celestial [ie heavenly or divine] bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the **glory** of the celestial is one, and the **glory** of the terrestrial is another.

There is one **glory** of the sun, and another **glory** of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in **glory**: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body [see John 3:5; 12:24; Rom 6:5; Mark 4:30-32]

“ ... And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (verses 42-44, 49)

Actually, God's glory is mentioned so frequently in scripture that sometimes we tend to read over them. See for instance Is 40:5; Col 1:11; Heb 2:9; John 17:5,22 etc. It is associated with power, light, a shining appearance and pure holiness. What is “glory” anyway? In the English language it means a thing of beauty and magnificence, fame and honour as we have seen. As such that which is glorious deserves praise and rejoicing in. Similarly, in the Hebrew it means beauty, comeliness, honour, majesty, splendour, rich; while the Greek has the meaning of praiseworthy, dignity, honour, worship.



The glory of the Sombrero galaxy taken with an infrared camera

As Christians are destined to inherit, as offspring, the Father's very glory, we shall be filled with holiness, brightness, cleanliness, perfection, righteousness and radiate light. As such we will fulfill what it means to be glorified.

How similar to the quote in Meldaus's book about the differences in glory in the heavenly realm. So it is in the spiritual realm within the angelic kingdom and shall be with us.

This reminds me of the Psalm: "At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11). And in ICor 2:9:

"But as it is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" " (cp Rom 8:18).

"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house;
And Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures.
For with Thee is the fountain of life: [cp Rev 22:1; 21:6; John 7: 37-39; 4:10;
Is 12:2-3]

"In Thy **light** shall we see light" (Ps 38:8-9)

As Christ dwells in us via the holy spirit, He is our life (Col 3:3-4; Eph 5:30; ICor 6:15; 12:12-14) and as such, we are part of God and become an extension of His being or life because the holy spirit is joined with the human spirit - we inherit the very life of God Himself!. When the physical dies, the spirit in man essence leaves the flesh and remains with God, either at the spot where we have been buried, or a place which He chooses to place it which is in heaven. He will re-issue our essence, memory and character which is stored in the miniscule substance known as the 'spirit in man' mentioned in several scriptures (ICor 2:11; Ezra 1:1; Job 32:8; Eccl 12:7; Zech 12:1). Without the continuation of our memory, we will not be us!

Think for a moment. What if you were re-born in years to come with the exact same image or physical appearance as you now have; your mind is the same, as is your outlook, knowledge, personality and character. You would still be you - right? Wrong! You are only you if you had the same or at least a part of the memory of whence you came and your

experiences. Even if that memory fades, you can only by you if there is a link or historical knowledge including recall of some of the events of the previous life. Thus it may be in the new life at the resurrection.

We will know and recall our previous life, but some details may dim in time, for the former things shall be no more (Rev 21:4), just as a child who is born and grows into adulthood, cannot recall much, if anything, prior to the age of two or three. In fact, how much detail can an adult recall of their first 10 years? We know where we come from and have some memories, but they fade as we leave our past behind. Memory, therefore, is imparted by the brain and thus becomes a part of our minds. Who knows, God may indeed impart some of His memory to us so that we become, as it were, eternally generated by Him and eternally proceeding from Him in a sense. This means that we will inhabit eternity which is beyond space and time, and possess thereby some knowledge and experiences of past events and creations.

What is mind anyway? It is not the brain; nor memory, personality, consciousness/awareness alone (even animals have these to some degree). It includes uniqueness, creativity, reasoning, thought and distinctiveness with the potential of character development through education, training and planned choice:

"Today we accept as a truism that the brain is the physical basis of the mind, although this is not quite the same thing as stating that the brain is the mind" which is given a place to be active in the brain which numbers approximately 15 billion neurons (RM Restak, *The Brain: The Last Frontier*, pp. 15-16).

The brain enables the mind to operate - it consumes a disproportionate amount of the body's energy (20%) and produces a disproportionate amount of the body's heat. But it is this human spirit that gives man 'understanding' or mind (Job 32:8,18; Prov 20:24,27), placing him on a plain far greater than the animals and enables him to have a relationship with God - a relationship, by the way, which God outlines, not something which we may derive and offer to Him.

"If we are not careful, we can very quickly begin to think that the spirit in man possesses conscious sensation, thought and awareness independent from the brain. This is wholly wrong! The spirit in man, of itself, cannot sense, cannot think, cannot reason, cannot know. The brain performs these tasks. But to engender the exquisite qualities which constitute the human mind, the spirit in man must be added". ("Why the vast difference between animal brain and human mind? Part V", *Plain Truth*, June 1972, p. 42).

Perhaps the Hindi belief in the 'third eye' (symbolised by the painted red dot on their foreheads) is a corruption of ancient knowledge. The Bible has a lot to say about our minds and the forehead. In fact, the frontal area of the brain is the most complex of all parts of the brain, being responsible for intellect, learning and personality; reasoning, consciousness and judgment. Some have gone so far as stating that the pineal gland, residing deep within the brain, may have something to do with this "third eye". Because it responds to light and alerts the body to whether it is light or dark (controls our biological clock) and is the regulator or regulators (eg it has certain control over the thyroid gland), it is thought by some to be the

heart of the brain and an aid in stimulating human mind. Further, it controls the sleep, reproduction, growth, temperature, blood pressure, tumour growth, mood, the immune system and may even be a factor in longevity.

"Named after a French psychologist, Philippe Pinel, who first described the gland in the human brain, it is only slowly beginning to be understood in its functions. It has both neural and endocrine properties, and in simple vertebrates such as the lamprey the organ is mounted on a stalk close to an opening in the skull and functions as a photoreceptive organ. Photoreceptive structures linked with the pineal body are still observed in higher vertebrates such as reptiles and even some species of birds. In mammals the pineal body is not light-sensitive, but a neural connection remains between the eyes and the gland. Thus the functions of the pineal body in an animal are linked with surrounding light levels." ("Pineal Body," Microsoft (R) Encarta, 1994 Microsoft Corporation. Funk & Wagnall's Corporation.)

We may never know where the 'spirit in man' essence exactly resides within our brains at this time, but we do know that the chemical and electrical impulses which the brain produces, is not all there is to 'mind'. Recently I came across the following fascinating article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (3 November 1997) on "How our brains are set for signals from God":

"United States researchers believe that they have discovered a "God spot" in the brain - a circuit of nerves which could explain humanity's almost universal belief in a deity.

"A study of epileptics [and the deeply religious] who said they had experienced spiritual states revealed that a spot in the front of the brain appeared to become electrically active, when they thought about God ...

"... Research is at an early stage, but the scientists said the results appeared to show that the phenomenon of religious belief could be inbuilt in humans."

Is it possible that the 'spirit in man' resides somewhere near the forehead and that is where (and how) God inspired the prophets and apostles; where the holy spirit fuses with our spirit in man essence; and where Satan and the demons influence people, by radiating their evil impulses into human minds?

"There seems to be, within the human head, an inner, personal awareness, a free-standing, observant itself. We have come to think of this self, with all its emotions, sensations, and cognitions, as the phenomenon of mind. Neurology cannot completely explain how such a thing can happen — how a somehow nonmaterial mind can rise from mere biological function; how the flesh and blood machinery of the brain can suddenly become "aware." Science and philosophy, in fact, have struggled with this question for centuries, but no definitive answers have been found, and none is clearly on the horizon." (*Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* by Andrew Newburg 2002, p. 5)

Perhaps it was the removal of the 'spirit in man' essence that was the reason for Nebuchadnezzar's animal-like behaviour as described in Dan 4:29-33. We do not know how this 'spirit in man' essence/power comes into man, but it may be carried in a gene and becomes active in a part of the brain. When the precious holy spirit is imparted to the repentant, it becomes human spirit, to form the joined or fused with the initial stage in a new creation (ICor 2:11-16; IIPet 1:3-4) – an unborn babe is formed in the mind, which resides in the brain. As such, as stated previously, we become extensions of God, His offspring or His Family by the indwelling of the holy spirit which carries God's character - like a genetic coding of His qualities and goodness via a male sperm, it lodges within our minds, fusing to it, creating new divine beings. Via the washing clean of the blood of Christ, we become pure and clean - like God - an take on the new man - we put on Christ.

If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands (Job 14:14-15)

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He, the God Who is called our Father, is therefore literally the Father, and we literally the unborn children. When we die our unconscious spirit in man essence remains joined with the eternal holy spirit – the very life of God Himself ("But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" - ICor 6:17). As such, we are assured of eternal life, because when God awakens or regenerates us, it will be with a new body. A body that will actually be composed of the holy spirit having put bearing the image of will contain your memory, to continue with God for holy spirit fills the necessarily in not in Satan for doesn't matter the deepest ocean, peak, blown to or as an astronaut in will provide a new His spirit essence which will be filled with light, energy and power - shining with brilliance and radiating rays of beauty.



on Christ and the Father, which character and our relationship eternity. As the universe (but is not everything - it is instance), it where one dies: in on the highest pieces by a bomb outer space! God body for you from

We will inherit God's life and have life inherent within ourselves, exactly as Christ was given life in Himself (John 5:26; Rom 8:29-30. See also other scriptures on this life that God is offering us: Eph 4:18; 2:21; IJohn 1:2; Rom 8:11,16-17; 12:4; ICor 6:7; John 15:5).¹

¹ "It is *almost* beyond dispute that deification is also a major theme in the Pauline literature, where believers will be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29), "transformed into the same image" (2 Cor 3:18). There is much less data on deification in the traditions of the sayings of Jesus, but the theme *is* present in key passages in Matthew, Luke, and John, and is subtly suggested in Mark.

There are three particularly vivid deification passages in the Gospels:

The kingdom of God is within you. Luke 17:21 NIV, KJV (but default translation is NRSV)

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matt 5:48 NRSV

Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'?" John 10:34" (p. 1)

By commanding perfection, Jesus suggests the necessity—and possibility—of human transformation, a profound correcting of that which is imperfect, even within this lifetime." (p. 8)

Currently our human body, the brain specifically, is the 'temple' or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (ICor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:22). It becomes part of us and connects us directly with God, being His children, but as yet not born. But at our birth, in the resurrection, we will be given new bodies similar to Christ's (Phil 3:21; ICor 15:42-53). It will be, as it were, the fused human spirit/holy spirit that grows to form the new body, which will be fully composed of God's spirit, and will have no fleshly components (ICor 15:44-45), a separate personality from God, yet joined to God because the holy spirit fills the universe and beyond.

It should also be noted here that according to the scriptures we are yet to inherit a new body. This should tell us two things. First, we do not have an immortal soul which floats off to heaven (whether it be out there somewhere or another dimension); and second, we are not yet 'born again' nor have experienced the 'new birth'. If we already had the new body, we would be born again. Instead a new babe is in the formation in our minds, which resides in our brains and as such the new birth is yet future (John 3:6; ICor 15:50-51).

God is the 'ground of all being' – the fountain and sustainer of life; the source of existence; the centre of everything. Therefore He is the only One with the power to resurrect and to create. None else can. In His wisdom He has created us for a purpose. And in His mercy He allows us to die and to lie 'asleep' for a little while, waiting for the breaking of a new day, when light will be shed across the globe, and Christ, with awesome power, and according to His promise, will resurrect us to eternal life, joy and glory. How wonderful are His ways; and how sure and faithful He is to adhere to His promise.

This is why death is likened to a sleep - it is something that we will all awaken out of to a brilliant dawn and literally break into a chorus of happiness and praise to God, the One Who called us and Who, in His unfathomable generosity, is happy to grant us His eternal life. Death is likened to a sleep; but the resurrection to an awakening to a new day, with the sun shining beautifully; to stand up; to go upwards; to have life (Ps 17:15; Dan 12:2; John 11:11) and to inherit the glory of God - actual aspects or parts of His glory as His **LITERAL** offspring or children.

It must be despairing and depressing to be nearing the end of one's natural life. A life filled with pain, stress, suffering, abuse, mistrust, sin and everything evil. Yet a life with many joys and wonders. That is the sad story of a world that has inherited the tree of the knowledge (and ways) of good and evil.

We enter this world in pain, wrinkled, bald, toothless, hunched and humble. And we leave this world in pain, wrinkled, bald, toothless, hunched and humble. Life is like a garden – we germinate and grow, flowering for but a moment, and then quickly degenerate and die (Ps 103:13-17; 144:4; Is 40:7-8; IPet 1:24-25; James 1:10-11; Job 14:1-2,10). We come from almost nothing, and we become nothing: when buried, we rot away, our corpses being

"... that matters for Jesus is not our spiritual level but our spiritual *direction*, not our proximity to perfection but our *desire* for it. He grants forgiveness to the paralyzed man and his friends who lowered him down through the roof because he recognizes their spirituality—"Jesus saw their faith" (Mark 2:5; Matt 9:2)—and he responds to their motivation—"Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven" (Matt 9:2)."" (p. 10) ("Deification in Jesus' Teaching" (abbreviated) by S Finlan in *Theosis: Deification in Christology*, vol. 2 (V Kharlamov (ed)), Wipf & Stock, 2011, Eugene OR).

devoured by maggots and drying out to become a shell – a dried out rot upon a skeleton. Over the decades the skeleton itself merely disintegrates until it is dust and our very molecules and atoms are recycled back into the earth from whence we come (Ps 139:15). That is all that is left of us. Even memories about us dim with every passing generation. Truly, man is nothing compared to God. It is only God Who can provide us with the character that is identifiable with His and which He wants as part of His eternal life. A character that is an extension of His glory as He lives in us. A character that He actually desires in us so that He can have a relationship with us and use us for eternity, as His very sons and daughters (ie descendants or extensions).

He desires to share the universe and whatever else with us as His family, to be part of a relationship that is the closest imaginable – to the extent that He will even grant us His name! (Rev 22:4; 3:12). It is His family, not because He has a family only; but because God is a Family. A father is always part of his family, not separate from it.

But before that we die after undergoing a rigorous character developing life. For a little while we 'sleep' in the dust of the earth, unaware of the traumas that abound above us. Then that great Spirit Being Who actually created the vastness and immenseness of the universe, will call us to eternal life. As Job states:

“If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.
Thou shalt call [see Matt 24:31; Ps 50:5; 47:5; IThess 4:16], and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands” (14:14-15).

Like Job, we shall flower once more, be born once more, be alive once more! (Ps 71:19-21) We shall sing and shout with utter happiness and joy when our Saviour rewards us with eternal power and magnificence; we shall inherit eternity and infinity. How excited we shall be when we meet Him, our Saviour and our Lord, the husband of the Church, the Son of God the Father. It would seem that our first waking moment will be like the flash of holiness and light – we will be filled with God's glory! We will be tremendously happy and we will emit positive radiance that blesses all before it. That is why the terms “arise” (Is 26:19; 60:1-3), “glory” (as we have seen), “brightness of your rising” (Ps 82:13-14; Is 60:3; Ezek 1:4, 27-28; Hab 1:3-4), “shine” (Is 60:1; Dan 12:3; Job 11:17) and such like are used in scripture of the intervention of God in world affairs, in one's personal life and of the resurrection of the saints. A close examination would reveal that these verses actually have reference to the Christian resurrection – rising to meet Christ at His return and to experience **life evermore – called the “light of life” in John 8:12 – eternal happiness or bliss**. In fact, the scriptures indicate that the angels will be involved in this event and will apparently actually carry the resurrected saints into the clouds to meet Christ (somewhat like midwives? See Matt 13:38-39; 24:31; Luke 16:22).

The reader may also care to read Rom 8:30; 5:1-2; Col 1:27; IPet 1:7; Ps 73:24 where we are told the following:

- the present sufferings of this life are intended to produce perfection unto glory
- glorification is our hope

- glorification is ultimately future

Christ was resurrected as a forerunner of our resurrection and glorification (ICor 15:20-23; Rom 6:5; Gal 6:8; Phil 3:8-11):

“He reflects the **glory** of God and bears the very **stamp** [KJV “image”] of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

For to what angel did God ever say, ‘Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee?’ Or again ‘I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son?’ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him’” (Heb 1:3-6, RSV).

The original Greek for “image” or “stamp” is “charakter”. Thayer lists the following interpretations of the word (#5481):

1. The instrument used in engraving or carving;
2. A mark stamped upon that instrument; a mark or figure burned in; an impression; marked likeness; precise reproduction in every respect; facsimile; the peculiarity by which things are recognised and distinguished from each other (ie character).

In other words He became a replica or mirror of God in His perfect holy conduct while walking this earth, and fully upon resurrection: “For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9). In 2Cor 4:4 and Col 1:15 Christ is again said to be the *image* of God. A different, but similar, word is used, “i-kone” which means an image, figure, likeness, visible conformity (Thayer #1504). See also John 14:8-11; Ps 17:15.



A wonderful, beautiful future awaits you

In turn, as we are called to glory and partakers of the very divine nature of God Himself (IIPet 1:3-4), Christians must develop holy, righteous character by the inculcation of the Laws of

God, beatitudes and the fruits of the spirit (Rom 8:29; 1Cor 15:49-50; Col 3:10) and become holy, pure in heart (Prov 23:7) just like God, but in miniature form:

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the **image** of Him that created him” (Col 3:10).

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

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same **image** from **glory to glory**, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (II Cor 3:18).²

“And as we have borne the **image** of the earthy, we shall also bear the **image** of the heavenly” (I Cor 15:49).

Our becoming like God is by living a righteous life, repenting, putting sin out and being washed clean by the precious blood of Jesus Christ - therefore absorbing his holiness and purity into our beings. This is His method of creating His nature and character within us.

Our Christian destiny is to be the full image of God both bodily and in spiritual character somewhat as children are replicas of their parents. How? By God and Christ living within us via the Holy Spirit and finally being born as God (Gal 2:20; 1John 4:12-13). We are to be full replicas of God as real, literal sons or descendants of God as an extended family, not merely adopted sons - death will not have the victory over us.

To those that lose hope; to those that lose faith; to those who cannot comprehend; to those that no longer believe. **BELIEVE! YOUR SAVIOUR LIVES AND DESIRES TO GIVE YOU LIFE ETERNAL!**

² Rabens explains: “It is hard to imagine how in 2 Corinthians 3:18, becoming like Christ would not involve ontological change, particularly as Paul says that we are transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into the image (of God), that is, Christ. When we look at Paul, it seems rather that participation is, inter alia, a means to greater likeness. As believers participate “in Christ”, they are in the realm of Christ’s influence and become more like Christ.” (V Rabens (2016) “The Holy Spirit and Deification in Paul: A ‘Western Perspective’,” “The Holy Spirit and Deification in Paul: A ‘Western’ Perspective,” in: P. Dragutinovic / K.-W. Niebuhr / J.B. Wallace (eds.), *The Holy Spirit and the Church according to the New Testament* (in cooperation with C. Karakolis; WUNT I/354; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck): 187–220 (p. 211)

“What is the meaning and significance of Paul’s locution that through the Spirit-worked beholding of the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face, *we are transformed into the same image* (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα)? Understanding this phrase will be key to comprehending Paul’s idea of transformation and deification by the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3:18. As most scholars agree, “the same image” here refers to Christ,⁸⁰ as is suggested by the context: in 4:4 Paul designates Christ as the image of God (“... seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God [ὃς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ]”; cf. 4:6; Col 1:15). Litwa concludes from this phrase that believers are “transformed into Christ” – that is, they are deified.⁸¹ In order to understand the import of this claim, we need to look at how Litwa defines deification. He argues: The basis of deification ... is sharing in *a* or *the* divine identity – that is, sharing in those distinctive qualities which make (a) God (a) God. It is not enough, in other words, to define deification in terms of ‘likeness’ to God. For likeness is too vague in terms of content (*how* are two beings alike?) and degree (*to what extent* are two beings alike?). ... For ‘like’ language to work, the likeness has to be defined with reference to specifically divine qualities. ... The[se] qualities must be constitutive of the divine identity. ... In this way, participation in divine qualities results in a participation in the divine identity. Likeness language, in contrast, tends to distinguish the identities of God and the deified. This is because likeness never means identity. Participation means more than likeness. ... Participation language, ... allows us to speak about sharing identity. ... In short, then, deification is the participation in the divine identity of (a particular) God ...⁸²” (p. 210) “Assimilation to God (ὁμοίωσις θεῶ) in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and elsewhere in Paul specified as assimilation to Christ.” (p. 219).

Forget about your depression, stresses, unhappiness and other negatives. Think about the absolute power of God Who, if He raised Christ, can raise YOU! Enjoy your salvation and uplift and encourage others. Do not become morose and depressed – become outgoing and sparkle with the speck or ‘taste’ of eternal life that you now have (Heb 6:5; Eph 1:13-14; IICor 1:22), exuding the Law of God, the fruits of the Spirit, the Beatitudes and the gifts the Father has bestowed upon you. My friends,

If God can bring about this physical universe, He can resurrect you.

If God can bring ancient prophecies to fulfillment, He can raise you.

If God can answer your prayers, He can give you eternal life.

And if God exists and inspired the Bible in circuitous and mysterious ways, He can grant you a life of joy and energy unimaginable that will never end! As Isaiah was inspired to write

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.
**Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs,
and the earth shall cast out the dead”** (Is 26:19).



We will awaken to tremendous glory

What power it took to create the physical universe, let alone the angels. If we are to define the universe as all matter that appeared from a central source, explosion or whatever, it is quite possible that there might be many other universes and even dimensions. God is so great, that man with all his technology cannot fathom the depths of the universe, although we scrape the surface of these secrets in recent discoveries (see Deut 29:29; Eccl 3:11; Amos 3:7). In fact, God's secrets are tied together with His light in Daniel:

“He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the **light** dwelleth with Him” (Dan 2:22).

In the years to come, man shall continue to seek out the mysteries of the universe: the physical universe ‘out there’; the universe of the mind; the universe of matter and atomic

structure; the life forms at the depths of the oceans. But the more he will learn, the more he will come to realise how little he knows. The time is coming when man will actually have space colonies, either in space stations or on certain planets, if my reading of Matt 24:31b, Deut 30:4 and Jer 51:53 is correct. Who knows what scientists are planning for the years and decades ahead, but you can be assured that they will strive for human immortality (cf Gen 11:6b).

My dear deceased uncle whom I had some tremendous and scintillating discussions with, related eternity in this fashion:

Eternity is like turning the earth into two halves: one half is huge sand dune comprised of countless trillions of grains of sand; the other half is flat and empty. Each day a little bird takes one grain of sand from the sand dune and places it on the other side and conceivably this would take countless trillions of years to accomplish. Once all the sand is placed on the other side and forms a dune, the little bird starts the process all over again and so on continually. You can see what he was driving at. Eternity is impossible to comprehend as it has no ending – future eternity is beyond our wildest imagination. Past eternity and infinity are absolutely impossible for the human mind to grasp. We can devise, create, invent and imagine. Yet there is still finiteness to humanity.

Yet God offers us eternity and He has offered us rulership of (Rom 8:17-23; Heb 2:5-8; Is

“...we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is” (1John 3:2)

infinity as co-heirs with Him. the entire universe and more 9:7; 51:16).

When I page through books such as *Our Awesome Universe*, *The Traveller's Guide to the Solar System* and *Out of the Cradle*. I am inspired and enthralled – nay marvelled – at God's creation. Dear reader, take some time out and just sit outside one night and meditate upon God's creation and the stars above. Read books about the universe and ponder upon the photographs of the splendours of His great power. Such books are an immense inspiration and will re-energise you as never before.

So, dear reader, when all is said and done, God will just get His way and grant you and me life, if we really want it and demonstrate to Him that we want it.

We are indeed promised “so great a salvation” (Heb 2:3. See Ps 31:19). Christian destiny or potential, then, is **SHARING ABSOLUTE GLORY WITH THE FATHER! We shall be God just as He is God; we will be on the God plain, with the attributes of God; we shall be part of the Godhead, as He and His Son, Jesus Christ are. We shall be God as God is God! But understand this: we shall not be the Father Himself of course, but we shall be as much a divine God Being as He is. That glory will not be to the extent of power of the Father. This group of divine Beings we can correctly call the God Family. And it is for this reason that God created the human family - to be typologically paralleling the God Family - so that at its best moments and when it functions in the fashion He designed it, it may portray, in miniature, what He has destined for us.**

This is why the Gospel message is primarily future oriented – it is about the return of Christ, the setting up of His millennial reign via His Kingdom and the resurrection of the saints. The

evangelicals and other protestants brood over a dead Christ on a cross – that is their 'Gospel'. But the true Gospel is primarily future oriented and one which focuses on the end-time prophecies, the second coming of Christ, the millennial reign of the Messiah, the setting up of the Kingdom of God and Christian glorification.

How much more thrilling is the true Gospel than the nonsense and meaningless counterfeit presented by the evangelicals with their emphasis on charismatic experiences, deceived into believing that they are born again now, into the kingdom in this life, and therefore are imbued with miraculous powers. Such perversions! Such nonsense! Their constant date settings, false prophecies, behaviours of their tele-evangelists and infiltrations of the Churches of God reveal very well their cunningness, craftiness and carnality. Where is the spirit of God in all of this?

... BUT OUR GOD CAN EMANATE FIRE THAT WILL DEVOUR!

There is another side to this 'fire', 'sun' and 'brightness' – it is that they, at their extreme, are actual white. What is it about whiteness and brightness which is the ultimate depth of these aspects of God's nature, which He may be trying to convey to us? There is something here which we cannot quite grasp at this time. There is an inexplicable ecstasy, joy, bliss and mind blowing experience which the white blast seems to portray.

God's presence is also fiery white: "The Lord was like a devouring fire in the eyes of the children of Israel" (Ex 24:17) and His anger kindles like a fire (Num 12:8-9). Indeed we are warned in Deuteronomy that "the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" (4:24). While Amos states

"Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like a **fire** in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel" (5:6. Cp Amos 5:6-8).

In other words God demands our attention, devotion, worship and very lives. We must be so surrendered to His will in our lives, that He lives in us and via us can shine forth with goodness, the fruits of the spirit, the beatitudes and His Law upon which the aforementioned characteristics are based. Our all – our very being must be absolutely for placing God and His truths before all else: wives, children, work, interests or self. God first – all else follows on. Anything that takes us away from devotion to Him is idolatry. Thus roars our mighty God:

"Now consider this, ye that forget God,
Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.
Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me:
And to him that ordereth his conversation aright
Will I shew the salvation of God" (Ps 50:22-23).

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have
grace,
whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:
For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12 28-29).

This theme is carried over into the New Testament like so many other Old Testament themes (so much for the supposed vast difference between the Old and New Testaments). As we have seen above, Paul himself tells us that "our God is a consuming fire" – literally bright, fiery white, consuming, glorious and intense – filled with supreme power and energy. Such a God is worthy of the highest honour and love. He desires a relationship with us in the way He commands. Not the sort of nonsense that the evangelicals go around asking people "Do you have a relationship with Jesus?" They know not the Father or that He is the One Who determines how to have a relationship, not us. He demands many attributes including true doctrine, a total honesty with His word and observance of the seventh day Sabbath which is

a sign of a true Christian. And He chooses whom to have a relationship with Him - we cannot choose Him. Many would like to, but that does not make them Christians - they end up striving in vain, but are deceived with false doctrines, practices and charismatic experiences.

Christ is also likened to the Sun: in Malachi God speaks of the wicked being consumed in His great day and that they shall be mere stubble or ashes (Mal 4:1-5)

“But unto you that fear My name shall the **Sun** of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves” (verse 2).
(In his note, Bullinger states that this refers to the Messiah – page 1301).

When the Messiah returns, He shall light up the sky like a giant fire, consuming His adversaries (II Thess 1:7-9). Note also the following awesome Psalm:

“The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken,
And called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God hath shined.
Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence:
A fire shall devour before Him,
And it shall be very tempestuous round about Him (Ps 50:5. See 68:2; 97:2-5).

Upon the return of Christ, a lake of fire will be ignited outside Jerusalem, in which the recalcitrants will be cast. You can read about this lake of fire in the following passages: Rev 19:20; 20:10; Dan 7:11; Is 10:16; 30:33. There are many scriptures relating to God and His punishments by fire, but here are just a few to whet the appetite toward future Bible studies: Is 4:3; Mal 3:1-4,11-12; 4:1; Ps 1:4; 35:5; 37:20; 50:3; 68:2; 112:10 Is 17:13; 30:24; 41:16; Jer 51:2; Hos 13:3; Matt 13:12,30.

I might pause here for a moment to briefly discuss what it is to have a relationship with God in this life. In the first instance it is on His terms and under the conditions He determines. Secondly it is nothing like the shallow, meaningless nonsense promulgated by evangelicals and their twin, the pentecostals. It is not a major emotional experience with lots of singing and verbal praises and other immature experiences. It is a serious life, filled with study of His Word for truth, not for reading for inspiration alone. It is a life of striving for His Way, not a way we create and offer to Him to accept as the correct way of life. It includes adhering to His Laws, believing His truths and following His ways. It is not a half-baked relationship that can be developed without being based on His Word of Truth and without being called. Having a nice personality and living a clean, moral life, is not enough, because our righteousness is like filthy rags to God (Is 64:6) – they are just not good enough.

Why? Because, although some would like Him to be in the relationship with them, He isn't. God calls very few to His precious truths or grants His spirit to in this age (ICor 1:26). The spirit is given to those that are called and repent of sins: we must bring forth fruits of repentance (Matt 3:8), obey God (Acts 5:32) and upon showing repentance of breaking His Law, be baptised by complete immersion. THEN and only then, is the holy spirit imparted.

Not before. The indwelling of the spirit is a sign that we are God's. But that is not all, careful seventh-day Sabbath observance is also called a sign in God's Word and knowledge of basic Bible truths is of vital importance.



What an intriguing future for Christians!

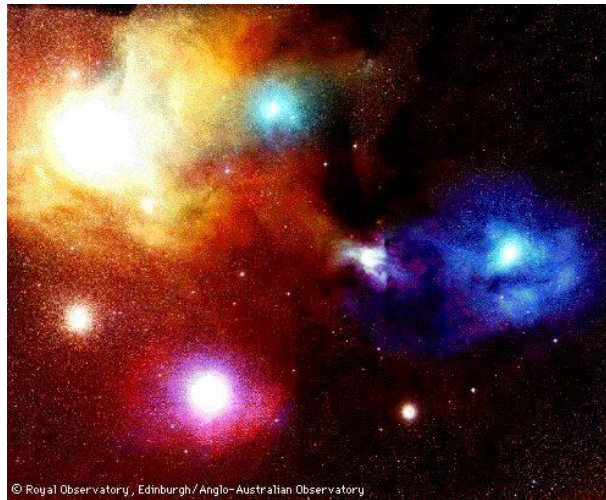
Those that claim to be Christian but are not called in this life are like the ancient Israelites. They used the name of YHWH, tried to keep some of His laws, but absorbed much of the beliefs of the surrounding nations via synchronisation (Deut 12:30-32). In fact, the surrounding nations had gods with names similar to Israel's, a similar priestly pattern, sacrifices, feasts, temple structure and so forth. That did not make them YHWH's. Similarly in the century leading up to Christ and during the first century, there were several other Christ's with some similarities to Him! (see *Pagan Christs; Mysteries of Mithra* and *The World's Sixteen Crucified Saviours*.) This world's 'christianity' follows those Christ's with pagan practices and doctrines. Utilising the name of Christ and then superimposing Babylonian Mystery ideas upon the Bible, is not approved of by God, no matter how nice and sincere the persons involved are. In both the Old and New Testament times there were counterfeits of the true religion.

It is God Who determines who is a Christian and how to become one. It is not up to us to feel that others who do not adhere to His truth are Christians – this compromising and merging with so-called "Christianity" is what the Bible everywhere describes as spiritual whoredom or spiritual fornication – joining together with foreign gods. Instead of compromising with this world's so-called 'christianity', He has called us out of them to life.

Finally, the Bible warns us that Christians who have tasted of His ways and joys that do not keep faith with God, will be burned up. The pertinent scriptures are: Heb 2:3-4; 6:4-8; 10:26-27; Rom 9:22; II Pet 2:21-22; I John 5:16; Mark 3: 28-29; Ps 68:2; Prov 25:15-16.

May God, the ground of all being, the source of eternity, infinity and life, grant you the gift of glorification and eternal life which will be happiness without end. May His face literally smile upon you and His blessings be granted you in this short, little human life and for eternity. The choice is up to each and every one of us.

Let us pray and care for one another in true justice and fairness - in the love of God with the divine nature in each of us through the lively indwelling of the holy spirit - as extensions and literal offspring or children of God.



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The universe has been offered by God to His people to inherit

APPENDIX: EARLY AND MODERN REFERENCES TO DIVINISATION/DEIFICATION/THEOSIS

compiled by Craig White

Perhaps some early 'Christian' writings reflect beliefs of primitive true sabbatarian Christianity in terms of Christian destiny and human purpose upon the earth. Here is what some of the early 'fathers' taught concerning human destiny:

"For we cast blame on Him, because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, **then at length gods**" (Irenaeus (AD c125-203), *Against Heresies*, Book 4, Chapter 38; ANF, Vol. I, p. 522).

Irenaeus further said that we are empty receptacles designed to be filled by God for: "God shall be glorified in His handiwork ... for the perfect man consists in the comingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father....For this is why the Word became flesh, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and **thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God**" (*Against Heresies* Book 3, 19, 1: PG 7/1, 939).

"There is none called God by the scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son, and those who possess the adoption." (*Against Heresies* Book 4, preface; *vide* also 3.61-2; 4.11)

Clement of Alexandria (AD 155-220): "Christians, with whom has been mingled the regal gold, the Holy Spirit Accordingly, as wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man" and for man to inherit immortality: "to be imperishable is to **share in Divinity**" (*Strom.* V.10.63).

"in order that the human, by communion with the divine, **might rise to divine**, not in Jesus only, but in all those who believe, but enter on the life that Jesus taught" (Origen (cAD 185-254), *Origen Against Celsus The Anti-Nicea Fathers* volume 4 Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James ed. T & T Clark Edinburgh 1989 p. 475)

"... assisting them to become Gods ... the others are Gods formed according to him as images of the prototype" (Origen, *Commentary on John* 2.17-18)

"And thou shalt be a companion of Deity, and a co-heir with Christ, no longer enslaved by disease., For thou hast become God ... For the Deity (by condescension,) does not diminish aught from the dignity of His divine perfection; **having made thee even God unto His glory!**" (Hippolytus (cAD 170-236) *The Refutation Of All Heresies*, chapter XXX; ANF, Vol. V, pg 153)

"**If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God.** And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the laver he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection of the dead" (Hippolytus, *Discourse On The Holy Theiphany*, (section) 8; ANF, Vol. V. p. 237).

"thy body shall be immortal and incorruptible as well as they soul. **For thou hast become God.** All the things that follow upon the divine nature God has promised to supply to thee, for thou was deified in being born to immortality" (Hippolytus, *Philos.* X.34)

Cyprian (AD 200-260): "He is the power of God, He is the reason, He is His wisdom and glory; He enters into a virgin; being the Holy Spirit, He is endued with the flesh; God is mingled with man. **This is our God, this is Christ, who, as the mediator of the two, puts on man that He may lead them to the Father. What man is, Christ was willing to be, that man also may be what Christ is.**"

Athanasius (AD 293-373): "For the Son of God became man so **that we might become God.**" (*De inc.*, 54, 3: PG 25, 192B) and "The Word was made flesh in order to offer up this body for all, **that we might be deified**" (*De Dec.* para.14). "He was not man, and then became God, but he was God, and then became man, in order to deify us" (*Orat.I.* para.39).

Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335-395) stated: that Christ's fleshly presence on the earth "**deified** everything kindred and related to mankind".

"There is nothing remarkable in man being the image and likeness of the universe: for the earth passes away, the sky changes, and all that is contained therein is as transient as that which contained it. (Lossky, Vladimir *Orthodox Theology* Translated By Kesarcodi-Watson, Ian and Ihita St. Vlacimir's Seminary Press Crestwood, NY 1989, p. 70)

Pseudo-Dionysius (5th/6th centuries) stated that salvation "can only happen with divinization of the saved. **And divinization consists of being as much as possible like God**"... as much as possible in union with God. (ibid. page 198 *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, chapter 1 :3)

"The Word of God [Christ] is now God as He had been man, **in order to deify mankind together with himself**" (Eusebius (cAD 267-339), *Demonstratio Evangelica* iv.14).

"Christ came to us, and took upon him our nature and **deified** it" (Chrysostom - AD 347-407).

"... a man, by keeping the directions of God, may receive from him immortality as a reward and **become God**" (Theophilus (cAD 115-181, *ad Autol.* 11.27).

"**God became man that you might become gods**" stated Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430).

Researcher, Tom Roberts, stated in his paper *Faith and Practice in Early Christianity* that

"The new birth process from conception to begettal to resurrection was later interpreted to be granted when the Holy Spirit gives the impregnable eternal seed as the convert receives eternal life. (Hippolytus in *Philos.* X.34) And it should be noted that Orthodox theology unto this very day holds the position that we shall have our deification completed in the resurrection when we shall with Christ during His Messianic Reign over the nations." (p. 17)

It should be noted that although the Eastern Orthodox Church believes that humans can become divine, they obviously don't believe we become God Himself or get absorbed into the Godhead in some way.

What they teach is that man's destiny is becoming the essence of deity or Godlikeness where God is divining the Human creation. In so doing He is replicating Himself – the very divine essence (IIPet 1:4).

"Orthodox theologians are careful to insist that deified Christians do not become God or Christ. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) taught that Christians participate in the energies, not the essence of God (though he added that God's energies still express God's real being" ("Becoming Gods: Deification and the Supernatural," by M David Litwa in *Religion: Super*

Religion, ed. Jeffrey J. Kripal, Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks, Religion Series (Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2017), pp. 89-103.)

Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa were amongst those that laid the foundations of the Eastern Church. That Church was initially without icons, great liturgies and canonical regulations for governing the church's life which took hundreds of years to develop and be accepted. But in contrast with Rome, the Eastern Churches permit their ministry to marry, reject the primacy of the Papacy (their approach is more collegial), do not accept transubstantiation and believe that they are the true church. They originally believed in the 7,000 year plan and that man is mortal, without an immortal soul.

Dr Arius (of the famous 'Arian Controversy') apparently also believed in deification, at least to some degree, according to Dr Herman L Hoeh in his sermon *Arianism and Trinitarianism* (he was critiquing these doctrines) given on 24 November 1989. The book he used was *Early Arianism – A View of Salvation* by Robert C Gregg and Dennis E Groh. I subsequently obtained a copy of the book):

"Arius and his followers believed that God has and will have many sons – many, in fact, who might be called his "words"." (p. 56)

"Arian Christians professed, "we are able to become sons [like Christ became a son]." (p. 64)

On the opposite spectrum were the trinitarians, whom, as Dr Hoeh explained, "moved away from the idea that we too could be God. They moved away from that and finally came to the conclusion that we could never in that sense participate in the same nature, where in fact the Bible says that we can."

Dr Arius' followers were generally from the eastern area of the Roman Empire and thus a little less tainted by Rome.

What is the Eastern Orthodox Church that it should still retain a semblance of the truth about divinisation?: The eastern churches participated in the first seven ecumenical councils which ended with the Second Council of Nicaea in 787AD. Their differences with Rome mounted after that time with the official split eventuating in 1054AD. But originally, the Church of God had scattered for a time in 33AD according to Acts 8:1. Later, after the Roman sacking of Jerusalem 69-70AD, the Church at Jerusalem known as the Nazarenes, fled to Pella (or Petra as some suggest) and remnants were left in Britain and others may have scattered to all sorts of sects. A certain number continued in the eastern congregations in Asia Minor, which observed the Sabbath alongside Sunday in the same churches, for a long time. Of these Christians in the second century it was written:

"The primitive Christians had a great veneration for the Sabbath, and spent the day in devotion and sermons. And it is not to be doubted but they derived this practice from the Apostles themselves, as appears by several scriptures to that purpose." (*Dialogue on the Lord's Day*, p.189. London: 1701. By Dr. T.H. Morer (Church of England).

In the third and fourth centuries we have this witness:

"The ancient Christians were very careful in the observation of Saturday, or the seventh day ... It is plain that all the **Oriental [Eastern] Churches**, and the greatest part of the world, observed the Sabbath as a festival ... Athanasius likewise tells us that they held religious assemblies on the Sabbath, not because they were infected

with Judaism, but to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath; Epiphanius says the same." (*Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Vol. II. Book XX, chap 3, Sec. 1 66.1137, 1138.)

"The observance of the Sabbath among the Jewish Christians gradually ceased. **Yet the Eastern Church to this day marks the seventh day of the week** (excepting only the Easter Sabbath) by omitting fasting, and standing in prayer; the Latin Church, in direct opposition to Judaism, made Saturday a fast day. The controversy on this point began as early as the end of the second century" (*History of the Church*, p.372, 1864 edition; p.205 1952 edition. Quoted in *A History of the Sabbath & Sunday* by John Kiesz, p. 17).

Concerning the Council of Laodicea: "From the apostles' time until the council of Laodicea, which was about the year 364, the holy observation of the Jews' Sabbath continued [this was primarily in the East], as may be proved out of many authors; yea, notwithstanding the decree of the council against it." (*Sunday a Sabbath*, John Ley, p. 163. London:1640.)

This is what the Council of Laodicea actually stated: "Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but most work on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day; and if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ" (Canon 29).

In the fifth century it was written:

"Likewise some meet both upon the Sabbath and upon the day after the Sabbath, as at **Constantinople [ie the Eastern Church]**, and among almost all others. At Rome and Alexandria they do not" (*Ecclesiastical History*, in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Book 7, Chapter 19).

"Alexandrian Christianity, too, had early adopted Sunday observance. However, in harmony with **Eastern Christianity**, it had also kept the Sabbath as a day of worship and a festival" (*The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, pp. 171-2).

One final quote:

"The **Eastern Orthodox Church** is perhaps the best example of this evolution in the practice of Sabbath observance. Even as late as the seventeenth century Samuel Purchas (c. 1577-1626), listing the beliefs and practices of the Greek Church of the Constantinople patriarchate, states that "they solemnize Saturday (the old Sabbath) festively" " (*The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, p. 152).

Gradually the Sabbath and other truths were lost, but divinisation continued in the East and has been a component of their theology for a very long time. To early eastern Christians, being given immortality was equivalent to being ascribed or granted godhead or a relationship with God that is so close and so akin to the life He experiences, that it is divine or godly: we become deified or divinised.

This concept continued in a limited undercurrent over the centuries. For instance the *New Dictionary of Theology* states that Calvin taught that "Christians are admitted, through the Holy Spirit, **to participation in the inner life of the Godhead**" (p. 694).

"The passage which Christ quotes [ie John 10:34] is in Ps. lxxxii.6 ... Christ applies this to the case in hand, **that they receive the name of gods**, because they are God's ministers for governing the world. For the same reason Scripture calls angels

gods, because by them the glory of God beams forth on the world" (John Calvin, in his *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids, Wm. Eerdman's Publishing, vol. 1, p. 419.)

One wonders whether we may deduce from these quotes how close to the truth on this issue these people were. Note that even famous researcher and trinitarian, Spiros Zodhiates, wrote the following concerning John 1:18:

"The word *monogenees* actually is a compound of the *monos*, 'alone', and the word *genos*, 'race, stock, family'. Here we are told that He who came to reveal God - Jesus Christ - is of the same **family**, of the same stock, of the same race as God. There is ample evidence in the Scriptures that **the Godhead is a family ...**" (*Was Jesus God?*, p. 21).

We are destined to have a very close family relationship with God. God is indeed our Father. A father is a member of his family. Thus those in God's family are in the very family of God - the God Family if you wish. Peter Toon, a Protestant, in *Born Again. A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration* writes:

"... Paul ... speaks of believers as being changed to bear the image and likeness of God that Christ himself perfectly bears and reflects .. we are to bear the true image of God ... [Christians] **are able to have an intimate communion with their heavenly Father**, just as a child might address his or her earthly father by a familiar term like the Aramaic *Abba* or the English *Daddy* ... **Birth from above is birth into a family** ... Growth in new life is growth into Christ within his body, the church" (pp. 44-45, 65).

Another is pastor Charles Taze Russell who seemed to hold to a similar belief:

"Our high calling is so great, so much above the comprehension of men, that they feel that we are guilty of blasphemy when we speak of being "new creatures '—not any longer human,' but 'partakers of the divine nature.' When we claim on the scriptural warrant, that we are begotten of a divine nature and that Jehovah is thus our father, it is claiming that we are divine beings—hence all such are Gods. **Thus we have a family of Gods**, Jehovah being our father, and all his sons being brethren and joint-heirs: Jesus being the chief, or first-born." ("Ye are Gods," *Zion's Watch Tower*, December 1881, vol 3, no 6, pp. 2-3) [emphasis mine]

"Uniformly throughout the Bible, except in this one instance death is represented as a dreadful disaster, a terrible enemy, a devouring monster, and the grave a prison, permitted of our loving Heavenly Father ... The human must be entirely sacrificed **before the divine is perfected.**" ("The Blessed Dying", *Zion's Watch Tower*, December 1881, pp. 3-4) [emphasis mine]

In 1899 an academic book appeared on deification as salvation by WR Inge, *Christian Mysticism*. In it he quotes from the church historian, Professor Harnack:

"After Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen, the idea of deification is found in all the Fathers of the ancient Church, and that in a primary position. We have it in Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Apollinaris, Ephraem Syrus, and others, as also in Cyril, Sophronius, and later Greek and Russian theologians. In proof of it, Ps 82:6 ("I said, Ye are gods") is very often quoted" (Inge, p. 358).

To this day, the Eastern Orthodox Church still teaches divinisation or deification:

"Eastern Orthodox theological thought regarding humanity, sin, and redemption has always revolved around the concept of theosis. The doctrine is also called deification or divinization Simply put, theosis means being deified or becoming like God. Theosis connotes participation in God's nature while maintaining a distinct human nature ... Theosis is held by the Orthodox to be the chief end of Humanity. Humans were created for deification" (Clendenin, Daniel B. "The Deification of Humanity: Theosis", *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994, p. 120).

The Orthodox view is that the gospel is not primarily the solution to man's problem with personal sin. It is God's provision of divine life in Christ, the beginning of theosis. A residual benefit of beginning the process of deification is the remission of sins. Baptism is the means by which the believer enters into this new life. John Meyendorff summarizes the idea of redemption in Eastern Orthodox theology well. He says:

"Communion in the risen body of Christ; participation in divine life; sanctification through the energy of God, which penetrates the humanity and restores it to its "natural" state, rather than justification, or remission of inherited guilt - these are at the center of Byzantine understanding of the Christian Gospel" (Meyendorff, John. "Man", *Byzantine Theology Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1979, pp. 145-146).

Even the Roman Catholic Church appears to recall a little of this great truth. In the most up-to-date version of the official Catechism of the Catholic Church, released in 1992, Article 460 addresses the question: Why did the Word become flesh? In response, the *Catechism* uses the quotes from Irenaeus and Athanasius above, as well as this from Saint Thomas Aquinas:

"The word became flesh to make us 'partakers of the divine nature' (2Peter 1:4). 'For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the son of man; so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship might become a son of God' (Irenaeus Adv. haeres. 3,19, 1 PG 7/1,939) 'For the Son of God became man so that we might become God' (Athanasius, De Inc 54, 3:PG 25, 1923). The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so **that he, made man, might make men gods**" (Aquinas, *Opusc.* 57:1-4)" [emphasis mine]

Although it seems to say little about divinisation these days, and its own members do not seem to be taught much about it, nevertheless it lurks there deep within its theology.

More recently Pope Ratzinger stated:

"The Father as the source and origin, from whom the Son and the Spirit proceed from, is what defines His Personality. No one can call Him Father unless he is the "Son of the Father." Only the Son Jesus Christ ever called Him "Father" (J. Jeremias) and rightly so ... But the Father is generous. He does not keep His Son to Himself. He sent His Son so that we can be called sons of God. **Man can become God, not by making himself God, but by allowing himself to be made 'Son.'** Here in this gesture of Jesus as the Son, and nowhere else, can the Kingdom of God be realized" (J. Ratzinger in *Dogmatic Theology* vol. 9: Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life, The Catholic University of America Press, 1988, pp. 64-65) (located at http://apolonio.blogspot.com/2005_12_01_archive.html)

To the Eastern Orthodox theologians, salvation and redemption, baptism and the life of Christ were not events brought about by God as a result of a need to save man as such. Rather, salvation and associated concepts were subject to God's plan to incorporate man into the Godhead! While in

contrast, the Western (Roman and Protestant) view is that salvation is involved with the remission of sins and heaven as the reward of the saved. The evangelicals in particular, are heavily into the idea of salvation is God saving man from a fallen state and being reconciled to God via loving Jesus. But the Eastern Church radically differs with the belief that the Gospel is not focused solely upon man's sins being expunged, but rather that Christ's mission was to grant us divine life or theosis.

The Orthodox view is that the gospel is not primarily the solution to man's problem with personal sin. It is God's provision of divine life in Christ, the beginning of theosis, because God's Spirit mingles with humans. The remission of sins - salvation - is residual to the true plan for man: man was created to be made divine (Clendenin, "The Deification of Humanity: Theosis," 120). Remission of sins is to purify man to make him like his Creator. The following is written by John Meyendorff:

"Communion in the risen body of Christ; **participation in divine life; sanctification through the energy of God**, which penetrates the humanity and restores it to its "natural" state, rather than justification, or remission of inherited guilt--these are at the center of Byzantine understanding of the Christian Gospel." (Meyendorff, "Man," pp. 145-146.) (emphasis mine)

This doctrine is called theosis, deification or divinisation: it is shrouded in mystery and their theologians are very cautious about entering into great examination or analysis of the true depth of this teaching. Perhaps they are a little embarrassed by the teaching as human destiny is far greater than ending up in a heaven somewhere. But observers state that the teaching simply means to become very much like God - participating in God's nature whilst remaining distinct.

And their version of the Fall of man is quite different from the West: Adam and Eve's sin brought universal mortality to mankind, not guilt, because each and every one of us are responsible for our own sins. We make the choice whether to sin or not; our sin is not the direct result of Adam's choice (Clendenin, "The Deification of Humanity: Theosis," pp. 132-133., 120-123).

It should be explained here that their idea of man being divinised is not associated with the 'universal bliss' idea found amongst so much of Buddhist, eastern Asian religious thought and New Age thought (see further information about this at <http://www.westernchanfellowship.org/lib/wcf////introducing-buddhism-a-guide-for-western-beginners/>). It has nothing to do with dropping into the ocean of universal Godhead by your self sacrifice.

In such collectivist thinking, you would lose your identity and individuality and become part of the universal love - some say you will be conscious and others say unconscious forever. They may explain it like this: when a drop of water falls into a pool, the drop becomes part of the water, absorbed into it and part of it, yet remaining conscious - so it will be with humans. Their immortal souls supposedly become absorbed into god which is the universal consciousness. Such a perversion of the truth!

That is why it is so dangerous to speak of God not having shape or form. If He does not, then if we become part of the God Family, we would also not have shape or form. Instead we are promised a new body and to look just like Him, literal mirror images. Nor is He the universal consciousness; He instead has universal consciousness via His Spirit which fills the universe and beyond. You can see why there are so many variants to God's truth: Romanism, evangelicalism, New Age, Buddhism and so on. Even the Eastern Orthodox variant, whilst much closer to the truth than the others, is not willing to discuss it much and certainly does not have the sharp focus and depth of understanding that HWA and the old WCG had. Nor does it specifically state that God is a Family which we can be born into at the resurrection. Rather, Satan has cleverly shrouded the truth in a dark cloud of mystical terminology and paganistic rituals and twisted doctrines.

In addition, the Eastern tradition appears to have represented in its understanding of the nature of God and Christology, a small residue of its original unitarian or binitarian belief because, unlike the Roman Catholic definition of the Trinity which emphasises God's oneness, the Eastern tradition speaks of the Son as being eternally generated by the Father and the Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father - here we seem to have a faint glimpse of their ancient unitarian or binitarian doctrine. In this teaching the distinctness of the personalities within the unity of the Godhead are emphasised as opposed to the mystical unity of God which is emphasised by Rome. In turn, the Protestants even further define the personages of the trinitarian Godhead as separate entities.

"The Orthodox put the primary stress on the persons of the Godhead, and tend to regard the Father as the hypostatization of the divine essence. He is the unique fountainhead of Deity ..., which explains why the Orthodox cannot accept that the Holy Spirit derives his being from the Son as well as from the Father [as taught by Rome] ... The believer is called to a life of deification, which means transfiguration into the image and likeness of God ... **Deification is based on the statement in Gn. 1:26, that man and woman are created in the image and likeness of God ...**" but who after the fall lost this likeness. The holy spirit assists us in redemption by communicating to us "the energies of God himself, so that we may become partakers of the divine nature (2Pet. 1:4). The energies of God radiate from his essence and share its nature; but it must be understood that the deified person retains his personal identity and is not absorbed into the essence of God" (*New Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 217-218, 189). (emphasis mine)

" ... In Orthodox theology, the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father rests on the Son and becomes his energies. We who are called to the imitation of Christ are likewise called to manifest the energies of the Holy Spirit ... **those redeemed by Christ will be like gods** (cf. e.g. Ps. 82:6)" (p. 189). (emphasis mine)

Residues of the view that the Bible expresses primarily the centrality of God the Father rather than the Son Who is in His image, may be seen forthrightly in the Orthodox doctrine.

Today, when evangelicals and protestants talk about being in the likeness of God or being made like God by taking on the divine nature, they do not mean anything remotely like the 'born into the God Family' as taught by HWA or the divinisation as taught by the Eastern Orthodox churches. They merely mean that one takes upon themselves divine characteristics in similitude to the angels, but that a human can never be part of the Godhead in the slightest sense. To them, that is utterly heretical. Instead they believe that the saved will be flesh for eternity, requiring replenishment by eating of the tree of life. Evangelicals in particular, so adept at infiltrating the Churches of God, find all of our teachings to be abominable, preferring to cohabit with Rome, as they do so snugly in North America.

How utterly different to the New Age doctrine that man is a god and can choose for himself right from wrong:

"It would be impossible that another God could be admitted, when it is permitted to no other being to possess anything of God. Well, then, you say, at that rate we ourselves possess nothing of God. But indeed we do, and will continue to do so. Only it is from *Him* that we receive it, and not from *ourselves*. For we will be even gods, if we deserve to be among those of whom He declared, 'I have said, "You are gods,"' and 'God stands in the congregation of the gods.' But this comes of His own grace, not from any property in us. For it is He alone who can make gods" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, p. 480, quoted in "Deification of Man," David Bercot, editor, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, 1998, p. 200).

POSTSCRIPT

I came across a paper at the finalisation of this study titled *Heresy Hunters* by Dennis De Jarnette. I would like to highlight some of the interesting items he raises, in point form, while maintaining his wording:

- The Greek Orthodox Church liturgy states: "In My Kingdom, says Christ, I shall be God with you as gods." (From the Canon for Matins of Holy Thursday, Ode 4, Troparion 3 as quoted in Ware, Timothy (Bishop) *The Orthodox Church* Penguin Books New York 1993 page 231).
- A whole group of Faith Preachers on Television's Trinity Broadcasting Company advocate the doctrine of Deification in a very liberal form. These TV preachers include Paul Crouch, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Robert Tilton, and Fred Price. Fred Price Comments:

Man is the only creation of God that is in God's class ... I believe that through these scriptures we can very clearly see that God made man a god. (as quoted in Horton, Michael ed. *Agony of Deceit* Moody Press Chicago 1990 page 264)

This is almost identical to Herbert Armstrong's idea that Man is, or will be, of the God kind. Or Kenneth Hagin:

"Physically we are born of human parents and partake of their nature. Spiritually, we are born of God and partake of his nature. (Ibid. Why this troubled the editor of *Agony* is beyond me, this is a rewording of 2 Pet 1:14!)

- Or Earl Paulk: "Just as dogs have puppies and cats have kittens, so God has little gods". (Ibid.)
- Maximus the Confessor:

"Mysterious self-abasement of the only begotten son with a view to the deification of our nature" (*Maximus the Confessor Classics of Western Spirituality* Ed John Farina Translated by George Berthold. Paulist Press New York 1985 page 102 Commentary on Our Father Prologue.)

" ... in the process of deification through virtue" (ie character development) (*Ibid.* page 197 *The Church's Mystagogy* Chapter 7)

I included Maximus because what he is saying here is similar to what the Church of God has always taught, that the purpose of life in the here and now is to build character. Or as Maximus puts it—deification through virtue.

- Augustine more than anyone else fine-tuned Christian Theology. He is one of the most radical of those who believe in the deification of man. Augustine said "Let us rejoice and give thanks: we are not only made Christians, but made Christ." (Underhill *Op Cited* page 251 Hom Jn 21.8) This is very similar to the most radical advocates of Deification today the "Faith Preachers" who were talked about earlier. Not only this, but we are to "eat" God, probably through communion. This "eating of God" has an interesting effect on people:

I heard thy voice from on high crying unto me, 'I am Food of the full-grown: grow, and then thou shalt feed on me. Nor shalt thou change me into thy substance as thou changest the food of thy

flesh, but thou shalt be changed into Mine.' (Augustine *Confessions The Nicea and Post Nicea Fathers* Ed. Schaff, Philip T & T Clark vol. 1 1989 page 109 Confessions bk. vii cap x).

Here Augustine holds similar sentiments to Athanasius and Irenaeus.

"The Son of God was made a partaker of mortality, so that mortal man might partake of divinity" (Underhill *Op Cited* page 251 Hom on Ps 52:6 36:646)

- St. Thomas Aquinas:

"For Dionysus teaches that the height of understanding is for man to become conjoined to God as the wholly unknown. He agrees but limits it and qualifies it. Although he uses not the term energy, he says that he can't see God's essence." (Aquinas, Thomas *Summa Theologiae* Black Friars/ Mc Graw Hill Gilby, Thomas O.P. translator vol.16 page 83 from question 3 article 8 "What Happiness is.")

Thomas is agreeing with Deification as a concept, but limits it and qualifies it to such an extent that he does not really believe it. Thomas's position is precisely what Bowman said when I quoted him on page 4.

I have several secondary sources which state that Thomas believes in Deification. A good example is the O'Brien's article on "Deification" in the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion*. (O'Brien, T. C. O.P. "Deification" in the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion* Ed Meagher O.P.S., Kevin Paul et al Corpus Publication Washington, DC.1970). He lists Th Aq ST 1a 103.4 1a2ae 110 as a source for the Aquinas's belief in Deification. Aquinas says that "...all things become like absolute Good ... creatures are guided toward a likeness of God." (Ibid. vol. 3 103.4 translator of this volume T. C. O'Brien!) Aquinas here is referring to this life. But while this approaches Deification, it does not arrive there fully. O'Brien is here overstating his case. What makes this overstatement so interesting is that O'Brien was the translator of this volume of *Summa Theologiae*! He is obviously a Thomist scholar. Thomas Aquinas does believe in Deification but in a very limited way.

- What is blasphemy? To Symeon the New Theologian it is to deny that the Holy Spirit can be experienced today and that the Holy Spirit can Deify believers. I would not go that far, but Symeon does have a point. Today we have cheap grace. The Holy Spirit, assuming these nominal Christians have it, seems to have no effect on their lives. I heard one of these "Easter Christians" suggest that all regular Church-goers stay home on Easter so he could get better parking! My church has its share of what I call "Passover Christians" too! The Holy Spirit should be more powerful than that, Symeon comments:

"As it [the Holy Spirit] regenerates you, it changes you from corruptible to incorruptible, from mortal to immortal, from sons of men into sons of God and gods by adoption and grace."

There are some differences such as Symeon's emphasis on deification in this life. But his concept of Deification is similar to what the Church of God teaches.

- If you had to pick one modern theologian who best expresses the Orthodox Church you would probably choose Vladimir Lossky. His *Orthodox Theology* is a short summation of Orthodox Theology. Is Deification, to the Greek Orthodox, the fact the Holy Spirit dwells in each Christian? Lossky comments:

" ... instead of becoming 'disindividualized' to become 'cosmic' and to merge thus in a divine impersonal ... God allows him to 'personalize' the world" (Lossky,

Vladimir *Orthodox Theology* Translated By Kesarcodi-Watson, Ian and Ihita St. Vlacimir's Seminary Press Crestwood, NY 1989 page 70-71)

- The premier theologian of the twentieth century was probably C. S. Lewis. This has always struck me as odd since his training was in English Literature. Surely C. S. Lewis did not believe in Deification, did he?

"God looks at you as if you were a little Christ: Christ stands beside you to turn you into one. I daresay this idea of a divine make-believe sounds rather strange at first. But, is it so strange really? Is that not how the higher thing always raises the lower? Another teaches her baby to talk by talking to it as if it understood long before it really does. We treat our dogs as if they were 'almost human': that is why they really become 'almost human' in the end." (Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity* Macmillan Co. New York 1972 page 165-166)

Even C. S. Lewis believes in Deification!

Addendum added March 2005:

I found the following from a famous work by CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, to be of great interest:

"We are not begotten by God [yet], we are only made by Him: in our natural state we are not sons of God [fully], only (so to speak) statues. We have not got *Zoe* or spiritual life [fully]: only *Bios* or biological life which is presently going to fun down and die. Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have his way, come to share in the life of Christ". (page 150)

"The Son of God became man to enable men to become sons of God". (page 151)

We are "becoming a son of God, of being turned from a created thing into a begotten thing, of passing over from the temporary biological life into timeless 'spiritual' life, has been done for us. Humanity is already 'saved' in principle. (page 153)

"God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man". (page 180)

Addendum added 8 July 2021:

I came across an article which is worth a read *You are Gods at the Origins of Christianity* by Vincenzo Belmonte and also the March-April *Beyond Today* magazine contained a very good article "When God became man so man could become God" by Scott Ashley.

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"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved. The marvelous richness of human experience would lose something of rewarding joy if there were no limitations to overcome. The hilltop hour would not be half so wonderful if there were no dark valleys to traverse."

- Helen Keller