04-2026

Superina Paolo

T H O U G H T S

Cogito ergo credo

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THE CHRISTIAN CHRCH
AND
THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNION

In the Name of the Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ

As, at the beginning, there was perfect harmony between Yahweh and His whole creation, so it will be at the end, when all will live a new life of full spiritual communion with Yahweh and with each other

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THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
AND
THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNION
In the Name of the Father
and of His Son, Jesus Christ

T H O U G H T S

Cogito ergo credo

Where do we exist?
Which is the origin and the reason of our existence?
Why to believe in the Christian God?
Why has the Christian God created the universe?
Why man?
Why to believe in Jesus Christ?
Which is the reason and purpose of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection?
Who really was and is Jesus Christ?
What will happen to men after physical death?

Bible's quotations based on:
The Holy Bible NIV. (New International Version)

Superina Paolo
Unitarian Christian
iconoclast

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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

What follows is not intended and does not want to be a new or original study of the New Testament books, but simply what I have learned from them and of them, then put in writing.

When, in 1989, I wrote the chapter "Looking at the Bible. Ideas and interpretations," my comprehension of how to read the Old Testament and how to understand its meaning was somewhat limited. But, after more than twenty years of study and reflection, it was deeply matured. However, I have preferred to leave the chapter as it was and to add two update notes (Annexes 1 and 2) written in 2013.

Notes

1: To God, His Name is given back: Yahweh.

2: The word "love" (and its derivatives: to love, loved, etc.) is used in many situations and takes many, even deeply different meanings. In this book it is used only in three cases:

a) In the man > Yahweh relationship.

b) In the man > < woman relationship.

c) In the parents > < children relationship.

In all other cases, other words are used, depending on the context: affection, fondness, benevolence, goodwill, to be fond of, to cherish, to like, etc.

3: For a proper comprehension of some New Testament passages and concepts which do not appear to be "Christian" or "Good News," is important to remember that:

a) We usually don't realize how near Christianity was to becoming only another kind of Judaism. All the first Christians were Jews and all their traditions would have convinced them to keep the Good News for themselves, excluding completely the Gentiles.

b) All New Testament writers viewed the whole period beginning with Jesus Christ's birth as "the last days." They understood this period to be the "last" of the days because neither former prophecy nor new revelation concerning the history of salvation indicated the coming of another era before the return of Jesus Christ.

c) The actual meaning of what they wrote is still too often concealed by considerations derived from Old Testament ideas -it could not have been easy, for the writers of the New Testament Books, to detach themselves immediately and completely from the ideas they grew up with.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Even though I was born into a Christian -Catholic- family of believers -or, perhaps, just because of this- I had some periods in my life when the Christian religion and the whole set of ideas constituting it seemed to me right and logical, others when they appeared absurd and unacceptable; and some others when I was practically unconcerned.

Anyway, at a certain point I did feel the desire to know better and to understand the Christian religion and its origins, the meaning and the purpose of creation, of our existence and of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Unfortunately, books and courses -usually of catechism- about Christianity not only do not help clarify the quantity of doubts, but do not even give an organic vision of Christianity and of the history of the human race before and after Jesus' coming. Similarly, priests and pastors tend to answer by using some standard phrases -those characteristic of the denomination of Christianity they belong to- sure that they can, in such a way, explain everything; whereas they actually achieve the opposite effect, and they convince people, at the best, not to ask for explanations any more.

The purpose of what follows is, really, to try and give, looking from a Christian non-sectarian point of view, a thoughtful, rational, and univocal interpretation of the Bible as a whole -Old and New Testament- trying to take into consideration and to understand the totality of the existential and religious problems that come to the human mind; from the existence of a God Creator, to the reason and evolution of creation, till the necessity and genesis of the Christian Religion. It is clear that it would be absurd to imagine that one is able to solve, with this, all the doubts which may have accompanied man from the beginning. However, the hope is to have the possibility of giving a positive contribution to knowledge and comprehension.

I also consider it necessary to note that, very often, the ideas which follow are in opposition, some times in total antithesis, to the official and traditional interpretations. Anyway, every time I was convinced of an idea or an interpretation, I went on with it without compromising.

To allow a proper understanding of the ideas that follow, it is essential to explain how they have developed and why I have started writing them down. Five fundamental steps characterize the passage from a personal situation of poor interest in religious subjects to the present involvement.

First step, about December 1986. I went to a Christian bookstore with my daughter, Sandra, to get some books for her, and she proposed buying me a Bible as a present for Christmas, a suggestion that I refused. I told her that I had already read the Bible once as a teenager, and I still remembered it quite well. That, of course, was not true, but at the time I had no interest at all in reading the Bible again.

Second step, from January to June 1987. In this period something changed and I began feeling an internal curiosity and desire to know more about our religion and its origin, to understand the meaning and the purpose of creation, of our existence, and of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection. I am deeply convinced that all this curiosity and desire did not originate from my own mind, but was inspired by an external source; Yahweh. As a first consequence, I bought a Bible -The New International Version, Third Printing, January 1986- and I began reading and studying it.

Third step, about February 1988. During a lunch with one of my daughter Sandra's teachers at Dalat School, Miss Robbie Ellen Skaggs, I found a very interesting and illuminating issue of the religious magazine "Alliance Life" dealing with demons, possession, and so on. Miss Skaggs noticed my interest and lent me some books, taken from Dalat School's library, on the same topics.

Fourth step, about May 1988. After a dinner at home, I had a very interesting conversation with the Dalat School's pastor, Mr. Jim H. Livingston, who gave me his own copy of "The Plain Man looks at the Apostles' Creed" by Mr. William Barclay. This and all the other books by the same author that I bought later had been of fundamental importance for the development of my ideas.

Fifth step, July 1988. I received from my wife a nice birthday present, a New International Version Study Bible, full of historical and explanatory notes fundamental for the improvement of my knowledge.

From the very beginning of this interest, I had the conviction that there had to be a purpose in all this study and in my life; and that this purpose was to understand and explain the actual truth. In effect, there always was, and there always is, something directing my study, posing questions and giving answers, finding for me, at the proper moment, an appropriate book, an article, a person to discuss with, a way to solve the problem of the moment.

Finally, another essential point. I am not always allowed to write these notes when I would like to; but, because of some sort of inspiration, sometimes my hands have to write, sometimes they refuse to.

EXISTENCE

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

EXISTENCE

As soon as we begin looking around and thinking about ourselves, our life, the place where we live with all its mountains, seas, rivers, animals, and plants, and the sky with the sun, the moon, and all the stars, the problem of "existence" arises. Existence of what we can perceive with our senses and of what we cannot; in short, existence of the "universe."

Speaking about the existence of the universe and of all its content, we should not forget that there are three fundamental and distinct aspects to consider: the reality, the origin, and the reason for such existence. First comes the reality; does the universe actually exist? The essence of this question is mainly of a physical nature. To answer it, it is only necessary to give physical proof of the existence of the physical, material universe, without any need to consider or understand the other two aspects: What is the origin of the universe? What is the reason for its existence? These last two questions cannot be answered nor demonstrated by any kind of physical proof; only philosophy and religion can try to give a proper explanation.

REALITY OF EXISTENCE

We cannot have any doubt that we exist. The fact itself that we can think and discuss whether we exist or not is already a logical demonstration of the reality of our existence; without existence there cannot be any thought, meditation, and discussion. By means of our physical senses we are aware of the physical existence of ourselves, our fellow-men, the animals, the plants, the Earth, and the sky with all its stars. This makes us fully aware and sure that the physical reality, which we call "physical universe," does really exist. Therefore, our senses are sufficient to give proof of its existence, in spite of the fact that they can only provide a very limited and partial picture of it.

We should not confuse the certain awareness of the existence of the universe with the poor knowledge and limited understanding we have of it. Our senses are adequate for normal daily life and indispensable for the physical beings we are, even if it is easy to mislead them. One example will be more than enough: if two people look into a mirror from two different angles, they see two different "realities." Now, in the mirror there are no "realities" at all; there are countless optically reflected images of the only one physical reality, not many contemporaneous different realities. It is our mind, or our mental capacity to reason and deduce, that makes us aware of this diffe-

rence between the true reality and the false images of it we can receive from our senses.

The point is quite clear: our senses are limited, and they exist -such as they are- to allow us to live a normal physical life on Earth. On the other hand, our minds -through them and by using them- have a certain capacity to separate true from false and to extrapolate the truth hidden behind totally or partially false indications. This process generates what we call "knowledge." From better knowledge we get better understanding, and from better understanding we get better knowledge. All the technical instruments of any kind ever developed from the beginning of the human race are part of and within this process of understanding-knowledge-understanding; they are, indeed, only ways to strengthen, improve, and extend the characteristics and capacities of the human senses. The most powerful microscopes and telescopes -optical or electronic does not make any conceptual difference, being only two different technologies- are equipment designed to extend the capacity of our eyes to see more and farther than they are physically able to do.

As a final result, having plenty of physical evidence, we know for sure that we and the place were we live exist. With the evolution and improvement of the technical capacity, our knowledge of ourselves and of the universe increases continuously. The reality of the universe's nature and existence does not change; it is our own knowledge and understanding of it that changes, not the universe itself.

The level of knowledge of the present moment is expressed by a number of "theories" and "physical laws." A theory is a hypothetical explanation, of a higher level than the knowledge and technical capacity of the moment should allow, for the actual reality; it is a supposed, but not necessarily real or true, proposition made from known facts, and has to be used as a basis for additional reasoning and investigation. A theory can contribute to the further development of knowledge and technical capacity, and this may either confirm the basic idea of a theory or make necessary a more or less substantial revision of it. A theory tries to give a logical explanation to certain facts and experimental results. When new facts and results arise and do not fit into its suppositions, it becomes necessary to formulate another, wider, theory that can include the previous one and all the new facts.

A physical law, formulated in mathematical terms, is a way to express some particular aspects of the reality which we understand, or suppose we do, well enough. Presently, all the physical laws we have are approximated formulations only good within certain limits, out of which they lose validity and cannot describe any more in sufficiently precise mathematical terms the

actual reality. Most times there are different, more or less accurate and complicated formulations of the same law, depending on where and for what purpose it is necessary to use the mathematical formulation.

An example: Newton and Kepler's laws on the gravitational attraction and movement of the planets, as studied at school, are sufficient to calculate the position of the solar planets -few, big, and subject to minimum external influence- but are absolutely inadequate to execute the calculations for putting and keeping in orbit an artificial satellite -small and subject to plenty of strong external influences.

A physical law, in certain terms, is the practical output and consequence of a theory; it is mathematics applied to science. A theory is mainly an idea, that is, the result of the mental activity and capacity; it is philosophy applied to science.

It is important to be aware that very often the information media -TV, radio, magazines, and newspapers- are sending a misleading message: they almost always say that some aspects or some parts of the universe either do respect or do not respect the statements of a particular theory or physical law. Now, the universe exists and works in a certain typical way; what we call theories and physical laws -which we are continuously changing and improving- are our ways to understand and explain it to the best of our capacity. The universe does not respect any of our theories; neither does it follow any of our physical laws, as it clearly results from the meaning of the word "theory." What we can say is that the existence of the universe is regulated by some intrinsic "Universal Laws" which we are trying to understand and to write down, as far as possible, as physical laws.

ORIGIN OF EXISTENCE

After having recognized that the universe, in all its known and unknown aspects, actually exists, the second question arises: what is its origin, does it have any origin at all? It is evident that in this case we are unable -now and even in the distant future- to give an answer supported by physical proof; the solution can only come from a logical analysis of the various possibilities. There are three of them.

1) The universe came into existence, from nothingness, on its own; without any external input or influence.

2) The universe came into existence, from nothingness, because of the decision and the initiative of one or more pre-existing beings by whom it was created.

3) The universe always existed as it is, never auto-born from nothingness, never "created" by one or more pre-existing beings.

Let us analyze these three possibilities.

1)The universe came into existence from nothingness without any external influence, that is, auto-generated from non-existence. Now, how can something that does not exist decide on its own to come at a certain point into existence? No existence means no capacity, no possibility, nothing at all. On the contrary, the passage from non-existence to existence is the result of an act of willingness supported by the appropriate power and capacity. Nothingness, not existing, cannot have any willingness, power, or capacity. This possibility is totally and completely absurd, one we have to fully reject.

2)The universe was created by one or more pre-existing powerful beings, each of whom we call by the name "God." This second possibility makes a lot more sense and becomes, also, logical once we have accepted the philosophical concept of the actual reality and existence of one or more Gods. This solution is called theistic and we say that it is full of spiritual content, a definition that derives from the traditional practice of considering a being at the level of God as purely spiritual. We will further discuss it after analyzing the third possibility.

3)The universe has always existed, it was never created by any God nor auto-generated from nothingness. In this case we should easily say that the universe itself is God. Furthermore, if we consider the universe as being one, it follows that even the "Universe-God" has to be one. This way, too, has a certain logical sense, as does the second one. And we have to recognize that, in line of principle, between the second and the third possible origin there is not such a big conceptual difference; both of them are theistic, even if in two fundamentally different ways. Anyway, if the universe itself is God, it follows that we too are part of God; that everyone and everything is part of this "Universe-God" which was never created, but has always existed. However, we see all too clearly that in this universe everything and everybody has a beginning and an end, that all the living beings and creatures are born and then die. The same applies to the planets, the stars, and the galaxies; we have more than enough technical proof and evidence of it from the activities and studies of the astronomers. It is clear that, if all the parts constituting the universe have a beginning and an end, the same has to apply and has to be true for the universe itself; and this completely contradicts the initial assumption of a Universe-God always existing. From another point of view, as we can personally experience on Earth, the universe is a mixture, in a constant struggle, between good and evil. This mixture is an intrinsic characteristic, it is the nature itself of the universe; in this case of God. It follows as a logical consequence that God himself is both good and evil; in other words that he has always to fight against himself. And this situation is neither logical, nor convincing.

As a result of both the above mentioned considerations, we have to reject even this possibility and reach the conclusion that the universe had to be created by the initiative of one or more Gods.

PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF EXISTENCE

Let us go back to the explanation of the second possibility for existence, with the universe created by one or more Gods. We have already said that we are accustomed to consider a being at the level of God as purely spiritual. This is because we do not have any direct physical contact with Him, and He appears to be too far from us and, as a consequence, not within our capacity to understand Him. Furthermore, we are accustomed to classifying all the aspects of reality either as physical or spiritual, even if we cannot be sure of what is physical and what is spiritual. The physical aspect is represented by what we can perceive with our senses or with our technical devices. The spiritual by what we cannot perceive physically, but only imagine with our thought and reasoning. The real problem of this classification is that we do not know which aspects of reality, that presently we are not able to physically perceive, will be in the future within the range and capacity of our technology, and which will never be. In historical terms, we see that what we call the "physical" part of the universe is growing wider following the improvement of our understanding of it, and that the border between "physical" and "spiritual" is moving as more and more supposedly spiritual aspects and phenomena are entering into the definition of physical. This is essentially a matter of knowledge and understanding; what is wrong, in fact, is to consider the separate existence and distinction between material and spiritual. The definition itself of the words "physical" and "spiritual" is wrong and misleading; in the end there is no difference at all, they represent two apparent and temporary faces of the same reality.

In a universe created by the will and power of a totally "spiritual" God, everything existing has been created by Him; thus we can say that matter is derived from spirit. At this point it is difficult to consider matter and spirit as two different realities; they are the same and only one, of which we perceive and understand different aspects as different realities.

As a matter of fact, we can arrive at similar conclusions even considering the other two possibilities. In the case of a universe auto-generated, everything existing would be material; therefore, what we call spiritual would be totally and fully physical, "spiritual" being only the classification of all the aspects and phenomena presently not understood. If we consider a universe always existing, it would be God himself; hence, everything existing would be spiritual. All the physical aspects of the universe would anyway be within the nature of God, and again there would be exclusively one reality.

REASON FOR EXISTENCE

Immediately after answering the question of the universe's existence and origin, the third and last question arises: what is the reason for it? Even in this case, as before, we are not able to give an answer supported by physical proof; the solution can only be the result of a logical analysis of the problem.

To explain the origin of a universe created by one or more Gods -let us write one, for a matter of simplicity- we may consider two different moral approaches; first, a pessimistic and, second, an optimistic one.

i) Pessimistic. We, and the entire universe, were created as we are to be the experiment, the playground, and the toys of the Creator. In this case, whatever happens to us and to the whole of creation does not have any importance because this God is doing and getting what he likes and wants. It does not have any importance if a person is doing good or evil, then it follows that a good person will never get any specific reward, and a bad one will never incur any specific penalty. This means that not only all the sufferings and injustices on Earth do not have any importance; but that also the opposite, all the good and positive aspects and facts of life, do not have any. It follows that when we die, it is all finished and that after death there is nothing, no life, no compensation, no reward and no punishment; everybody and everything is completely obliterated into non-existence, into nothingness. But, in this case, why do we have, during life, the capacity to think, to meditate, and to understand if nothing can follow? From a logical point of view, this reason for our existence, for the universe's existence, is absolutely not convincing; it is too frightening in its complete lack of any moral meaning, in its total ruthlessness.

ii) Optimistic. We, and the whole universe, were created for another reason, better than experiment or amusement. In this case, we can be sure that whoever decided to create the universe had surely a final result of quite different moral values in mind. It follows that, even if things on Earth are far from being perfect, there is still the opportunity for improvement on Earth itself and, more important, also after physical death; this way giving continuity of existence to our intellectual capacities and assuring a proper final balance of compensations, rewards, and punishments.

We can easily say that this last approach -God creator, optimistic solution- is very attractive and that, from a moral point of view, it is the correct one. What is not easy, is to try and personally know this God creator and to understand, from his point of view, the actual reason why we and the universe were created. Looking around and considering all the things we are not able to do, it is clear that the gap between our capacities and the powers of the

Creator is so wide that, left to ourselves, we do not have much possibility of understanding and knowing Him. In other terms, this means that we depend on His initiative and have to wait for Him to show and introduce Himself to us.

And now that we are speaking about a Creator, a being whom we call God, it is necessary to define what God is to us, what His characteristics are. We can begin by saying that God is a being whose powers are big enough to have created the whole universe, were we are and live, as it is. That, being God the creator of everything and everybody, He is almighty. Furthermore, it is clear that, to create, He existed before and independently from His creation; He cannot have been created (in this case the true God would be his creator) and so He has existed from ever in the past. Finally, it is obvious that an almighty being, never created, surely cannot die; He will exist for ever in the future. In effect, past, present, and future -in essence time- exist because of the existence of the universe and apply only to it. God is not subject to time as we understand it, because time itself was created by God when He created the universe.

The reason God had for creating the universe is quite clear and simple; it is intrinsic in God's existence, in the fact that He is alive and active. Nobody, God above all, can stay passive without doing anything, without moving, and without "thinking." Intellectual capacity and powers are there to be used, not to be kept idle in a kind of passive self-complacency. God, the Creator of the universe, is clearly very powerful and very active; He is always fully involved in His creation and its evolution. Therefore, we can say that for God it was, and is, "necessary" not only to have created the universe with all its content, but also to follow its development, and to personally participate in all the day-to-day events.

Now, which kind of God? One God or many Gods? Here we are entering the realm of religious belief, of faith. To believe in one God, in many Gods, or in our Only One Christian God, Yahweh, is anyway a matter of faith. Faith itself makes evident his personal belief to the believer. By reason we can only arrive at a picture of a majestic God of big power and might, a God who does as He likes and who does not give any friendliness and intimacy to His creation. It requires revelation and faith to see that God, Yahweh, worries for and takes care of what He has created. As Christians, we know very well that the essence and the center of the Christian concept of God is that Yahweh is fond of His creation. And that, furthermore, His fondness can never be complete and satisfied until it is returned. Consequently, for Yahweh, a continuous creation is a necessity as He needs beings, persons, whom He can be fond of and who can be fond of Him.

LOOKING AT THE BIBLE

IDEAS AND INTERPRETATIONS

DOES GOD EXIST, OR NOT?

Yes, God exists. Proof of His existence is the existence of the universe itself; by definition God is He who has created the universe.

The fact that this God, Creator of the universe, is our Christian God, Yahweh, that He is the Only One God, and that our religion is the right one, is totally a matter of faith. To prove and demonstrate the reason and reality of this faith to people having a strong different idea or belief, will always be very difficult, many times impossible.

To be convinced that He exists, we need His help which is His direct intervention into our mind and soul. This intervention can assume any kind of aspect and strength but needs, undoubtedly and always, our active collaboration. If we do not want to be convinced, we will not be; to allow or not to be convinced is our margin of personal free choice.

GOD DOES EXIST

Yes, God exists. He is a being with His own characteristics and powers, He has created the angels, the universe and all the living beings of the universe, man included. As He is the Creator of everything and everybody, we assume that He has all the possible powers, and, as a consequence, we say that He is Almighty.

To create, that is, to be at the origin of all the existing things and beings, He had surely to exist before their creation; nobody could have created Him. Therefore, He is eternal.

The Christian faith tells us that He is Yahweh, the Only One God. This means that, even if there were others like Him, they were not involved in the creation of our universe; and so the fact that He is our Only One God is fully valid.

His existence is too big a philosophical problem, which we are totally unable to solve. In other terms, we do not know why He exists, but we know that we have physical and spiritual proof of His existence. Physical through the existence of the physical universe, which we can "see" by means of our physical senses. Spiritual through our own mental capacity to use and to elaborate the information received by our senses, as well as to think and reason in abstract terms about non-physical, theoretical, and spiritual ideas and concepts.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YAHWEH

Yahweh is said to be pure spirit, that is, lacking any kind of body. Now, why did this powerful being have to create such a big -at least from our point of view- material universe and so many material beings if He is purely spiritual? Therefore, it comes as a consequence that Yahweh has both "body" and "spirit." Obviously, His body is not like the one we have; but, even if we cannot imagine what His body is like, we can be sure He has one. This is also demonstrated by the fact that Yahweh is in Heaven, where Jesus Christ is with his resurrected body; and where all of us will be, after resurrection, with our own resurrected bodies. Yahweh and His Son, Jesus, His sons the angels, and His adopted sons, men, will all live together in the same place, in the "Reign of Yahweh." In fact everyone will be there with his own body and spirit, that means with his own full "personality."

The word "body" assumes different meanings depending on whose body we are speaking about. As far as we are concerned, there are:

a) Yahweh's body; whose characteristics are unknown.

b) Jesus Christ's body; first the human -physical and material- body; second, the resurrected one, of partially unknown characteristics.

c) Angels' bodies; whose characteristics are almost totally unknown.

d) Man's body; first the physical, material body; later the resurrected one, of partially unknown characteristics.

To recognize that Yahweh has a body and that the angels do too is of fundamental importance to understand, as much as we can, this God by Whom man was created, male and female, in a way to be like Him and to resemble Him. Furthermore, this means that our body, mind, and soul -spirit- are in some ways similar to His. We have:

a) Body; presently physical and material, but which will assume different characteristics after our resurrection.

b) Mind; intelligence, capacity to think, to have emotions, and to control them.

c) Soul; spirit, generated by the hereditary patrimonies of our parent's souls, like body and mind are generated by their body's hereditary patrimonies. Body and mind constitute the material, and soul the spiritual, part of the human being.

The fact that Adam was given a soul by Yahweh -Who "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," which is the soul- means that at the origin of all men's spirits there is the Spirit of Yahweh, because Adam's soul is the originator and generator of all human souls, the one of Eve included. The generation of Eve from Adam's body and soul gives one and only one common origin to all human beings, as body, mind, and soul. Moreover, this common origin explains why all human beings are sharing Adam and Eve's

life outside the Garden of Eden. And it is clear, above any reasonable doubt, that the soul -the most important part of the human being, the part that represents the difference between human and animal life- must be generated by the parents and not created anew by Yahweh, at the moment of conception, because this would mean that the new human being would not have anything in common with his ancestors but the physical body, and we know that all human beings, after Adam and Eve, are generated, not created.

The fact that Heaven, Earth -universe- and hell are all together as parts of a global reality, created by Yahweh, of which we can sense only Earth by our body, by our senses, means that, even if the conception of a new human being is done in a laboratory, from frozen semen and egg, and possibly after the physical death of the two parents, the "hereditary patrimonies" of their souls give origin to the new one. This reality is not affected by their souls being possibly in Heaven or in hell. Also a girl born of parthenogenesis will have her own body and soul, derived from her mother's. Should it be possible to generate a human being -by cell division, duplication, and evolution- from a part taken from another man, -a natural, biological, process which follows the genetic patrimony instructions coded into the DNA and RNA- the new one would have his own body and soul, both of them derived from that man's body and soul.

The fact that man is like Yahweh means that, at a different level of capacity, Yahweh -and the angels as well- has:

a) Body. Description of His body and of His physical activities are given plenty of times in the Bible.

b) Mind. He thinks, reasons, and has opinions and emotions. His ideas and opinions can change depending on the reality of the facts and as a consequence of the discussions with angels and men.

c) Spirit. His spirit is creating and giving life. His spirit can inhabit all the things and all the beings He has created; in this way He can be omnipresent.

CREATION

The reason Yahweh had for creating is quite clear and simple; it is because of existing, of being alive and active. Nobody, Yahweh above all, can stay passive without doing anything, without moving and without thinking. Looking from another point of view, the existence of the "creation" is the demonstration that a Being with the willingness and the power to create actually exists and operates.

Let us now speculate and imagine the existence of a "God," a very powerful being, fully and totally perfect in every aspect of his existence. Being

fully and totally perfect, his activities can only be oriented toward total perfection; that is, exclusively toward himself, since he and only he can be fully and totally perfect. Should this "God" decide to create another "God," the created one, solely because of having been created, cannot be at the same level as his creator. Therefore, the best created being will not be so fully and totally perfect as his creator. Surely, this fully and totally perfect "God" would never create something or somebody not totally perfect; consequently, he would never create at all. Thus, even if he exists, he is not our creator and his existence is, at least from our point of view, completely unessential. Yahweh, our Creator, Who is very powerful and active, Who is always fully involved in His creation, is very far from the above mentioned sterile and useless "full and total perfection." Therefore, we have to recognize that our Creator is not like He was described by thousands of years of empty words, and that it becomes easier to understand Him and His creation. Yahweh is not "fully and totally perfect" in the way we want to think Him to be; He cannot be like that, and the demonstration of this is the creation itself.

Yahweh is a Being and He resides, with His body, mind, and spirit in a "place." As we do not know the "physical" characteristics of His body, so we do not know the characteristics of the "place" were He resides. One thing, though, is clear: Heaven, Earth -actually, the whole physical universe- and hell exist within this "place." Let us now take into account the theory of the Big Bang for the creation -actually, the origin- of the physical universe. It is essential to understand that a theory is only an explanation, a way to describe the existing reality by the scientific knowledge of the moment: better knowledge can -and always does- change the theory. Now, if this theory is correct, the universe is expanding within a pre-existing "place;" if not, it is still certain that the universe exists within a "space-place" and that such a "place" is where Yahweh and His whole creation are. The universe had a beginning at a certain moment of this "time" which, as we understand it, seems to exist only together and within the universe. To know for sure if this is true or not, is not so important, because the whole creation is, anyway, immersed into this time and the knowledge of the reality of time can affect only the "before the beginning" and the "after the end" of the universe. To know about "before" and "after" should be very interesting, but it is out of our capacity; for we can only sense within the universe, not before or after it.

CREATION OF THE ANGELS

There was a time, if "time" had any meaning before the beginning of creation, when nothing and nobody existed but Yahweh. At that time He was to-

tally, completely, and absolutely alone in an "empty space" where, at a certain point, He started His creation. His first step was creating the angels who are beings having the capacity to share His kind of life and to live in His same "environment." With the common definition of "angels," we classify many different kinds of beings with different characteristics, capacities, and duties. We do not know much about them, for in the Bible we can find only few indications and explanations; anyway we are accustomed to consider the angels as purely spiritual beings, very powerful, and living in Heaven in the continuous presence of Yahweh.

Anyway, through a thorough and accurate reading and analysis of the Bible, we can at least understand what their fundamental characteristics are. Considering the definitions given above:

a) Many different kinds. It is true there are many different kinds, holding different positions and responsibilities, and having different duties.

b) Purely spiritual. It is not true they are spiritual only. Descriptions of their physical appearance are given many times in the Bible, and they can even be seen by men when "their eyes are opened," that is, when it is given to people to see what their physical eyes cannot see. They can speak with people, some of them can eat and drink human food, and others cannot. Normally, they are described as being male. Some of them, the "sons of Yahweh," -fallen, but still angels- had children from women, the "daughters of men," generating the "gods" of the ancient religions. The gods, semi-gods, and heroes of the Greek and Roman mythology correspond perfectly to these generated "gods." They were very powerful, yet very far from almighty; and they were born from other "gods." They were mortal, not immortal; for they were growing and becoming old within an extraordinarily long life that was considered "eternal" from a human point of view. Yet it was always possible, even if very difficult, to kill them in any moment of their life. And, furthermore, each new generation was less powerful than their parents' one.

c) Very powerful. Actually, they have many more powers and capacities than human beings. Different kinds of angels have different powers.

d) Living in the presence of Yahweh. In reality, only some of them are living in the continuous presence of Yahweh -few of them- because their duty is there. All the others have different duties in different places, and for them there are appointed times for appearing in His presence. When not in Yahweh's presence, they are somewhere else either fulfilling their duty or on their own. Furthermore, they can be only in one place at a time, so this is another demonstration that they have a "body."

CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE

Usually, we mean by "universe" the physical reality that we can perceive with our senses and with our technological instruments. It is important to remember that, when new aspects and particularities of this reality are discovered and understood, it is our knowledge, as well as our technological capacity, which is changing, not the universe itself. The physical universe is the part of the creation where we live and move; that part to which our bodies belong. It is not "heaven," nor "hell." Heaven is the place, characterized by Yahweh's presence, where He resides and where His influence is total. On the contrary, hell is the place where Yahweh is not, characterized by Yahweh's total and absolute absence, and where He does not exert any influence at all. At the same time, the physical universe, Heaven, and hell are intertwined as they are part of a common creation; they are different places in three-dimensional terms, but within the same super-place in multidimensional terms.

It is obvious that the idea of Earth -universe- here, of Heaven high in the sky, and of hell low into the Earth does not make any sense. It is an old image which was necessary and valid only for a human race with a very poor understanding of the physical and spiritual reality. Earth (the physical universe), Heaven, and hell are all part of the same creation, and they exist together, for the separation is only apparent; it is a mere concept, not even too difficult to understand.

After creating the angels, Yahweh dedicated Himself to the creation of the universe within the "place" where He and His angels were already staying. Without any doubt, the creation of the universe required the full involvement and collaboration of all the angels. Each of them was given a precise responsibility and task depending on his capabilities. The universe was designed by Yahweh and was implemented by His angels who followed His instructions and worked under His supervision. The traditional description we have of the creation of the universe (or, better, of the Earth and the Solar System) and of man in six days -or steps- is an allegory that is not to be taken literally as a technical report. Again, it is a description meant for the men of the past who lacked any technical knowledge. Anyway, it carries two important messages. First that Yahweh is the actual Creator of everything and everybody. Second that men do not only have to work, but also to get rest once a week and, on that day, to honor and pray to Yahweh. The first statement is the ultimate declaration that Yahweh and only Yahweh has decided to create and has created. Nobody else can create; the angels were implementing only, as they do not have any autonomous creative capacity. The second statement reminds men that they do not have to dedicate them-

selves exclusively to the material life. Man is matter and spirit; he has to work and also to dedicate the appropriate time to the spirit, seeking for his Creator.

At the end of the first phase of the creation of our part of the universe, the Earth and the Solar System(*) -the actual "creation;" what followed was and is "creative evolution"- Yahweh was pleased and satisfied, and all the angels involved rejoiced with Him for the results achieved. At the time, there still existed perfect harmony between Yahweh, all those angels, and the newly created Solar System. There was no evidence at all of the angels' "rebellion." This "rebellion" was not the matter of a single moment, but a long process that involved some of the angels when still working following Yahweh's instructions, and the final result was what we are accustomed to call "angelic rebellion." One of the angels -there could have been more than one, but one only took the actual initiative- the most powerful of them, Lucifer, who, in this part of the universe, was second only to Yahweh, was the one given most of the responsibility. He confused Yahweh's intellectual and creative capacity to design with his own "manual" capacity to implement His projects, and convinced himself that all the merit for the creation of the Solar System was not to be given to Yahweh, but to him and to the other angels. They were those who worked, who made, and who were "physically" involved in the work; Yahweh was simply giving some instructions.

Since Lucifer had been created as the most perfect and powerful of those angels, his idea -at least partially justified by his powers which were and are very close to those of Yahweh Himself- was that, after having seen that all the efforts had been theirs, all the rewards should have been theirs too. As a consequence of these ideas and of the rebellion, the angels were separated in two groups; one still loyal to Yahweh, the other to Lucifer.

At the beginning, the main responsibility for carrying on the creation of the Solar System was given to Lucifer, with a wide margin of independence. Yahweh had given the guidelines, but the practical solutions were left to Lucifer and to the angels. In the end, this independence was what convinced Lucifer of being the actual creator of the Solar System and its true master. Changes to the original design were introduced little by little with the initial intention of making improvements. The sensation of power coming from studying and introducing all these improvements changed Lucifer's mind; he became more and more convinced of being the inventor, the creator, and the master.

The creation of the Solar System (and, surely, of the whole universe) has never been "ended" nor "completed," for it is still going on -even if we can consider it better in terms of evolution of the already existing Solar Sy-

(*) We don't know which part of the creation was entrusted to Lucifer.

stem- with the active contribution and involvement of both Yahweh with the angels and Lucifer with the devils. From the very beginning till the end of the first phase, the changes introduced were positive, perfectly acceptable to Yahweh. They were made for the best reasons, with the intention of making improvements; there was nothing wrong in them. To introduce positive changes and modifications was right, for it was part of the angels' duty. Wrong was and is Lucifer's conviction that he was so powerful as to have the capacity to improve Yahweh's projects and to "create" independently of Him; in other words, to live without Him and against Him.

Lucifer was given the responsibility to implement the creation of the Solar System; therefore, the solar system was given to him, and he had power over it. The initial intention of Yahweh was to have full harmony among Himself, the angels and the Solar System. The original design was surely something very positive, not carrying in itself any suffering and destruction. With his rebellion, Lucifer became Satan, the "adversary," and he began to introduce changes in the Solar System and to influence its development with the intention of disrupting the good of creation and to challenge Yahweh. As time passed, these changes became more and more evident and, as a result, the real Solar System now is very different to the one envisaged by Yahweh. Changes were and are being continuously introduced at all levels, from the smallest to the biggest, and, as each advance in our technical investigative capacity demonstrates, we have full evidence of the fundamentally "positive" content of the creation and of his "adversary," a "negative" that is fighting against the positive. As it is, the creation comes from Yahweh and bears the marks of all Satan's changes.

At this point, before going any further, it is necessary to try to understand how Yahweh and Lucifer-Satan really relate. We have a total and complete picture of it in the Book of Job. Satan is the adversary, the accuser; his purpose is to demonstrate, moment after moment, using any possible opportunity, big or small, that Yahweh does not have complete control of the situation. That he, Satan, can show -given Yahweh's approval- that the creation does not follow Yahweh's, but his orders; that he has the control and the power. Here, we have to understand what is Yahweh's concept, which is His top priority. The important fact is Job's faithfulness, not Job himself, nor his children, nor his slaves, nor his animals and possessions. It is evident that, having been sacrificed for the test, Job's children did surely receive the appropriate compensation in their next life, which is very important, but, without any doubt, in the terrestrial life, they and their sufferings were secondary; for one of the purposes of their earthly existence was to test their father's faith. Another reason, the fundamental one for testing Job's faithfulness,

consisted in giving Yahweh the possibility to demonstrate to Satan that there were human beings who refused to serve Satan and to curse and leave Yahweh. All this is not for Yahweh's pleasure in demonstrating that He is more powerful than Satan; what we can say is that one of the purposes of our existence is to give Yahweh the possibility to convince Satan to withdraw from his rebellion and to join Him again. Satan was one of the best beings ever created by Yahweh, Who cannot accept leaving him in his condition of rebellion and does whatever is possible to convince His creature, and all the fallen angels, to turn back to Him.

All the suffering of the world, of the human race, and of Jesus Christ too, has to be understood as a necessary and temporary price to pay for having again perfect harmony between Yahweh and all His creatures. All the troubles, all the sufferings that presently we cannot understand and accept, will be appropriately compensated for in the next life which will be in total harmony with Yahweh.

CREATION OF MAN

After creating the physical universe and our Solar System, Yahweh introduced on Earth something new, something of a higher level than the bare material creation, something directly involving His Spirit. Such a new element was "life," and this is the reason why the Spirit of Yahweh is often called "Spirit of Life." This means that in all the living creatures, from the lowest to the highest vegetable and animal forms, there is an active contribution from, in a certain sense we can say a part of, the Spirit of Yahweh.

Here, even more than in the material creation, Satan fought to introduce changes and to influence the development of all living creatures. From the lowest possible living organism, as it is more and more confirmed by our improving technical knowledge, competition and destruction were introduced. From the beginning till the end of the life of the world, there was, there is, and there will always be this creative competition; with Yahweh making something good and Satan introducing something bad to it; with Yahweh then finding a good solution for the bad addition and Satan looking for a new bad factor. All this happens in a kind of scientific way, to show and demonstrate to each other the solutions implemented and the results achieved. An almost unlimited number of different forms of life were introduced and developed, modified and re-modified, subject to continuous changes; to evolution. As a consequence of what has been mentioned above, all life-forms carry in themselves the good of Yahweh and the bad of Satan, all have a tendency to "happiness" but are prone to "anti-happiness," and all are subject to physical life, to illness, and to death.

All terrestrial lifeforms have a physical, material "body" and a physical, intellectual "mind," that is, a certain level of intelligence, which gives them the capacity to solve the problems of the practical life and to adapt to the environment, to develop some kind of social organization, etc. In fact, as we know very well, most of the animals, if not all of them, have some forms of social organization more or less developed and complex. This does not mean that the animals have a spiritual life, a soul; the fact that they have body and mind only allows them to have both intelligence and sentiments, at least to a certain extent, but not to have any present or future spiritual life; consequently, after death their existence is totally finished.

Plenty of different physical solutions were tested and implemented by Yahweh and, consequently, by Satan. It was even too easy for him to extend and exert his influence on all vegetable and animal creatures; for, as they are only matter, they cannot offer any substantial opposition to the powerful Satan who was firmly holding on to his position of master of the world, in the sense that in the world there was not even a single creature capable of opposing him.

Here the creation of Man comes in. In a situation similar to the one described in Job, we can see Satan saying to Yahweh, "Until now I have fully demonstrated my capacity to bend all of Your creation to follow my will; moreover, it did not take me too much effort. At this point, I would like to face something or somebody more challenging. I know You are planning to create on Earth another kind of material being and to give him spiritual life, a soul. I am sure that, even if You put him in a protected place, so as to make his life very safe and comfortable, and You give him eternal life with eternal blessing and without any suffering, I will have the capacity to turn him away from You. Give him one order only, not to do a particular thing, and I will surely convince him to do it."

Yahweh accepted the challenge and went on with the creation of a being both material, with body and mind, and spiritual, with soul; Adam, the first man. Body and mind of this being were in line with the best of the material creation already made and available. The soul came from Yahweh's Spirit, giving Man full spiritual capacity. Yahweh took the body of an already existing ape, introduced some genetic changes to improve and differentiate it from the original one and, above all, gave him a soul, a spiritual existence; making in such a way this new Man similar to Himself, with body, mind, and soul.

To give him perfect health, Yahweh put Man in a protected environment, the "Garden of Eden," and gave him a special food, the fruit of the "Tree of Life." This food provided all the substances necessary for being in perfect

health, for a very long life, for not becoming sick, and for not suffering. From a scientific point of view, this food was giving a kind of total physical protection against all possible illnesses. Yahweh gave to Man a soul and the best body and brain ever created on Earth; and, with these, the authority to rule over all the other creatures, plants and animals, present in the garden. Immediately after Adam, Yahweh created a second human being, Eve, the first Woman, her body from Adam's body, her soul from Adam's soul; to have only one genetic patrimony at the origin of the human race, for both body and soul. Eve, even if created from Adam's body and soul, had her own body and her own soul, both of them fully independent, only derived, from those of Adam.

Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat the fruit of the "tree of the [experimental] knowledge of good and evil." That was the only one rule to follow, the only one order to respect in the garden; everything else was given and allowed; the environment was completely good, nothing at all bad or negative having been introduced there.

At a certain point, Satan was allowed to enter the garden and to run the test trying to convince Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. He appeared to them in his angelic form [In Hebrew, a language written without vowels, the word for Lucifer, Cherub, and serpent is almost the same; the traditional translation "serpent" is not correct. Satan was there, as Lucifer, in all the splendor of his angelic form. And, in "The Revelation" John confirms that the "serpent" was Satan: "That ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan" (Rev. 12:9) and "That ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan" (Rev. 20:2)]. Adam and Eve had no problem speaking with him as they were accustomed to speaking with Yahweh and the angels, and Satan appeared to be an angel similar to, or better than, many others.

Satan used a psychological approach to find the weak point of the couple. Eve was already curious about the forbidden fruit. As Satan asked them, "Did Yahweh really say 'you must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3.1), she answered, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but Yahweh did say 'you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. And you must not touch it, or you will die'." Now, the prohibition was for eating, not for touching! At this very moment Satan was sure to win, for Eve was only waiting to be convinced and to eat the forbidden fruit; she was merely waiting for an ally to justify herself. Satan added, "You will not surely die, for Yahweh knows that, when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like Him, knowing good and evil," and Eve ate the fruit. Yet we do not have to blame Eve only; for Adam was there with her in the garden, and he was convinced too. Actually he did not even participate in the discussion, he did not oppose it at all; he simply ac-

cepted to eat the fruit offered to him by Eve. Consequently, Satan won! The best creature on the Earth, the one similar to Yahweh, having body, mind, and soul, was unable to withstand Satan's temptation and was convinced, not only to eat a particular fruit, but also to try to be at the same level as Yahweh by acquiring His "knowledge of good and evil."

Once Satan had demonstrated to Yahweh his capacity to make man "sin," he became the master of the human race. Therefore Adam and Eve had to leave the protected environment of the garden, and to go and live in the outside world. In doing so, they lost the possibility to eat the fruit of the "Tree of Life;" and with it they lost the perfect health and the very long life, becoming prone to illness, suffering, and early death. Surely, they did not lose this perfect health and eternal life all of a sudden, but little by little, as "competition" between good en evil entered into the biology of their bodies. A clear indication of this is the duration of human life, from the very long of the first generations to the short one we now consider "normal."

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE HUMAN RACE, TO JESUS CHRIST

Eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve "sinned" for the first time in their lives and in the history of mankind. This was the "Original Sin" -the sin committed at the beginning of mankind for which only Adam and Eve were responsible and bore the punishment. All the other human beings, who are their descendants, did not and do not have any moral involvement nor responsibility, even if they are suffering the consequences of it, having to live outside the garden.

Actually, there was a partial justification for this first sin as Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan whose powers were so much greater than theirs. More serious and important was the fact that they did not recognize their fault and they did not repent. Both of them tried to hide from Yahweh's sight among the trees of the garden. Adam blamed Eve for giving him some fruit to eat, and Yahweh for putting the woman with him in the garden. Eve blamed Lucifer for deceiving her. They did not feel nor recognize even a minimum personal responsibility, and they did not even think about repenting for the mistake they had made. Surely, this lack of repentance was what obliged Yahweh to punish them. There was no excuse at all for not recognizing their fault, not repenting, and not asking for forgiveness.

This was the actual sin, the SIN in capital letters. As a consequence of it, they had to leave the Garden of Eden -where they had been created and were living in an environment completely separated from the rest of the world

and protected against its influence- and go and live in the outside world where illness, suffering, and death were already part of daily life. With them, "sin entered into the world."

As we understand it, sin is a concept that applies only to the human race. It does not apply to plants, or animals, because they do not have a soul; and neither does it apply to the angels, who have a rapport with Yahweh different from ours. The angelic rebellion, including all that followed, does not completely correspond to the meaning that the word "sin" has for human beings. If we want to, we can say that Lucifer and the angels did sin; but such a definition is not completely correct, because we do not know exactly what is -and what is not- sin for them. From our point of view, the rebellion was surely a sin, and a capital one; but, what about the temptation of human beings -Jesus Christ included- with Yahweh's permission and approval? Therefore, we have to use the word "sin" for men only, as we do not have a proper word for describing the "sins" of the angels.

Anyway, even after sending Adam and Eve out of the garden, Yahweh did not stop communicating and speaking with them and their children; but in a very different and much more limited way than before. After Cain killed his brother Abel, there followed a long conversation between Yahweh and him. From this conversation, and from the way they spoke to each other, we get a clear indication that the first men were accustomed not only to worship Yahweh but also to have a direct relationship with Him; for them to be in His presence, and to speak with Him, was part of their lives. The actual punishment for killing Abel came from Yahweh -since men were forbidden to punish Cain on their own- and consisted of excluding him from both communicating with Him and being in His presence.

At the beginning of the human race men's bodies were in perfect condition; lives were very long and illnesses very few. Consequently, the human population grew very fast following a geometric progression that, for obvious reasons, slowed down little by little with the passing of time and with the number of generations living outside the garden without the possibility of eating the fruits of the Tree of Life. Adam and Eve had plenty of children who had plenty of their own, and so on. As well as Cain and his descendants, who were barred from the presence of Yahweh, so were all the other people committing capital sins and not repenting for them. As a result, after a certain number of generations, the vast majority of people were alien to Yahweh and part of a society more and more corrupted as they were totally left to Satan's influence.

Satan was fighting to bring everybody under his control to further and further reduce the number of people morally suitable to communicate with

Yahweh. Yet, even without knowing anything about Yahweh and His existence, men have anyway an internal necessity, that comes from their souls, to enter in contact and to communicate with Him, to worship Him. This necessity can easily lead people, when left alone and in the wrong environment, towards making big mistakes, towards recognizing the existence of other "gods" and worshiping them. And it is precisely for this reason that Satan sent to Earth some of his angels ("the sons of Yahweh [fallen angels] went to the daughters of men and had children from them") to generate powerful beings with the purpose of proposing them to men as alternative "gods." As a consequence, at a certain moment, the whole human population of Mesopotamia -the world of the patriarchs(*)-, with the only exception of Noah and his family, was totally and absolutely wicked and evil. So wicked and evil that there was no other way left but to restart again from this single faithful family, after destroying everybody else. The Flood -the Universal Deluge(*)- brought this total destruction and, in the meantime, carried the "seed," men and animals into the arc, for the new beginning, for the second period of human society(*).

From Adam and Eve to Noah there was what we can call the first period, with Yahweh practically absent and not involved in the evolution of the human society; He was dealing only with a limited number of individuals, the very few who were still good and faithful. During this period no laws and no rules were given to men to follow. Left to themselves, men were unable to stand up against Satan's temptations; and they produced a totally corrupt society.

After the flood, Yahweh stipulated a covenant, a pact with Noah as representative of the human race(*); this started the second period of human history. He told Noah and his family to repopulate the Earth of Mesopotamia (*), as He had told Adam and Eve before, and gave them the first laws and rules: not to eat animals with blood, that is life, still in their veins; and not to kill other men, for man is similar to Yahweh. The purpose of these few fundamental rules was to give men guidelines to follow and to make them able to remain in the pathway of Yahweh. On the other hand, there was Yahweh's promise not to repeat this kind of total(*) destruction.

From the "seed" that was carried by the arc, life went on again, spreading people and animals throughout the Earth of Mesopotamia(*); and Satan was once more actively involved in making men sin, in making them alien to Yahweh. Other religions, with false "gods," were born again in the same way as before, with fallen angels coming on Earth and having children from women. In such a way Satan had, once more, plenty of people worshiping

(*) See Appendix 1: Noah's deluge. The Flood.

these "gods," forgetting not only the punishment previously brought by the flood but even the actual existence of Yahweh.

Anyway, in spite of all his efforts, certain people were able to resist Satan's temptations. One of them was Abrahm. He was chosen by Yahweh to start another phase of the second period. With his name changed to Abraham, he was put at the beginning of a special population, a "holy" one -holy means different, separated. Yahweh's idea was to give this population a special support, a special revelation with a special promise and a special pact; to make them The Example for all the other peoples to follow. Their fundamental duty was to convince, by practical example, all the other populations to leave their false idols and to follow Yahweh.

Being so special to Yahweh and having to carry His message, they immediately became the main target for Satan. All the history of the Jews shows, in a dramatically clear way, the continuous battle -the intellectual competition- between Yahweh and Satan. Battle, for men, is a physical fact; whereas, when referring to Yahweh Satan, and the angels, it is something intellectual involving tests and demonstrations. As we know very well, at the end of this second period, the Hebrews' period, there were plenty of good people, even if, from a global point of view, their religion was fully and totally transformed into an absurd, long, and complicated set of rules to be followed every single moment of their life. It was total and complete "legalism" or strict and formal respect of all the rules, without much link to their original moral meaning.

To be the originator and the leader of this special population, Yahweh chose a special person, a man with an indestructible faith in Him. This man was Abrahm. Every time Abrahm was told by Yahweh what to do, he never disobeyed Him, not even when subjected to the maximum test, the request to make a sacrifice to Yahweh by killing his son, the son through whom Yahweh's promise had to be fulfilled. In such a way he demonstrated to Yahweh, and to Satan too, his total faithfulness. Abrahm was the selected representative of the chosen people, and for that reason Yahweh had a special relationship with him. Yahweh did not only come to Abrahm in visions, but He actually appeared to him to confirm the establishment of His covenant, changing his name from Abrahm to Abraham. On other occasions, Yahweh visited Abraham to announce the birth of his son, Isaac, and discussed with him the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. From the report of this conversation, we have some fundamental information as we can see that Yahweh accepts a discussion and, as a result of it, changes His mind. When we say that men were made similar to Yahweh, that is the actual truth! Our way to reason, discuss, and decide is in a very close parallel to His way.

Through Abraham, Yahweh revealed Himself again to men. From Abraham to Moses only one more fundamental rule was stated, that is, to keep the covenant, to remember Yahweh's existence, and to be faithful to Him. As a reward for doing this, the chosen people grew in number and wealth. At a certain point of their history, because of a famine in their land, the Israelites moved to Egypt were they became very prosperous and multiplied in number as promised by Yahweh. The period of high prosperity was followed by a period of enslavement under Egyptian domination. There is no explanation given for this; either it was another test, a competition between Yahweh and Satan to see if their faith was strong enough to stand the bad period; or, perhaps, it was the punishment for having forgotten Yahweh during their stay in Egypt. Eventually, under the guidance of Moses, the Israelites left Egypt and moved towards their final destination, the "Promised Land."

With Moses another part of the second period began; when Yahweh gave to His people a complete set of moral laws, the Ten Commandments, of social regulations, and of religious rules. During all this period, and especially when Moses was speaking with Yahweh and receiving the Tables of The Law, Satan tried very hard, much harder than before, to make Yahweh's people deviate from His way. This led to many wrongdoings and complaints against Yahweh, culminating in their worshiping of the "golden calf," pure idolatry, which took place at the very moment of Yahweh's revelation. Such a capital sin, after so many commands against idolatry, after so many demonstrations of Yahweh's existence and powers, was worthy of an adequate punishment(**). But Moses, who had a special and continuous relationship with Yahweh, who was speaking face to face with Him, was able, as on many other occasions, to placate Yahweh, to convince Him to forget His anger, in essence to change His mind.

This is another demonstration that man is similar to Yahweh, that man has the proper intellectual and moral level to be in direct communication with his Creator, that Yahweh is not closed in Himself and unreachable; but that He is, on the contrary, very open and always waiting to be contacted.

After rewriting -but this time it was Moses, not Yahweh, writing- the Tables of The Law, the Israelites traveled towards the Promised Land, to enter it, and to take possession of it. Again, Satan was very active. He convinced the vast majority of people not to follow Yahweh's orders and suggestions; first, with the explorers making false reports about the land and its inhabitants, so they refused to go any further and strongly complained against

(**) See Appendix 2: The Old Testament: What does it represent? Which is its true meaning?

Yahweh; second, pushing them to try to enter the land even after being forbidden as a consequence of their previous lack of faith.

All Israel's history is a continuous succession of tests accompanied by Yahweh's promise of rewards for being faithful -note that the rewards were always and only promised in exchange for keeping their faith, that is, for giving Yahweh the opportunity to demonstrate to Satan their faith in Him. Plenty of times the Israelites deviated from the true faith; Yahweh, therefore, punished them and left them alone without His support and without His rewards(**). That would cause the Israelites' repentance, restarting again with the proper and due faith under the guidance of "the faithful remnant," but always for a too short period. They were unfaithful so frequently that they never had the chance to enjoy for a long period of time Yahweh's promises to be very numerous, wealthy, and powerful; in essence, to be able to convert by example all the other populations and to have the Earth of Mesopotamia inhabited by Yahweh's people only. Actually, it was just the opposite. Because of their repeated unfaithfulness, they always remained a small nation and very often were under foreign domination.

After wandering for forty years in the desert where the old unfaithful generation died, the time came again to enter the Promised Land and to take possession of it. Before letting them go, Yahweh gave particular and detailed instructions about what to do and what not to do as they entered the land. Particularly important was a set of three orders(**):

a) To demolish all the pagan altars, temples, and idols.
b) To completely drive out the other populations from the land.
c) To have only one place to worship Him.

Yahweh was very well aware both of the weakness of His people, and of how determinedly Satan had decided to spoil again and again His plans. The actual meaning of the three orders was:

a) To demolish, to destroy, all the places where, actually, Satan was worshiped. All the pagan "gods" were in origin either fallen angels or their sons. To leave standing some of these places, some of these symbols, to leave alive the people involved in these cults, was to leave a door fully open for Satan to come back and to convince and push people to idolatry.
b) To drive out the pre-existing populations from the land was essential to be sure that the Israelites would not intermarry with them. It would have been too easy for Satan to work through and by means of the local husbands and wives and convince the Israelites to worship their old "gods," pushing them again to idolatry.

(**) See Appendix 2: The Old Testament: What does it represent? Which is its true meaning?

c) To have only one place to worship Yahweh was necessary to indicate that they were only one population and that this population was identified by the fact that they worshiped Yahweh there. Having to go to the same place, gave to all people a clear sense of unity and identity as they had the opportunity to know each other. In other words, there was less possibility of creating separate, different groups which in the end would have surely turned against each other and most probably would have worshiped Yahweh in some wrong ways; consequently opening the door again to idolatry.

Under the guidance of Joshua, the Israelites entered the Promised Land and tried to conquer it. The Bible reports that, whenever Yahweh's orders were fully followed, there was complete victory; when they were not followed, there was an appropriate punishment and defeat. As a matter of a fact, from a global point of view, Yahweh's orders were almost never completely followed and as a consequence His promise could never have been completely fulfilled(**):

a) Neither were all the altars, temples, and idols demolished; nor were all the people involved in their cults killed. What we cannot understand and justify, after two thousand years of Christian ideas and concepts, is the killing of so many people during the conquest of the Promised Land. The fundamental point is that we are too accustomed to thinking in terms of Christian morality. This morality comes from a rapport between Yahweh and men substantially different from what it was before. For us, it is even possible to understand that at the time it was necessary to eliminate -to kill- all the people directly involved in the cults of the pagan gods because there was no way of converting these kinds of people to Yahweh's faith, for they were too much under Satan's control; they were his possession. It is much more difficult to understand and justify the necessity to kill whole populations, even if they were pagan. In this case as well we are judging from a Christian point of view; for us the pagans are people who are to be converted to Yahweh, people who have to receive His "Good News" about the new Christian times. However, at that time -the old times- there was no Good News yet, for the "Christian" relationship between Yahweh and men was in the distant future and was not only unknown, but totally unthinkable. At that particular moment and in that situation, there was the necessity to stop and cut short all the possible ways for Satan to enter into contact with the Israelites. In other words, the physical elimination of all the people and populations who were under the strong control of Satan was a cruel but absolute necessity(**).

b) Not all the pre-existing populations were driven away from the land; on the contrary, some were allowed to stay, to be used as forced labor.

(**) See Appendix 2: The Old Testament: What does it represent? Which is its true meaning?

c) Too many places and altars -"the high places"- were left for Yahweh's cult, generating jealousy and incomprehensions between different groups of Israelites.

As a consequence of not respecting Yahweh's orders, the generation following the conquest became easy prey for Satan and was "serving Baal;" generic phrase for saying that the Israelites were worshiping the old pagan "gods." This brought forth the due punishment; the Israelites were allowed to be conquered and enslaved by foreign dominators. This punishment was then followed by repentance, and the Israelites were free again through the first "Judges"(**).

All their subsequent history from the period of the Judges to the end of the Kings is reported by the Bible as a repetition, practically without end, of this cycle of faithfulness and blessing, of unfaithfulness and punishment, and of repentance followed by new faith and new blessing. So, it was impossible for the blessing of Yahweh to be operative long enough to make His People the most important and powerful nation on Earth. Furthermore, at the final stage of their history their religion became legalistic, incapable of propagating Yahweh's message. Instead of being the example for everybody else to follow, they became a closed group; closed in sharing their faith in Yahweh with other fellow-men.

Men, without the specific and individual help of Yahweh -of the Spirit of Yahweh- were unable to resist Satan's temptations. Actually, there were plenty of good and faithful people supported by His Spirit -people "filled by the Spirit of Yahweh"- but they were always left a minority within the population.

It was necessary for Yahweh, and for men, to enter the third period; when Yahweh's message and help -His Spirit- could be given to every single human being. This new period had to begin with somebody who had the capacity to resist Satan's temptations without the slightest hesitation; somebody who had the capacity to give Yahweh, once and forever, the possibility to demonstrate to Satan his total and full faith in Him. This somebody was the human Son of Yahweh, Jesus Christ.

(**) See Appendix 2: The Old Testament: What does it represent? Which is its true meaning?

JESUS CHRIST. LIFE, PURPOSE, AND MESSAGE.

Before beginning to speak about Jesus Christ, we have to understand the reason, meaning, and necessity for "offering sacrifices to Yahweh." The first sacrifices were offered by Cain and Abel; they were sacrificing -renouncing by destroying or killing- some of their belongings, of their riches. The actual reason and meaning of making a sacrifice is not to please Yah-

weh with the sacrifice itself; how can Yahweh be pleased -satisfied and happy- over the destruction of some goods, the killing of some animals, or the suffering of some men? The necessity for making a sacrifice is that it gives Yahweh another opportunity to demonstrate to Satan that there are people who have faith in Him. So much faith that they can -in spite of Satan trying to convince them to do exactly the opposite- renounce some of their belongings, riches, and pleasures; that they can accept misfortunes, illnesses, and sufferings for the sake of Yahweh and in view of their future life with Him.

Therefore, it is clear and evident why some sacrifices are "accepted" and some are not. A sacrifice has to be made with "pure heart;" has to be not only voluntary but, even more important, for Yahweh only to know. A compulsory sacrifice -made because of social rules and regulations- or a sacrifice shown to other people -to get their approval and applause- has to be "rejected" as it does not give Yahweh anything good to show and demonstrate to Satan. Obviously, with the good sacrifices having such a meaning, Satan has always worked and continues to work to empty them of their moral validity; from his point of view a bad sacrifice is much better than no sacrifice at all as it gives him a better possibility to show Yahweh the unfaithfulness of men and his power over them.

When Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross "sacrificing" himself, his was not the "necessary high level sacrifice" to Yahweh to placate His anger against men, as Yahweh was not angry with them. It was exactly for the opposite, to give Yahweh the final possibility -demonstrating to Satan that there was a man fully and totally faithful to Him- to open for ever His Reign to everybody; to have all men in spiritual communion with Him.

Jesus Christ was born of a human mother with the special and direct involvement of Yahweh, of His Spirit. His body and his soul were generated, as it is with all the other human beings, by his parents' bodies and souls. Consequently, they were a mixture of human and divine and were, just because of this, fully human and fully divine. This does not have to surprise or to create problems since, as we know very well, at the beginning man -male and female- was created by Yahweh to be like Him and to resemble Him. Furthermore, later on, in the future life, all men will live in the Reign of Yahweh; in spiritual communion not only with all the other human beings and angels but with Yahweh Himself. This means that there is "compatibility" between men's bodies and souls and Yahweh's Body and Spirit. In particular, as men's souls come straight from Yahweh's Spirit, they are of the same "nature." For what refers to Jesus Christ's body, it is clear and obvious that He Who had the power to create the universe has the full capacity to

join His genetic physical contribution to that of a woman. Even the angels, at least some of them, had and used this capacity!

Jesus Christ was and is SON of Yahweh, not "God." He never said he was "God," and always kept himself in a position of obedience to the Father Who, only after his death and resurrection, gave Jesus authority over all creation and assigned him the task of making all men suitable to enter into His Reign; to be in spiritual communion with Him.

Jesus Christ was conceived at a certain moment in "time" thus beginning his existence. Without this beginning he would have not been human. His "sacrifice" and its results are valid because of the fact that he is human; a man, and only a man, had to demonstrate his total faithfulness to Yahweh, so Jesus Christ was born, fully and totally, a man. Having Yahweh as one of the parents, Jesus was in communion with Him in a way that will only be possible to the other men after entering the Reign of Yahweh.

Without any doubt, thanks to his Father's genetic contribution, his body was in particularly good shape and his mind particularly acute; anyway, both had to develop following the rules imposed by the human nature. His soul, like everybody else's soul, was both human and divine; men's souls are human because they originated from their parent's souls and are divine because at the beginning Adam's soul was originated from Yahweh's Spirit. When Jesus was a small boy, he was a small boy and that's all; he had to grow and develop as any other child. The difference was a better intelligence, giving him the capacity to learn and reason with unusual profit and acumen. Only at a certain point in his physical and intellectual development he began feeling his spiritual communion with Yahweh; he was sure of his special relationship with Him only after Yahweh's declaration following his baptism. Jesus was fully and totally a man and, before accepting and beginning his special mission, he lived a normal human life, working to support himself and his family.

The four Evangelists did not write about this part of Jesus' life -how he was maturing and getting ready for his mission- in their Gospels. To have something written about this period would have been very interesting, but it would not have given us any useful indication about how to live a Christian life and enter the Reign of Yahweh; therefore it was not taken into consideration by the Evangelists. The actual purpose of their writings was to spread the Good News, not to write Jesus' biography. His life began, from this point of view, at the moment of his baptism, when Yahweh entered in full spiritual communion with His Son, showing him Heaven -the Reign of Yahweh- and declaring to him His fatherhood and His love for him. Immediately after this great and wonderful moment, Jesus had to begin his mis-

sion demonstrating to Yahweh -and to Satan- his total and complete faith in Him. Satan was allowed by Yahweh to tempt Jesus in a way appropriate to his being the Son of Yahweh, with the most important things that he had the authority to offer him:
a) Personal, material satisfaction; using his powers for himself.
b) Personal, intellectual satisfaction; using his powers for the pleasure of using and showing them off to everybody.
c) Terrestrial power; on condition of recognizing Satan's preeminence over Yahweh.
Jesus was able to stand, helped and strengthened by being in spiritual communion with Yahweh, against the temptation. There is no "was able for sure" here; it was actual temptation, Jesus had all the freedom to accept Satan's proposals and to reject Yahweh's mission!

This temptation and all the others he was subject to until his death were of a level appropriate to his position as Son of Yahweh in charge of a very special and particular mission; Jesus was tested and tempted at the highest possible level. The same is valid for all men; the level of a person's temptation is strictly related to his capacity to resist it. Only a continuous communion with Yahweh can help men to withstand Satan, even if in a very imperfect way.

The whole human race, every single person, had to be informed that the doors to the Reign of Yahweh, after Jesus' resurrection, were open to everybody. This is the reason for Jesus preaching and choosing disciples; to prepare and make able a group of people to communicate and spread the Good News all around the Earth, continuing what he had initiated. It would have surely been possible for Yahweh to reach His goal through Jesus without telling anybody, but that would have been against His logic; He made men to be similar to Himself and He wants them to be informed and aware of their position in His respect.

When choosing his disciples, Jesus did not look for powerful, rich, learned, or particularly religious people; on the contrary, they were quite normal and, many times, from the lower classes. What better indication can we have that the Reign of Yahweh is for all men? Who is already powerful, rich, learned, and intelligent has the full capacity of making his own choices; it is he who is not so fortunate that needs Yahweh's help. Jesus' teaching began in the most logical place, the synagogues. He was, first, conveying his message to the Jews who were supposed, at least in theory, to receive and understand it without any difficulty. When the synagogues were closed to him because of the opposition of the religious hierarchy, he was obliged to teach only in the open spaces. His teaching had the purpose of announcing the

Good News that the Reign of Yahweh was open to everybody and was always accompanied by two other activities which traditionally we call miracles: healing and driving out of demons.

At this point, it is better to understand and define what a miracle is, and what is the purpose of performing one. A miracle is any kind of accomplishment which is totally alien to the human capability and knowledge of the time. May be some of Jesus' miracles would not be considered as such with today's knowledge and technical capacity; nevertheless, at the time, they were, without any doubt, miracles. Performing miracles has two meanings; the first valid for the Jews only, the second for everybody at any time.

a) For the Jews illness was Yahweh's punishment for personal or ancestors' sins; to have the capacity to heal was a demonstration of having the power to forgive sins, which only Yahweh has and which He has delegated only to His Son, the Messiah.

b) To perform a miracle means to help a human being either physically -in his body and mind- giving him back his health, or spiritually -in his soul- freeing him from the slavery of demon bondage. It is very interesting to note that Jesus never denied such help to anybody, either when the person was asking for himself or for some friends or relatives.

There are some important indications from these facts:

i) People do not have to focus on the spirit only; they are, now and forever, flesh too. To forget the condition and the physical health of the body is to forget that to do harm and to jeopardize health is to go against Yahweh's creation, against Yahweh's will. Of course this does not mean nor authorize any excess in the opposite direction; man is flesh and spirit, both are important.

ii) To intercede and pray for other people is an important, morally good, activity. It is a characteristic and a demonstration of being in spiritual communion with them.

iii) As people can be in spiritual communion with Yahweh, so they can be in a similar condition with Satan and his angels who, obviously, are using it to dominate men at will and to cause as much harm as possible. The person involved is usually unable to break this bad bond of dependence; only people with strong faith and appropriate preparation can help to break it. It is a very particular kind of intercession. Teaching, preparing disciples, healing, and driving out demons were part of Jesus' mission; they were activities on which he had to spend a lot of energy, both physical and mental. To compensate for it, to acquire new energy to spend and use on people, he needed to spare some time and pray in solitude; in other terms, he needed to be in private, personal spiritual communion with Yahweh.

From the above, we have an indication useful for everybody; the moral strength necessary to carry on with a moral mission can come only from Yahweh, from being in spiritual communion with Him. As it is impossible -because of our human nature- to be in continuous spiritual communion with Yahweh, men have to do their best to re-enter into this condition, never losing their courage, every time they step out of it.

Jesus, even when subject to Satan's temptation, was able to remain in spiritual communion with Yahweh; as a consequence, his faith, his understanding of the reason and meaning of his mission, and his awareness of the immediate consequences of accepting it grew to be complete at the moment of his Transfiguration. At that very moment he was in the Reign of Yahweh, in full communion with his Father from Whom he received the complete explanation of the meaning and purpose of his mission. He knew for sure of his imminent suffering, his death, and his resurrection and of the ensuing prize; the opening of the Reign of Yahweh -where he was to be second only to the Father- to all people of the past, the present, and the future. The fact that his acceptance of the imminent suffering was complete and total does not mean it was easy and fearless; on the contrary, it was -as had to be due to his human nature- extremely difficult and fearful. All this is carefully described in the Gospels, beginning with Mark (Gethsemane, Mark 14:32-42), where we can see that, even though Jesus was "deeply distressed and troubled," with his "soul overwhelmed with sorrow at the point of death;" nevertheless he was determined in following Yahweh's will, "Everything is possible for You. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will." The last step of his earthly mission was to go through the arrest, Sanhedrin and Pilate's judgment, scourging, and crucifixion as the final confirmation of his total faith in Yahweh.

He was continuously tested by Satan, for all the length of this ordeal, in his body as well as in his mind. In his body, by the scourging and the crucifixion. In his mind, more than by the mockery of the soldiers, it was by the insults of people "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself" and of the chief priests and teachers of the law "He saved others, but he can't save himself! Let Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe". Furthermore, his special communion with Yahweh was an obstacle to the final, doubtless demonstration of his faith; so Yahweh had to leave him alone "[Yahweh,] My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" to stand the last test "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down". Man as any other man, alone as any human being can be, he was able to withstand Satan till the very last moment of his life; after de-

claring his earthly mission completed "It is finished" he died professing again his faith in Yahweh "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit".

It was necessary for Jesus to die; a rescue even a fraction of a moment before his death would have left open the doubt about the possibility of Jesus losing his battle against Satan just in that one moment. Only by dying did he leave Satan no possibility to doubt; his mission was accomplished, providing the final demonstration of his faith in Yahweh.

In the beginning, because of Adam and Eve, the human race had to leave the Garden of Eden; now, due to Jesus, the whole of it was rescued and admitted to the Reign of Yahweh. Anyway, the Garden of Eden and the Reign of Yahweh are not the same; they are two different concepts and places. The Garden of Eden was a protected place on Earth where one could live nicely and easily, a place that was lost for ever. This good physical environment and condition will never be available again even though there will be more and more people trying to live in a better, Christian, way on Earth. The Reign of Yahweh was, and is, the final destination of all Yahweh's spiritual creatures; men and angels.

After his death, Jesus was resurrected by Yahweh to demonstrate to all people on Earth that he was the Son of Yahweh, and to let everybody know that "all authority in Heaven and on Earth" had "been given to" him. In other words, that he is second only to the Father, Who gave him two tasks:
a) To improve -as much as possible, in spite of the competition still existing between Yahweh and Satan- the human physical and spiritual condition on Earth by convincing more and more people to live a "Christian life."
b) To make everybody suitable to enter His Reign by administering justice during life and after death so that, at the end of "time," all men and angels will live together an everlasting life in the Reign of Yahweh, in full spiritual communion with Him and everybody else, still conserving their individual personalities.

At the beginning of the Jews' religion and history, Yahweh gave them -through Moses- a series of commandments and rules to follow; the Law. Jesus has expressed the essence of the Law in two short and fundamental statements:
a) You'll love [Yahweh] the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.
b) You'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself.
All the rest of the Law and all the work of the prophets are direct consequences of these two rules. The validity of the Law was limited only to the Jews; it did not apply to the other populations and people -the "pagans"-

who were never considered as "neighbors." Anyway, the Law was not enough for people to enter the Reign of Yahweh; only Jesus, with his death and resurrection, was able to open its doors and to allow everybody in. The best men could do, following the Law, was to be very near to the Reign of Yahweh, but never to enter it.

Jesus did not cancel the Law, there was no reason and no need for that; what he did reject was the legalistic superstructure that had been built on top of and around it. He completed and perfected the Law by making it valid for everybody and for ever. He did not leave any written commandment, rule, or order. What he gave was advices, suggestions, and moral targets to aim for; and all with plenty of consideration and forgiveness for human imperfections. The "rule" for living a Christian life can be synthesized in one sentence: Be fond of all men -above all your "enemies"- as of yourself, more than of yourself. Obviously, nobody can do it, as no man is perfect, but everyone can, with Yahweh's help, try his best.

Yahweh is in Jesus, and Jesus is in all the people who need help; therefore to help people is to be fond of them, that is, to be fond of Jesus, and that is, to be fond of Yahweh. We can say that the best way -may be the only one- for a man to prove his affection for Yahweh is by being fond of -that is helping- other men. Actually, this means to improve the human physical and spiritual condition on Earth, which is one of the two tasks that Yahweh assigned to Jesus after conferring on him complete authority on this part of His creation. The second task is to make everybody suitable to enter the Reign of Yahweh by administering justice -the perfect justice that only the omniscience of Yahweh makes possible. In this way, Yahweh's affection will bring all people to His Reign -to a condition of perfect communion with Him- after having satisfied His perfect justice. This satisfaction is possible both during life -by the sufferings of life- and after death -by the sufferings of hell.

It is important to note that:

a) Not all the sufferings of life are for this administration of justice; most of them are tests people are subjected to in order to make them even more suitable, in order to allow them to enter into a better and deeper communion with Yahweh. During the final personal judgment, Satan will point to all the bad actions of each man; at the same time, Jesus will point to the good ones, to that man’s tests and sufferings, and, above all, he will remind Satan that he has acquired back all men by his death and resurrection. As such all men will gain admittance to the Reign of Yahweh, even if at different levels of spiritual communion with Him, because of their different worthiness.

b) The purpose of hell -of the sufferings of hell- is the administration of Yahweh's justice to all men who have something for which they have not sufficiently atoned during their terrestrial life. After dying each man -good or bad, Christian or not- will be offered Yahweh's grace by Jesus; will be given the opportunity to repent or to convert to Christianity. This conversion can take any time, from a very short to an immensely long one, and involves the sufferings of hell as a necessary tool. For each man, at the moment of his conversion, hell is over; that man is going, passing through his personal judgment, to the Reign of Yahweh.
c) Hell is temporary, it is the place where Yahweh is not; at the end of the human race, after the conversion of the last man, it will be an empty place and, for that reason, will cease to exist. At this point, after the demonstration that all men have accepted to live with and not against Yahweh, even Lucifer will be convinced of his mistakes, will repent, and will enter for ever -accompanied by all his angels- the Reign of Yahweh.
d) To be in communion does not mean to be fused to, to become part of, nor to cease being an autonomous and independent entity. Spiritual communion is the highest level of relationship that different, independent beings can reach. It is left to their free choice and decision and leaves them totally unaltered and independent. Each man -and, as far as the analogy can apply, each angel- will conserve his individual personality as it was formed by his parents -inherited physical and mental characteristics,- by his earthly life -acquired physical, mental, and spiritual characteristics- and by the possible spiritual life preceding his admission to the Reign of Yahweh -spiritual characteristics.

HUMAN RACE. Fundamental periods and phases

First period: **Adam and Eve**

Good sons — **Fallen angels** — **Bad sons**

Some follow Yahweh | **Some do not** | **These do not follow Yahweh**

Very few people are good
The society is terribly corrupt.

Noah and the Flood
Destruction of the old, corrupt society.

Second period:

New society from Noah
The rules given are not enough to keep them good.
New direct involvement by the fallen angels.

Abraham and the chosen people
A population is chosen to carry Yahweh's message
and to be the example for everybody else to follow.

Moses and the Ten Commandments
Clear rules are given to keep the chosen people
good and faithful. On them concentrates the
battle/competition between Yahweh and Lucifer.

Conquest of the Promised Land
They are not faithful enough to become a big,
powerful nation. They remain a small one,
often under foreign domination.

Legalism
The religion becomes legalistic, incapable of
propagating any message. Instead of being the example to
follow, they become a group closed to everybody else.

Third period:

Jesus Christ
"Good News": the Reign of Yahweh is open to all people.
Everybody can enter in "communion" with Yahweh.

Note: Before proceeding to the next topic, I recommernd reading Appendices 1 and 2, mentioned in the personal introduction on page 3.

THE CREED
of the universal communion

THE CREED

I believe in Yahweh, the Only Eternal God, Creator Almighty of the Universe.
I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son of the human race, conceived by His Spirit and born of Mary on Earth;
Who preached, suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried to pay the price of Everybody's ransom;
Who went to preach when dead to the Souls of the Dead;
Whom Yahweh resurrected, thus beginning His Kingdom;
Who is second only to the Father, Who gave him the task to improve the human physical and spiritual condition, and to administer Justice to the Living and the Dead thus making Everybody suitable to enter His Reign.
I believe in the Universal Church, composed of All Believers, which invites All Sinners to take part;
in the expiatory and corrective punishment of sins for Everybody's final access to the Reign of Yahweh;
in the Physical Resurrection at the end of time with the conservation of the Individual Personality;
in Everybody's Everlasting Life, made similar again to Yahweh.

INTRODUCTION

A "Creed" is essentially a list of basic statements that try to contain and express the essence of the Christian faith and religion, of Christianity. Among the many versions already existing, there is one in particular -the Apostles' Creed- that expresses at best the universality of this essence. There are many slightly different forms of it, depending on the language and the Church, as different Churches usually give slightly different interpretations, tuned to the particularities of their belief. Nevertheless, all these versions are remarkably similar and have virtually the same meaning. We can really say that this Creed is good and acceptable for most Christians and that, as such, it has a general validity. However, just because of this, it cannot give complete satisfaction to a person who is looking for some better and deeper explanations. And it is exactly for this reason, to better express my own points of view and ideas, that I felt the necessity to write my own version.

When speaking about Christianity, it is essential to note that personal does not have to mean private; on the contrary, the spiritual experiences of a Christian have to be communicated to and shared with other people. To

reach this target, it is not sufficient to write down a mere list of statements; it is necessary to give all the due and indispensable explanations in order to put a possible reader in condition to understand and, if he likes, to agree.

This Creed wants neither to be better nor more complete than the Apostles' one; that cannot be, as no Creed can be complete, and it is impossible to express properly and render the sense of Christianity by a brief list of short statements. In this version, I give more emphasis to some points that are particularly important to me and of which I have my personal interpretations. Similarly, other people, considering other points to be equally or even more important, will have their own version, one that can properly express their convictions and ideas.

I BELIEVE IN YAHWEH, THE ONLY ETERNAL GOD, CREATOR ALMIGHTY OF THE UNIVERSE.

The first words are "I believe" -even if we should recognize that, in the case of a Christian Creed, it would be better to say "we believe," as the Christian faith is shared by all believers- and constitute a personal declaration: I am convinced, we are convinced, of the reality and truth of what follows; that there is only One God Who, furthermore, is the Creator of the universe. In this way we immediately point to our solution to the fundamental problem of the existence of the universe; of the two possible solutions, the theistic -with a God Creator of the universe, full of spiritual content- and the atheistic -with a universe existing on its own, void of any spiritual content- we opt for the theistic one.

To believe in a God, to believe in our Christian God, or not to believe at all, that is, to accept or to reject a religion, is only a matter of faith. For the believer, there is neither reason nor necessity to try and prove the existence of God; his faith makes it self-evident. The same is valid for the non-believer, the atheist, who has total faith in material and none in spiritual things; even though, in many cases, atheism is nothing more than an easy -and wrong- way to reject the religious hierarchy with its organization and rules.

Anyway, for the believer, the proof of God's existence is given by the existence of the universe, because God, for definition, is its Creator. It is also obvious that the universe, before coming into existence, surely did not have the capacity or the possibility of creating itself. It follows that everything and everybody, that is, the universe, the angels, and the human beings, were created by God Who, by having the power to create, is Almighty. Furthermore, to create, He had to exist before and independently of His creation; which means that He was never created, but always existed. Actually "time," as we intend it, does not have much of a meaning to Him who, there-

fore, is Eternal. By creating -the creation was and is His initiative- He is at the origin of all existing things and living beings; He is the Only God.

It is sufficient to look around with some care and attention to see that the world is in continuous evolution and that it was purposely designed to produce certain effects and to give certain results by evolving; to produce exactly those particular forms of life it did produce. We can call it "guided evolution" because even what looks due to accident is, in reality, part of the general plan so much that, beyond the apparent disorder, we can clearly see the work of the mind of a God of infinite power who does not neglect the smallest detail, and who has so designed life that lethargy brings disaster and even extinction, while activity of mind and body brings still greater life and gifts.

Once we have recognized the existence of God, what kind of God? If we use our reason, if we do not receive any help from faith, we can only reach the idea of a God of majesty and might, who leaves man completely separate and alien from Him. A God who does as He likes to a man who has no rights and to whom no explanations are given, left in the position of a slave without any hope. By reason we can only arrive at this picture of God; it requires more than reason, it requires revelation and faith, to see that God, Yahweh, is not only majesty and might, but that He is also fond of and takes care of all men; that His affection is inalienable and all-inclusive; nothing that man can do will ever alter it. That His affection is personalized, going in its fullness to each and every man. In effect, the essence and the center of the Christian conception of God is that Yahweh is fond of His creation and that, furthermore, He can never be completely satisfied until He is returned. Therefore, we may say that for Yahweh creation was and is a necessity; that He needs people whom He can be fond of and who will be fond of Him.

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON OF THE HUMAN RACE, CONCEIVED BY HIS SPIRIT AND BORN OF MARY ON EARTH;

The second declaration of a Christian, after the fundamental belief in Yahweh the Creator, is his belief in Jesus Christ; he who is at the origin of the Christian religion. To believe in Jesus Christ means to believe in:

a) The actual historical existence of a man called Jesus.

b) The fact that this man was the Christ, the Messiah sent by Yahweh to change the human conditions and to open His Reign to all men.

Jesus Christ has a special and peculiar characteristic, one that belongs exclusively to him as the only Son of Yahweh and of the human race. He is not only "Son of Yahweh" -that in Hebrew means "similar to Yahweh" or

"doing as Yahweh." He is not even only "a Son of Yahweh" -that means one among others. But he is "the only Son of Yahweh and of the human race." This means that there are no other human sons than him; Jesus Christ is the only man who can truly call Yahweh "My Father." Being Son he is, as any son, equal in nature but subordinate in obedience to his Father. In the meantime he is, as any son, an independent person, different from his Father. Being the only Son of Yahweh, he enjoys a special relationship with his Father; a kind of relationship which is unique only to him.
a) He has a special knowledge of his Father, at a level that no other human being can reach and equal.
b) Yahweh gave to His Son a special revelation of His purposes and plans and made Jesus Christ the intermediary between Himself and men, with full responsibility and authority on the further evolution and the destiny of the human race. All this special knowledge and revelation, all this responsibility and authority were given to Jesus because he was always fully obedient to his Father; and, as a consequence, there is a very particular and strong link between Father and Son, almost a union, because of their reciprocal knowledge and mutual understanding or, in other terms, of their reciprocal love; where love is the bond that gives two independent beings the "unity" of acting and thinking in unison, of being in a very deep, fully spiritual, "communion."

Jesus Christ, the only Son of Yahweh and of the human race, had a woman as a mother. Physically, he was not created by Yahweh, but born of Mary, with the special and direct involvement of Yahweh; of His Spirit. Jesus' body and soul were generated, as for all men, by his parents' bodies and souls. For this reason he is a mixture of human and divine and, as a consequence, he has a double nature; he is fully human and fully divine. To understand this double nature, it is important to remember that Adam and Eve, who are at the origin of the human race, were created by Yahweh to be like Him and to resemble Him. This means that there is "compatibility" between men's bodies and souls and Yahweh's Body and Spirit; they are of the same "nature."

Adam and Eve were fully human -mankind actually comes from them- even though they were created -in two totally different ways- by Yahweh. All the other men -who are their descendants- were, and are, generated by their parents, not created by Yahweh. Jesus Christ was and is fully human even if only his mother was human; one parent is enough to give the complete human nature. For the same reason, a girl born of parthenogenesis or a person originated by cell division, duplication, and evolution using a part taken from another man -a natural, biological, process that follows the in-

structions coded into the DNA and RNA- will be fully and totally human with all the characteristics of a human being: body, mind, and soul. In effect, it seems that Eve was originated by a similar biological process, with the further introduction of some genetic modifications to avoid having a clone of Adam and to change the sex from male to female.

For the same reason, having Yahweh as Father made Jesus fully divine, and he has both human and divine natures. The divine was limited by the human only during his life on earth; but, after resurrection, it is not limited any more, it is complemented. This is exactly what is happening and will happen, at a different level, to all men, whose bodies limit the activity of mind and soul during their life on earth. After resurrection, we will be freed from all these limits and constraints, even though we will keep our own -resurrected- body and our own personality.

Jesus Christ, having had a human mother, was conceived at a certain moment of "time," thus beginning his existence at that particular moment. Without a beginning he would have not been human, and the results of his "sacrifice" would not have been valid. Jesus Christ was and is Son of Yahweh, from whom he has inherited the divine nature, but he is not “God;” and he never said he was “God.” The main difference between the two of them is that Yahweh, Who never had a beginning, is eternal from ever in the past to ever in the future, while Jesus had a beginning and is eternal for ever in the future. Here, it is of fundamental importance not to confuse Yahweh -the Only Eternal God Creator Almighty- with His divine nature; Jesus has the full divine nature -he is a divine Being- even though he is not “God.” The only difficulty in understanding this concept -and reality- is due to the fact that, actually, we do not know what the "divine nature" is and what its characteristics are. In other terms Yahweh can -He is Almighty- transfer His divine nature to other beings, as He did with His Son Jesus Christ; yet this does not make them “God.”

Jesus was conceived and born of a woman on Earth; this woman, Mary, was not taken to Heaven to conceive and to give birth. This is to emphasize both the human nature of Jesus and his earthly mission. His sacrifice has full validity exactly for the fact that it was the sacrifice of a fully human being, and a human being has to be conceived and born on Earth -or, anyway, within the physical creation.

WHO PREACHED, SUFFERED, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED, AND WAS BURIED TO PAY THE PRICE OF EVERYBODY'S RANSOM;

During the first part of his life, from birth to adulthood, Jesus did mature

-from a human point of view- and prepare for his mission, which began at the moment of his baptism when his Father entered in full spiritual communion with him.

The initial phase of Jesus' mission consisted of preaching to the multitudes and choosing and instructing some disciples. Preaching to the multitudes, to inform as many people as possible that the doors of the Reign of Yahweh were to be opened to everybody; to spread the Good News. Choosing and instructing some disciples, to prepare a group of people to be able to continue his mission of communicating and spreading the Good News to all people around the whole Earth. Jesus' preaching was not theoretical, and he did not leave any kind of formal rules on how to live in order to be able to enter the Reign of Yahweh; it was always applied to practical life and accompanied by "miracles" -healing and driving out demons- actions which demonstrated that even the human condition on Earth and its improvement is important and is part of the Good News. In fact the human beings are composed of soul, mind, and body; the three of them are part of Yahweh's creation and are to be respected as they are important -even if not exactly to the same extent- for the present and the future life. It is essential to notice that Jesus was personally and totally involved in this activity; he was personally going around, speaking to all kinds of people, and spending his own energy -or power- to perform the miracles. He was not living in a luxurious palace and sending his subjects to act on his behalf; he personally traveled with his disciples, preparing them by practical example.

The second phase of Jesus' mission consisted of resisting Satan's final temptations through suffering, crucifixion, and death as final confirmation of his faith in Yahweh. His suffering, crucifixion, and death occurred under the Roman judicial system. The Gospels' references to Pilate, Erod, and the process are there to give proof of the actual reality of the facts described and, as a consequence, of the actual existence of the man Jesus. The suffering was of two kinds, physical and psychological. Physical by the scourging and the crucifixion. Psychological by being arrested, judged, and condemned; by being rejected by everybody, mocked by the soldiers, and insulted by the people, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. In the ancient Roman world the crucifixion was not only one of the most terrible ways to die, it was without any doubt the most humiliating and shameful because it was a penalty which could only be inflicted on slaves and non-Roman citizens. To conquer the human race -the world- for Yahweh, Jesus died on a cross demonstrating that from the lowest human level it is possible to rise straight to Yahweh.

After having being scourged and crucified, Jesus died and was buried.

The Gospels focus very much on his having been actually dead and buried; it was absolutely necessary for Jesus to die, as all human beings have to go through death. If Jesus was truly and completely man, then he had to experience it. Furthermore, a rescue even a short moment before his death would have left open the doubt about the possibility of Jesus losing his battle against Satan's temptation exactly at that moment. Only his death canceled totally and completely any possibility of such a doubt.

By dying on the cross, Jesus "sacrificed" himself by a fully voluntary "sacrifice" as he was fully aware of all the sufferings he had to go through to accomplish his mission, which he always had all the freedom to reject by accepting Satan's proposals. With his "sacrifice," Jesus gave Yahweh the final and complete possibility -demonstrating to Satan that there was a man fully and totally faithful to Him- to open forever His Reign to all people. In other words we can say that, by suffering and dying, Jesus paid for the cost of releasing the whole human race from Satan's domination; he paid the price of everybody's ransom.

WHO WENT TO PREACH WHEN DEAD TO THE SOULS OF THE DEAD;

After Jesus' death his body lay in the tomb waiting for Resurrection, while his Spirit -his Soul- went to the "Land of the Dead" to preach to their souls. Traditionally, and wrongly, we are accustomed to say that Jesus, after his death, "descended into hell." This mistake is due to an improper translation of the words that appear in the original Greek versions. The word used in Greek is Hades, Sheol in Hebrew; and it did not represent hell, but the land of the dead, the place where men's souls were going after their physical death.

Before Jesus' Resurrection, the doors of the Reign of Yahweh were not yet opened to all men. As a consequence the souls of all the dead -with the exception of the few who had been chosen by Yahweh for some particular mission and for this reason were in personal spiritual communion with His Spirit- had to go to this Land of the Dead which, anyway, does not have any of the connotations of torture and punishment that the word hell includes; in this last case the word normally used by the New Testament writers was Gehenna, that is, the place of punishment of the wicked.

Jesus' Spirit did not only go to this land of the dead; he preached to them, to their souls, announcing his Gospel -the Good News- and declaring the remission of sins, which was received by those who believed in him, in the same way he did on Earth with the living. Jesus preached to all men who lived and died from the beginning of he human race and who never heard of

him; not only to those who in every age and generation and in every race and nation lived rightly, but to all the souls of the dead who never had the opportunity to receive the Christian Gospel. From this moment on, it is always valid and true that, either in this life or in the life beyond physical death, all men are offered the Gospel of Yahweh's Truth and Affection.

This means that there are no limits in space and time to the Grace of Yahweh which continues to operate in whatever other world and whatever other life there may be; that the whole universe in time and in eternity, here and after here, belongs to Yahweh; and that He has not only time, but also eternity to win all men to Himself. Therefore, the result of Jesus Christ's mission is destined to be complete and total because, in the end, not only all men will be saved, but even Lucifer will repent and will enter for ever -with all his angels- the Reign of Yahweh.

WHOM YAHWEH RESURRECTED, THUS BEGINNING HIS KINGDOM;

Jesus' body lay in the tomb, waiting for his physical resurrection, for the length of earthly time his Spirit preached to the souls of the dead. At the end of this time, "on the third day," he -his body- was resurrected by Yahweh and reunited with his Spirit to give him the chance to demonstrate to all people on Earth of being truly the Son of Yahweh. To give this demonstration, and to be seen and recognized by his disciples, Jesus remained physically on Earth for "forty days" after resurrecting. During this period he, with his "resurrected" body, was fully independent of time, place, and space; in effect, while still in his earthly body, Jesus could not reach the minds and hearts and consciences of men everywhere, being confined by the limitations of place and time, the Risen Christ could come and go at will and, not any more subject to the previous limitations, he could appear when and how he wished to whom he wished. Nothing on Earth was a barrier or an obstacle to him.

Jesus' resurrection -and, as a consequence, men's resurrection- is at the center of the Christian beliefs as it is demonstrated by the fact of having been, from the very beginning of the Christian Church, at the center of the Apostles' faith and preaching. There never would have been a Christian Church had there never been the Resurrection of Jesus. During his earthly mission, Jesus was always fully aware not only of his imminent suffering and death but also of his forthcoming resurrection, which was clearly an act of Yahweh, Who raised him from the dead, entering actively and personally even in this phase of Jesus' "global life," as He already did in his birth and during his terrestrial life.

Before Jesus' resurrection, the doors of the Reign of Yahweh were not open to all men, but only to the good and faithful people supported by His Spirit -people "filled by the Spirit of Yahweh"- who were a minority even within the Jews; while, after Resurrection, these doors are fully open, ready to accept and allow in every person who believes in Jesus. The moment of his resurrection marks the "beginning" of the Reign of Yahweh; where "beginning" means open to everybody, not coming into existence at that moment.

In the meantime Yahweh gave Jesus the appropriate reward for his unshakable faith and for the suffering endured, holding the highest position, immediately after Yahweh, in His Reign. As his first action with his new responsibility, Jesus led, out of Hades into the Reign of Yahweh, all those who had believed in him. These people freed from Hades entered the Reign of Yahweh with their souls -men have to wait for the "end of time" to be physically resurrected; whereas Jesus was, and is, there with his full Being; Spirit, Mind, and Body.

WHO IS SECOND ONLY TO THE FATHER, WHO GAVE HIM THE TASK TO IMPROVE THE HUMAN PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL CONDITION, AND TO ADMINISTER JUSTICE TO THE LIVING AND THE DEAD THUS MAKING EVERYBODY SUITABLE TO ENTER HIS REIGN.

"Forty days" after resurrecting, Jesus "ascended to Heaven," in such a way indicating the continuity between the end of his presence and mission on Earth, and the beginning of his presence and responsibility in the Reign of Yahweh.

By dying on the cross, Jesus opened to everybody the doors of the Reign; from that moment on, to all men is given the possibility -the grace- to live near Yahweh, to be in communion with Him.

By "ascending to Heaven," he -the Son of Yahweh- settled in His Reign holding the highest position, immediately after Yahweh Himself -"seated at the right hand of Yahweh," and, "all authority in Heaven and on Earth had been given to him"- and taking charge of the responsibilities that Yahweh assigned him -to be the "Lord of men" and "to judge the living and the dead." In other words, from the moment of his Ascension, Jesus has been second only to the Father, Who gave him full authority; position of power and responsibility that came as a consequence of what he did, following the will of his Father, for the redemption of the human race.

Jesus is the Savior of all men and, as such, was given two tasks:

a) To improve -as much as possible within the competition still existing

between Yahweh and Satan which, as we know, will stop only after "the end of time" and of the world, and after the total conversion to Christianity of the last man- the human physical and spiritual condition on Earth by convincing more and more people of living a "Christian Life." It is necessary, at this point, to remember that there will never more be on Earth a perfect condition - as it existed in the "Garden of Eden." This condition was lost for ever because of Adam and Eve, and the possibility to reinstate it is not part of Yahweh's plans about the destiny of the human race.

b) To make everybody suitable to enter His Reign by administering justice during life and after death. The Reign of Yahweh is the final destination of all the spiritual beings He has created; men and angels, and is the place where, at "the end of time," all men and angels will live together an everlasting life in full spiritual communion with Him and everybody else. Men are suitable to enter Yahweh's Reign only after having satisfied His justice -the perfect justice possible only to the omniscience of Yahweh. This condition can be fulfilled during life -by the sufferings of life- and after death -by the sufferings of hell. At this point it is necessary to remember that not all the sufferings of life are for the administration of divine justice; part are tests people are subject to for making them even more suitable to the Reign, for allowing them to enter in a better and deeper communion with Yahweh. Part are for giving some people the occasion and possibility to express and demonstrate their Christian faith and piety by helping those who are in need.

The administration of justice is a consequence of a judgment, and both the functions of judgment and of administration of justice belong to Jesus, to whom they were given by Yahweh. Now, if we consider that it is a matter of common experience to see that rewards and punishments -which are a consequence of the administration of justice- are only partially allocated in this life, it follows that Jesus' judgment and administration of justice, with the balance of rewards and punishments, have to take place after the end of each man's terrestrial life.

During this life and, if necessary, after death, each man is offered the grace of having faith in Jesus; grace that the man has the privilege to accept or the responsibility to refuse; in the second case even many times. To accept means to repent and, for this, to have the privilege of being received by Jesus and allowed to enter the Reign of Yahweh. To refuse means to go on carrying the full responsibility for all the sins -the "non-Christian" facts and aspects of a person's life. The refusal to repent makes necessary a judgment which at or after the end of life, carries the due punishment for not accepting the grace and the forgiveness offered. The place of such punishment is "hell," that is, the place were Yahweh is not, characterized by His total and

absolute absence. Hell does not exist only for making possible the proper administration of Yahweh's justice; it exists mainly as a tool, an absolutely necessary tool, of Yahweh's grace. It is just through hell that Jesus can -by offering His grace many and many times- make everybody, even the worst man, suitable to enter his Father's Reign.

I BELIEVE IN THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH, COMPOSED OF ALL BELIEVERS, WHICH INVITES ALL SINNERS TO TAKE PART;

The third declaration of a Christian, after the belief in Yahweh the Creator and in His Son Jesus Christ, is his belief in the existence of the "Christian Church" and, a point never to forget, in the Church's duty to invite ALL "Sinners" -that is, everybody, without even a single exception- to come and be part of it.

The Church is the togetherness, the unity, and the communion of all who believe in Yahweh and in Jesus Christ: the "Believers." Presently, the Church is divided between Earth and the Reign of Yahweh. On Earth, it is composed of living people, and so it is very far from perfect. In the Reign of Yahweh, it is composed of the souls of men waiting for their resurrection and of the few who were accepted directly with their bodies ("ascended to Heaven") by Yahweh. In the future, at the "end of time," and after the conversion and the consequent resurrection of the last man, the Church will be composed of all men who were ever born -all of them believers- and of all the angels of Yahweh -both the "good" ones who at the time of creation did not rebel, and the "bad" ones who did rebel but, later, at the end of time, will repent.

When living on Earth, Jesus Christ's teaching had the purpose of announcing the Good News that the Reign of Yahweh was open to all men; that the possibility to be in spiritual communion with Yahweh was given to all people, without limits and without exceptions. The earthly Church, which has to go on with what Jesus began, is open to everybody, and is universal; "catholic," as it is expressed by the Greek word "katholikos" that means, precisely, universal. Intrinsic to Christianity is the invitation to take part in the Church, in the Community in which there are no barriers: "all people are one [Community of Believers] in Jesus Christ." This concept is perfectly expressed by the Greek word for Church: "Ekklesia;" an assembly of people having a strong common interest, in our case the Community of those who have accepted the invitation and the command of Yahweh, given by Jesus Christ, to come to Him. The Church, in its true essence, is a divine institution, not a human invention; when he was on Earth, Jesus gave more than

enough evidence that he wanted to institute a Church and that this had to be open to everybody. In effect;
a) He did surround himself with a group of people -men and women- whom he had personally invited to follow him; the first "Believers."
b) He did expect from this group of people a clear and distinctive way of life which would differentiate them from the others.
c) They were not a closed group; actually, exactly the opposite, because their task, duty, and function was to persuade as many people as possible to enter in relationship with Jesus, as they had already done. Their target was to gather all men into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, into the Community, into the Christian Church.

Unfortunately, as time was passing and the Church expanding, many different ecclesiastical structures developed from the original group of Jesus' followers. This situation constitutes the biggest of the many defects of the earthly Church which, because of its being earthly, does not have any possibility to be good and perfect as we would like it to be. Anyway, imperfect as it is, the Church is composed of ALL Believers; of ALL people who have faith in Jesus Christ.

To have faith means to be convinced that certain things are true and to behave accordingly. The fundamental Christian faith is in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of ALL men; all people sharing this fundamental belief in Jesus Christ are fully and totally Christian Believers and form the Christian Church. To be part of the Christian Church is not a matter of being "saint" or "sinner," as it is actually impossible not to be a sinner, but of being a "believer." It does not matter, as well, the particular hierarchical organization, the denomination, and the physical place or building used for worship: the Christian Church is composed by every one of its local congregations, by every group of people gathered together to listen to a message from Yahweh, to read the Scripture, and to pray. On Earth, the Church is an earthly necessity, and it is appropriate to remember that it was just within the Church that the story of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith were preserved during the past centuries. It is the Church, represented by all its members, that has to continue the mission assigned by Jesus to the first group of Believers; to carry his message to all people on Earth, to convince as many of them as possible to become Christian in this life. The Christian faith is not meant to detach and isolate men from each other, but to unite them all in fellowship. To be part of the Church means to share the common faith and to be part of a unity. Anyway, Christian unity does not mean and does not bring the obliteration of all the differences; it actually means the harmonization of all the possible differences in a wider unity, the concentration on He

who unites rather than on the systems and theologies that divide. Unity means that there is only one Church; this is, indeed, obvious since there is, for everybody, only one Lord, one faith, and one God, Yahweh, Father of all.

IN THE EXPIATORY AND CORRECTIVE PUNISHMENT OF SINS FOR EVERYBODY'S FINAL ACCESS TO THE REIGN OF YAHWEH;

After his resurrection, Jesus was appointed by Yahweh "Lord" and "Savior" of the human race. As Lord, he is the Master of all people; all of them belong to him and have to recognize him as such, sooner or later. As Savior, he has to be sure that everybody will be part of the Christian community and will enter, at least at the end of time, the Reign of Yahweh. For this purpose, to make every single person suitable for the Reign of Yahweh, Jesus has to administer justice; the appropriate, perfect justice that only the omniscience of Yahweh makes possible. The administration of Yahweh's justice is possible both during earthly life -by the sufferings of life- and after death -by the sufferings of hell. It is important to remember that not all the sufferings of life are due to this reason, as it was and still is the Jews' point of view. Actually, most of the sufferings are tests people are subject to in order to make them even more suitable, to enter in a better and deeper spiritual communion with Yahweh. Anyway, immediately after death, each soul is brought in front of Yahweh for the personal judgment, when each person -good or bad, Christian or not- will be offered Yahweh's grace by Jesus Christ, who will ask him to repent -to feel deep sorrow and regret for his sins and omissions- and to become, fully and totally, a Christian. At this point, each soul is totally free and fully responsible for accepting or rejecting the offer of Yahweh's grace. By accepting, the person gives proof of being ready to enter the Reign of Yahweh; or by rejecting, of not being ready, and in this case is sent, for a certain period, to hell -the place were Yahweh is not-. After this period, the possibility of accepting Yahweh's grace is offered again and again until it is, finally, accepted.

The purpose of hell -of the sufferings of hell- is the administration of Yahweh's justice to all men who have something for which they have not sufficiently atoned during their terrestrial lives. Hell, and the expiatory and corrective punishment it carries on, is not "eternal" in the sense of "without end;" it cannot be because eternal punishment would leave an eternally divided universe, with part of Yahweh's creatures living in spiritual communion with Him and part totally separated from Him. Here, we have to remember that Yahweh is not only Justice, He is also and above all, benevolence. As a

consequence, a situation of eternal separation would leave Yahweh totally unsatisfied and full of sorrow; it would actually leave the final demonstration, and the final victory, to Satan; not to Yahweh.

From the point of view of perfect justice, it would not be of any justice to impose, for the sins of a life-time, an eternal punishment; it would be a disproportionate penalty. It would be hard to recognize perfect justice in an infinite penalty for that which was done in the very short time of a human life. Eternal punishment would impose limits on the operation of the grace of Yahweh; instead, Jesus' descent to Hades is a demonstration that the offer of the grace of Yahweh extends to everybody and beyond time as we know it. Only the restoration of all people and angels can lead to a situation of perfect unity with each person in full spiritual communion with Yahweh and with everybody else.

After satisfying Yahweh's justice and becoming fully and totally a Christian -this process can take any time, from a very short to an immensely long one- hell is over; the person enters, passing through the final personal judgment, the Reign of Yahweh. During this judgment, Satan will point to all the bad actions of each one; Jesus will point to the good ones, to the person's tests and sufferings, and to the fact that he has acquired all people by his Death and Resurrection. As a result, at the end of time, all people will gain admittance to the Reign of Yahweh even if at different levels of spiritual communion with Him, because of their different individual capacity, which is a personal characteristic that depends on both the earthly life of each person and his attitude at the moment of the personal judgment. There is a substantial difference between entering the Reign of Yahweh immediately after death -as a result of a "Christian" life and of a prompt acceptance of the grace offered during the personal judgment- or after a bad life and a long period in hell: the "spiritual scars" left by a bad life and by the punishment in hell will always be evident and will constitute a limit to the maximum possible level of spiritual communion between this particular person and Yahweh.

It is, indeed, obvious that hell -the place where Yahweh is not- is temporary; at the end of the human race, after the conversion of the last man, it will be an empty place and, for that, the reason itself for its existence will end. At this point, having had the final demonstration that all people have accepted to live with and not against Yahweh, even Lucifer will be convinced of his mistake, will repent, and will enter for ever -accompanied by all his angels- the Reign of Yahweh.

IN THE PHYSICAL RESURRECTION AT THE END OF TIME WITH THE CONSERVATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY;

At the end of time, after the acceptance of Yahweh's grace by even the last man, and with everyone admitted to His Reign, there will be everybody's "Physical Resurrection;" the last step leading, with the restoration of all men and angels, to a situation of perfect unity and total communion. Yahweh has created man -to be like Him and to resemble Him- both materially and spiritually in body, mind, and soul; therefore, there is no part of man which is beyond Yahweh's grace; man can and has to live in the Reign of Yahweh as a whole. Man is a composite, material and spiritual, creature; body and mind alone are not man, soul alone is not man. Man is body, mind, and soul together. Yahweh calls man to eternal life; not a part of man, but the whole man. Then, to say that only the soul is immortal is to say that only a part of a man can accept Yahweh's grace and have eternal life. It is therefore necessary, in the very essence of Christianity, to believe in the resurrection of the body; in the "Physical Resurrection."

To believe in the Physical Resurrection means to believe that each man will have his own soul, mind, and body even when living his eternal life in the Reign of Yahweh. This does not mean that the resurrected bodies will be exactly as they were on Earth, where age, illnesses, and accidents are causing continuous changes; they will be resurrected by Yahweh as He did for Jesus'. The resurrected body will have different characteristics from the original earthly one; it will be a body made alive and vivified by the Spirit of Yahweh.

The real belief behind the idea of the resurrection of the body is that the individual survives as an individual, as a complete person. Christians, believing in the survival of the personal individual identity, believe that after death every man will be exactly, totally, and only he himself. Actually, it is not necessary to believe in the survival of the individual to believe in the immortality of the soul. The use of the word body in the original Gospels is due to the fact that the Greeks and the Hebrews had no better or proper word than "body" to describe "individual personality." They could not conceive a personality without a body because it is only through the body that the personality acts and expresses itself on Earth. So then, in modern words, when we affirm our belief in the resurrection of the body, the essence of what we are really saying is: 'I believe in the survival of the individual personality. I believe that we will neither be obliterated into nothingness, nor absorbed in the divine.' In this way both the ancient and the modern man will express exactly the same idea and the same belief.

At the end of time all angels and men will live together an everlasting life in the Reign of Yahweh, in full spiritual communion with Him and everybody else, still conserving their individual personalities. To be in communion does not mean to be fused to, to become part of, or to be canceled as an entity. Communion is the highest level of relationship, due to their free choice and decision, that different, independent beings can reach, and leaves them totally unaltered and independent. Each man -and similarly, as far as applicable, each angel- will keep his individual personality as it was generated by his parents -inherited physical and mental characteristics-, shaped by his earthly life -acquired physical, mental, and spiritual characteristics- and molded by the possible spiritual life preceding his admission to the Reign of Yahweh -acquired spiritual characteristics.

IN EVERYBODY'S EVERLASTING LIFE, MADE SIMILAR AGAIN TO YAHWEH.

The Resurrection of all men will mark the actual beginning of the New Life of spiritual communion between Yahweh and all His spiritual creatures. At the end of time, the final objective and target of the task which Yahweh assigned to His Son Jesus Christ will have been reached: after making everyone suitable, all men and angels -all Yahweh's spiritual creatures- will live a new everlasting life in His Reign.

The belief in the new life to come is a fundamental principle of the New Testament, which teaches how to live on Earth in preparation for another -better- life in another -better- world. To believe in this, and to behave accordingly, is again a matter of faith. Then, if we have faith in Yahweh, we are also aware of His perfect justice and total benevolence. Both His justice and benevolence demand another life as a necessary consequence of the reality of the present one on Earth. Necessary the justice, to compensate for the preponderant injustice of this world. He who suffered more and endured the highest injustice will receive the due compensation and reward by entering the Reign of Yahweh -as a soul- sooner than he who did not go through so much suffering and injustice in his earthly life. Necessary the benevolence, to allow each person to find a purpose for his life and to fully develop his gifts and character. It does not matter how short, incomplete, and limited the earthly life was; in the new one, each person will blossom to the full extent of his capacity.

Between death -the end of the earthly life- and final judgment and resurrection -the beginning of the new life- there will probably be a more or less long period of instruction, followed by the offering of Yahweh's grace, during which the souls of the dead will be properly prepared for the new life.

This life will be everlasting, with a beginning but with no end. Being without end, it will be similar to the eternal life of Yahweh -which is, furthermore, even without beginning. After resurrection we will be -with our resurrected bodies- similar to Yahweh and, for this reason, able to live and share His kind of life. Surely, this eternal life will not be static, but there will be the possibility, actually the necessity, for an active life of growth and development, with the ever improving mutual knowledge and understanding leading to a deeper and deeper level of spiritual communion.

JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF YAHWEH, A MAN

In the canonical Christian tradition, Jesus Christ is considered to be one of the three Persons of the Trinity ("God"); that he himself is true "God" while, at the same time, he is said to be a true man. Essentially, this leads to the absurd situation of "God" sacrificing Himself on the cross -in one of the three Persons- for the good of the human race and to demonstrate to Satan the existence of a man -who, in this case, would also be "God"- capable of withstanding him.

In short, there are three possible arguments and objections supporting the proposition that Jesus, in spite of being the Son of Yahweh, is only a man, and not "God" Himself:

1) It is absurd that "God" could have died sacrificing Himself; "God" cannot die.

2) If it were possible and it really happened, no demonstration at all would have been given to Satan, as it is obvious that "God" can resist him.

3) The demonstration had to be given by a man; therefore, he could not and did not have to be "God."

As the first and absolutely necessary consideration, we have to focus on the reason, meaning, and necessity of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection. For this reason, it is essential to remember that the very existence and essence of our religion, and of the reality of the life, sacrifice, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are a direct consequence of the rebellion of the cherub Lucifer, Satan, and of his further activity. Without this, there would not have been any necessity for Jesus Christ to sacrifice Himself on the cross for the redemption of the human race which, in this case, would not have had any need to be redeemed.

As we know very well, in the beginning, Yahweh created the universe with the full involvement and collaboration of all the angels who implemented and realized His design by following His instructions and working under His supervision. Yahweh gave the top responsibility for the practical implementation of the creation of our part of the universe, let say the Solar System(*), to the cherub Lucifer, the one who, in this part of the universe, was second only to Yahweh Himself. The consequence of this responsibility is that the Solar System was "given" to him from the beginning, and that, consequently, he had, and has, power over it. All this power made him rebel against Yahweh, desiring the worship of the Solar System for himself and also considering himself to be at the same level of his Creator. From that moment onward, the perfect and beautiful Lucifer -the shining one- became Satan -the resister, the adversary- and was banished from Heaven, from the

(*) We don't know which part of the creation was entrusted to Lucifer.

continuous contact with Yahweh. But, even after he rebelled, Satan did not lose his authority and power over the Solar System; on the contrary, as it is fully described in the Bible, he worked very hard to turn the creation against Yahweh. At a certain point, he was allowed by Yahweh to go and tempt Adam and Eve, the progenitors of the human race, and to try and convince them to do the only one forbidden thing; not to obey the only one order Yahweh gave them. He was able to convince them and, as a consequence, he became the master of the human race.

The only possibility of removing him from such a position of power was by demonstrating the existence of at least one man with the capacity to resist all his temptations, till the last moment of his life, and without the slightest hesitation; a man capable of showing Satan, once and for ever, his total and full faith in Yahweh. There were, and there are, plenty of good and faithful people, but no man born of human parents has ever been able to make true this objective in all the necessary fullness; men, without the specific and individual help of Yahweh, of the Spirit of Yahweh, were, are, and will always be unable to withstand Satan's temptations.

For this reason, Yahweh, Who is fond of men and wants all of them to live a life of eternal communion with Him, decided to generate a man with whom He would be in special spiritual communion and who could withstand Satan's temptations for the final redemption of the human race. This man was Jesus Christ, the human Son of Yahweh. He was a man because only and exclusively a man -not “God,” not an incarnation of Yahweh- had to give the demonstration of being able to resist Satan. Furthermore, to make this demonstration final and total, he had to resist till the very last moment of his earthly life -till his death- in order not to leave room for even the slightest doubt about the possibility of his losing the battle against Satan at that very moment. It was essential not to leave Satan any possible residual doubt; only by resisting and dying, this man could provide the final demonstration of his total faith in Yahweh. Another reason why Jesus Christ was definitely a man -not “God,” not an incarnation of Yahweh- is that Yahweh, even Yahweh incarnated, cannot die; a "God" who dies is a so-called "semi-god," who is so common in many mythologies, but who does not have anything to do with Yahweh, the Creator. Jesus Christ, who is Son of Yahweh with the human race, is not “God.” We can say -even if the term is clearly inappropriate- that he is The Semi-God; the only one of the human race with Yahweh. There were, and probably there still are even now, plenty of other semi-gods generated by unions between fallen angels and women. Of course, we do not have to confuse the Son of Yahweh with the sons of the angels, fallen or not.

There is another idea about Jesus Christ which is totally wrong and that is absolutely necessary to clarify: the idea that, in order to placate Yahweh's anger against the human race for the "offense" committed against Him by Adam and Eve, it was necessary to sacrifice -to dedicate to Yahweh through killing- a being at the same level with Yahweh and that Jesus Christ was this "necessary high level sacrifice." This idea is both absurd and wrong. Absurd because it depicts Yahweh as revengeful, deprived of any affection; and Who, to satisfy a formality, was waiting to be offered the sacrifice of Himself -there is only one being at the level of Yahweh: Yahweh Himself. But Yahweh cannot die, therefore such a sacrifice could not take place. Furthermore, if feasible, it would have been the worst sin ever possible to commit; absolutely not comparable to any act of disobedience, as Adam and Eve's was. Wrong because, actually, Yahweh was not angry with men; it was exactly the opposite, as Yahweh was and is so much fond of men that He decided to generate His own human Son and to give him the task of redeeming the human race and opening once and for ever His Reign to everybody, to have all men there, living for ever in spiritual communion with Him.

"For Yahweh was so fond of the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For Yahweh did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17)

Jesus Christ -who is the only Son of Yahweh and of the human race- is, like any other son, equal in nature but subordinate in obedience to his Father. At the same time he is, as any other son, an independent being, different from his Father.

"This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Spirit of Yahweh." (Matthew 1:18)

"Yahweh sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph... The Virgin's name was Mary... The angel said to her, '...you will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... The Spirit of Yahweh will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.'" (Luke 1:26-35)

Jesus' body and soul were generated, like for any other human being, by his parents' bodies and souls. As a consequence, they were fully human and fully divine; he inherited both the human and the divine nature. This should not surprise or create problems since, as we know very well, at the begin-

ning the human being -male and female- was created by Yahweh to be like Him and to resemble Him. Furthermore, in the future life, all men will live in the Reign of Yahweh; in communion not only with all other human beings and angels, but also with Yahweh Himself. This means that there is "compatibility" between men's bodies and souls and Yahweh's Body and Spirit. Actually, in particular, men's souls come straight from Yahweh's Spirit; therefore, they are of the same "nature." For what refers to Jesus' body, it is clear and obvious that He Who had the power to create the universe has also the full capacity to join His genetic physical patrimony to that of a woman. Even the angels, at least some of them, had and used this capacity.

Jesus Christ was and is Son of Yahweh, not “God.” He has inherited the divine nature from his Father, but he is not “God;” furthermore, he never claimed to be “God” and always kept himself in a position of obedience to the Father.

"Jesus gave them [the Jews] this answer: 'I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does.'" (John 5:19)

"Jesus answered, 'My teaching is not my own. It comes from Him Who sent me.'" (John 7:16)

"Jesus said to them, 'I have not come on my own, but He [Yahweh] sent me.'" (John 8:42)

"Jesus answered, 'The miracles I do in my Father's name.'" (John 10:25)

"[About the end of the age], 'No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.'" (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32)

"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father Who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." (John 12:49-50)

The main difference between Jesus and his Father is that Yahweh is eternal from ever in the past to ever in the future, while Jesus had a beginning and is eternal for ever in the future. Here, it is of fundamental importance not to confuse Yahweh -the Only Eternal Creator Almighty- with His divine nature; Jesus has the full divine nature, he is a divine Being, even though he is not “God.” The only difficulty in understanding this concept -and reality- is due to the fact that, actually, we do not know what the "divine nature" is and what its characteristics are, even if we can, without any doubt, say that Yahweh can -He is Almighty- transfer His divine nature to other beings, as He did with His Son Jesus Christ; yet this does not make them "God."

Jesus was conceived and born of a woman on Earth. We have to note that this woman, Mary, was not taken to Heaven to conceive and give birth, to emphasize both the human nature of Jesus and his earthly mission, which had full validity precisely because he was a truly human being. A human being has to be conceived and born on Earth or, anyway, within the physical creation. By having had a human mother, Jesus was conceived at a certain moment in "time" thus beginning his existence. Again, without this beginning he would not have belonged to the human race. His "sacrifice" on the cross and its results are valid precisely because of the fact that he was a man. A man, and only a man, had to demonstrate his total faithfulness to Yahweh, and Jesus Christ was born and was, fully and totally, a man. Furthermore, having Yahweh as one parent, Jesus was in communion with Him in a way that will be possible to other men only after entering the Reign of Yahweh.

Without any doubt, due to his Father's genetic contribution, his body was in particularly good shape and his mind particularly acute; anyway, both had to develop following the rules imposed by human nature. His soul, as everybody's soul, was both human and divine; men's souls are human because they are generated by their parent's souls and are divine because, in the beginning, Adam's soul was originated by Yahweh's Spirit. When Jesus was a small boy, he was a small boy and that's all; he had to grow and develop as any other child. The difference was a better intelligence, giving him the capacity to learn and reason with unusual profit and acumen. Only at a certain point in his physical and intellectual development, he began to feel his communion with Yahweh; and he was sure of his special relationship with Him because of Yahweh's declaration immediately after his baptism.

> "As soon as Jesus was baptized [by John the Baptist]... he saw the Spirit of Yahweh descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from Heaven said, 'This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:16-17)
>
> "Jesus... saw... the Spirit of Yahweh descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from Heaven: 'You are My Son, whom I love.'" (Mark 1:10-11)

Jesus was fully and totally a man and, before accepting and beginning his special mission, he lived a normal terrestrial life, working to support himself and his family.

Immediately after Yahweh's declaration which followed his baptism, he had to begin his mission demonstrating to Yahweh -and to Satan- his total and complete faith in Him.

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit of Yahweh into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said: 'If you are the Son of Yahweh, tell these stones to become bread.'
Jesus answered...
Then the devil took him to the Holy City and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of Yahweh,' he said, 'throw yourself down for it is written: "He will command His angels concerning you..."'
Jesus answered him...
Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'
Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship Yahweh your Lord, and serve Him only."'
Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him."
(Matthew 4:1-11)

Similar words are in Luke 4:1-13, which differs only in the last verse:

"When the devil had finished all his tempting, he left him until an opportune time." (Luke 4:13)

Satan was allowed by Yahweh to tempt Jesus in a way appropriate to his being the Son of Yahweh, with the most important things he had the authority to offer him:

a) Personal, material satisfaction; using his powers exclusively for himself.
b) Personal, intellectual satisfaction; using his powers for the pleasure of using and showing them off to everybody.
c) Terrestrial power; on condition that he worshiped Satan, in this way recognizing Satan's pre-eminence to Yahweh.

Jesus was able to stand against all these temptations and, even if he was helped and strengthened by being in spiritual communion with Yahweh, there is no "was able for sure" here; those were actual temptations, and he had all the freedom to accept Satan's proposals and to reject Yahweh's mission.

This episode offers fundamental proof of the fact that Jesus was a man, not “God” -as a Person of the Trinity- not an incarnation of Yahweh. The temptations he was subjected to only make sense if addressed to a man; because, in fact, only a man can be tempted. Yahweh would not and, furthermore, surely could not be tempted with an offer of what already belongs to Him -the whole universe. Surely, Satan will never even think of tempting Yahweh: now, how can he even think of proposing that Yahweh worship

one of His creatures -the same Satan? When he tempted Jesus, he did it with Yahweh's approval; sure that he was tempting the man Jesus Christ, not Yahweh Himself.

At the moment of Transfiguration, Jesus was in the Reign of Yahweh; in full spiritual communion with his Father, Who gave him a complete explanation of the meaning and purpose of his mission,

"A voice from the cloud said, 'This is My Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 17:5)

"And a voice came from the cloud: 'This is My Son, whom I love [whom I have chosen], listen to him.'" (Mark 9:7 and [Luke 9:35])

And he knew of his imminent suffering, death, and resurrection and of the ensuing prize; the opening of the Reign of Yahweh -where he was to be second only to the Father- to all people of the past, the present, and the future. And he fully and freely accepted the proposed mission.

The fact that his acceptance of the imminent suffering was complete and total does not mean it was easy and fearless; on the contrary, it was -as had to be due to his human nature- extremely difficult and fearful. All this is fully described by the Gospels where we can see that, even if Jesus was

"Deeply distressed and troubled," (Mark 14:33)

with his

"soul overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death;" (Mark 14:34)

he, nevertheless, confirmed his decision to follow Yahweh's will,

"Abba, Father, everything is possible for You. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will." (Mark 14:36. Similar words are in Matthew 26:37-39 and in Luke 22:42-43)

The last step of his earthly mission was to go through arrest, Sanhedrin and Pilate's judgment, scourging, and crucifixion as final confirmation of his total faith in Yahweh. He was continuously tested by Satan, for the whole duration of his ordeal, on his body as well as on his mind. On his body, by the scourging and the crucifixion. On his mind, more than by the mockery of the soldiers, it was by the insults of his own people,

"You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross if you are the Son of Yahweh!" (Matthew 27:40. Similar words are in Mark 15:29-30)

and by the insults of the chief priests and the teachers of the law,

"He saved others, but he can't save himself! Let Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." (Mark 15:31-32. Similar words are in Matthew 27:42 and in Luke 23:35)

Furthermore, his special communion with Yahweh was an obstacle to the final, doubtless demonstration of his faith; so Yahweh had to leave him alone,

"[Yahweh,] My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"
(Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34)

to stand the last test,

"Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him [to take him down]." (Matthew 27:49 and [Mark 15:36])

Man as any other man, alone as any human being can be, he was able to withstand Satan till the very last moment of his life,

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"
(Luke 23:34)

and, after declaring his earthly mission completed,

"It is finished" (John 19:30)

he died professing again his faith in Yahweh,

"Father, into Your hands I commit my Spirit." (Luke 23:46)

The Gospels focus very much on his having been actually dead and buried, giving details of facts, places, and witnesses:

"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his Spirit." (Matthew 27:50)

"With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last." (Mark 15:37)

"A man from Arimathea, named Joseph... Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body... Joseph took the body... and placed it in his own new tomb... Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite to the tomb." (Matthew 27:57-61. Similar words are in Mark 15:43-47 and Luke 23:50-55)

"Joseph of Arimathea... With Pilate's permission, came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus... At he place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb... They laid Jesus there." (John 19:38-42)

It was absolutely necessary for Jesus to die, as all human beings have to experience death. If Jesus was truly and completely a man, then death had to be unavoidable even for him. Furthermore, a rescue received even a short moment before death would have left open the doubt about the possibility of Jesus losing his battle against Satan precisely at that moment. Only his death canceled totally and completely any possibility of such a doubt.

By dying on the cross, Jesus "sacrificed" himself with a "sacrifice" that was fully voluntary as he was fully aware of all the suffering he had to go through to accomplish his mission, which he always had all the freedom to reject by accepting Satan's proposals. By means of his "sacrifice," Jesus gave Yahweh the final and complete possibility -demonstrating to Satan that there was a man fully and totally faithful to Him- to open for ever His Reign to everybody. In other words, we can say that, by suffering and dying, Jesus

paid the price for releasing the whole human race from Satan's domination; that he paid the price of everybody's ransom.

"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood... When we were Yahweh's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son..." (Romans 5:8-10)

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the Righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to Yahweh." (1 Peter 3:18)

"The result of the one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." (Romans 5:18)

"Christ died for our sins..." (1 Corinthians 15:3)

"All this is from Yahweh, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ." (2 Corinthians 5:18)

"We have been made holy through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:10)

After his death, Jesus was resurrected by Yahweh to demonstrate to all people on Earth that he really was the Son of Yahweh, and to let everybody know that:

"All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:18-19)

"The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son... And He [Yahweh] has given him [Jesus] authority to judge..." (John 5:22,27)

In other words, Jesus is second only to the Father, Who gave him two tasks:
a) To improve -as much as possible in spite of the competition still existing between Yahweh and Satan- the human physical and spiritual condition on Earth by convincing more and more people to live a "Christian life."
b) To make everybody suitable to enter His Reign by administering justice, both during life and after death, so that, at the end of "time," all men and angels will live together an everlasting life in the Reign of Yahweh, in full spiritual communion with Him and everybody else. And he did pass these tasks to his disciples, telling them,

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." (Mark 16:15)

and to Simon Peter, in particular,

"Feed my lambs... Take care of my sheep... Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17)

Jesus' physical resurrection was an act of Yahweh, Who raised him from the dead; as a man he had no power to rise himself. As Yahweh was active in the birth and life of Jesus, so it was for his Resurrection. When he was on Earth, Jesus could not reach the mind, heart, and conscience of men every-

where; he was confined by the physical limitations of place and time on his earthly body. On the contrary, the Risen Christ came and went at will, not any more subject to the previous limitations:

"Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them [of the disciples] while they were walking in the country." (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13-15)

"And they recognized him [Jesus], and he disappeared from their sight." (Luke 24:31)

"While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them." (Luke 24:36)

"One evening... when the disciples were together, with the doors locked... Jesus came and stood among them." (Mark 16:14; John 20:19)

"A week later... Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them." (John 20:26)

He was real, yet he could appear when and how he wished to whom he wished; nothing any more on Earth was a barrier or an obstacle to him. In other words, the divine nature of Jesus Christ was set free from the limitations of the physical human one only after his resurrection.

SATAN'S EXISTENCE AND ACTIVITY

A REALITY WE HAVE TO CONSIDER AND UNDERSTAND, NOT TO OVERESTIMATE, NOT TO UNDERESTIMATE.

Even though we don't have to give too much emphasis to Satan and his powers nor, even worse, to consider him too close, in terms of these powers and capabilities, to Yahweh, we don't have to consider him very much inferior. In effect, we don't have to forget nor to not properly consider that Satan, Lucifer, was created -by Yahweh- so powerful to be second only to Himself. Furthermore, Yahweh did not reduce Satan's powers after his rebellion.

The fact that Satan exists and is always very active in trying to attain his purposes is a reality we absolutely have to be aware of, so we won't be unprepared for his attacks. We also have to recognize that, in the present historical period, there is a general tendency not to consider Satan properly; a sort of shyness of speaking and discussing about him, his existence, and his activity. Whereas, in other historical times, there was an opposite situation; too much importance and consideration was given to him, generating a different kind of trouble, harm, and suffering for the people of the epoch. In both cases this is clearly due to Satan's activity; he tries to blind people -especially the hierarchy of the Christian Churches- in order to hide the fundamental truth from them.

As Christians, it is essential to remember that the very existence and essence of our religion, and the reality of the life, sacrifice, and death of Jesus Christ are a direct consequence of Satan's existence and activity; of what he did in the distant past, beginning with the creation of our part of the the universe. Without such actions -without his "rebellion" against Yahweh and all that followed it- there would not have been any necessity for Jesus Christ to sacrifice himself on the cross for the redemption of the human race which, in this case, would not have had any need of being redeemed.

Only by knowing Satan for what he actually is -how powerful he was created, in what way he rebelled against Yahweh, what his activity was and is- we do not risk falling in the dualism Yahweh-Satan; which, in reality, not only does not exist, but cannot even be proposed because, whatever he does, it is always and only within the limits of Yahweh's permission.

The real problem is that very often, almost always, we cannot understand why Yahweh gives Satan the permission to do so much evil, to generate so much suffering. The fact is that our understanding of Yahweh's reasons is

very much limited by the physical part of our beings; since all the suffering so widespread on Earth is relevant to this physical part, it follows that, physically, it is too difficult -nearly impossible- to understand and justify. Anyway, even though we do not understand it, this is the fundamental reality for which we have to try, even taking into account our limitations, to give at least a partial, even if unsatisfactory, explanation.

First of all, we can see immediately that the dualism Yahweh-Satan does not exist. Dualism means antagonism and fighting between two parties who, by having the same level of capacities and powers, compete at the maximum of their capability and do not allow each other to have any freedom of action. Now, even if it is true that Satan's powers are very close to those of Yahweh, by granting or not His permission to act, Yahweh fully maintains His total supremacy. But then, why is Yahweh giving His permission? It is because He is continuously trying, in this way of His which we have so much difficulty in understanding, to convince Satan to come back to Him; something that will have to happen as a consequence of Satan's own conviction and decision, without any coercion from Yahweh. To Satan, to all the angels, and to us men was given the "freedom" to accept or to reject Yahweh and His grace, that is, to live with Him or against -separated from- Him. This freedom of decision is absolutely necessary for beings who, if they accept, are in condition of being in communion with Yahweh as independent entities.

To know about Satan and his activity, we have to refer to the only historical document available, the Bible. By reading it carefully we can go back to what happened before man came into existence, at the very moment of the creation of our part of the universe. In the Bible we can find the actual account of how and why a being of incredible power, named Lucifer, rebelled against Yahweh and became Satan.

Satan was created by Yahweh as the Cherub Lucifer, the one who, in our part of the universe, let's say the Solar System(*), was second only to Yahweh Himself. The powers he received were so great as to allow him to go against Yahweh even when he was still living and operating in direct contact with Him. During the creation of the Solar System, Lucifer was given by Yahweh, as His main collaborator, the responsibility for the practical implementation of the creation and for the evolution of the first stages of the Solar System. Having been given the responsibility of the implementation, he was practically given the direct control of the Solar System from the beginning, and, as a consequence, he had -and has- substantial power over it. Because of what he did later, because of his rebellion, Lucifer became Satan, the Adversary, the Accuser; he always wants to demonstrate, moment

(*) We don't know which part of the creation was entrusted to Lucifer.

after momoment, by the small facts as well as by the big ones, that Yahweh does not have the control of the situation; that he, Lucifer, can show -given Yahweh's approval- that the creation does not follow Yahweh's, but his orders; that he has the real control and the real power over everything and everybody. Anyway, it is essential to understand and remember that, whatever Satan does, it is only with Yahweh's permission, and that such permission is given only for the purpose of convincing him to repent, by his own freedom of choice, without obliging him by force.

A very clear description of this concept, of this relationship which looks so strange -almost unbelievable- to us, is in the book of Job. Let us look at it:

"One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord [Yahweh], and Satan [the Accuser, in Hebrew] also came with them. The Lord [Yahweh] said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?'
Satan answered to the Lord [Yahweh], 'From roaming through the Earth and going back and forth in it.'
Then the Lord [Yahweh] said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on Earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears Yahweh and shuns evil.'
'Does Job fear Yahweh for nothing?' Satan replied. 'Have You not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch Your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face.'
The Lord [Yahweh] said to Satan, 'Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.'
Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord [Yahweh]."
(Job 1:6-12)

A very similar situation is found also in Job 2:1-7, where particularly interesting and illuminating is the phrase:

"And he [Job] still maintains his integrity, though you [Satan] incited Me [Yahweh] against him to ruin him without any reason." (Job 2:3)

As we can clearly see, Satan -the accuser- is given permission to afflict, but is kept under precise guidelines as he cannot exceed Yahweh's instruction and authorization. It follows that, in all his evil among men and in nature, Satan is always under Yahweh's power. To understand this, we should not forget the main point; that Yahweh does not want to lose him -as He does not want to lose even one of us- and is using all His patience and all His affection while waiting for the moment of repentance and reunion. Lucifer was one of the best beings ever created by Yahweh, and Yahweh cannot accept leaving him in a condition of rebellion, of separation. Yahweh is doing

whatever He can to convince His creature, and all the fallen angels, to return to Him. The difficulty we face in understanding and approving Yahweh's ways is due to our present limitations; and, with Satan working hard on all of us against Him, it is very easy to reject and refuse His ways. Anyway, surely, after the final resurrection -not limited any more by our earthly bodies- we will finally be in a position to understand and approve.

Satan, still looking like the Cherub Lucifer -neither his look nor his powers were changed because of his rebellion- was allowed by Yahweh to enter the Garden of Eden and tempt Adam and Eve. He was not free to go there on his own initiative but, once he was able to convince Adam and Eve to do the wrong thing, he became the master of the human race, and it was impossible to remove him from this position until Jesus Christ came and dispossessed him. Satan was also allowed by Yahweh to tempt Jesus, who had the capacity to resist his temptations without the slightest hesitation, in this way giving Yahweh, once and for ever, the possibility to demonstrate to Satan Jesus' total and full faith in Him.

In the book of Job, Yahweh reveals some essential information about the creation of this planet:

> "Where were you when I laid the Earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone while the Morning Stars sang together and all the Angels [Sons of Yahweh] shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7)

In the Old Testament the titles "Morning Stars" and "Sons of Yahweh" are used only in regard to angels, who are not only of a higher level and have greater intelligence and more power than man, but also have personal audience with Yahweh. Now, when Yahweh created the Solar System, all these beings "shouted for joy" at the demonstration of His power. And, by saying that they ALL shouted for joy, we are given a clear indication of the complete harmony existing among angels and Yahweh; and, thus, of the fact that, obviously, no rebellion of any kind had taken place, at least up until that time.

Before the rebellion, Lucifer was a creature perfect in all his aspects from the day he was created. In Ezekiel we can find plenty of information about the origin of Lucifer-Satan and his conflict with Yahweh. Ezekiel 28:1-2 speaks of a ruler, the Prince of Tyre, who is described as a man who became so vain about his riches and intelligence that he claimed to be a God. In Ezekiel 28:11-15 we are introduced to somebody else, to someone who, according to the description given, is clearly a different person. He, called the King of Tyre, is the real power behind the Prince of Tyre. When Ezekiel writes about the man, Prince of Tyre, and about Satan, the King of Tyre,

who is the power behind the man, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the two of them -the man being possessed so much by Satan's will- but it is anyway clear which considerations refer to Satan and which to the man. To the King of Tyre:

> "You were a model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of Yahweh; You were anointed as a Guardian Cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the Holy Mountain of Yahweh; you walked among the Fiery Stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you." (Ezekiel 28:12-15)

The King of Tyre is described as "a model of perfection, wisdom, and beauty," one the most beautiful and wise of all Yahweh's creatures. It is Yahweh Himself Who describes Lucifer as perfect and Who "anointed [him] as a Guardian Cherub." A Cherub is an angel of high rank, living in the presence of Yahweh. Lucifer is called "anointed," which indicates supreme favor from Yahweh. The word used for this purpose is the same one which will later be used for the Messiah, Yahweh's Anointed King. This cherub was the ruler and the leader of the angels and led them in their praise of Yahweh and shouts of joy. The Hebrew word translated "guardian" in Ezekiel 28:14 and 16 literally means "who leads." He had been in "Eden, the Garden of Yahweh" and "on the Holy Mountain of Yahweh." He had "walked among the Fiery Stones," which is a symbol often used of Yahweh's presence. Such a description could not be applied to a mere human. Actually, this passage speaks of one of the greatest beings Yahweh ever created, one who had unequaled strength, wisdom, beauty, privilege, and authority. According to Isaiah this one was named "Lucifer" or "the Son of the Morning," a name that literally means "the shining one," and is a word for great beauty. In Ezekiel 28:15, he is described as "blameless [literally, perfect] in all your ways from the day you were created..." Of course this could not have been an ordinary man. First of all, man is not created; since Adam, all men are born. Second, no man is born perfect. The blameless, perfect Lucifer was created without any form of evil -a condition which could not have applied to any man after Adam- and with the full freedom to decide how to behave. Truly, Lucifer was perfect in his ways until "wickedness was found" in him. This fact marked the fall of Lucifer and the birth of Satan. This unrighteousness or evil is described in Isaiah 14:12-14. When reading this passage, it is important to note that Yahweh addressed Satan through the person of the Prince of Tyre; Satan is the unseen source of this Prince's arrogance and self-deification.

In Isaiah 14:12-14, a song of sorrow, more than the description of Satan,

of the being who introduced suffering into the world, we see how much Yahweh mourns over this creature He had been so fond of:

> "How you have fallen from Heaven, o Morning Star, son of the dawn!
> You have been cast down to the Earth, you who once laid low the nations!
> You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to Heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of Yahweh; I will sit enthroned on the mount of the assembly, on the outmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'"
> (Isaiah 14:12-14)

He was described first as Lucifer, the "shining one," who was so beautiful he literally shone, and was so full of holiness because he was created with the very Glory of Yahweh. The phrase "you said in your heart" gives the actual description of evil: this is where sin originates -in the heart, which is in the mind. Five times he said in his heart, "I will," in this way filling it with rebellion; for he wanted to act independently of Yahweh. Practically he thought, "After all, since I am so magnificent, so beautiful, so filled with powers, why shouldn't I have some of the worship of the world for myself?" Moreover, by saying, "I will ascend to Heaven," he wanted to take over from Yahweh and to be there in charge of everybody and everything. By saying, "I will make myself as the Most High," he wanted to be “God.”

When Yahweh created the angels and Lucifer, He gave Lucifer great intelligence, and gave him and all the other angels self-determination; which was necessary because He wanted to have near to Himself independent creatures, who could respond to His affection and have spontaneous fellowship with Him. For that He had to give them the ability to act independently of His will, and the possibility of having the choice of rejecting or obeying Him.

Lucifer, realizing how intelligent and powerful he was, rebelled against his Creator and, after breaking his relationship with Yahweh when he said, "I will make myself like the Most High," organized a rebellion among the angels, some of whom followed him in his sedition. We have to note, again, that even after he rebelled, Lucifer did not lose his great intellect, his beauty, or the powers he had. But that, rather, he used them all to convince the highest possible number of angels to join his ranks.

When the perfect Lucifer, the one who had the responsibility of the implementation of the creation of the solar system, rebelled against his Creator, Yahweh's perfect world lost its perfection. At this moment, Lucifer's name was changed to Satan -the Resister or the Adversary- and to Devil -the Evil One, the Accuser, or the Slanderer. Lucifer became Satan and was banished from Heaven, from the continuous contact with Yahweh, and was sent, with

all the angels who shared his rebellion, to a place expressly created by Yahweh for them; hell -the place where Yahweh is not present.

A demonstration that Satan did not lose his authority over the world is in Luke, when Satan personally tempted Jesus showing him all the kingdoms of the world:

> "And he [Satan] said to him [Jesus], 'I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to." (Luke 4:6)

And Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim to the world.

It is important to notice that Satan does not want a world which rejects the supernatural; on the contrary, he wants a world which is "religious" and accepts supernatural phenomena because this gives him ample possibility of being worshiped in many ways through idols, gods, world leaders, etc. An important step in reaching this goal was and is to discredit the historical validity of the Bible so that Satan's true nature and plans would not be discovered. He wants a religious world, but one of a religiousness that rejects Yahweh's offer of a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

Satan has two titles:

1) Ruler of this world. The world was given to him to rule; as such he is working very often through human governments. An example of this comes from the book of Daniel. At one time Daniel spent twentyone days in prayer, waiting for Yahweh to reveal to him the meaning of a prophetic vision. Only at the end of this period of time an angel appeared to Daniel and told him that, to come and reveal to him the meaning of the vision, he had to fight his way for twentyone days.

> "The Prince of the Persian Kingdom resisted me twentyone days." (Daniel 10:13)

Of course, it was not a man holding up one of Yahweh's angels, but it was a demon -a fallen angel- who was controlling the man, the prince of Persia. Yahweh had to send Michael, one of His chief angels, to overcome the demon and send the angel messenger free on his way to Daniel. This is not an isolated case; according to the Bible, there is a continuous invisible warfare all around the world. This is clear in the New Testament:

> "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 6:12)

2) God of this age. This title refers to Satan's activity in relation to religion. Actually, he is the god of all those who do not follow Jesus Christ. All men are under Satan's rule till the moment they are brought to Jesus Christ; and the Bible confirms it:

"The whole world is under control of the evil one." (1 John 5:19)

As we have already discussed, modern thought rejects the antiquated idea that Satan is at the origin of evil and has the world under his control. There are so many explanations for evil: poverty, pollution, politicians, police, parents, employers, unions, racial minorities, etc. Even the Christians are not exempt from this inability to understand where and how Satan is working. In fact, precisely because the reality of his existence has been neglected for so long, they are sometimes the least discerning of all in understanding the reality of the world system. The devil's cleverest ruse is to make people believe that he does not exist. This is the reason why we see such ridiculous pictures of Satan with horns, tail, red suit, and evil grin. There is really little harm modern people can expect from somebody whose aspect is so absurd to be only ridiculous and comic.

Satan is very active, always moving around, doing everything evil he can. When Yahweh asks Satan from where he came, the answer is,

"From roaming through the Earth and going back and forth in it." (Job 2:2)

One of the ways Satan hides behind religion, is through "false prophets" -some priests and pastors who claim to have revelation from Yahweh, but they have not; they appear to be sent from Yahweh, but they are not. They make proclamations and predictions mixed with just enough truth to make them appear plausible. The power of all these false prophets comes from Satan, who may easily work through people who appear to be righteous; and he can even make them perform supernatural feats that appear to be direct acts of Yahweh.

As we know very well, Yahweh is always working miracles; but, in the meantime, we have to be aware that Satan is allowed to counterfeit them. This is clearly stated in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15:

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness."

The devil can cite the Scripture for his own purposes and blind men's minds to the truth about Yahweh and how to understand it. He attacks the Bible and those who preach and teach from it. In Acts, Paul alerts the elders of the Church of Ephesus that from their own group there will be ministers who would teach perverted things while posing as teachers of truth:

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Spirit of Yahweh has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the Church of Yahweh which he [Jesus] bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave,

savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.
Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!"
(Acts 20:28-31)

Again in Acts, Paul gives the antidote to this, recommending them to rely upon Yahweh and His grace:

"Now I commit you to Yahweh and to the work of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32)

One of the most effective ways to move people away from truth is to push them into "legalism," seeking to live for Yahweh by the principles of the law. The practical effects of legalism appear very clear if we compare the present reality and organization of all the great and minor Christian Denominations to the faith and fervor of their original founders. Unfortunately, legalism finds especially fertile soil in the life of growing believers exactly when they are trying to please Yahweh in all the aspects of their life.

At this point, we have to understand the difference between the principle of law and the principle of grace. The law is a principle that guides our behavior by setting up standards of conduct so that legalism, by setting rules, makes it very easy to "sin." After a while, all the laws, even Yahweh's Commandments given to Moses, are given totally legalistic interpretations, leading to a mere keeping of exterior forms and rituals. The law shows us what sin is and, from a certain point of view, it actually makes us sin more. On the contrary, the principle of Grace, of Yahweh's Grace, teaches that salvation is only in Yahweh's hands. It tells us to repent every time we fall into sin and to try our best not to sin again, made strong by the faith in Yahweh's grace; in the conviction that, at the end, all men will be saved -will live with Yahweh- by the intercession of Jesus Christ. Law and grace are complete systems in themselves; and, exactly for this reason, they are mutually exclusive. To mix them robs the law of the "bona fide terror" and the grace of its creative freedom.

As soon as we consider the reality of human nature, it appears clear that it is absolutely impossible not to be sinners and that, by following the principle of law, men cannot reach salvation and live with Yahweh. Nevertheless, we do not have to despair as, because of Jesus, we can live by the principle of grace, knowing that, in actual fact, Yahweh's grace allows us to overcome Satan's attacks; that every time we fail, we have to sincerely repent and have faith in Yahweh's forgiveness.

In the Christian life, the power to fight against Satan and his attacks comes only from one source; the indwelling of the Spirit of Yahweh in us.

The Scripture tells us that when we become believers in Jesus Christ, we have the Spirit of Yahweh dwelling in us and that there is only one way of releasing this source; to have faith. Our only concern has to be of "walking in the Spirit," that means to have a faithful relationship with Jesus Christ. Here, it is essential to notice two points:
1) The indwelling of the Spirit of Yahweh does not mean that we are losing our personal freedom; the Spirit of Yahweh does not control us but, actually, gives us the freedom to call upon Him for help and forgiveness.
2) When we sin, sin grieves Yahweh but does not cause Him to leave us. Far from leaving, the Spirit of Yahweh still dwells in us -ready and waiting to be called to our help. To have faith means to be convinced that we are under the grace of Yahweh; that is, to be convinced that we are totally accepted by Yahweh in our present, unfinished condition.

Of course Satan is trying to hide all of this and to bring everybody to a total legalism. He has completely blinded the Churches to the fact that by keeping their people under the law -under the doctrine that makes an absolute fetish of being doctrinally pure in every area- they wipe out their Christian life, and that a true understanding of grace will never produce license, but plenty of license is always produced by legalism.

The instant we are reconciled by Jesus to the Father, and that happens the moment we believe in Jesus' death on our behalf, we are in effect "holy and blameless in Yahweh's sight." A true, powerful faith consists in the total and absolute belief in the forgiveness which Jesus acquired for us by dying on the cross and in the full awareness that Yahweh has accepted us just as we are:

> "If anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense -Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world."
> (1 John 2:1-2)

Jesus is our advocate; he defends us against Satan in the presence of Yahweh.

Once we believe in Jesus as savior, it is impossible to be lost again or unforgiven; for a child of Yahweh to be lost, Jesus would have to stop interceding for him. This does not mean that Yahweh condones sin in the life of a believer, far from it. It means He has set Himself free to be ready to work in us the moment we see that we have sinned, acknowledge it, and accept His forgiveness.

AT THE END OF TIME, EVERYBODY WILL BE WITH YAHWEH

A DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF YAHWEH'S JUSTICE AND AFFECTION.

Many Christians have some doubts about the possibility of hell being only temporary and about the justice of a final situation, after the end of time, with everybody -both those who were good and those who were bad- living together with Yahweh. And they have even more doubts on the convenience of spreading such a belief -even though correct- fearing the relaxation of moral values it could engender.

Yet at the "end of time" everybody, that is, all men and angels, without any exception, will be admitted to the Reign of Yahweh to live in His presence and company -that is, in spiritual communion with Him and everybody else. This final situation of general communion of Yahweh's creation is not only the only possible consequence of both His justice and His affection, but, furthermore, is perfectly right and just even if, apparently, it puts those who were "bad" during their earthly life at the same level of those who were "good."

Let us now discuss and demonstrate that this final situation of everybody's communion is a consequence of Yahweh's justice and affection, is right and just, and is proportionate to His saving action.

1) It is a consequence of Yahweh's justice:

A perfect and total justice has to give and guarantee a punishment exactly tuned to the crime committed; not a bit too soft, not a bit too harsh, and, even more important, not an end to itself, but focused on correcting and changing positively the behavior of the punished; therefore making him, at the end of the punishment, a better person. At this point we have to notice that the length of human life, compared to the age of the universe and to eternity, is a very short flash. Even if we consider the worst man who could ever have lived on Earth; and suppose that he was put in a position of power and authority so great that he was able to afflict whole populations with his evil doings; that, furthermore, he lived an exceptionally long life, long as the life of the first human generations. Well, then, even in this worst case, it is evident that the "quantity" of evil done, although huge, is still limited. The relevant punishment, as a consequence of a perfect justice, has to be perfectly proportional to the evil done; then, it has to be exceptionally long and harsh, yet limited and, moreover, tuned to obtain repentance. Of course, from our point of view, as human beings living on Earth, we have an objective difficulty in understanding how it is possible for such a kind of evil person to be still accepted by Yahweh. We can manage it only by remembering

that Jesus came on Earth to announce the good news that the doors of the Kingdom of Yahweh are open to ALL men of the past, of the present, and of the future; even to the most evil man who ever existed:

> "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among people... and people brought to him all who were ill... and he healed them." (Matthew 4:23-25)
>
> "Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of Yahweh. 'The time has come, 'he said, 'the Kingdom of Yahweh is near. Repent and believe the good news.'" (Mark 1:14-15)
>
> "The people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people." (Luke 4:40-41)

As we can see, not only Jesus announces to everybody the good news, which refers to the future life, but even his practical actions -in this case healing any sickness and liberation from demon possession- are available for everybody; both the good and the evil.

Let us go back to the extremely powerful and evil person mentioned above, who, for the position of power he holds, is surely full of earthly riches. Well, the Gospels declare that even these people so rich and powerful will be allowed to enter -obviously after repenting; that means after the due, just punishment- the Reign of Yahweh, because for Yahweh "all things are possible:"

> "Jesus said to his disciples, 'I tell you the truth, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Yahweh.'
>
> 'Who then can be saved?'
>
> Jesus... said, 'With man this is impossible, but with Yahweh all things are possible.'" (Matthew 19:23-26; Luke 18:25-27)

Surely Yahweh has many ways to distribute punishment, the harshest being hell, which has the purpose, with the sufferings it carries, to administer His justice to all men who have something evil for which they have not sufficiently atoned during their terrestrial life. As a consequence of the administration of justice, the punishment of hell -which is both expiatory and corrective- has to be limited and cannot last for all future eternity. Moreover, surely at a certain point in the future, the human race will cease to exist; after a further "period of time," which could even be dramatically long, the punishment of all bad people will reach its end and, as a consequence, even the last man will leave hell. It follows that hell has to be tem-

porary; because, being corrective and redemptive, at a certain point -when there will be no more people to correct and redeem- it will be an empty place and even the reason for its existence will end.

In this way, we know that after death -end of terrestrial life- there will almost surely be a more or less long period of instruction, followed by the offering of Yahweh's grace. At this point, repentance and salvation, after leaving hell and going with Jesus Christ to Yahweh, will constitute the reality of the first stage of our future life; waiting for the general judgment and for the physical resurrection.

> "I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of Yahweh and those who hear will live." (John 5:25)
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> "This is why it [Psalm 68:18] says: 'When he [Jesus] ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.' (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very One who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe)." (Ephesians 4:8-10)
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> "For Christ died for sins once for all, the Righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to Yahweh. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit of Yahweh, through Whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when Yahweh waited patiently in the days of Noah." (1 Peter 3:18-20)
>
> "For this is the reason the Gospel was preached even to those who are now dead..." (1 Peter 4:6)

After his physical death, Jesus' spirit went to the "Land of the Dead" to preach to the souls of the dead, announcing the good news and declaring the remission of sins. All who believed in him were immediately admitted to the Reign of Yahweh. From that moment, it is always true that either in this life or in the life beyond physical death each man -good or bad, Christian or not- will be offered Yahweh's grace by Jesus Christ and, when he accepts it, he will be converted to Christianity. This conversion can take any "time," from a very short to an immensely long one, and involves the sufferings of hell as a necessary expiatory and corrective tool. In other words, souls in hell are ill and Jesus keeps going there, trying to heal them. After a man's repentance and conversion, his period in hell ends and he goes, passing through personal judgment, to the Reign of Yahweh.

> "Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners."
>
> (Mark 2:17. Similar words are in Matthew 9:12-13 and in Luke 5:31-32)

Salvation during life, at the end of it, and after death is always in Jesus'

hands: his spirit went, in the period between his earthly body's death and his resurrection, to preach to the souls of the dead -all the dead- and left the place where they were staying, carrying with him all who had declared repentance.

> "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. And this is the will of Him Who sent me, that I should lose none of that He has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:37-40)

The same situation is repeated again and again; Jesus keeps going to preach to the souls of the dead. He who repents, follows him in Yahweh's Reign; he who does not want to repent -to repent or not is a decision left to individual freedom- is left there for another period of punishment and instruction. Anyway, at a certain point, all people will have repented and gained admittance to Yahweh's Reign; at that moment, after the demonstration that all men have accepted to live with and not against Yahweh, even Satan, Lucifer, will repent and will rejoin for ever -accompanied by all his angels- Yahweh in His Reign.

2) It is a consequence of Yahweh's affection:

The essence and center of the Christian concept of Yahweh is that Yahweh's affection is unlimited and going in its fullness to each and every man. Such an affection must not only be expressed, but can never be complete and satisfied until it is returned; we can say that Yahweh needs persons He can be fond of and who will be fond of Him. If we consider that the human being was created by Yahweh, male and female, to be like Him and to resemble Him, and that, furthermore, man's spirit is derived, through Adam, from Yahweh's Spirit, it follows that Yahweh, Who is fond with a perfect affection of His spiritual creatures, certainly cannot accept not being together with all of them for all future eternity. Yahweh's fondness for man is clearly stated in the Gospel of John:

> "For Yahweh was so fond of the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For Yahweh did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17)

Another demonstration of Yahweh's fondness comes from how much Jesus was active in healing the sick and liberating the demon possessed, showing that even the human condition on Earth and its improvement -within the possibility left by the still existing competition between Yahweh and Satan- is important and is part of the Good News:

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages... preaching the good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness." (Matthew 9:35)
"When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had com passion on them and healed their sick." (Matthew 14:14)
"The people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed... and Jesus healed many... he also drove out many demons..." (Mark 1:32-34)
"A great number of people from all over... who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured... healing them all." (Luke 6:17-19)

Similar situations are described in many passages, together with plenty of cases in which Jesus is taking material and spiritual care of single individuals, as in:

"Jesus heals the official's son." (John 4:46-50)
"The man with leprosy." (Matthew 8:2-3; Mark 1:40-42; Luke 5:12-13)
"Jesus drives out an evil spirit." (Mark 1:23-26; Luke 4:33-35)
"The faith of the centurion." (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10)
"Jesus heals a paralytic." (Matthew 9:2-7; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-25)
"A dead girl and a sick woman."
(Matthew 9:18-25; Mark 5:22-42; Luke 8:41-55)
"Jesus heals the blind and mute." (Matthew 9:27-33)
"The faith of the Canaanite (a Syrophoenician) woman."
(Matthew 15:22-28; Mark 7:25-30)
"The healing of a boy with a demon."
(Matthew 17:14-18; Mark 9:17-27; Luke 9:38-42)
"Two blind men receive sight." (Matthew 20:30-34)
"The healing of a deaf and mute man." (Mark 7:32-35)
"The healing of a blind man at Bethsaida." (Mark 8:22-25)
"Jesus raises a widow's son." (Luke 7:12-15)
"A crippled woman healed on Sabbath." (Luke 13:10-13)
"A blind beggar receives his sight." (Luke 18:35-43)
"The healing at the pool." (John 5:5-9)
"Jesus heals a man born blind." (John 9:1-7)
"The death of Lazarus. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead."
(John 11:1-44)

In all these cases, we can see that the only necessary condition for being healed is to have faith in Jesus' capacity to do what was requested.

The hypothesis of a final situation, after the end of time, with the creation split in two; the good ones with Yahweh and the bad ones with Satan, is really absurd and unacceptable because a situation of eternal separation would not only leave Yahweh totally unsatisfied and full of sorrow but, fur-

thermore, would leave the final demonstration, and the final victory, to Satan, not to Yahweh. Yahweh's perfect fondness, with its unlimited tolerance and patience, gives all the freedom to behave badly -tolerance- and in the meantime tries, without ever giving up -patience- to convince the bad of becoming good.

> "I [Jesus] tell you that... there will be more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninetynine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (Luke 15:7)
>
> "I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of Yahweh over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10)

Yahweh, the Creator, is everybody's Father; as Father He loves all His creatures, all His children, nobody excluded. A clear picture of His love is expressed by the parable of the lost son, in Luke 15:11-32. This parable depicts a son who "sins" and leaves his father's home but, in the end, repents and comes back to him in full humility. The father, sad over his son's departure, was patiently waiting for him to come back. And, when at last the son comes back, the father forgives him totally and completely (the punishment was already constituted by the conditions in which the son lived during his separation), rejoices, and wants everybody else of his house to rejoice with him.

How could it be possible for Yahweh to spend all future eternity at the same time full of joy over all who are with Him and of sadness over all who are not? The fondness of Yahweh must necessarily bring all people to His Reign -to a condition of perfect communion with Him- after, obviously, having satisfied His perfect justice. This satisfaction is possible both during life -by the sufferings of life- and after death -by the sufferings of hell.

3) It is a right and just situation:

At the end of time, all men will be with Yahweh in His Reign. To demonstrate that this situation -which apparently places at the same level those who were bad and those who were good- is right and just, we have to take into account two essential points:

a) Who are, from the point of view of a perfect justice, the good and who are the bad people? This takes into exact account all the circumstances of every person's life -country and epoch, social reality, family, education, hereditary and acquired diseases, physical and psychical dysfunctions, etc. Only He Who is in condition to administer the perfect justice is also in condition to give the proper answer.

b) Having decided who are the good -those going straight to Heaven at the moment of their physical death- and who are the bad -those going to Heaven after a more or less long period in hell- it is necessary to remember that the

"physical" resurrection -physical means with a resurrected body, different from the material, earthly one- maintains unaltered the original individual personality. This means that the complete history of all the actions and thoughts of each single individual and of their consequences is kept intact and made clear to everybody else. In the condition of perfect harmony and communion with Yahweh, among all the angels and men there will be no secrets and no envies, only full comprehension and satisfaction; there will be no need, for the bad, to be ashamed of the bad actions and thoughts of their lives; neither will there be need, for the good ones, to be proud -with a feeling of superiority- of the good actions and thoughts of their life.

An individual's history, his life on Earth and in hell, defines the "quantity" of affection, of satisfaction, and of mutual communion he can enjoy -receive and give-. To be in communion does not mean to be fused to, to become part of, or to be canceled as an autonomous entity. Communion is the highest level of relationship that different, independent beings can reach. It is due to their free choice and leaves them totally unaltered and independent. Each man -and, as far as it can apply, each angel will conserve his individual personality as it was formed by his parents -inherited physical and mental characteristics-, by his earthly life -acquired physical, mental, and spiritual characteristics-, and by the possible spiritual life preceding his admission to the Reign of Yahweh -spiritual characteristics. There is, anyway, a substantial difference between entering the Reign of Yahweh immediately after death -as a result of a "Christian" life and of a prompt acceptance of the grace offered during personal judgment- or after a bad life and a long period in hell: the "spiritual scars" left by a bad life and by the punishment in hell will always be evident and will constitute a limit to the maximum possible level of communion between this particular person and Yahweh.

Reusing the old example of the pots full of water, we can say that a very good person is comparable to a big, extremely beautiful pot; a very bad person to a small, really ugly one. But, once both pots are full of water, their capacity -to receive and contain water- is totally used and satisfied. Looking from a place inside the pots, an observer can see that both of them are full and, so, fully satisfied, as they cannot hold one more drop of water. Looking from outside, an observer can see that the beautiful pot is pleasant to look at and consider that it is more useful because it contains more water. But the water is the same for both pots, and both are filled to their maximum capacity. Something similar applies to people in Heaven: the "good" ones are more "beautiful" and more "recipient;" as such, all the others feel joy and satisfaction from "looking at them" -by being in communion with them.- Those who were "bad" are less "beautiful," or more "ugly," and a lot less

"recipient;" the quality and quantity of the communion that they receive from and can give to others are much inferior. But, from the point of view of the single individual -envy does not exist in Yahweh's Reign- his satisfaction is complete and each individual is fully conscious of his own and of everybody else's characteristics, defects, and qualities.

4) It is proportionate to His saving action:

One more consideration supporting this belief of everybody's final admission to the Reign of Yahweh is the following: "Is it logical and rational to think that the ultimate saving action of Yahweh -to have generated His own Son and allowed him to suffer and die as he did- was implemented to reach only a partial result; to bring to Yahweh only some of the human beings, and doing nothing at all for the fallen angels? It is obvious that only a complete result, the final admission to the Reign of Yahweh for all His created beings, can be proportionate to His saving action. This action, this direct intervention of Yahweh, is more than enough proof to demonstrate His decision to achieve a final, complete result by taking, or re-taking, all men and angels to Him.

Let us now discuss the convenience of spreading the belief in the final salvation of all men. First of all, we have to recognize that this belief is clearly stated in many passages of the Bible and that it has always been deeply rooted in the thinking of the Church:

"And all mankind will see Yahweh's salvation." (Luke 3:6)

"The living God, Yahweh, Who is the Savior of all men..." (Timothy 4:10)

"But I [Jesus], when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (John 12:32)

Is it right to conceal this with the only justification that it could cause some relaxation of moral values? Going back to the beginning of the Christian Church, the first great exponent of it was Origen, in the third century. He held that the fire of hell was a purifying fire, and that the souls of men are purified through their torments. Even if his belief was considered heretic, we have to note that he never denied hell and its punishment, but always affirmed that the punishment is also corrective and purifying. In a few words, Origen believed that at the end of time Yahweh through Jesus would call all His creatures to Him,

"The result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." (Romans 5:18)

"For as in Adam all died, so in Christ all will be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22)

that this will be thanks to the voluntary submission of each man to Yahweh,

"The Lord... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

and that the end must be like the beginning; as the world began by being Yahweh's world, so ultimately it has to end by being again Yahweh's world in the completeness of all its parts.

"And He [Yahweh] made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment -to bring all things in Heaven and on Earth together under one head, under Christ." (Ephesians 1:9-10)

It is clear that, from an earthly point of view, the belief in everybody's final salvation removes from the hands of the Church one of its main weapons, the threat and terror of eternal punishment; if universal salvation is granted, then why worry about living in a correct way, as everything will be all right in the end? Origen, although convinced of the final salvation of all men, nevertheless said that, to avoid causing people to live a sinful life, it was inappropriate to talk about this subject in the presence of everyone. However, as Christians, we know that, if a thing is true, it must be openly stated and, if a thing is false, it cannot be used simply because it happens to be useful.

"Yahweh our Savior, Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:3-5)

To accept a doctrine for its convenience rather than truth is indeed cynical. We can't absolutely accept the idea that the Christian Church needs to teach fear; that the weapon of the terror of hell has to be used to drive a man into Heaven.

Finally, we have to consider that the concept of universal salvation does not destroy at all the concepts of personal will and choice, because each single man's salvation will never be produced by coercion, but only by the persuasion of Yahweh's grace. Each offer of Yahweh's grace and salvation brings with it the responsibility of acceptance or refusal; every offer is a privilege and a responsibility. To accept means to repent and, for this, to have the privilege of being received by Jesus and allowed to enter the Reign of Yahweh. To refuse means to go on carrying the full responsibility for the sins of life. A refusal to repent makes necessary a judgment which carries the due punishment for not accepting the grace and the forgiveness offered. Therefore, as we have already discussed, all men reformed by the punishment of Yahweh, both on Earth and in hell, will have on themselves its indelible marks, as a demonstration and result of having exercised their personal choice.

HUMAN SPIRIT, THE SOUL

GENESIS AND PROCREATION.

The following pages essentially constitute a widening of what already written about the concept of the initial creation of the human soul -genesis of the first man- followed by natural reproduction -procreation of the human race.

Before beginning and discussing the matter, it is necessary to define the exact meaning of three fundamental words:

1) Genesis = origin, mode of initial formation, creation.

2) Procreation = to bring offspring into existence by any of the natural methods of reproduction.

3) Natural = following the natural laws and ways decided by Yahweh; whether we know them or not, whether they are "normal" -when they apply to the vast majority of cases- or "exceptional" -when they apply only to a few or single cases.

Man is part of Yahweh's creation, he constitutes the evolution and the completion of the previous phases. As it results from Genesis:

i) Yahweh's first phase was creating the angels who are beings having the capacity to share His kind of life and to live in His same "environment."

ii) The second was creating the physical universe, which is the part of creation where all the physical beings created by Yahweh in the following phases live.

iii) The third, at least in our Solar System, was the introduction of life with the creation of all vegetable and animal forms. All these terrestrial life-forms have a physical, material "body" and a physical, intellectual "mind," which gives them a certain, more or less developed, level of intelligence. This means that the animals do not have a spiritual life, a soul; that, having body and mind only, they have both intelligence and sentiments, at least to a certain extent, but they do not have any spiritual life following the physical terrestrial one, and after death they totally finish to exist.

iv) As fourth and final phase, at least on Earth, Yahweh created the human being; a being both material, with body and mind, and spiritual, with soul. Body and mind of this being were in line with the best of the material creation already made and available. On the contrary, soul came straight from Yahweh's Spirit, giving man full spiritual capacity.

For the creation of Adam:

> "The Lord Yahweh formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." (Genesis 2:7)

For the creation of Eve:

> "So the Lord Yahweh caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord Yahweh made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man..." (Genesis 2:21-22)

Strictly speaking, only the creation of Adam represents the genesis of the human race; the creation of Eve is already a matter of reproduction by a natural, although presently unknown, exceptional process, of a kind we begin only now to analyze and understand.

The Bible puts in evidence the substantial fact that Yahweh created the human being, male and female, to be like Him and to resemble Him:

> "So Yahweh created the human being in His own image, in the image of Yahweh He created him; male and female He created them."
> (Genesis 1:27)

The first declaration gives proof of the direct line of descent existing between Yahweh and man's spirit; the second has a tremendous moral and social value, as it shows that for Yahweh there is no difference of any kind between the two sexes, that for Him men and women are exactly at the same level of importance.

The human beings, who are both material, as body and mind, and spiritual, as soul, have:

a) Body, presently physical and material; later, after resurrection, they will have a different, "resurrected" one, of which we do not know the characteristics.

b) Mind, intelligence, capacity to think, to have emotions, and to control them.

c) Soul, spirit, generated by the "hereditary genetic patrimonies" of our parents' souls like body and mind are generated by their bodies' hereditary genetic patrimonies.

Adam, and only Adam, was given a soul by Yahweh, Who "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," which is the soul; so, at the origin of all men's spirits, there is the Spirit of Yahweh -which is, as well, at the origin of the angels' spirits. Adam's soul is the originator and generator of all human souls, and his body is the originator and generator of all human bodies; soul and body of Eve included. The generation of Eve from Adam's body and soul gives one and only one common origin to all men, as body, mind, and soul and, incidentally, explains why everybody is sharing Adam and Eve's life outside the garden of Eden. The soul is the most important part of the human being, that part which represents the difference between human and animal life. To have the soul created anew at the moment of conception of every newly conceived human being, would mean that it would not have

anything in common with his ancestors except the physical body, which is only the less important part. Men, after Adam, are not created but generated; this means body, mind, and soul without exceptions, and excludes the idea of having a new direct intervention of the Spirit of Yahweh at every new conception. Anyway, through Adam, we can surely call Yahweh "our Father" as we were taught by Jesus:

"This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in Heaven..."
(Matthew 6:9)

And, as Paul said:

"You received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father."
(Romans 8:15)

Abba, which appears even in Mark 14:36 and in Galatians 4:6, is the word used by Jesus when speaking with Yahweh, his Father. Abba is the particular word for father used by a little child addressing his father in the intimacy of the family. The nearest corresponding English word is Daddy. Even men, as Jesus, can use this same word, as the relationship Yahweh-man is a father-son relationship. This means that, no matter what a man is like, be he good or bad, just or unjust, Yahweh loves him as a son. Having the possibility to say that Yahweh is our "Father," and considering that men are not created but generated, it follows that Yahweh is everybody's Father through Adam; that this fatherhood refers to the complete human being, not only to a part of him; and that both body and soul of all human beings come from Adam's body and soul.

Heaven, Earth -the physical universe- and hell are all together as parts of a common reality, created by Yahweh, of which we can sense only Earth by our senses. This means that, even if the conception of a new human being is done in a laboratory, with the union of frozen semen and egg, and even if this happens after the physical death of the parents, the "genetic patrimonies" of their souls are present and are giving origin to the new soul, as well as the genetic patrimonies of their bodies give origin to the new body. This is not affected by the souls of the parents being, in that particular moment, in Heaven or in hell. Similarly, it does not matter at all which was the destiny of their terrestrial bodies. Even a girl born of parthenogenesis would have her own body and soul, in this case derived from her mother's only. Should it be possible to generate a human being -by cell division, duplication, and evolution- using a part taken from another man -a natural, biological process which follows the genetic patrimony's instructions coded into the DNA and RNA- the new one would be fully and totally human with all the characteristics of a human being: body, mind, and soul; all of them derived from the other man's body and soul. It seems that Eve was originated by

a similar biological process, with the further introduction of some genetic modifications to avoid having a clone of Adam and to change sex from male to female. All these cases, and surely many others we do not have any idea of, still represent natural ways of reproduction and procreation.

After creating -genesis- Adam, Yahweh created -through a natural, even if exceptional method of reproduction- a second human being, Eve, a woman, her body from Adam's body, her soul from Adam's soul; to have only one genetic patrimony at the origin of the human race, for both body and soul. Eve was created from Adam's body and soul; nevertheless, she had her own body and her own soul, both of them independent, but derived from Adam's. Both Adam and Eve were fully human -actually all mankind comes from them- even though they were created -and in two different ways- by Yahweh.

The Bible shows two other exceptional cases of natural reproduction:

a) Some of the angels ("sons of Yahweh"), fallen but still angels, had children from women ("daughters of men") generating the "gods" of the ancient religions.

> "The sons of Yahweh saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." (Genesis 6:2)
>
> "The Nephilim were on the Earth in those days -and also afterward- when the sons of Yahweh went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown." (Genesis 6:4)

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for Nephilim means "fallen ones," and that they were a people of great size and strength. Another reference to the Nephilim is in Numbers 13:31-33, when speaking of the bad report of the explorers sent by Moses to explore the land of Canaan. In this way we can note that, the Flood having killed all the Nephilim living at the time, the fallen angels had to generate again terrestrial children, after the Flood. The Greek and Roman gods, semigods, and heroes correspond perfectly to these "gods," generated and born from other "gods." They were very powerful, yet very far from almighty. Each new generation was less powerful than their parents' one. They were mortal, not immortal, as they were growing and becoming old within extraordinarily long lives which could have been considered "eternal" from a human point of view. Yet it was possible, even if very difficult, to kill them. Having a human parent, they, too, right from the first generation, were fully human, even if with some additional characteristics inherited from their angelic parent or ancestor.

b) In the case of Jesus Christ, the only Son of Yahweh and of the human race, the Father was Yahweh Himself and the mother a woman.

> "Yahweh sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph... The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said... 'You will be with child and give birth to a son... the Son of the Most High.'" (Luke 1:26-32)
>
> "His mother Mary... was found to be with child through the Spirit of Yahweh." (Matthew 1:18)

Physically, Jesus was not created, but procreated by Yahweh, and born of a woman with, in his only case, the special and direct involvement of Yahweh; of His Spirit. His body and his soul were generated, like all men, by his parents' bodies and souls. For this reason he is a mixture of human and divine and, as a consequence, he has a double nature; he is at the same time fully human and fully divine.

It is important to remember that Adam and Eve, who are at the origin of the human race, were created by Yahweh to be like Him and to resemble Him. This means that there is "compatibility" between men's bodies and souls and Yahweh's body and Spirit; they are essentially of the same nature. At this point we can say, without any doubt, that the souls of all men are both human and divine; human because they are generated by their parent's souls and divine because, at the beginning of the human race, Adam's soul was originated by Yahweh's Spirit.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSE

A TASK ASSIGNED TO THE ANGELS.

In the following pages there are some explanations about the idea that the task of implementing and developing the universe, following His initial design and after He had provided for the initial creation, was assigned by Yahweh to the angels under the guidance and responsibility, in our part of the universe, let's say the Solar System, of Lucifer.

There are two fundamental reasons for considering correct this idea:

1) By reading the Bible we have clear indications that Yahweh is always assigning any kind of task to angels and to men. His personal intervention is the rare exception, not the normality. The Bible, in nearly 300 places, affirms that Yahweh has innumerable angels at His command and He is using them to intervene in the affairs of the world. If we want an example, there is no better one than that of the angel messenger in Luke 1:26-38, when Gabriel comes to Mary to announce she will have a child whose conception will be the work of Yahweh. Even Jesus Christ, Yahweh's Son, was messenger -of the Good News- and was assigned the task of carrying the whole human race to salvation. He was sent (John 6:44; 6:57; 8:16; 14:24; 20:21) and had to accomplish his work (John 4:34; 10:18; 15:10). Furthermore, also the judgment of all men, at the moment of their death, is not carried out by Yahweh, but given -assigned as a task- to Jesus. It is, therefore, only a matter of logical consequence to arrive at the conclusion that, after creating the universe -Yahweh is the only one who can create- He assigned to His collaborators -the angels- the task of implementing His plan for the further development and evolution of the universe.

2) When he was allowed to tempt Jesus, Satan declared that he had authority over all the kingdoms of the Earth -which means, in Biblical language, over the part of the universe where we live- and that such authority was given to him [by Yahweh, obviously]. And Jesus, by not denying it, confirms such a declaration. The only possible and logical reason that can explain why Satan is allowed to have such a power is that he amply contributed in making the world as it is; that he received this power from the beginning, when he was still loyal to Yahweh and working for Him. The fact that this power was not withdrawn from him after his rebellion is a demonstration that when Yahweh assigns a task He does not interfere with who is in charge of it, angel or man; He leaves to His agents a substantial margin of decisional freedom on what to do and how to act. Even if they choose to do the

opposite of Yahweh's will, the task is still theirs; therefore, they always leave their mark and give their own personal contribution to the implementation and evolution of the task assigned. Anyway, it is essential not to confuse the capacity to create -which belongs only to Yahweh- with the capacity to influence the further evolution and development of what was already created; and, as we are fully aware, even men are affecting, and heavily, the development of planet Earth. The first chapters of Genesis report the essential information that Yahweh has created and shaped the universe, but they do not tell us anything about His methods; their only purpose is to express the supreme reality that everything and everybody came into being through the power and by the will of Yahweh. The original acts of creation are described by the Hebrew word "bara," which is used in the sense of bringing something into existence out of nothing, and appears only at the beginning in Genesis 1:1, where it refers to the original act of creation of the universe; in Genesis 1:21, for the creation of all subhuman creatures; in Genesis 1:27, for the creation of the life and personality of man; and never again later. Yahweh is the only one and true Creator; after His original act of creation it was, it is, and it will always be only a matter of evolution. In this the angels were involved from the beginning: implementing and developing the already created universe by following, at least initially, Yahweh's design.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

AN UNNECESSARY "MYSTERY" OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

The Christian religion, or at least what is traditionally taught about it, is characterized by a certain number of doctrines and mysteries. Among all of them, the most difficult to understand and accept is the doctrine of the Trinity -which in essence says that “God” is Three Persons in One, and One in Three. Furthermore, this is declared to be an insuperable mystery for the human mind. The fact that nobody can satisfactorily explain or justify it -not even the necessity for a Christian to believe in it- is a consequence of the fact that it is not directly a New Testament doctrine. There is no explicit mention or declaration of it in any part of the New Testament; it is rather a kind of deduction, of interpretation, from what is supposed to be the intrinsic thought and meaning of the New Testament. But, the more we analyze and understand the actual essence of Christianity, the more it appears evident that Christianity does not need any "mystery." In effect, Jesus never taught anything very complicated and "mysterious." All the so called "mysteries" considered by the doctrines of the Roman Catholic, the Orthodox, and the various Protestant Denominations are in reality complicated and useless human inventions by the religious organizations; which, instead of giving explanations with plain and clear words, resort to the "mysteries" to maintain in their hands the "knowledge," that is, in essence, the temporal power. Sometimes this is done in good faith, supposing people would not be able to understand a deep and accurate explanation; but most of the times it is due to the determination to keep for themselves both the spiritual and the material power that the religious hierarchies had and still have (or would like to have) on the masses.

In the case, for example, of the conception of Jesus, to say that it is a mystery only demonstrates ignorance and lack of faith. Ignorance, by not understanding that conception is perfectly possible outside the sexual act. Lack of faith, by not recognizing that Yahweh, Who is the All-powerful Creator of everything and everybody, cannot have any difficulty in generating a son from a woman, if He so wishes.

In the Apostles' Creed, which contains and states the essence of the traditional Christian faith and doctrine, we can read:

"I believe in Yahweh the Father Almighty... and in Jesus Christ His only Son... conceived by The Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary..."

This means that the Person of the Trinity Jesus Christ, said to be Son of the Person Father, was actually conceived by the Person Holy Spirit. Now Jesus

Christ, His only human son, was generated by Yahweh the Father, which means by His (Holy) Spirit, not by a different Person of the supposed Trinity; in that case he would have been son of the Holy Spirit, not of Yahweh the Father. Therefore, the concept itself of the doctrine of the Trinity is not correct; actually, there are only Yahweh the Father Almighty, Whose Spirit carries the principle of Life, and Jesus Christ, His only human Son.

The practical result of the doctrine of the Trinity is to make Yahweh totally and completely impossible to understand, to place Him totally out of the reach and touch of any man; against Jesus' declaration that he made the Father available, through himself, the only intermediary, to all men.

Christianity, in its essence, is very straightforward and simple; to be effective -to reach its fundamental goal of calling and bringing all men as soon as possible to the Reign of Yahweh- it does not need any kind of mystery or of complicated doctrine which, instead, not only confuse people's minds by showing them wrong ways, but even affect negatively their understanding of Yahweh and Jesus Christ and the possibility of being good Christians.

In "Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh, a Man" we have already discussed the fact that Jesus is fully a man partaking of his Father's divine nature, but that he is not “God.” In this way, all the "mysteries" linked to his double nature disappear. It follows as a direct consequence that, being Jesus a man and not “God,” the doctrine of the Trinity composed by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit does not have any reason to exist. Anyway, the following pages constitute a widening of the discussion already made, to find evidence from the Scripture that the Holy Spirit is not the third person of the supposed Trinity, but is the Spirit of Yahweh Himself; the spiritual part of the Being Who has created the universe and Whose characteristics were already analyzed in "Looking at the Bible, ideas and interpretations. Characteristics of Yahweh."

If we take the Scripture and write "Spirit of Yahweh" or simply "Yahweh" wherever we find "Holy Spirit," we can immediately notice that the letter and substance do not change at all; that everything looks clearer and more understandable; and that plenty of doubts disappear. From another point of view, we can ask ourselves: does the traditional concept of Trinity help us in becoming better Christians and in reaching more easily the Reign of Yahweh? It is more than evident that the answer is, No! I am strongly convinced that the original version of the Scripture -if there ever was anything we can consider as "The Original"- came with "the Holy Spirit of Yahweh" and that the present "Holy Spirit" -understood as a different Person from Yahweh the Father- is due to later modifications. We can still see that, here and there, the modification was forgotten; even now we can find

"Spirit of Yahweh" written in a certain number of places where we should logically expect to find "Holy Spirit." Not only this, but in a few cases there is even an explicit written declaration that the Holy Spirit is actually the Spirit of Yahweh.

We find mention of the Spirit of Yahweh in the opening words of the Old Testament:

"And the Spirit of Yahweh was hovering over the waters." (Genesis 1:2)

The psalmist, speaking of all Yahweh's creatures, says:

"When You send Your Spirit, they are created." (Psalm 104:30)

When Samuel anointed Saul, we can read:

"The Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] will come upon you in power... and you will be changed into a different person." (Samuel 10:6)

This last one is also a clear example of the communion between man and Yahweh as it was in the Old Testament times, reserved to few selected people only.

For the appointment of Israel's Judges:

"The Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] came upon him [Othniel]."
(Judges 3:10)

"Then the Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] came upon Gideon."
(Judges 6:34)

"Then the Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] came upon Jephthah."
(Judges 11:29)

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of Yahweh is especially connected with the prophets:

"The Spirit of Yahweh came upon him [Saul] in power."
(1 Samuel 10:10)

"The Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] spoke through me [David]."
(2 Samuel 23:2)

"And now the Sovereign Lord [Yahweh] has sent me, with His Spirit."
(Isaiah 48:16)

"Then the Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] came upon me [Ezekiel]..."
(Ezekiel 11:5)

"As He spoke, the Spirit [of Yahweh] came into me [Ezekiel]."
(Ezekiel 2:2)

"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord [Yahweh] is on me..." (Isaiah 61:1)

"But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh]..." (Micah 3:8)

In the Old Testament, the action of the Spirit of Yahweh -the spiritual communion between Yahweh and men- is still extraordinary and not open to everybody:

"He [Samson] grew and the Lord [Yahweh] blessed him, and the Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] began to stir him..." (Judges 13:24-25)

"The Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] came upon him [Samson] in power..." (Judges 14:6)

"I [Obadiah] don't know were the Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] may carry you [Elijah]..." (1 Kings 18:12)

Finally, in the Old Testament, there is also the belief that, when the new age came, the Spirit of Yahweh would be poured out on all men:

"And afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all people." (Joel 2:28)

In the New Testament, we find mention of the (Holy) Spirit of Yahweh practically everywhere, and this is absolutely logical because it reports the result of Jesus Christ's action: all men can be in spiritual communion with him and his Father.

Some examples of forgotten modification from the original "Spirit of Yahweh" to the present "Holy Spirit":

"The man without the spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of Yahweh..." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

"Don't you know that you yourselves are Yahweh's temple and that Yahweh's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16)

"But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of Yahweh our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)

"...you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of Yahweh are sons of Yahweh." (Romans 8:13-14)

"...this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'In the last days, Yahweh says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people.'" (Acts 2:16-17)

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of Yahweh, with Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)

"No one has ever seen Yahweh; but if we are fond of one another, Yahweh lives in us and His fondness is made complete in us. We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." (1 John 4:12-13)

"If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of Glory and of Yahweh rests on you." (1 Peter 4:14)

Remembering that, at the time, it was normal to repeat the same concept by using synonyms, a typical example of written declaration that the Holy Spirit is actually the Spirit of Yahweh, is:

"The angel answered [to Mary], 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the Spirit of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of Yahweh.'" (Luke 1:35)

At the moment of Jesus' baptism, Yahweh declares Himself to be his Father:

> "And the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from Heaven: 'You are My Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" (Luke 3:22)

It is clear that Jesus is Son of Yahweh, of the (Holy) Spirit of Yahweh, not of the Holy Spirit as third person of a Trinity; therefore, it follows that the Holy Spirit is, actually, the Spirit of Yahweh.

Some declarations that there is no third person and, consequently, no Trinity:

> "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him." (Matthew 11:27)
>
> "For there is only one God [Yahweh] and one mediator between Yahweh and men, the man Christ Jesus..." (1 Timothy 2:5)

In his letters, Paul speaks mainly of Yahweh, Jesus Christ, Church and faith in Christ; seldom of the Holy Spirit of Yahweh. In all his benedictions and greetings, he only speaks of Yahweh and Jesus Christ:

> "Grace, mercy and peace from Yahweh the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." (1 Timothy 1:2)
>
> "Grace and peace to you from Yahweh our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself... according to the will of [Yahweh] our Father, to Whom be glory for ever and ever." (Galatians 1:3,5)
>
> "Grace and peace to you from Yahweh our father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:2)

We can find the same reference, to Yahweh and Jesus Christ only, in many passages of the New Testament, giving again evidence that there was no such a concept of Trinity during the first times of Christianity:

> "And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3)
>
> "...you have an anointing from the Holy One... the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ... is the antichrist -he denies the Father and the Son." (1 John 2:20,22)
>
> "Grace, mercy, and peace from Yahweh the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and benevolence." (2 John 1:3)
>
> "Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of Yahweh and of Jesus our Lord." (2 Peter 1:2)

As we know very well, The Book of Acts is called the "Book of the Holy Spirit," because of the number of times -almost sixty- the words "Holy Spirit" are found written in it; and not because it gives any kind of statement or explanation about the concept of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. Anyway, even in this case, if we change all the "Holy Spirit" into "Spirit of Yahweh," nothing in the meaning of the book will be lost; on the contrary, it appears immediately clearer and more understandable.

Again, in this book, Peter declares -by citing the words of the prophet Joel- that the Spirit received at Pentecost is the Spirit of Yahweh:

"In the last days, Yahweh says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people..."
(Acts 2:17)

To be "filled with the Holy Spirit" means to be spiritually filled, satisfied, and fortified by being in spiritual communion with Yahweh and Jesus. As it was possible for Jesus to complete his mission only by being fortified by his spiritual communion with Yahweh his Father; likewise, the apostolic work of the disciples was possible only after they entered in spiritual communion with Yahweh and Jesus at Pentecost:

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised... you will receive power when the Spirit of Yahweh comes on you."
(Acts 1:4,8)

After Pentecost the invitation to be in communion with Yahweh was extended to all who repent and receive forgiveness, to all who want to be helped by Yahweh. This is the reason why the Spirit of Yahweh is called "the Helper;" because, by entering in spiritual communion with men, Yahweh helps them in all the moments and aspects of their lives.

SOUL, BODY, RESURRECTION

As human beings, we are aware of our existence. This means that we are both conscious of having a physical body equipped with a physical brain and aware of being aware. Physical body and physical brain identify our material side, which includes mind and, hence, intelligence. The awareness of being aware identifies, instead, our spiritual side, our soul. Furthermore, as Christians, we believe in the universal resurrection of our bodies, after physical death, at "the end of time."

What is the link, the connection, and the relation between human body, mind, and soul? What kind of body will we be resurrected in?

In the following notes, I am trying to express my ideas and opinions on the matter, even though I have to recognize that I cannot produce any kind of scientific proof to support them. As in so many other cases, even this time it is mainly -or exclusively- a matter of personal belief in an idea; of faith.

As we know, human beings have both a physical life -with body and mind- and a spiritual life -with soul.- Among the many fundamental problems with which we are fascinated and worry about, one emerges as predominant in the minds of all people, independently of their religious belief: to understand and define what is the boundary between their physical and spiritual parts, and what kind of interaction there is between the two. In particular, we, as Christians, believe in the resurrection of the body. This belief generates more and even bigger problems, which most probably we will never be able to solve during our terrestrial life. Furthermore, we know that Adam and Eve, forefathers of the human race, were created -body and soul- by Yahweh to be similar to Himself. So similar to be able to live together with Him both in the temporary spiritual condition -after physical death, before resurrection- and in the final physical-spiritual condition -after resurrection.

A human being is a composite creature, both material and spiritual; neither body or mind alone is man, nor is soul alone. Only the togetherness of body, mind, and soul is man. The material part of man -flesh, that is, body and mind- dies while the spiritual part -soul- has eternal life; flesh will be resurrected, in this way acquiring eternal life. In effect, flesh has to be resurrected because Yahweh calls man, the complete being -not only part of him- to eternal life. Therefore, each individual man has to survive as an individual, as an independent entity, and has to be conscious for ever of his own "individual personality."

Presently, we are aware of our existence within a very big and complex structure: the universe. We are aware of the physical part of it, and also of

the existence of something else, the spiritual realm. Aware that, even if we can think and have a discussion about the latter, we cannot understand and know it for certain; and that we have to rely on faith to satisfy our internal "spiritual" urges.

Going back to the human body, even Jesus Christ, as a man, was conceived, was born, and died. First among all men, his body was resurrected "on the third day" joining his spirit. For this to happen, his body -as will happen in due time to the bodies of all people- had to die, to be later replaced by the "resurrected body." This last body is clearly different from the original: so different that Jesus was not recognized by his disciples until he decided to be; furthermore, he showed immediately that he had new capabilities, like being able to pass through closed doors.

Therefore human beings, on Earth, are both physically and spiritually alive.

-Physically; temporarily, because and until their body and mind are alive. Of these two, the mind is the intellectual part, that part which guarantees a certain degree of intelligence and a certain level and depth of sentiments. The mind, which resides in the brain, is anyway part of the material body. Body and mind are the parts we have in common with all the animals created and developed on Earth.

-Spiritually; for ever, because the soul is immortal. And it is the soul which, in union with the physical mind, gives us a certain degree of consciousness (awareness of ourselves, of existing, etc.). Soul is not material (thus, it is spiritual, by definition) and represents the essence of the person and of his self-awareness. Anyway, the union of soul and body is so deep that quite often, in the Bible, the term "soul" points to the human "life" or to the human "person" as a whole. But, most important, it points to the most intimate and valuable part of man, that part which, by coming straight from Yahweh's Spirit, makes man similar to his Creator.

"Soul" is synonymous with "spiritual principle and content" of the human being. It is the soul that gives us our consciousness: that is the immediate, subjective awareness we have of the world and of ourselves. This knowledge, this consciousness of being aware, is unique to humans. And it is because of this that we have the sensation of "free will," (in fact, to have a certain "capacity to make decisions), that is, an ineradicable sense that our minds exist independently and exert control over our bodies. In effect, consciousness cannot come from any physical system -the knowledge of our consciousness does not come to us from the senses- even if, clearly, it cannot have an existence independent of the material mind and body. Furthermore, the level of consciousness of a particular individual is strictly linked to the evolutionary level reached by his mind; and is also limited by the physical con-

ditions (age, health, or illness) of his body and mind. At this point, it is important to remember that with our physical senses, for example our eyes, we do not see the reality as it actually is, but what our brain is able to grasp, remodeling the sensory pulses received by our nervous system; a kind of personal and, thus, limited reinterpretation. Medical analysis gives some intriguing examples. There are people whose sense of awareness has been damaged by some trauma or disease: for example people who display a strange condition known as blindsight(*). They physically respond to visual stimuli -for example, being able to catch a ball tossed to them while insisting that they cannot see anything. Blindsight is usually caused by fairly extensive damage to the primary visual cortex, in many cases only on one side of the head. When the brain is injured in certain ways, consciousness (and not necessarily perception) is impaired. Clearly, even if it is difficult to describe it in terms of the workings of the brain, consciousness has no existence independent of the physical body (at least in the case of human beings, during their terrestrial life), but is lodged firmly within it.

The soul is the essence of the person: it is the personality, the residence of self-awareness. It follows that the physical brain is not conscious of itself on its own. Without soul, the human body would have intelligence, but not consciousness: neither would it have the concept of self, nor the concept of religion; of the possible existence of one or many gods. This last concept can be developed exclusively at a somewhat advanced level of self-consciousness and, anyway, makes sense only in the case of at least partially spiritual beings. The combination soul-body is a fusion, a symbiosis; the two parts need each other to function perfectly. One without the other would be useless. In effect, body and soul are generated, at the moment of conception, by the genetic patrimonies of their parents' bodies and souls. Both body and soul have a beginning along the scale of time: before, they DID NOT exist; after, they DO exist for ever. The soul is generated together with the body, at the moment of conception; without a beginning for the existence of the body, there could not be a beginning for the existence of the soul. It follows that the soul has to evolve in parallel to the body: there is an "embryonic" soul in the physical embryo, and an "infant" soul in a newborn baby. As the body, so the soul "grows and becomes adult." The soul "develops" in and with the body; its characteristics and possibilities are limited by the actual condition and level of development of the body. If the body has an atrophied brain, then even the soul looks "atrophied." As a consequence, during terrestrial life, the soul can only reach a certain, limited, level of ethic-moral development. However, the fact that a man has a high intelligence, does not necessarily determine that this particular person has reached a high level of

(*) See: “Seeing Blind” -Scientific American, October 2013, page 12.

of moral development. Similarly, a limited intelligence -but, how is it possible to measure, in absolute, the level of intelligence?- does not preclude the attainment of a high ethic-moral level. Here, in effect, the person's willingness, his free-will, does intervene; this allows a person to choose a certain kind of life instead of another one. In any case, we have to presume, suppose, and realize that such a willingness cannot be entirely free. In effect, it is clearly conditioned by events happening outside the body (external environment) and by events happening inside it (internal environment). The effect of the environment, which is as important as the genetic characteristics of a person, is much more far-reaching than we are usually inclined to imagine. Consciousness is shaped by an individual's interactions with the environment and with other people. Genetic defects, physical and mental injuries, damages to the cerebro-neural system, chemical imbalances, as well as social environment can change a person's will and influence, even heavily, his mentality and behavior. A madman could have been good before being transformed into a torturer or a murderer by an illness or an injury. Psychological and chemical factors can even produce multiple personalities. Furthermore, the choices made by most people are strongly influenced, almost imposed, by their internal biochemistry as well as by their initial conditioning. Anyway, it is always possible, even though with a remarkable effort, to fight and win not only such a conditioning but also the fundamental hereditary structure by applying one's willingness. Obviously this willingness to exert one's free-will is not really and completely free, but is, actually, limited by the hereditary genetic patrimony which defines the initial conditioning. The soul is so intimately connected to the body that it reflects all bodily and mental changes; consequently, an idiot or a mentally retarded's soul appears to be "idiot" or "retarded." Without soul, human beings would not have had free-will, which is the ability to make choices between different moral alternatives, limiting or canceling the considerations and the pushes received both by body and environment, and by personal inclinations' demands and necessities. Only the soul has free-will and self-consciousness, and yet it has to express them through the body.

It is very difficult to define a clear separation between soul and body. Even if the soul supplies the concept of self and personal will (the capacity to make decisions), it depends, anyway, on the body for character features and for anything belonging to the genetic and nervous systems. We can say that the soul interacts with the body, from which it receives the features of its personality, and is influenced, at least partially, by them. In essence, the evolution of the soul mirrors globally, in a totally accurate way, the physical, ethical, and spiritual evolution of an individual. Consequently, when the body dies, the soul -which does not die- leaves it carrying in itself a "recor-

ding" of all the emotions and thoughts and of everything that did constitute the individual's personality. The soul has, as well, personal-will and self-awareness, and can be reaggregated to a "duplicate" of the body: the "resurrected" body. By saying "duplicate," we immediately tend to arrive at the conclusion that soul plus resurrected body is not the same person as it was before, because the body is not the original one. But, even on Earth, body and brain are subjected to continuous changes, every moment of their life. To clarify this point, let us take into consideration two examples:
-In the body, normal human bones continuously renew themselves, rebuilding themselves completely in about eight years.
-In the brain, where only few cells are physically replaced by new ones, there is, however, a continuous renewal of types and quantity of interneural-connections.
Most of the atoms which make up the new born body are not the same as when it is ten years old. They were replaced, one by one, by similar, but different ones. And at fifty years of age, they are not the same as at forty. The body keeps changing and, together with it, even mind, memories, convictions, attitudes, and reactions change. A person is never exactly the same in two different moments of his life. And, when resurrected, the person will change again. This will be the last transformation, after which the body will remain eternally unchanged, because there will be no need for any further changes, having reached perfection.

The deceased's soul contains his personality: it is the soul which is either immediately received in Heaven -waiting for the universal resurrection of the bodies- or which is subjected to expiatory, corrective, and instructive punishment in hell -until the personality changes in the appropriate way,- thus giving the possibility, after repenting of his sins, to be admitted into Heaven. Anyway, even after being admitted, the soul keeps intact his individual personality, as it was formed by the terrestrial life and by the spiritual life preceding his admission to the Reign of Yahweh. All these characteristics are and will always be perfectly evident, fully representing a particular person.

The final conclusion, summarizing what we have said above, is that the soul is the essence of the person. Otherwise, it would be totally useless to join it to the resurrected body that, actually, is not the original terrestrial one. The soul exists in the same space occupied by matter, but usually does not interact with matter itself. The soul is the source and the origin of self-consciousness, but cannot develop it unless through the living entity "body" which, to realize all the possibilities of the soul, has also to be equipped with a highly developed neural system, the "mind." The soul, after the bo-

dy's death, contains a "recording" of the content of the whole body -genetic patrimony and mind, of course, included. Actually, the resurrected body is not the same thing as the dead one. Only the soul, the source and the residence of self-consciousness, is not a copy, but the original.

The resurrected body will be in its substance and appearance as much as possible similar to the original one, yet it will have all the physical defects, as well as the metabolic imbalances of the terrestrial one, corrected at a genetic level. Actually, it will be without any defects at all and, whatever was the malformation or the sickness in this life, the resurrected body will be perfect. For example, dwarfs will have a corrected, normal body -as dwarfism is a genetic defect- but pygmies and giants will keep their original size -due to genetic differences, not to defects. Mentally retarded and idiots will have a normally developed brain. Similarly, all the human beings never born because of spontaneous, premature, or procured abortions will be resurrected following their own, corrected, genetic patrimony.

Obviously, the resurrected body will have a number of characteristics different from the terrestrial one. It will be extremely mobile. It will possess all the terrestrial senses, and will also have a certain level of telepathy; the ability to be in contact with other people's mind. It will have the capability to go wherever it wishes unobstructed, just by thinking. It will be able to pass through solid barriers such as walls and mountains and to see through three-dimensional objects. And, from the point of view of its appearance, being at the best of all its physical, psychical, and spiritual capabilities, the resurrected body will look as in a "young adult" condition. Furthermore, it will be able to carry in clear evidence, at will, those special particularities which could have characterized the most important part of a person's life. For example, in the case of Jesus Christ, the stigmata on his hands and feet, and the wound on his side.

Note: In 1 Corinthians 15:35-54, Paul expresses a similar idea -clearly limited by the level of scientific knowledge of his time- specifically describing the resurrected body as "spiritual" rather than physical.

It is presently well known that the "World" or the "Earth" of the Old Testament was actually the region of Mesopotamia and its inhabitants; that the "Flood" or "Universal Deluge" was actually limited to this region only.

NOAH's DELUGE
Old Testament. Book of Genesis. The Flood
(Sciarborasca January 2013)

Text from the Book of Genesis:

(Genesis 6:17) I [Yahweh] am going to bring floodwaters on the land [of Mesopotamia] to destroy...

(7:4) ...I [Yahweh] will send rain on the land [of Mesopotamia] for forty days and forty nights and I will wipe from the face of the land [of Mesopotamia]...

(7:11) In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month -on that day all the springs of the great deep bust forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. (12) And rain fell on the land [of Mesopotamia] for forty days and forty nights. (17) For forty days the flood kept coming on the land [of Mesopotamia], and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the land [of Mesopotamia]. (18) The waters rose and increased greatly on the land [of Mesopotamia]... (20) ...and covered the mountains till a depth of more than twenty feet. (24) And the high waters flooded the land [of Mesopotamia] for a hundred and fifty days.

(8:1) Then Yahweh... sent a wind over the land [of Mesopotamia], and the waters receded. (2) The springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky. (3) And the waters receded steadily from the land [of Mesopotamia]. (4) After one hundred and fifty days of the waters going down, on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest... (5) The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the mountains became entirely visible.

(13) By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the waters had receded from the land [of Mesopotamia]... (14) By the twenty seventh day of the second month the land [of Mesopotamia] was completely dry.

First of all, it is important to understand that Noah's Flood was clearly an intervention of Yahweh, through a natural phenomena (even if not a very common one) used by Yahweh to work out His plans.

Second, even if some believe that Noah's deluge was worldwide, partly because of the apparently universal terms of the text, it is clear that we have to understand the flood as having been regional -one that destroyed everything in its wake, but that was of relatively limited scope and effect; universal only from the stand-point of view of the geographical knowledge of Moses' time.

In effect, the Hebrew words "eretz" (meaning earth, land or soil) and "adamah" (soil) were both always translated in the Latin "terra", considered as the name of the planet Earth. But in Latin terra generally means land or soil; it does not typically imply the whole planet. And this gives clear support -straight from the Bible itself- to the view that Noah's Flood was an important, yet local event. To note that in many other passages eretz is translated as ground or land when it clearly refers to a region as the land of Israel or Canaan.

Since the purpose of the deluge was to destroy sinful mankind, and since the writer clearly had in mind only the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, the flood did not have to be worldwide to destroy all of them.

Starting in 1922 with Leonard Woolley, many archaeologists began excavations in Mesopotamia looking for the remains of biblical ancient cities and for evidence of a civilization-ending flood. With everybody's surprise, their excavations brought to light the deposits lefts by a number of different floods, none of them "universal." Although there was no consensus among the archaeologists as to which, if any, of these deposits was from Noah's Flood, when the Tigris River flooded in 1954 and submerged the floodplain for hundred of miles around Baghdad, everybody realized that enormous floods could actually submerge the area. And the story of a particularly great flood that submerged the world (actually, Mesopotamia) leaving few survivors (men and their animals) gained credibility. This means that the narrative of the Flood records some terrible but local cataclysm which devastated the original seat of the Semitic race.

Anyway, from the excavations in the area, it appears evident that a major flood hit Mesopotamia more than 4,000 years before Christ, covering an area 350 miles long and 100 miles wide. To note that, at the time, the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers flew separately into the Persian Gulf, about 80 miles north-east of the present, common estuary.

A highly possible explanation for Noah's Flood involves both the well known and devastating effect of a Tsunami [*the springs of the great deep bust forth*] coming from the ocean through the Persian Gulf and of the re-

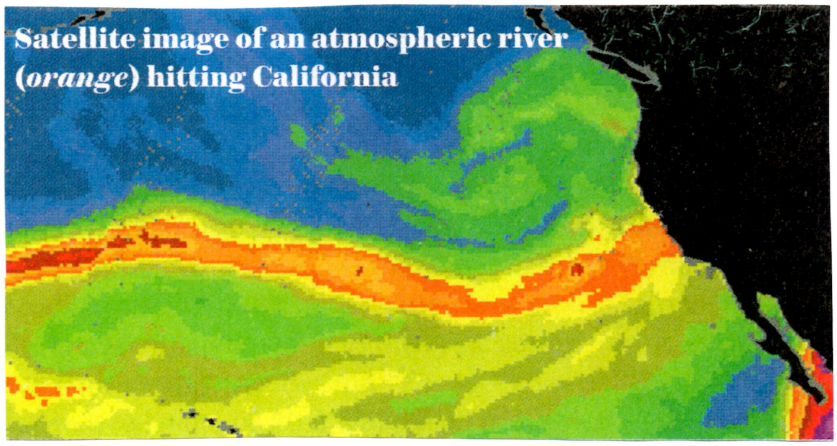
cently discovered "atmospheric rivers" [*the floodgates of the heavens were opened*] (see "The coming Megafloods" -Scientific American, January 2013, pages 58-65). To note that geologic evidence shows that truly massive floods, caused by rainfall alone, are a recurrence all around the Earth.

An atmospheric river is a long stream of concentrated water vapor (up to 200 - 250 miles wide) about a mile above the ocean and that extend for thousands of miles. Strong winds within the river bring very humid air from the tropics and the river also pulls in atmospheric moisture along its path. When the river strikes a cost or a mountain range, the warm, moist air rises up; as it does, the air cools and the moisture condenses into abundant rain or snow. To note that these rivers of vapor can carry as much water as 10 to 15 Mississippi River (250 - 370 times the discharge of the Thames River).

A recent and well documented example of a flood due to the Atmospheric River phenomena is the Megaflood that hit California on Christmas Eve of 1861 and continued without interruption for 43 days. The deluge quickly transformed the rivers running down from the Sierra Nevada mountains into raging torrents that swept away entire communities and mining settlements, turning the Central Valley into an inland sea 300 miles long and 20 miles wide, and causing the death of thousands of people. And the town of Sacramento was submerged for six months under 10 feet of muddy water.

A satellite image of an atmospheric river hitting California can be seen next page (see: "Before the deluge" -Scientific American, March 2013, page 12).

See also: "Forecasting Atmospheric Rivers" -Scientific American, September 2022, pages 60-67)



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It is quite evident that to understand the true relation between Yahweh and His chosen people, the Jews, (with promises of rewards and punishments for acting in ways we, Christians, can't often accept) is necessary to analyze the whole Old Testament; not only its written words, but also who has written what, for what a reason, for what a purpose and when.

The Old Testament: What does it represent? Which is its true meaning?

(Sciarborasca, March - April 2013)

Foreword

The main obstacle we encounter to clarify the basic concepts of the Old Testament is the nature itself of it, as it includes a wide variety of literary forms: narratives, poems, wisdom sayings, prophetic oracles, etc. It is a collection of writings, not a coherently organized theological treatise. Furthermore, the growth of this collection into the present day canon was a long, complicated process, with plenty of successive accretions.

The whole Bible, Old and New Testament, is in essence the history of Yahweh's interventions in the development of the human race. Interventions assuming forms and giving results deeply different in the period of the single nation (Israel - Old Testament) than in the period of the whole mankind (Christianity - New Testament).

By reading the Bible we have clear indications that Yahweh's personal intervention is the rare exception, not the normality. Furthermore, when He, the Creator of the Universe, intervenes in the matters of the world, His interventions are almost never direct and personal. Usually, behind His interventions there are some natural phenomena or events used by Yahweh to accomplish His plans. Yet sometime (a minimum number of times) He intervenes directly as, for example, when creating the human race; when choosing a particular population and some of its leaders and prophets; when conceiving His Son Jesus Christ; etc.

Fundamental differences between Old and New Testament

The Old Testament is the history first, of the Creation and then, of the vicissitudes of Israel, Yahweh's chosen people. It actually is -as also demonstrated by plenty of archaeological findings- a collection of books of biased history written in a way, the way of ancient times, which does not appear "historical" to modern readers. Anyway, the Bible speaks of Yahweh's influence on the life and behavior of a small population over a period of few millennia; life and behavior absolutely "terrestrial," that is, quite far from what they should have been.

In the New Testament Yahweh's direct intervention is referred to in what concerns the procreation, the baptism, the confirmation (at the Transfiguration) and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, His Son and His Messiah. In everything else, the narration of the New Testament is conceptually different from the global narration of the Old Testament because, even if it refers -in the four Gospels- the history of Jesus Christ's preaching, it does so with a purely moral intent. Only the Book of Acts and the Epistles of Paul are a kind of "historical" narration of the first Christians' vicissitudes.

The great difference is the fact that Christianity -the New Testament- applies to the whole world, without any distinction of country and race, while the Old Testament is only concerned with the -practical- history of a small population: Israel.

To note that the spiritual and moral concepts and principles introduced by Jesus Christ -in effect, only made clear and not "militarily" compulsory- are nothing else than those already present in the Old Testament where they are obscured -or made non understandable- by the structure of the human "traditions" developed around the True Law of Yahweh with the passing of time.

A consideration: To be comparable to the Old Testament, nowadays the "New Testament" would have to be a collection of books which, in this case, should include: 1) All the already existing New Testament's books. 2) A series of history books with the biased accounts of the expansion and the development of Christianity in the world, along with the vicissitudes of many populations, of their leaders and of their saints -the last ones corresponding to the Old Testament's prophets. 3) Some catechism books with all the rules, laws (dogmas, doctrines, etc.), traditions and liturgies developed in the last two millennia. This hypothetical collection of books would show how much "terrestrial" was and is the Christians' behavior, in spite of the New Testament's moral teaching, and would made much easier to understand the true moral meaning of the Old Testament.

<u>The Old Testament: Israel's history</u>

Reading the Old Testament, it is quite often hard to retrieve and understand what really happened as, even in the so-called "historical books" (such as 1 and 2 Kings or Ezra) the writers were mainly concerned with their religious and theological significance and have described the various characters according to their conformity to religious stance. In the Old Testament, the events are always "interpreted," never rendered with photographic accuracy.

Israel's history can be divided in two fundamental periods: The Period of the Ancestors (from Abraham to the end of slavery in Egypt) and the Period of Life as a Nation (from the escape out of Egypt to the completion of the reconstruction of the Temple after the end of the Babylonian Captivity).

Period of the Ancestors: The stories about the great ancestors of Israel -the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob- give an idea of Near Eastern life in the second millennium BC. The Patriarchs have been historical persons, and the accounts about them contain names, legal customs and other informations that are confirmed by contemporary extra-biblical documents and archeological findings. But the narratives about the Patriarchs are not the kind of solid factual writings from which modern historians could develop a coherent history of Israel's beginning.

Period of Life as a Nation: The real history of Israel begins in the early thirteen century BC with the people's escape from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. And it is clear that it would be difficult to explain Israel's history and religion without recognizing the historical reality of the exodus and of the leadership of Moses. The forty years of wandering in the desert are easily explained considering that a population accustomed to slavery could not have been in condition to military conquer a country suitable for their future existence. They had to wait for a new, free generation psychologically able to fight. And, in the meantime, their religion was taking shape, including even catastrophic events seen as directly sent by Yahweh. The entrance in the land of Canaan took place in the late thirteen century BC and is symbolically depicted in the biblical account. In effect, Israel did not gain complete control of the land until the time of King David. In the meantime, not only many Canaanite cities did remain unconquered, but also there were invasions by the Philistines, Moabites, Midianites and Ammonites. And all the events of this period, the period of the Judges, are depicted in the Old Testament as direct results of the people's obedience/disobedience to Yahweh. Then the period of the Kings Saul, David and Solomon (1010 - 930 BC) was marked by military and political success and, as a consequence, it is referred to as a period of obedience to Yahweh, a period gifted by His benevolence. During this period, King David brought political and religious unity to Israel by making Jerusalem its capital. The sagas of the Patriarchs, the Books of Exodus and Judges were revised, collected and put in written form at that time. King Solomon built Jerusalem Temple making it for ever the center of Israel's religion. The political and social disasters following Solomon's death (the split of Israel in two kingdoms and their further vicissitudes) were attributed to Solomon and his successors' sins. Anyway, all the relevant accounts are true relations of historical facts, even if always seen

through the religious optic of people's obedience-disobedience / Yahweh's benevolence-punishment. The same considerations apply to the following periods, till the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the people's deportation, followed by the return in Israel and the restoration of Jerusalem Temple and City (even if always under Persian domination). And the Bible's account stops there, and does not refer the fact that Israel was never more free (Persian, Hellenistic -with Alexander the Great-, Ptolemaic -Egypt-, Seleucidic -Syria-, Hasmonean, and finally Roman domination).

Conclusions

From what said above, it clearly results that the Old Testament represents the political history of the people of Israel intertwined with the history of the development of its religion. And it is also clear that, to understand its true religious and moral meaning we have to use the "lens" of the New Testament, as only in this way we can separate the True Law of Yahweh from the Old testament's imposing superstructure of human rules and traditions.

To note that, in the New Testament, the True Law of Yahweh (a "Law" of moral principles, not of rules) appears much clearly than in the Old Testament, even if it is still too often concealed by considerations derived from Old Testament's ideas and has to be purged of the New Testament's own superstructure of human rules and traditions developed during the last two millennia.

The True Law of Yahweh

In the Gospels the True Law of Yahweh is stated with total clarity:

You'll be fond of [Yahweh] the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind; and you'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31; Matthew 22:37-39; Luke 10:27)

Furthermore, the Gospels clarify the relation of Jesus Christ's teaching with the Old Testament:

All the [Books of the] Law and the [Books of the] Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:40)

To be fond of your neighbor as of yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark 12:33)

I [Yahweh] desire mercy, not sacrifice. (Matthew 12:7, quoting from Hosea 6:6, that is, from the Book of the Old Testament prophet Hosea)

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In color: pages 3; 113-114.