

BOAZ ADHENGU

WORLDVIEW

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ISBN 978-0-359-46198-1



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Published by Jahwar Creative
4476 61 Court
Vero Beach, Florida 32967
United States

eBook ISBN: 978-0-359-46198-1

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Design and typography: Amanda Spielberg

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Table of Contents

	Preface.....	*
I	Introduction	1.
II	The Worldview Agenda	9.
III	Catalytic Modernism	21.
IV	The Order of Man	28.
V	What About Love	34.
VI	Son of A Woman Knight	52.



PREFACE

The title of this book has been of great interest since the urge to contribute towards the ever growing topic of *worldviews* entered my psyche. Not claiming that whatever exists is dormant, but to show that almost the same story told from a different perspective would bring, somehow a fresh interest in understanding similar issues that others might have failed to put in prose.

We all develop different characters while growing up, channelling our ages through divergent processes of toddler, adolescence, teen and youthful experiences; yet in all these, we climax in agreement of what it means to belong in the sphere of *adulthood*. The core remains the same, humanity behaves differently, driven into action not only through appetites but as an act predetermined from intellectual grooming. Without laws, our interests will always be in conflict with the others and thus situations of might becoming right remain inevitable. To the Marxist and Darwinian theorists, it's survival of the fittest.

Christianity brings a different purview to all these contextualised delusion, however agreeing scientifically that the human brain develops into different capacities in relation to how exposed the individual is specifically to nature; we still base such struggles to be caused by the fall of Adam and Eve out of Eden, the origin of sin and the price that humanity has to pay. This is why such a topic as *worldview* remains a path to tread, not only to expose the fundamentals of birth order but to show the many

possibilities we have in having not only good morals, but living ethical Christian life.

In my childhood struggles, am engulfed into perplex as to why God would allow such sufferings to torment my horizon. Growing up as a neglected child, the disfavoured and possibly, an image of guilt made me seek discovery into my true being; only to realise that I was that child born out of an affair and somehow interfered with the expectations of a birth order. This stereotype of a neglected child had some basis, including an internalised lack of any specific role in the family and difficulty in finding a unique identity, especially after being displaced as that child born from an adulterous friendship. However, this has fostered greater resilience to stressors, as well as diplomacy in dealing with a variety of personalities in an attempt to negotiate with potentially domineering siblings.

We must understand that children's self-esteem is reliant on their perceptions of how their parents and significant others, view and treat them. Children who perceive themselves as *the non-favoured child* may experience feelings of inferiority, anger, depression and incompetence. The *favoured* children may benefit from the greater security and adoration, but may be troubled by sibling jealousy, greater obligations to parents or guilt and empathy depending on the sibling relationship. All in all, parent and child relationships are extremely important in the formation of *self-esteem*, which is considered a crucial contributor to psychological wellbeing.

For eighteen years of my childhood, there existed no world beyond what my mother defined and the morals were to be guaranteed by the hypocrisy imputed to my mind by a father who was dissatisfied in whatever good came from me. This lack of knowing that I was a child born from an affair, made my mind to continuously seek reasons and answers about my caged reality. I couldn't grow however much I tried and it is only through rebellion against the immoral misgivings, that somehow, am free and able now to see the greater good in Christ. These lamentations have formed a lengthy chapter of my book, *Abundance of God*, and herein, I shall not repeat the narration.

Having trotted let me emphasize that it is important to instill a proper view of reality not only to our children, but upon our very selves. As a man *thinketh*, so he shall act; hence, morals are key in defining the continuum of truth, in seeking relation to the absolutes which remain unknown to the ordinary mind.

This book engages the *mindful* perception of worldviews, the personal perception to different realities and how such ideas correlate to create a global mix of action that shape the indwelling of humanity on earth. We as a fallen generation are continuously searching for meaning need only to repent in order that we may be regenerated in God.

In an attempt to culminate towards the *Christian Worldview*, the definitions and explanations progressively will develop you as a reader in understanding yourself and the true

essence of being a creation of God, for we were made in the likeness of God, in His image.

As you prayerfully read through the pages, may your intellect grow as you find reasons to further develop your faith in Christ. Am grateful for how far God has brought me and the transformations of my heart, which was almost as stone but now at ease to accept and make known the gospel of Christ, for to disciple is the true priesthood of all believers.

Much thanks to *Professor Henry Rayenga* and *Professor David Feddes* of Christian Leaders Institute, who have been my eye openers through constant training as received under their stewardship. Am also grateful to *Brian DeCook* for a wonderful course that not only made me curious to know Jesus Christ even more, but to endeavour in making others join in this quest of following Jesus at the *peacefire*. To all the Christian Leaders Alliance (CLA) fraternity, am sure to tell that we are being wonderfully prepared, and may we deliver as ambassadors of Christ.

Now, let's understand this topic of worldview!

CHAPTER ONE

introduction

The world around us can be construed as a huge house that we share with other humans, as well as with animals and plants. It is in this world we exist; fulfilling our tasks, enjoying things, developing social relations, creating a family etcetera. In short, we live in this world. We therefore have a deep human need to know and to trust it and be emotionally involved in it. Many of us, however, experience an increasing feeling of alienation. Even though, with the expansion of society, virtually the entire surface of the planet has become a part of our house, often we do not feel at home in that house. Our personal everyday world seems unable to harmonise itself with the global world of society, history and cosmos.

Instead of one view of the whole, shared by the members of a bounded collectively, there now exist in our international world very divergent and competitive conceptions and life styles. We do not interact with one culture, but with many cultures, and even with subcultures and fragments of cultures. The individual is forced to select his or her own future life, having to choose between the enormous number of possibilities offered.

World views, as related to the sciences, ethics, arts, politics and religions, are integral parts of all cultures. They have a strongly motivating and inspiring function. A socially shared view of the whole gives a culture a sense of direction, confidence and *self-esteem*. Moreover, interactions between cultures change constantly. A culture can, for example, be on the verge of entering a technological period, while some forces within it will try to conserve its proper values. The problem of world views is thus connected to the many attempts at constructing a new coherence between cultural fragments that are constantly

emerging and interacting. But what really is the best understanding of this concept, worldview?

We must first clarify what we mean by *world* and *world view*, and specify the role of a world view in a culture. We shall first introduce the basic concepts of “*world*” and “*world view*,” which we will explore in next chapters at greater length.

The world is the broadest environment that is cognitively, practically and emotionally relevant. We thus talk about *the world* in which we live. This *world* can differ, depending on the culture that we consider. Therefore we can speak of *the world of Antiquity*, or *the world of the Rendiles*. The world should not be identified with the earth, nor with the cosmos, nor with the observable universe, but with the totality in which we live and to which we can relate ourselves in a meaningful way.

A *worldview* is a coherent collection of concepts and theorems that must allow us to construct a global image of the world, and in this way to understand as many elements of our experience as possible.

Societies, as well as individuals, have always contemplated deep questions relating to their being and becoming, and to the being and becoming of the world. The configuration of answers to these questions forms their worldview. Hence, a worldview is a system of co-ordinates or a frame of reference in which everything presented to us by our diverse experiences can be placed. It is a symbolic system of representation that allows us to integrate everything we know about the world and ourselves into a global picture;

one that illuminates reality as it is presented to us within a certain culture.

The main properties of a worldview are *coherence* and *fidelity to experience*. Thus, due to the rational demand for coherence, a worldview should be a consistent whole of *concepts, axioms, theorems and metaphors* which do not exclude each other but which can be thought of together.

A worldview can only be faithful to experience if it does not contradict known experimental facts. Of course, what is to be considered as fact is not a simple matter. A fact for one generation is merely a theory for another or even scandalous.

A worldview cannot contradict known experimental facts, but this does not mean that it coincides with them. A worldview may even inspire further development of science and if necessary, from a synthetic vantage point, criticise certain *one-sided* aspects of it. In this sense a world view is a continuation of what the sciences pass on to us; sometimes coinciding with it, sometimes generalising from it, and sometimes critically rejecting it.

A worldview, however, cannot be determined by its relation to the sciences alone. Our experience also contains our different systems of meaning. In our world view, we also want to be faithful to these other aspects of our experience as we attempt possible explanations of our world. A worldview must allow us to *understand* as many aspects of the world as possible.

Our experience also includes our different systems of values. Even if these systems are often ambivalent and

contradictory, we want our world view to be faithful to them. Since evaluation is seen to be more subjective, and hence connected to a particular person inside a particular culture, it will be difficult to achieve one global worldview, satisfying the needs for coherent evaluation of the world for everyone. Not only scientific experience, but also aesthetic and ethical sensitivity will have a deep influence on our attempts at world view construction. It does not follow from this, however, that worldviews will be simply a question of taste and feeling. Arts, styles, customs and moral codes can be very diverse, but even then they are all interconnected within their culture, and on a larger scale within the whole world in which they interact.

Every experience leads towards action of the one having the experience. It is by means of these actions that we can influence the world, and strive for certain ends. A worldview should contain an organised concept of our real and possible actions in this world. Only then will it be faithful to the complete experience of humanity.

The experience of science with its plurality of disciplines, the experience of ethics with its plurality of ethical systems, the experience in aesthetics with its plurality of arts and styles, the experience of politics with its plurality of attempts to construct new societies: all these have a profound influence on worldviews. But conversely, these different types of experiences will in turn be influenced by the global worldview into which they are incorporated. As a consequence, a worldview can relate the different domains of experience, so that they are liberated from their isolation and become parts of the whole.

Worldviews grow organically and historically. But, on the other hand, they need to be articulated, understood, and developed. A worldview seeks to clarify the place of humanity in the world and to provide insight into the most significant relations humans have with this world, both theoretically and practically. Our knowledge, however, is far from complete. Our global action in the world is at a rudimentary stage and our value patterns are insecure. The future may depend on us, but it is not possible to simply derive it from the past. Rooted as we are in a past that cannot fully be unravelled, the future for us is a tree with many potentialities.

No matter how uncertain the prognoses may be, and no matter how opinions about the eschatological destiny of humanity may differ, we must attempt to reflect in a reasonable way about our responsibilities towards future generations. It must be possible to reach enough of a consensus on this aspect of the future to produce or promote meaningful collective action.

All knowledge, meaning and value are subjective and bound to a culture insofar as they are necessarily experienced by concrete, historically determined subjects. The nature of this situation does not imply, however, that the objective aspects of a world view are any less important. It is precisely these aspects that are at the basis of the possibility of integration. A worldview is neither a mere reflection on objective reality, nor a purely subjective construction. Today, the universe can no longer be examined without taking into account the one who observes this universe. As a consequence, world views are often reduced to the needs and characteristics of the subject.

The world in which we are cognitively and emotionally involved is also our field of action. To act in a meaningful way and to transform the world in function of our purposes are characteristics typical of the human species. Therefore, a worldview must not only contain a model of description, an explanation and an evaluation, but also an organised view of the factual and possible influences that humans can have on the world. To define such an integral pattern of action, it is necessary to bring together deeply divided disciplines, and perhaps even to use them for purposes for which they were not originally developed.

Now that we have understood what entails a worldview, let's embark on the origins of the term. How did it come to be used, to be understood or rather founded?

There is virtually universal recognition among German historians of ideas that the notable Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant coined the term *Weltanschauung*, that is, worldview, as expressed in his thesis, *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790.

It originates in a quintessential Kantian paragraph that emphasizes the power of the perception of the human mind. Kant writes, "*If the human mind is nonetheless to be able even to think the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible, whose idea of the noumenon cannot be intuited but can yet be regarded as the substrate underlying what is mere appearance, namely, our intuition of the world*".

That last phrase - "*our intuition of the world*" - is an English translation of Kant's coined German term *Weltanschauung*. The context of this quotation suggests that for Kant,

Weltanschauung means something rather simple like a perception of the world gained empirically.

From its coinage in Kant, who used the term only once and for whom it was of minor significance, it evolved rather quickly to refer to an intellectual conception of the universe from the perspective of a human knower.

Kant's *Copernican Revolution* in philosophy, with its emphasis on the knowing and willing self as the cognitive and moral center of the universe, created the conceptual space in which the notion of worldview could flourish. The term was adopted by Kant's successors and soon became a celebrated concept in German intellectual life.

Weltanschauung captured the imaginations not only of the German intelligentsia, but of thinkers throughout Europe and beyond. The term's success is seen by how readily it was adopted by writers in other European languages either as a loanword, especially in the romance languages, or as a copy word in the idiom of *Slavic* and *Germanic* languages. This concept, indeed, had legs. Given its prominence, it was impossible for it to remain isolated on the continent for long. Soon it crossed the channel to *Great Britain* and made its way across the *Atlantic* to the *United States*.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, within seventy-eight years of its inaugural use in Kant's Critique of Judgment, *Weltanschauung* entered the English language in 1868 with its naturalized form as "**worldview**."

CHAPTER TWO

the worldview agenda

Great philosophers are so because of their ambition to build systems of thought answering a maximum of our deepest philosophical questions. One of the last great attempts was made by *Rudolf Carnap*. Nowadays, Carnap is almost always quoted in order to be bitterly criticised -and on very strong grounds. However, one of his students, Leo Apostel (1925-1995) kept the same ambition, the same grandeur, without the naive and *reductionistic* presuppositions of the *Vienna Circle*. This led him among others to create an interdisciplinary research group, *The Worldviews Group*, and to write a short book together with Jan Van der Veken, which can be compared with the manifesto of the Wiener Kreis. The difference between the two is that the latter had a recognition it did not deserve, and the former deserves a recognition that it did not have.

The two concepts “*philosophy*” and “*worldview*” are closely related. Talking about *a philosophy* in its broadest sense refers in fact to a worldview. It is the case for example when we speak about the philosophy of the *Ndebele* or the *Greeks*.

The term *worldview* is often used to emphasize a personal and historical point of view. In this sense, the term can have a negative connotation for the philosopher, because philosophy generally claims universal validity, as it has a clear association with rational thought. It is however possible to define the class of *philosophical worldviews*, as rooted in rationality and thus also aiming at a kind of universal validity.

There are six worldview questions which correspond to the “big”, “eternal”, or “age-old” philosophical questions.

	Question	Philosophical Discipline
1.	What is?	<i>Ontology</i> (model of reality as a whole)
2.	Where does it all come from?	<i>Explanation</i> (model of the past)
3.	Where are we going?	<i>Prediction</i> (model of the future)
4.	What is good and what is evil?	<i>Axiology</i> (theory of values)
5.	How should we act?	<i>Praxeology</i> (theory of actions)
6.	What is true and what is false?	<i>Epistemology</i> (theory of knowledge)

The first question is the question of ontology; or a model of reality as a whole. It can be typified with the question “*What is?*” It encompasses questions like, *What is the nature of our world? How is it structured and how does it function? Why is there something rather than nothing?* etc.

The second question explains the first component. *Why is the world the way it is, and not different? What kind of global explanatory principles can we put forward? How did the Universe originate? Where does it all come from?* The kind of explanation sought here is one in terms of antecedents. Answers to these questions should be able to explain how and why such or such phenomena arose.

The third question is complementary to the second one. Instead of focusing on the past, it focuses on the future. *Where are we going to? What will be the fate of life in the Universe?* It is about futurology, because this component

should give us possible futures, with more or less probable developments. But the fact that there remain uncertainties, i.e. that there is more than one outcome possible, leaves us with choices to make. Which alternative should we promote and which one should we avoid? For this, we need values.

This brings us to the fourth question. *How do we evaluate global reality? What should we strive for? What is good and what is evil? What is the meaning of life?* Axiology traditionally deals with those questions, including morality, ethics, and aesthetics. The component should give us a direction, a purpose, a set of goals to guide our actions.

The fifth question is about the theory of action, or praxeology. *How should we act? What are the general principles according to which we should organise our actions?* It would help us to implement plans of action, according to our values, in order to solve practical problems. It is often said that a philosophy is of no use because it is too far from reality, that it does not give any precise answer to concrete questions. This is often true and a praxeology correctly developed should fill this gap.

The sixth question is about the theory of knowledge (*epistemology*). *How are we to construct our image of this world in such a way that we can come up with answers to questions 1, 2 and 3? How can we acquire knowledge?* The more abstract questions “*what are the principles of valid inferences or demonstrations?*”, “*How can we characterize truth, deduction, existence, necessity, etc.?*” are main issues

of logic and philosophy of logic. We can also relate to this component the problem of language; *what language should we use for our purposes of knowledge acquisition, and what are its limitations?*

There is in fact a seventh question, which is a meta-question, asking *where do we start in order to answer those questions?* It invites us to seek for partial answers found in the history of ideas and civilizations, preferably being aware of their tradition of thought, and their more or less hidden assumptions. This step is important for example to build a world philosophy. More generally, philosophical anthropology and history of philosophy operate at this meta-level, allowing a broader analysis of the evolution of different worldviews.

There are also psychological and sociological needs for a good worldview. Sociological research seems to indicate that the feelings of insecurity and distrust are stronger among the people who least profess belief in a religious or philosophical worldview. Psychologists researching life satisfaction, on the other hand, have found that having such beliefs increases well-being, by providing a sense of life meaning, feelings of hope and trust, a long-term perspective on life's woes, and a sense of belonging to a larger whole. If philosophy does not answer those questions, other realms of our culture will take advantage of the situation, and provide answers. These are principally religions, or, much more dangerously, cults, extremist secular ideologies or

fundamentalist interpretations of religion spreading irrational beliefs.

We all need a certain worldview, even if it is not made fully explicit, to interact with our world. There is a practical need to have at least an implicit, pre-ontological and for that reason *naive* answer for each of the worldview questions. However, it can be argued that all people have a worldview, or at least that all who have attained a degree of maturity in their relations with the wider world presuppose some kind of answers to these questions. Moreover our answers to these questions will tend strongly towards internal coherence. And since they reflect ways of answering ultimate questions, worldviews are inherently religious. That is, they are founded on what we believe about ourselves and the world in which we live; about our values, our destiny, and the meaning of our lives.

The conflict of worldviews calls Christians to thoughtful cultural engagement. In an increasingly secularized society, the followers of Christ often find their ideas under attack. How can we maintain a *Christ-centered perspective* on the contested issues of our day? How can we think as Christians in every area of intellectual life? And how can we live out a faithful Christian testimony at home, at school, at church, at work, in government, and in the marketplace of ideas? The answer begins with having a consistent Christian worldview that shapes our thoughts, forms our desires, guides our words, and motivates our actions.

Our worldview is what we presuppose. It is our way of looking at life, our interpretation of the universe, our orientation to reality. It is the *comprehensive framework of our basic belief about things*, or *the set of hinges on which all our everyday thinking and doing turns*.

Not all worldviews are equally systematic or equally comprehensive. Often there is a difference between the worldview that we think we have and the one we actually live - our functional as opposed to our theoretical worldview. Worldviews can also change according to circumstance. But whether we realize it or not, all of us have basic beliefs about who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. This is unavoidable. Even people who never stop to think about their worldview in any self-reflective way nevertheless live on the basis of their tacit worldview. This is so basic to who we are that usually we hardly even notice our worldview but simply take it for granted.

Worldviews are inherently religious. Because our worldview is at the core of who we are, it always reveals our fundamental convictions, including what we believe (*or don't believe*) about God. There is no spiritual neutrality - no view from nowhere. Even atheists and agnostics direct their lives toward some greater purpose. Whether he wishes it or not, man as a free creature must pattern his life according to some chosen ultimate end, must center his life on some chosen ultimate loyalty, and must commit his security to some trusted power.

People who say they do not believe in God nevertheless have controlling commitments, which are reflected in how they approach their schoolwork, spend their money, cast their ballots, use their smartphones, and do everything else they do. Whatever is ultimate for us shapes our total identity. The concept of worldview is a fairly recent development in Christian thought. In one sense, of course, the people of God have always had a worldview - a perspective on life that was guided by the Word of God. For Old Testament Israel, that worldview began with a daily confession of faith: “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one*” (Deut. 6:4).

For as long as God has been revealing his truth to his people, he has been shaping their view of the world.

Since Christians hold their worldview in common with other believers, it serves as a point of spiritual and intellectual unity. Originally, *Weltanschauung* referred to a person’s unique perspective on the world. But for Christians, worldview is less individualistic and more communal. Because it is grounded in divine revelation, the Christian worldview has a fixed reference point in the mind of God, and thus it stands as something that connects all believers everywhere.

This is not to say that Christians agree about everything. Within the general framework of the Christian worldview, the followers of Christ hold a wide variety of perspectives on politics, economics, aesthetics, and many other areas of

life and thought. Christians also disagree about doctrine, with different denominations holding distinctive views in theology. Nevertheless, they find substantial unity in the worldview they share. At the same time, there are areas where the Christian worldview overlaps with non-Christian thought. For example, like Christianity, Hinduism holds to the sanctity of human life. Similarly, both Christianity and Judaism teach that God created everything out of nothing. These complexities - both the variety of views that Christians hold and the areas of commonality between Christianity and other religions - prevent us from thinking too simplistically or *unilaterary* about worldviews. But they should not obscure the coherence of the Christian worldview in its basic principles.

Worldview thinking helps Christians engage in the marketplace of ideas. It does this by showing how Christianity relates to everything in life - not just the private life of personal piety but also the public life of art, music, science, business, politics, sports, and popular culture. In addition to providing intellectual perspective for every academic discipline, worldview thinking is useful for apologetics and evangelism. The way people live is always rooted in their religious perspective, even if they claim not to be religious at all. When conflicts arise, as they always do, understanding worldviews helps us identify the deepest source of the conflict and to explain what difference it makes in any situation to follow Jesus Christ.

While it is true that what we love often shapes what we think, it is also true that the biblical remedy for disordered affections is for God to speak his truth to the mind. “*Do not be conformed to this world,*” writes the apostle Paul. In other words, do not be shaped by the things that this world loves - its patterns and practices. Instead, the apostle goes on to say, “*be transformed by the renewal of your mind*” (Rom. 12:2). There is an intrinsic, ordered relationship between the thoughts and the affections that guide our actions. The formation of the heart comes through the transformation of the mind. Therefore, one of the primary ways the Holy Spirit changes the things we love and worship is by changing the way we think.

In developing a properly Christian worldview through the discipleship of the Christian mind, we are growing our capacity for sacred worship and holy love. We cannot be said truly to have a Christian view of the world unless what we love as well as what we think is directed to the glory of God, and unless this is readily apparent in the way we live in the world. The apostle Paul was thinking holistically in his prayer for the mind as well as the heart of the Philippians, which is also a prayer for us in forming and living out a Christian worldview: “*That your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ*” (Phil. 1:9–10).

So far we have defined worldview as “*a framework or set of fundamental beliefs through which we view the world and our calling and future in it.*” Now we can begin to articulate the basic principles of any Christian worldview. In brief, such a worldview gives us four categories that theologians commonly use to understand human experience:

- a. *Creation*: the way God created the world and everything in it, including the people he made in his own image, with the ultimate goal of displaying his glory;
- b. *The Fall*: the way we turned away from our creator, choosing to live for ourselves rather than for our Father’s glory, and thus came under the condemnation of a righteous God in a sin cursed world;
- c. *Grace*: the way God is working to save his people from sin and death through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his Son, and then transforming our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit; and
- d. *Glory*: the way God is fulfilling all his purposes for his people through the present and future pre-eminence of Jesus Christ over the everlasting kingdom of God.

Once we understand this four-part explanation of human experience we can apply it to every area of life. In doing so, we gain God’s perspective on why any particular thing was made in the first place (*creation*), what has gone wrong with

it (*the fall*), how we find its recovery in Jesus Christ (*grace*), and what it will become in the end, when everything is made new (*glory*).

Before we tell the story of the Christian worldview, we need to meet its Author. In doing so, we learn the answer to a couple of crucial questions that every worldview must answer: First, what is the fundamental reality? Second, how can we know that fundamental reality (or anything else, for that matter)? The place to begin answering these questions is where the Bible begins: “*In the beginning, God . . .*” (Gen. 1:1).

CHAPTER THREE

catalytic modernism

Our modern situation offers us various competing assumptions about religion, about the nature of humanity, about what is wrong with the world, about the purpose of life, and so on. These assumptions may have effects on how people read the Bible. We can begin to answer many of our difficulties in a number of areas if we make ourselves aware of the assumptions that we tend to bring along when we study the Bible.

But our deepest difficulties cannot be resolved merely on a narrowly intellectual plane. Our deepest difficulty is sin, rebellion against God. We have desires in our hearts that resist the Bible's views and what God has to say. We want to be our own master. The Bible talks about those who resist God as being "*dead in . . . trespasses and sins*" (Eph. 2:1) and "*darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart*" (Eph. 4:18). God himself must overcome our resistance (Acts 16:14; 2 Tim. 2:25–26; John 3:3–8). In this chapter, we will focus primarily these intellectual difficulties, because they can be easily and directly addressed. But it is wise to remember that some stubborn difficulties lurk beneath the surface.

Part of the challenge in searching for the truth is that we all do so against the background of assumptions about our truth, thus, many basic assumptions about the nature of the world fit together to form a worldview. A worldview includes assumptions about whether *God exists, what kind of God might exist, what kind of world we live in, how we come to know what we know, whether there are moral standards, what is the purpose of human life*, and so on.

Most modern worldviews differ at crucial points from the worldview offered in the Bible. When we come to the Bible and try to listen to its claims, we can easily misjudge those claims if we hear them only from within the framework of our own modern assumptions. Letting the Bible speak for itself, that is, letting it speak in its own terms, includes letting the Bible speak from within its own worldview rather than merely our own. One crucial piece in the biblical worldview concerns who God is. According to the Bible, God is the Creator and *sustainer* of the world and God is personal.

God's personal character makes a difference. If you want to find out about an apple sitting in a fruit bowl, there are many ways you might go about it. You might photograph it, chemically analyze it, smell it, cut it up, eat it. It is up to you; the apple has no choice in the matter. But getting to know a person is different. You are not completely in charge. You may be able to observe a stranger's actions at a distance. But for real acquaintance, you must first meet the person, and this person must cooperate. It is up to the other person how much he or she will tell you.

Some of the thinking about religion makes a mistake right here. If, in our thinking, God or religion becomes like an apple, we are in charge and we do our own investigating in whatever way we please. On the other hand, if God is a person, and in fact a person infinitely greater than we, it is up to him how he chooses to meet us. Until we get to know him, we cannot say whether he makes himself known in all religions equally, or in none of them, or in one particular way that fits his character.

The Bible claims to be God's communication to us. That is an exclusive claim. But mere exclusiveness, as we have seen, does not disqualify the claim. We have to find out by reading the Bible, not by rejecting it beforehand. And we have to reckon with the fact that God as a person may be different from what we imagine him to be. Getting acquainted succeeds better if it takes place without a lot of prejudice getting in the way. The God of the Bible is a personal God. According to the Bible's teaching and its personalist worldview; God has a moral character and it matters to Him whether or not we accept His moral guidance.

But if that is all we say, we can still feel as though moral rules are an imposition on human freedom. The Bible has a many-sided reply to this modern feeling. God made human beings in his image (Gen. 1:26–28), so that we have a moral character ourselves. We have a sense of right and wrong. And God made us with a purpose, so that we would grow in fellowship with him and find freedom and satisfaction in fellowship with him rather than in isolation.

Different worldviews lead to different conceptions of freedom. If there were no God, freedom might mean freedom to create our own purposes. It might mean freedom from all constraint, which implies, in the end, freedom from the constraints of personal relationships. The ideal freedom would be to live in isolation. On the other hand, if God exists and is personal, freedom means not isolation but joy in appreciating both other human beings and God the infinite person. God's moral order is designed by God to guide us into personal fellowship and satisfaction. It is for our good. It is for our freedom, we might say, in the true sense of *freedom*. The person who goes astray from God's

wise guidance burdens himself with sorrows and frustrations. In fact, he ends up being a slave to his own desires.

The person who rejects the Bible's moral guidance thinks that he has good reasons for rejecting it. It seems reasonable to him to seek "freedom" rather than the Bible's instruction, which he deems to be oppressing and confining. But his judgments about freedom and about oppression are coloured by a worldview. He already has assumptions about what would be a meaningful and fulfilling life - what true freedom would mean. And his assumptions depend on his conception of whether God is relevant, and whether God is personal. Thus, he may reject the Bible not because the Bible does not make sense in its own terms, but because he is not reading it on its own terms. He is injecting his own worldview and his own agenda about the kind of freedom that he pictures for himself as ideal.

The Bible's own view of the matter has still another dimension. The Bible indicates that God created us and designed us to have personal fellowship with him and to follow his ways. But we have gone astray and rebelled. We want to be our own master. That is sin. Sin colours our thinking and makes us dislike the idea of submitting to anyone else. Even though God's way is healthy and our own way is destructive, we do not want to stop following our own way. So when we interact with the Bible, we are not just innocent evaluators. We have a destructive agenda. And that is part of the problem. The problem is not just the worldviews "*out there*," so to speak, but the worldviews and sinful desires "*in here*." Our secret desires for sin mesh with the ideological offerings of the worldviews that are on sale in our society.

God is a God of love and patience and compassion. For the sake of Christ, he works with those who do not already know him fully. Many misconceptions may temporarily remain in their minds. If Ahab is saved, it is not because of his intellectual acuity, or even because he has formally correct ideas about the spirit world. He is saved by God's mercy and grace (Eph. 2:7–9). God uses, along the way to his salvation, Ahab's response as he trusts in God and abandons *self-service* and trust in *self*. Ahab trusts also in the promises and the faithfulness of God, which lead forward to Christ, who actually accomplishes the salvation the benefits of which people tasted in a preliminary way even in Old Testament times. Ahab can in principle begin trusting in God, God whom he knows partially but nevertheless truly, even while Ahab remains confused about the intellectual question of the existence and supposed powers of other gods.

The final power for change in apprehending meaning is the power of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Christ was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4). In obedience to the Father's will, he submitted himself to powers of the civil state, in the persons of Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the powers of the religious leadership, in the Sanhedrin. Behind these powers was the power of darkness: "*But this is your hour and the power of darkness*" (Luke 22:53). Looking forward to the crucifixion, Jesus says, "*I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world [Satan] is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father*" (John 14:30–31). Hebrews says that the Devil had "*the power of death*" (Heb. 2:14), and to death Christ submitted himself. Through Christ's obedience God

“disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Col. 2:15).

God is infinite and not subject to the finite dependencies on which we rely. But he does have contexts within himself from all eternity. The Father exists as a person in eternal fellowship with the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit is the ultimate context or situational environment for the interaction of the Father and the Son. Each person in the Trinity acts in harmony with this eternal fellowship, and the communication among persons of the Trinity happens within the context of the eternal knowledge of the persons, who know one another (Matt. 11:27). Because God has made us in his image, God’s Trinitarian character gets reflected in the structures of language. In particular, the contextual structure of the persons in the Godhead is reflected in the contextual elements in language in numerous ways. The interaction with contexts within language is not an unfortunate limitation due to human finiteness, but has its roots in God himself and is in full accord with his character as divine communicator. Hence, the Bible in its structure actually corresponds to the divine wisdom at the very point at which it seems to fail when we import a false philosophical ideal to evaluate it. We must only use the biblical language in understanding the biblical prophecies, thereby growing our christened worldview.

CHAPTER FOUR

the order of man

Persons are not just mechanical systems of instinctual animalistic proclivities, but also language-producing, existentially aware creatures, whose experiences and actions are drenched in subjective meaning. To understand a human being as a person is to understand him or her as a rational system that wants, fears, hopes, believes, and in other ways imbues the world with meaning, rather than just a mechanical system that is subject to the same chains of cause and effect as other animals.

As persons, we have the uniquely human capacities for complex, symbolic thinking that enable us, or even propel us, to reflect upon our own existence, including our historic, cultural, and social worlds, and the *transitoriness*, *corruptibility*, *possibilities*, and *purpose* of our lives. These capacities propel us to form a personal worldview, or *weltanschauung*, in order to imbue our physical, social, and existential predicament with meaning, and rise above our immediate sense impressions and biological instincts.

Personality in its most distinctly human expression, thus resides in a person's characteristic ways of dealing with the ultimate questions, dilemmas, and mysteries of life, such as: *Who am I? Is human nature basically good or bad? Should action be guided by the heart or the intellect? Is the universe ultimately subject only to blind, material, and deterministic forces or is it imbued with transcendent being and purpose? What do I really want from life?*

We cannot even begin to discuss to what extent persons are *self-aware* and able to make choices that are deliberate, rational, and free from biological, social, and psychological constraint without presupposing the utility of the intentional level of description, because only a creature that has the capacity for consciousness, free will, and rationality, in the first place, can display irrationality, unconsciousness, and un-freedom, as opposed to non-rationality, nonconsciousness, and non-freedom.

Personality refers to an individual's characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms - *hidden or not* - behind those patterns. When we explain human behaviour from the personality perspective, we are trying to understand why it would make sense for a particular rational being to choose a given course of action over other alternatives, by incorporating it into a logical pattern that endows it with meaning and makes it easier to accept as sensible.

Rational systems are holistic wholes that do not have parts in the same way that mechanistic systems do, due to their constituents being what they are in part because of their relations to each other - they are constitutively rather than just causally interrelated. However, given the indeterminacy (*i.e. the possibility of inconsistent descriptions that are equally empirically adequate*) in conceptualizing personality, it does not necessarily mean that personality is unified in itself; but rather, that we have no choice except to

understand persons as holistic unities, by imposing conditions of consistency upon them.

The study of worldviews is a basic science, from which better prediction of behaviour may very well arise through application. The worldview itself is not a construct in difference as personality is a construct; it is a complex phenomenon that we can imperfectly capture, or illuminate, through constructs, and the development of constructs and generalizations that allow us to do this has value in its own right, independent of the prediction of behaviour, simply because it fosters understanding of persons and enables us to explain behaviour as action performed by rational agents. The main problem today, barring historical obstacles, may be that there simply is too little unified literature on worldviews and too little appreciation for the crucial role of worldviews in personality. Because research on worldviews is so highly scattered across different fields, with different researchers not even using the same terms to describe worldviews, and there is little literature making a compelling case that the study of worldviews is an intrinsically important part of personality psychology, researchers may not even be familiar with each other's research on worldviews or with the prospect of having a systematic study of worldviews in the first place.

One fundamental existential fact that confronts every person is the singularity of the self as a locus of subjective experience, and the subsequent need to decide for herself how to think of, identify, and in this sense construct the self.

Countless psychologists have, accordingly, emphasized the importance of the subjective meanings imputed to the self. Existentialist and humanistic psychologists for example, believe that whether the person has an authentic *self-conception* that harmonizes with his or her true experiences and deepest aspirations is of utmost importance.

Considering life itself, one important feature of its objective structure, that we are all inevitably confronted with, is that everything about it, including all that we value and even our very existence, is temporary, changeable, and corruptible, and rendered a sense stability and permanence only through our symbolic worlds. Many humanistic and existentialistic psychologists have, accordingly, emphasized the importance of whether the person is open or closed to his world and sees himself as a process of becoming or as a fixed entity.

On a different note, looking at the family structures and treating it as a basic unit for societal relations, we can only say better about character trait developments, mostly so, at personal levels in relation to birth order or sibling relations. Of great importance, is the fact that sibling competition has been seen as a common occurrence in the animal world and occasionally ends in *siblicide*.

Birth order often affects the outcome of such struggles because it is a proxy for differences in age, size, power and access to scarce resources. Birth order refers to whether we were perhaps the first child born in a family or maybe one of many, or maybe even the last. Many researchers think

that where we are in relationship to our brothers and sisters helps influence how we develop. Thinking about birth order is one way we get some good clues as to why we are the way we are. Of course, there is no way to always accurately predict how one person may turn out - we are all too different, complex, and unique.

The interactions that infants have with adults are a foundational influence on the development of personalities because it is the beginning of the development of relationship skills. During childhood, people develop their concept of such things as what they believe men are like, women are like, and what is expected of them. This helps us to develop our conception of success. As we grow up we also develop an idea of what different birth ranks are like and how this may both pressure and limit us to live up to our perceived expectations.

People have different beliefs and expectations about each birth order rank. *Firstborns* are believed to be the most intelligent, responsible, stable, the least emotional, and the least creative. *Middleborn* children are believed to be the most envious and the least bold and talkative. *Lastborns* are believed to be the boldest, most creative, emotional, extraverted, disobedient, irresponsible, envious, and talkative, and the least stable. A *child born alone*, without any siblings, ranked themselves low in agreeableness but highest in creativity.

CHAPTER FIVE

what about love

Every personality is unique. Think about that. What an amazing thing it is that there isn't anyone, nor will there ever be anyone, exactly like you. Your appearance, personality, talents, circumstances, life purpose, and current or past life experiences are entirely unique. No one else is designed to have the experiences you are having through your *body*, *mind* and as a *personality*. That makes your life very precious, and it makes every other life very precious too, regardless of how another may seem to us.

For this reason alone, all life is precious. The image we have of someone isn't real - it's only an image, an idea. To know someone, we have to look deeper, and when we do, we find the same blessed divinity in everyone. To this end, everyone has an "*essence*", his *divine spiritual self* which needs to be awakened for all humanity has fallen. The fallen self is what we comprehend as *ego*, and this continuously fights our essence, our divine spiritual nature; for we are fearfully and wonderfully created by God, in the likeness of His image.

Love is so important to our *well-being*; and yet, contacting that which is within us; that which spontaneously and naturally loves is often difficult. It is obvious that human beings have a dual nature; that is, they have the potential for both good acts and harmful acts. We can be loving, compassionate, and altruistic or the opposite. Most of us would like to be more loving because it feels good to be full of love and because it is actually our true nature to love. But

something exists within us that could make it difficult to love consistently, and that something is the ego.

The ego is the false self (*as opposed to the true self, or essence, as we have defined it to be*). The ego is made up of conditioning - beliefs, opinions, judgments, “*shoulds*,” and any number of ideas that are part of our psychological makeup. This conditioning affects how we see and react to the world, and we often respond unconsciously to this conditioning without realizing that we have a choice. Although some of our conditioning is necessary and useful, much of it is false, negative, and limiting. This is the conditioning that causes us suffering and results in our causing of suffering to others. These false, negative, and limiting beliefs and perspectives are what interfere most with loving.

The ego is reflected as the voice in our head, the ongoing inner commentary we all are so familiar with. The ego admonishes and pushes us, chats with us, judges, fantasizes, and tells us what to do and how to do it. The ego is also behind most sentences that begin with “*I*.”

The ego tells us how to run our life, but it doesn’t have the wisdom to guide us about this. Consequently, the ego becomes that cause of suffering due to its negative voice that often leads to negative feelings. The ego’s perceptions and values are also too limiting and narrow to encompass the truth about life.

This ego - *who we think we are, with all the judgments, conditioning, and projections* - is an imposter, a saboteur of all relationships and of happiness in general. Essence is who we really are, the divine self that is living this life through us. It is our essential goodness. We are actually spiritual beings playing at being human beings.

The experience of being identified with the ego, on the other hand, is an experience generally of contraction, fear, judgment, unhappiness, and discontentment. Love doesn't flow from the ego. The ego's relationship to any relationship is: "*What can you do for me?*"

Love is only experienced when we are aligned with essence; thereby becoming more loving and less identified with the negative, judgmental voice in our head. This is accomplished in simply becoming more aware of our dual nature and consciously choosing to align with love rather than identify with the egoist mind and its judgment or other thoughts that cause negative feelings and contraction. What chooses love? That is the great mystery, isn't it? That is *essence* - what you really are!

When two people are meant to be together - *to enjoy love and life together, to help each other, or to learn something* - love is just there. Where it comes from and why is one of the great mysteries of life. You don't and can't make love happen; it just happens. Love shows up, and you had nothing to do with it.

Happiness, joy, love, peace, and contentment are not arrived at by trying to get them, but by noticing that they are already here. Just check: *is love here now? Is happiness here now? Is peace here now? Is contentment here now?* Noticing these qualities draws us into the experience of them.

We have everything we need because all we need is love, and everyone has an unlimited supply of that. Not everyone may feel love, but it is always there and available for us to share with others.

The way we experience the unlimited supply of love is by giving it away. That is counter-intuitive, which is why it may seem like there isn't enough love. When we believe we need to get love from outside ourselves, that sense of lack stops the love flowing from inside us to others. Believing that you need love becomes a *self-fulfilling* prophesy: You believe you need love because you aren't experiencing it, and in trying to get it, you fail to give it, so you don't experience it. You can't really do two things at once: If you are relating to someone, you are either giving your attention (*love*) to that person or trying to get something from that person. You are either in essence (*giving attention*) or in ego (*trying to get attention*). These are very different states of consciousness, and they result in very different experiences.

The experience of being in ego is an experience of lack. The ego never has enough of anything, including love. So the ego looks outside itself to try to get what it feels it lacks.

The ego tries to manipulate the world to fill its desires and so-called needs. That flow of love and attention toward life is the experience of love that everyone is looking for. It is always possible to give attention and love to whatever is showing up in our life. It is a simple choice, but not so easy to do. The ego doesn't value doing that. It doesn't believe that doing this, it will get all what it wants.

All you need is love, and you already have plenty of that to give! On the contrary, the feelings of romantic love are created by an illusion (i.e., psychological projection) and by the release of certain chemicals in the brain. Romantic feelings are a very different kind of love than *true love*; they are a falling in love with what we hope will be our salvation and happiness forever. That kind of love never lasts and often disappears upon getting to know someone better. If we are lucky, it turns into something truer, more real, more akin to our true nature. Love is an act of kindness, not a giddy feeling. Love is a natural expression of our true nature, not a feeling we get from others. The ego manipulates others to do what it wants so that it can feel love, but that's the opposite of love. Love allows others to be just as they are. It supports and nurtures, listens, and cares. Love flows toward others from within us. It exists within us and isn't something we get from others.

This kind of love is the most fulfilling thing in the world. Experiencing it doesn't require that you be beautiful or rich or healthy or intelligent or that you have a special talent or standing in life; experiencing it only requires that you

express it. It's free and it frees us and others from the enslavement of the false self. It's the greatest gift that doesn't cost the giver anything. It takes nothing from the giver and returns everything. This is the great secret we are meant to discover.

On a different note, appearances seem so important. Most of us believe that our appearance is very important, and we work very hard at looking a certain way. This is especially true for women, of course, and this conditioning is very difficult to overcome because there's a lot of fear that not looking good could have drastic consequences. For many people, appearance is a top priority and often remains that way right up until death. Our appearance does affect how others initially react to us. However, it's not as important as we make it. We suffer over it and try so hard to look any different, other than the way we do. All of this trying is exhausting and takes time and energy away from things that are more fulfilling and important in life. That's the problem - when we are consumed with our appearance, we aren't giving our attention and energy to other things that might be more meaningful, fulfilling, and rewarding. We might not discover that cultivating kindness is more rewarding, more than cultivating beauty. We might fail to notice the beauty that is here, within ourselves and others, just as we are.

Inner beauty and outer beauty can be at odds, since there is only so much attention and energy we have. Where your energy and attention transcends will reflect what you value. Do you value outer beauty more than inner beauty? You

might say you don't, but where are you putting your energy and attention? What are your thoughts on?

The funny thing is that others love us for our inner beauty, for the unique expression of essence that we are, although they may be attracted to us by our outer beauty. However, that allure doesn't mean much if they don't also fall in love with us. What people fall in love with isn't our outer beauty (*that's attraction or infatuation, not love*), but something much more subtle - our being. They love us because they see lovable qualities that belong to essence: goodness, creativity, kindness, joy for life, patience, compassion, courage, wisdom, strength, clarity, and so on.

Just because most people believe that appearances are important doesn't make it so. People are under the illusion that appearances are far more important than they are; which does create that reality to some extent – it makes this seem true. This illusion results in a culture that's sadly misled into putting too much energy and attention on such things. This cultural illusion makes it more difficult to discover the truth - that appearances aren't that important. But life is wise and ages us so that we can discover the truth. It is perhaps one of the greatest lessons of our lives, although it may take a lifetime to learn it.

Some people are easier to love than others, and they are the ones, therefore, who experience a lot of love. They experience it both within themselves and coming to them from others. What is their secret? *Amazing good looks?* No!

Stunning personalities? No! *Money and power?* No! Their secret is none of the things we assume will make us more lovable. Their secret is that they love, and by that I mean, they accept others the way they are. Isn't that the experience when you feel loved - when you feel accepted rather than judged?

Acceptance is the opposite of judgment and the antidote to judgment, and acceptance brings us the experience of love. *What is the experience of love?* It is the experience of accepting and being accepted, the experience of relaxation, of being able to just be, without struggling and striving to be any different than we are or requiring that others be different than however they are. That is what we all want - to just be able to relax and be okay just the way we are and to be okay with others just the way they are.

When someone gives us this gift of acceptance, we love them. What a gift! It is a gift you would never reject and hopefully one you will return, because returning it - giving others this gift - brings you the experience of love. Loving and accepting others feels good. It is its own reward. It isn't even necessary for others to love and accept you in return because it's enough to just feel love and acceptance for others.

You accept others because you appreciate the unique expression of life that they are. What amazing things these human forms are! And all the different personalities! When we can just let people be the way they are, it is such a relief

- for us and for them. Allowing people to *just be* is loving them in appreciation and allowing flows from our true nature, or essence, which is love. Accepting and loving is how essence feels toward life and every one of its creations.

People who love and accept themselves are lovable because they reflect essence, and that's what we all really want - not someone to do our every bidding and match our every fantasy. What we really want is to be with someone who knows how to love because our deepest desire is to love. Therefore, we are drawn to those who know how to love. They are our teachers - the path pointers in this world. And this is our destiny as well – to be a place of refuge, where egos dissolve and all that is left is the love that we are.

Our true nature, essence, is love. To be in essence is to be in love. If love is what you want (*do you?*), then being in essence and staying there is how to have it. The problem is that we have other agendas - other desires - when we are in relationship. Sometimes we want to be right more than we want to experience love. Sometimes we want to be separate and avoid being vulnerable more than we want to experience love. And sometimes we want what we want more than we want love.

Love flows when we recognize our own divine self in another. It flows when we are able to see beyond (*or behind*) the egoist mask to the real self, which is exquisitely lovable and which evokes love. All the qualities we love in another are qualities of the divine self, of essence:

compassion, understanding, wisdom, kindness, love, patience, and inner strength.

The desire to be right is one of the ego's strongest desires because being right is felt to be closely tied to survival. Being right puts us on top, and that's where the ego wants to be because the ego thinks that being on top will keep it safe. Again and again, the ego will choose being right over love and connection with others. This tendency to make being right more important than love is what makes relationships so difficult. When people in a relationship are ego identified, both want to be right, and that's especially impossible when no one is actually right!

The reason that no one is actually right is because disagreements are based on conditioning, and conditioning is simply different beliefs being imposed. Everyone thinks their beliefs are right; however, there is no absolute truth when it comes to beliefs, only relative truth. Conditioning is just conditioning, and all conditioning bears the stamp of the ego. Conditioning is made up of generalizations, beliefs that have been passed on, truisms, cultural and religious training, and other acquired ideas. When we are attached to our conditioning and to being right, we argue about things like the right way to make the bed or wash the dishes. Getting the other person to do things our way becomes more important than loving that person and accepting that we are all different.

Our true self, essence, loves our differences, or we wouldn't be the way we are. Life wouldn't be what it is if we weren't different from each other. What an amazing thing it is that each of us is so unique! However, the ego feels threatened by these differences, and so it is uncomfortable with them. We are designed to both love others and disagree with them. It's part of how we were created by God, to learn to lovingly disagree, which requires that we hold our differences more lightly than the ego is used to doing.

Wanting to be right is not a worthwhile desire, and that has to be seen. This desire is the ego doing what egos do. Choosing love over being right is the choice that brings happiness because choosing love over our conditioning shifts us out of the ego's world and into our essence's.

Essence chooses love because essence is moving all of life towards love. Whenever we choose love over being right, or any other value of the ego, we drop into essence and immediately experience the love, peace, joy, and contentment of essence.

Being happy or not being happy is largely a matter of what we focus on. The ego can be miserable, and we can still be happy if we find something loveable about what is going on. Finding something to love is hard for the ego, but it's actually easy because there's plenty that is loveable about life. From essence's standpoint, all of life is loveable because essence experiences life differently than the ego.

Essence says yes to it, while the ego says no. Paying attention to the ego's rejection of life makes us miserable, while noticing what is loveable fills us with love.

The ego doesn't want to love because loving makes it feel vulnerable. It doesn't trust love because the ego isn't what creates or experiences love. Loving is the domain of essence, and when we are experiencing love, we are experiencing essence. So to move out of the ego and into essence, all we have to do is find something to love. There comes a time in our spiritual growth when we become aware of our deep inner self that can choose to move out of ego identification. Then we begin to wake up out of ego identification and live more as essence in the world. Essence is what chooses love over the ego's values. Essence is what loves, not the ego.

Finding something to love in every moment is the antidote to the ego's rejection of the moment. When you find yourself struggling against life, stop and notice what's beautiful and loveable. And don't just stop with one thing; find another and another. Life can be lived from a place of celebration and gratitude instead of rejection. It's your choice.

So what is it you love about life? It's so good to notice and acknowledge this because doing so aligns us with essence and strengthens our awareness of essence's presence in our life. When we notice those friendships, those dew drops, those beautiful and amazing things about planet earth and

all of God's creations; we can't help but feel essence's joy. The only thing that gets in the way of that joy is not noticing such things, and the only reason we don't is if we are busy noticing something else, which for most people is their thoughts. We are created in the likeness of God, we have that essence.

Do your thoughts bring you that same kind of joy? It really helps to notice the impact that some thoughts have on your state of consciousness because when you do, you see that they don't give you the same peace, joy, and happiness that noticing life more purely does.

Do you love how the clouds move and shift as you watch them? Do you love how the stars seem to twinkle? Do you love how your dog's chest moves up and down when breathing? Do you love the sound of the wind in the trees before a storm? Do you love the smell of damp leaves in the fall? Do you love the feel of the water against your skin when you are swimming through it?

It's impossible to run out of things to love about life. What a wonderful spiritual practice it is to notice and feel gratitude for the little things in life. What feels that way is essence. So as we can explain, essence is very close at hand. It's not some mysterious force separate from us, but rather, that which lives through us and experiences this precious life we have been given by God.

Love is the underlying fabric of life, and kindness is its reflection in the world through us. It can be conveyed in attentiveness to others, in words, or in deeds. One of the most powerful acts of kindness is kindness toward our very own selves. That is really where kindness begins. If we aren't kind to ourselves, how can we be kind to others? Unless we are also kind to ourselves, kindness toward others is more of a manipulation, an attempt to get others to give us something, including love. However, unless we are kind to ourselves, we won't even be able to take in any kindness we do receive from others. That place of lack inside of us can't be filled from the outside. First, we have to be kind to ourselves.

True kindness comes from a desire to soothe and comfort others because we have discovered the power and blessing of kindness as a result of having received it. Receiving kindness from others heals us and makes it possible to express it to others. If we haven't received much kindness from others, we need to find a way to give it to ourselves, to be kind to ourselves even though others may not have been. To do that, we have to do two things: *We have to forgive those who weren't kind to us*, and *we have to see that we deserve love*.

Unfortunately, those who didn't receive a lot of kindness as children usually concluded that they deserved that and that they aren't lovable. They need to forgive those who were unable to be kind to them (*probably because they were treated the same way when they were young*) and learn to

give love to themselves. Those who were abused learned to abuse themselves inwardly; they learned to believe their negative thoughts about themselves. They need to develop a loving inner voice rather than an unloving one. That can be done, but it takes a willingness to see the truth, to see through the negative self-image to the truth - that you are divinity in a human body, that you are love incarnate.

Everyone has the same capacity to love, but that ability may have been squelched by not having been loved. Not being loved as a child blocks the natural flow of love, and giving love to yourself allows love to flow outward again. It's always possible to give ourselves love because our true nature (*essence*) loves the human expression that we are, no matter what we have or haven't done, no matter what our shortcomings are. When we tap into the love - the kindness and compassion - that our true self has for the human that we are and for all of humanity, we unleash the power of love in our life to heal ourselves and others. Be kind and compassionate toward yourself and those who are caught in the ego and the suffering it causes, and this kindness will release you and others from the ego's prison of limitation and fear. Love yourself and others for the courage to be alive and be human in these difficult and challenging times. Give yourself and others some slack. Forgive, allow, accept, and be kind. Relax and let everything be as it is.

The ego's thoughts in general and judgments in particular, aren't necessarily useful to share with others. Honesty is not the best policy, if that honesty comes from the ego. In

addition to judgments, the ego is full of opinions, complaints, and *half-truths*, and sharing these with others can only bring them into the egoist state of consciousness. And often, what the ego thinks is just plain hurtful. Most people are conditioned to believe that being honest is necessary and good for relationships when, in fact, it's often very detrimental. If being truthful means expressing the ego's truth, then it's better to not be truthful or to just keep quiet. The ego's truth is not the truth, and speaking it just keeps us identified with the ego and drags others into ego identification.

Whatever we put out in the world tends to come back to us, although not necessarily right away. Whether feedback from others or from life about our actions is immediate or not, we receive feedback instantly internally: When we act in accordance with our true nature - *with love* - we feel good; when we don't, we don't feel good. This is how life teaches us love: It rewards us for love and doesn't reward the opposite. So if life is rewarding loving behaviour, what does that mean? This would seem to be evidence for a loving force behind life, a force that is guiding us toward love and away from whatever undermines love.

To love, we have to fall in love with reality - with what's true right now, not with what might be true in the future or with what we want to be true in the future. Love happens in the now (*like everything, really*). That's why the ego doesn't know about love - because love is the experience of being in

the now, or the present moment, and as soon as the ego experiences the now, it runs.

Commitment takes a willingness to fall in love with reality - with the real partner who is in front of you - rather than seek something else, either actually or through fantasy. What you commit to is what's here right now. Who knows what will be here next? All you ever really have is what's here right now, so it makes sense to commit to that - in other words, to give your full attention, your love, to that.

Essence commits itself to someone only when love is flowing in both directions and the relationship is rewarding on many levels. The ego, on the other hand, may commit out of sexual attraction or because some other need is met through that relationship, neither of which is a good basis for commitment.

CHAPTER SIX

son of a woman knight

It has taken me a lengthy period of time to surely understand the true grace of God, to see my life transformed from glory to glory as the sea of trouble is split wide open for me to walk majestically through it. And with such an experience, am only able to define myself as a *child of God*.

Having grown up under a confused pressure of not knowing my true identity; it took the devil thirteen years to finally reveal that I was a child born as a result of an affair. But the ways of God overcome all, and the comfort we get by truly putting our faith in Him is overwhelming, for in learning about His love and mercy am able to accept my identity and rejoice with pride in Jesus, for am one of the adopted sons of God.

When I wrote my book, *Abundance of God* (2018), it was a commencing journey of continuous sanctification through Jesus Christ, whom I have found to be a pillar of peace, let alone a comforting experience to emulate. Yet am interested to talk about the *knight woman*, but how?

In most reflections of my teenage struggles and the gap that existed from a forced curse upon me through a sin that was not within my capacity to avoid, this father whom am thankful that at least I had a figure to look up to, has continuously frustrated my mind. And the painful insults whether through the verbal or uttermost neglect, prompted me to pursue possible replacements in my heart. I always admired other friends who perhaps were poor but yet peaceful because their parents had love for them. And in

such a dilemma, God became my ultimate father but the desperation caused in experiencing an abused upbringing made me humble and in so being, was able to find refuge in many different elderly men who treated me as though I was family to them. Of great importance was Berkeley Hackett whom am thankful for most part of my early *childhood development* stages, especially the teenage years; for without him discovering me in my troubles, I could be lost and it is through such reaching's that I came to know the importance of the church as a body of Christ.

With God, nothing becomes impossible and my dreams became a reality amidst great tempting cycles that prompted rebellion and urge for vengeance. Riches came into my life as properties and wealth of academics defined a regenerated soul, for reading has always been a major interest at heart. In developing literacy, I was able to interact with many different minds, boarded a plane several times to destinations that would have remained wishful if at all I was illiterate; and in such travels, some brought me love while some became regrets of lust. But in one major conference, I met a woman who would mother a child to me, and in relating with her, our bond became stronger than the natural family into which I was born and brought up.

Although this woman had been part of my life when I first left home to join University of Nairobi, for the undergraduate degree; it only became real when my graduate studies began. I had been working for their company which was a few minutes from the campus,

including being housed in their Karen home for a few months; but love only developed when we both started attending conferences and having a silent time away from work and home.

Rukia is the only daughter to a rich German diplomat who had been living in Kenya for almost thirty years (*as she once told me*) and always conversed in Kiswahili. This woman, *Elizabeth*, was the mother of *Rukia Abubakar*, whom she named according to the love experience of her past; Elizabeth claimed to have spent intimate time with *Abubakar*, a diplomat from Morocco, while on a project in Zanzibar. And from such a relationship, Rukia was born.

Rukia Abubakar grew up without any religious affiliation but her mother was a dedicated catholic, which also prompted Rukia to gain an interest on Catholicism, but due to the for love her name, she felt inferior when people failed to understand that this naming had nothing to do with her faith; that she was simply named as such and grew up knowing that it was just her name, not a definition. Notably, as human beings, we have the power of choices yet only God can control our realities.

At a time when I was pursuing my master's degree, conferencing became part of my priorities because I needed a ground to not only network with new prospective employers but also a ventilation zone for most of what I was being taught in the classrooms. Thus, at a conference for engineers, which needed input from students of political

science, my abstract conceptual proposal was approved and consequently, a research paper was needed. It was at this conference that I first got to intimately know *Rukia* and a few months later, we were dearly in love.

In their Karen home, her mother, though a diplomat attached to culture and environmental policies, was a great ecological enthusiast working on for her country, Germany. She once told me that she had transversed most of Africa, introduced landscaping programs that not only addressed the issue of food security but deeply conserved the environment. Kenya remained her crux of coordination, and sadly, after an attack on my Bondo home, she decided to relocate to Germany. Now, this is how I built bondo...

In 2012, after dreaming for a few years, it was the right time to build my rural home and without concern to traditional cultural processes inclined to ethnic Luo tribe, I decided to purchase a piece of earth not far from my ancestral source. A place which to my lack of understanding, was laden with poverty due to deeply entrenched practices of the dark, including sorcery and cultic formations. Most villagers opted for Christianity, not because they understood anything about salvation, but in belief that by associating with the church, they could be able to escape victimhood when voodoo was practiced against them. It was like each home had a church and if not, there was an alter table. The dominant religion here was the cultic *Legio Maria*, an offshoot of Catholicism but recreated with a mentality for *African renaissance*.

Elizabeth and her daughter Rukia loved to occasionally visit this new place that I had purchased because it was closer to Lake Victoria (*actually, my other neighbour owned a yacht and she was a minister for defence in Kenya*) but mostly because it was surrounded by nature – birdlife, plants and a few wild animals.

Although there was no significant relationship between Rukia and myself at this time other than love from a shared past; her mother treated me as a son. And her prowess of talking Swahili to the villagers in addition to being a white woman, made her gain a local name, *nyapala* (sword woman) because she could chop firewood using *panga* and participate to clear the bushes just as the local villagers did. She was more of a *Knight Woman*, a warrior spirit and because we did not communicate a lot with the villagers, partly because my *dholuo* was not that perfect, they failed to get our names, and each went with a local name. Rukia became *nyar-nyapala* and myself *wuod-nyapala*.

And whenever they visited, such names defined our existence to them and soon, it exported my uniqueness to the outside village; for I was able to bring foreigners into a remote village and make them live domestically, just like local villagers. The handling of *panga* to clear bushes and chop firewood by Elizabeth brought a lot of stories, and soon a local musician made a song about it which she insisted was not good for her profile, and as a replacement of her name, they sang *wuod-nyapala*, inserting my name as they deemed fit. And yet I didn't complain, because it added

no value to me but to a bad extent, it brought misery, for most thought I was excessively rich; and this prompted some relatives to plan my death with expectations of inheriting a lot. Of which they could have been right, but to a lesser extent.

As son to the knight woman, I gained fame yet lost all the material wealth after an attempted assassination. It was the aftermath that brought me to Christ, in seeing how narrow of an escape from the siege of Satan who had deceived my own father to try and kill me (*see Abundance of God, 2018*).

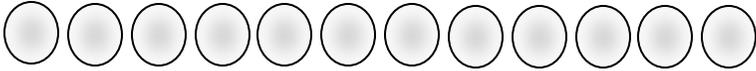
In as much as it is a fact that people come to know God through different circumstances, mine has been by understanding how merciful He has been to me, bringing me from the verge of atheism and taming my mind to be able to learn the true wisdom of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Imagine a person who decided to blame God for his misfortunes, and in so doing, am engulfed with denial of His existence by embracing atheism. But then, I meet a woman, she becomes pregnant and because am afraid of the hypocritical Christian friends, I try Islam to which am confident enough to say did teach me a lot during the transition period when I accepted that it was better to be hated as a man of an inferior faith other than a man without God. But then, in trying to reconcile with Christianity and having gained Islamic values, my heart refused to accept Jesus as God, mainly because I was depending on my own understanding of the scriptures, the Word of God. At that

point, I discovered the *Unitarian Christianity* which partly satisfied my curiosity, and somehow, was able to speak directly to God (*still in my own understanding*) without feeling any need for a mediator (*Jesus*). This part of Christianity still reconciles with atheism, and slowly in my noticing; I was becoming lukewarm yet with no mindful gain, lost. It is only after the attempted assassination and two separate car accidents occurring to me, that a deep reflection upon my survival brought me to tears with my knees bowing at last and accepting Christ, for He is Lord.

In my endless prayers for an opportunity to be able to know him best, am searching online for bible colleges or churches which can help. Then one night, in a persistent search, *Christian Leaders Institute* dominates the screen of my laptop, and ever since, God's glory has been incremental, for through the relations developed at the institute as a student, I have been able to serve God with humility and understand my human self.

Although writing has always been purposeful within me, Christian Leaders Institute has helped me gain better insights from the additional wisdom acquired through interaction, studying the *Word of God*, understanding the history of Christianity and relating with other students at college. This has shaped my purview and am humbled to have been able to gain such a training. This book is a testimony to that, and in my hopes, that you as a reader have been blessed. Thank you!



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