



THE GOSPEL FOR THE POSTMODERN WORLD V:

The Gift Abused

AT THE CENTER OF ALL HISTORY stands an unfathomable act of love in which the One-and-Only God irrevocably adopted his own Creation by becoming human as Jesus Christ (cf. Ephesians 3:11; Philippians 2:5-9). He did so in order to confront the negative consequences of actions necessary for resolving the virtually unsolvable challenge of creating a relational (covenantal) universe out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). These actions included his introduction of —

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1. Command (e.g., Psalm 33:9), possession and power structures.
2. Responsive free process in nature and self-conscious free will in humanity.
3. Death and extinction.¹

The negative consequences of these actions labeled God as having an “other side” — an alter ego (“other self”) known by such terms as Satan, *Samel*, Lucifer and the Serpent (cf. John 3:14). Jesus Christ dedicated his life and ministry to confronting these “attributes” of the “other side” of God. Moreover, the death of Jesus Christ inaugurated the death of his alter ego and its negative attributes. Then, the resurrection of Jesus Christ inaugurated a new reality filled with the gift of self-emptying love for all “others.”

For 40 days following his resurrection, Jesus Christ repeatedly appeared to his followers and assured them of his loving care and continuing presence. On one occasion in Galilee, he declared, “. . . [L]o, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20) Then, on the 40th day,

he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. — Luke 24:50-53.

Just 10 days later, after the ascension,

when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. — Acts 2:1-4.

Historically, of course, Pentecost began as the inaugural celebration of Israel's liberation from bondage in Egypt, their arrival at Mount Sinai, and the appearance of God "in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai" (Exodus 19:11).² God's appearance was followed by his words through Moses — e.g., "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

After the resurrection, Pentecost became a celebration of human liberation from bondage, the confirmation of the divine presence, and a commemoration of God's promissory words uttered by his followers. God's gift of the Holy Spirit to his followers on Pentecost assumed the reciprocal gifts of the Spirit to all "others," regardless of differences in ethnicity, language, culture, dwelling place, etc. Sadly, however, this Pentecostal gift was misconstrued by God's followers as the acquisition of divine power and the exaltation of their rank over other human beings. God's own followers thus gave precedence to his alter ego rather than to his self-emptying love.

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The Subsequent Tragedy

The subsequent tragedy of the last 2,000 years is that mankind has failed to be a true follower of the human God. All power structures, including every form of so-called Christianity, have continued to reflect God's alter ego, which Jesus Christ bore to death at Calvary. None has understood that the old covenant of the divine alter ego was terminated by Christ's death. None has discerned the depth, extent and ultimate victory of God's own self-emptying (*kenotic*) love for all Creation and all mankind. None has realized that the Christ event assured the irrevocable and noncontingent existence and transformation of Creation — the

universe, life and humanity. None has perceived that God became human but that no human ever will become god. Thus, despite God's monumental efforts, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22). God's efforts have continuously been met by human misperception, misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

In adhering to God's dead alter ego, the world faces satanic command, possession and power. In their consequent resort to concepts such as substitution, retribution, restitution and ransom, human beings have propagated lies that universally persist until today. Biblicists and others have employed the reality of death to propagate theories such as "original sin," the ultimate annihilation of all Creation, the abandonment of Creation by both God and man, the repeated reincarnation of mankind as other life forms, and the termination of an evil and suffering Creation through either a prolonged purgatory or an eternal fiery hell.

It is commonly assumed that we are now approaching the limit of global tension. Fear and apprehension have escalated to the point where many are convinced that we are nearing the end of history. Long have competing ideological power structures — political, religious, economic, cultural, etc. — been engaged in violence against perceived opponents in order to secure their own sovereignty by extending their control and domesticating influence, whatever the cost to others. However, today world power structures actually have the tools to violently destroy humanity and irreversibly disrupt all life on this planet. Even more ominously, beneath the surface religious fundamentalists are determined to launch the final assault against humanity, Creation and thus the Creator himself. Because they see themselves as cosmic gods (divine souls) imprisoned in Creation, their explicit purpose is to exterminate all enemies in the battle of Armageddon and, by bringing the end of the world (created order), to liberate themselves to their own cosmic divinity.

The Tragedy Resolved

God himself faces this heartbreaking tragedy and calls for witnesses to discern the truth of his own humanity and his achievements. He invites humanity to reflect his attributes of self-emptying (*kenotic*) love rather than the attributes of his alter ego (Philippians 2:5-8).

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When will we contemplate, accept and foster the truth of the Risen One — the human God — who met his followers by the Sea of Galilee? Early in the morning he stood upon the shore, lit a fire, cooked breakfast, and served his disciples. He called his followers his friends — not his servants (John 15:15). In this climactic incident, where were command, possession and power? They had been

abandoned, discarded and superseded by the humble, self-effacing love of God himself.

Will mankind recognize the truth of the Christ event? Will humanity understand, accept and celebrate that which Jesus Christ actually inaugurated? The emphatic answer is Yes! Soon all the global satanic power structures — which operate by deceit, fraud, covert action, force, violence and terror and which exist to arrogantly command, possess and domesticate others — will self-destruct. Jesus Christ is about to reappear and to again present himself as the judgment of this world and as the ultimate solution to mankind's self-delusional actions and purposes. Jesus Christ is about to act, and he will have witnesses who will be ready, willing and eager to affirm his true purposes, achievements and prospects (Philippians 2:6-11; cf. Romans 14:10-12). Soon he will again declare, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be [finally and fully] cast out" (John 12:31).

Endnotes

1. See "The Divine Predicament," *Outlook* (January/February 2005); "The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The 'Other Side' of God," *Outlook* (January 2008); "The Gospel for the Postmodern World IV: The Gift of God," *Outlook* (February 2008).
2. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. (1997), s.v. Louis Jacobs, "Shavuot."

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