SPIRITUAL CRUMBS
FOR A
SEARCHING SOUL

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Preface for Albert's Book

One of my most interesting friends is Albert Noradunkian. I came to know him through his daughter Isabelle, who was a very strong student in the first Religion course I offered in Victoria College in the University of Toronto, back in 1964. For many years I have continued to enjoy friendship with Albert and with his devoted wife, Angel, as well as with their daughter.

We have not been able to spend much time together, but every so often there has come an almost dazzling invitation to engage in intense conversation, punctuated by joyous laughter and undergirded by mutual respect and love.

In recent years Albert has been mining the treasures of his Armenian spiritual heritage. Remarkably, there has flowed non-stop from this adult learning, combined with his deep experience, a prodigious series of publications, of which this is but one. I have marvelled at his almost volcanic energy, but then, he is Albert!

Now in his late eighties, he seems as youthful as ever, and as special, though a visitor would make a mistake to expect a measured exchange of ideas. Coming away from a conversation in his home, with Angel presiding over whatever light breaks, one bears the marks of spiritual nourishment, and is moved to give thanks for ties of friendship with these remarkable persons in our midst. Whether the spiritual insight matches your own or not, you will have been privileged to travel far and deep with an original thinker, who would "walk the talk" with you.

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LOVE (III)

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

"A guest," I answered, "worthy to be here":
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord; but I have marred them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

--(By George Herbert 1593-1633)

THE HEAVENLY ONE

God is the unutterable and inexpressible Sweetness and the Great Reality of life. Though His imposing splendor and glorious majesty is inconceivable to man, He is comprehensible (intelligible) to spiritually sensitive devotees. The Heavenly, the Most High, the Almighty, is more easily imagined than expressed and He is more really alive than we fancy Him to be.

The Uncreated, the heavenly Creator, God, created the universe and all that we understand from non-substance. The Supreme Reality of Life, the Timeless and Incomprehensible Grandeur can be seen through the eye of faith and sanctified perception. The supreme human ambition is to be able to communicate with God, to join and fuse with Him without losing one's individual personality. That human inclination and flight of the soul is given to man from the Divine Essence and is present in each individual's soul. But these seeds need to be nurtured untill fruition (realization). Jesus bid His disciples saying,

"You, therefore, must be perfect,
as your heavenly Father is perfect"--Mat. 5:48.

The most beautiful creation in the cosmos is the human being. This unique marvel can feel the divine operational force in his clayish body. Man is the synthesis of matter and spirit, death and eternity. His spiritual tempests and storms rise from knowing that he or she is accessible to a divine heritage. This earthly rational being feels that within himself or herself there is something which is higher and more sublime than mere perishable blood, bones and nerves.

Our present is uncertain; our past indistinct; and our future suspicious. We resemble a ray of sunset which will be swallowed by the oncoming darkness, but hope and mercy from the Eternal arrives in time to the prisoners of death. Jesus the celestial Incarnation, with His compassionate words, healing touch and loving looks, speaks to the dying,

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes
in Me, although he may die, yet he shall live"--John 11:25.

The ultimate majesty of God is not in His being the Creator of cosmic galaxies. Nor is it because He is the Architect Who formed the solar system which gives life and being to the Earth. The majesty of God is most fully expressed in His inexhaustible love towards the sinful, the wanderer, the erroneous, the mislead and the lost without demanding revenge or punishment, because He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ as the Merciful and the universal Love in all His handiwork.

Therefore, we give praise and adoration to the Eternal Glory, the Heavenly One, the Most High, the Almighty, and to this unutterable Sacred Love, we bow and surrender ourselves in purity of heart.

January 8, 1992

THE ABSOLUTE--GOD

The word "absolute" in latin is written "absolutus" and it means--free, perfect in itself, unlimited in power, irrevocable and the will or power of the Almighty.

In philosophy, "absolute" portrays the supreme irretrievable fact (fait accompli), the uttermost reality, the perfect, the immaculate and the source of life. Plato portrayed the "absolute" as the understanding of goodness, but Spinoza described the "absolute" as the substance of the essence or the "original mind".

The apologists of the "absolute" generally have been idealistic thinkers who believed that the supreme reality should be the "Reasoning Mind" or "Logic".

The academics of the 19th century in their materialistic wisdom, categorically pronounced that there was no ABSOLUTE reality, because everything was relative. From an atheistic perspective, good and evil are relative and cannot be absolute.

The great German apostate, Friedrich Nietzsche, in his final disbelief in the existence of God, praised the willful stubborness of the individual and the worship of the "super man". Nietzscheism in the long run was represented in the horrible Fascism and Naziism. Leo Tolstoy named Nietzsche the "mad man" and he in fact is the product of lunacy. Because of his individuality and the inordinate or insatiable desire of his ego, he eventually involved mankind in the hellish destruction of the Second World War. Nietzscheistic philosophy cost mankind 53 million dead and twice as many maimed and mutilated.

Nietzsche had a great influence on German racist philosophers who, in turn, indoctrinated their fellow men in the "art" of hate and revenge. Nietzsche decimated numerous cultural and religious beliefs in the 19th century.

1. He believed that the meaning of life, depended upon what a person meant in his own logic.
2. He announced that God was dead.
3. He argued that the virtues of Christianity (such as compassion, humility, nobility, gentleness and self-sacrifice) were sheep minded moralities which should be obliterated.
4. He commended and encouraged the use of force and violence for the advancement of human civilization.

As a consequence of his selfish and egotistical reasoning, uncertainty and doubt replaced faith and authority in insecure minds, and nihilism and anarchy appeared in the 20th century. When man loses the perception of the Absolute--God--he also loses the reality of truth and untruth, of wrong and right. When an individual's perception is subjective and relative, and derived from one's own consciousness, then what is truth? Where is it? What is wrong and right? Fyodor Dostoyevsky argues that if there is no absolute scale and measurement--God--then the only logical and sensible alternative for humans is to commit suicide.

Therefore, when we argue the need of the Absolute as Christians, the new generation, thinking that we belong to a retired and useless generation, tries to contradict and silence us, saying: "Haven't you read A. Einstein's Theory of Relativity?" It is true that the theory of relativity was founded by Mr. Einstein.

The new generation forgets that Albert Einstein also was an old man. Secondly, he did not write his theory of relativity about *morality* or about *ethics*. His writing was on *physics*. It is true that science has not a single eternal dogma. All its laws are relative. Scientific knowledge is founded on the theory of relativity--the centimetre, the gram and the second--which measure space, weight, and time. In consumerism, the price and volume of a product is relative. The Earth is proportionally greater than the moon, but smaller than the sun. Matter can be relative, but never Truth, Goodness and the Absolute.

Why?

Because the human mind unconsciously measures everything with the Absolute. There is a spiritual urge in humanity which is very forceful and directs its perception to the Absolute and Perfect One.

In paganism, the "absolute" was the philosopher and the pathway of reason and suggestion. In Christianity, the "Absolute" is the Supernatural God whose love is comprehensible through faith. It is that small Voice, while you are groping in obscurity,

which directs and oversees your life or path.

Jesus Christ and Socrates both died for "Truth" but there is not a single temple erected for Socrates. Socrates exhorted the people to think correctly. In Jesus Christ's preachings, there is the supernatural hor izon and dimension of God from the present toward the future, in addition to the meaning of life and hope.

How many followers have been martyred for men like Nietzsche, Richard Rubinstein and Ernest Rennan, who have betrayed God, teaching atheism on unfounded, ignorant and unsupported evidence. Without the Supernatural, man becomes empty, discouraged and irrational.

There is a strange subversive tide which madly tries to eliminate and destroy all beauty and sanctity to replace them with vulgarity and immorality. A morality without religion and humans without God. Where is the source of the morality which has come to man? Through what instinct or thought process do humans realize that they should morally be honest? No one in history is competent to produce this instinct. Morality is a direct radiation from God.

The perception and recognition of the Divine and the revelation or Epiphany of God, are indivisible attributes of the same Creator God. God created everything not to add to His glory but to communicate with humans and to show us His loving-kindness.

The word "mystery" signifies that the Christian can enter into communion with the unseen and untouchable spiritual Forces and Authorities. The believer enters into the highest intimate relationship with Christ. He or she stays there, grows spiritually and enjoys divine favours. The Christian lives in the mystical and happy Presence of God. The "mystery" is the encounter of God and man. Jesus Christ is the Author of each mystery.

Ungodly academics search for scientific explanations instead of searching for revelation, testimony and evidence. I am satisfied and persuaded that there is evidence and testimony for the existence of God, but I do not have the scientific proof.

Why not?

Because God is **SUPREMELY** greater than scientific argument.

God is ABSOLUTE.

August 16, 1998
Toronto

When I Consider How My Light Is Spent

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask; but patience to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best, His state

Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

--John Milton (1608-1674)

THE INNERMOST EGO
(SUBCONSCIOUS SELF)

Who am I? What am I? Is my consciousness an independent personality? Our "self" can become our greatest enemy or it can be our friend and the motivation in our success.

In modern psychology, the word "success" and "I am" are common expressions for active force. For instance, the person who cannot say "I am" hesitates and becomes wavering and loses opportunities for success.

The concept of self can build the person or it can ruin and destroy. The "I am" is that force, energy and influence which is bestowed only to humankind among all creation.

Why is it consigned exclusively to humans and not to other animals?

Within creation, only humans receive the divine image, likeness, qualifications and character of the Creator. Those who deny and reject the divine creation of the universe and existence have no better or alternative answer as to where humans received their creative personality, individuality and qualifications. Is it possible that Mother Earth could have given people consciousness, intellectual faculties and spiritualism? Is it possible that Father Time bestowed special faculties on humanity? Or did natural forces transmit the "ego" or subconscious self to men and women? If nature gave those faculties, from where did unconscious nature receive them?

Both atheists and followers of Jesus Christ <u>believe</u> that man has received a consciousness of self, which moves us to great and sublime heights and also to unfathomable hopelessness, desperation and destruction. Both atheist and Christians apply <u>faith</u> in their search and endeavour, however the atheist's faith is a <u>negative</u> one while the faith of a follower of Christ is <u>positive</u>.

Consciousness of self is a titanic force which can be used either for good-- God--or for evil. The subconscious self can function through a person's will either for positive or negative results. Consequently, what is its source and from whence does it come?

The most published, the most widely read and most sacred scripture in the world is the Holy Bible which Christians revere and adore. It has been translated into more than 200 languages and Eight million Bibles were published between 1987 and 1992. The Holy Bible has had considerable influence on the world's culture. It is interesting and exciting to know what The Bible tells us about the ego or the unconcious self.

While Moses, the shepherd was grazing his father-in-law's, Jethro's flock, he saw the burning Bush, the flaming angel of the Lord, and through this miraculous vision heard the Voice of God which ordered him to return to Pharaoh. Moses asked God a question saying, "In Whose name should I go?" and "Whose messenger will I become?" God said to Moses:

"I AM THAT I AM; thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel,
"I AM" hath sent me unto you"--**Ex. 3:14.**

The word "Jehovah" is the unique name of the Almighty given to Moses which, in Hebrew, means "I AM THAT I AM"--GOD, LORD, CREATOR, FATHER, ALMIGHTY, etc.

Through Moses, God revealed that He is the "I AM". In all Armenian Apostolic Churches, above the altar, there is one letter from the Armenian alphabet the «Է» which means "eternally existing". This profoundly symbolic Armenian letter in its mystical, suggestive and inspiring essence is given to humanity because we are created in the loving Creator's Image. The "I am", is our most valuable asset. However, "I am"ness without the support and assistance of God is haughtiness, arrogance and evil.

1. We do not live only for the benefit of ourselves. We should live for our nation and society, as Jesus Christ lived.

2. Each "I am"ness without the assistance of Goodness is moral death and suicide. The end or conclusion of the negative "I am", is objectively seen in the prophecy of Isaiah,

"How art thou fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How art thou cut down to the ground,
which did weaken the nations!
For thou hast said in thine heart,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation,
In the sides of the north:
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will be like the most High.
Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell,
to the sides of the pit.
They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee,
and consider thee, saying,
Is this the man that made the earth to tremble,
that did shake kingdoms;
That made the world as a wilderness,
and destroyed the cities thereof;
That opened not the house of his prisoners?
But thou art cast out of thy grave like an
abominable branch,
And as the raiment of those that are slain,
Thrust through with a sword,
That go down to the stones of the pit;
As a carcass trodden under feet".

Isaiah 14:12-15.

The above prophetic judgement clearly shows the end of the devil, Satan. It is also a warning to all who try to use the divine "I am" for their selfish ambition and personal satisfaction.

The Christian should avoid the word "me" and ' I ', and think in terms of "us" and "our" which represents the brotherhood of people and nations.

In modern psychology, sovereign authority is represented by the Godless "I am"--the temporal, the finite and the conceited or counterfeit. Therefore, those whom we consider successful, rich, powerful and happy close their eyes or terminate their true "I am"s by committing suicide. Numerous Caesars, who were Roman titans, and Napoleons and Hitlers who charmed millions through their "I am"s, were overthrown and lost through their self-centered dreamings.

How does a Christian render worthy his or her "I am" and still convert it into a positive force? Very often Jesus Himself said: "I am". Let us count His "I am"s--

1. ***"I am the bread of life"--John 6: 35, 46, 41.***
2. ***"I am the Light of the world"--John 8: 12.***
3. ***"I am the door of the sheep pen"--10:7.***
4. ***"I am the Good Shepherd"--10:11.***
5. ***"I am the Resurrection and the Life"--11:25.***
6. ***"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life"--14:6.***
7. ***"When you have lifted up the Son of man, you will realize that I am He; and that I do nothing from Myself but I say what My Father has taught me"*--John 8:28.**

John the Baptist who was called the greatest prophet, testified for himself when the Jewish authorities wanted to find out who he was. He said without hesitation:

"I am not the Christ". I am "the voice in the wilderness".

John the Baptist says: ***"I am Not"***, but Jesus Christ says: **"I am".** Why does the Son of Man--the Only Begotten of the Father say: **"I am"?**

While talking with his own disciples in a moment of inspirataion, John the Baptist expressed himself to them, saying:

"A man can receive nothing except as it has been granted to him from heaven".

He continued his inspirational message saying: "He Who comes from above... is above all others... God does not give His Spirit sparingly or by measure, but boundless is the gift God makes of His spirit. The Father loves the Son, and has given everything into His hand"--**John 3:34-35.**

The explanation and the authority of Jesus for using the divine "I am"s is found in John 5: 19-30.

1. Jesus says: "I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the Son is able to do nothing from Himself--of His own accord; but He is able to do only what He sees the Father doing.For whatever the Father does is what the Son does in the same way".

2."The Father judges no one; for He has given all judgment entirely into the hands of the Son".

3. "Believe Me when I most solemnly assure you, The time is coming and is here now when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear it shall live".

4. "I am able to do nothing by Myself, or of My own accord; but only as I am taught by God and as I get His orders. Even as I hear, I judge and My judgment is right, because I do not seek or consult My own will but only the will and pleas - ure of the Father Who sent Me".

In the above historical document the most substantial words of Jesus are:

"I do not seek or consult My own will but only the will and pleasure of the Father Who sent me".
John 5:30, 6:38.

A human being who has been granted divine will power, should be extremely cautious when learning to use it.Having free will and the choice to choose is such a tremendous responsibility that we often overlook it and take it for granted. Having free will puts our destiny in our own hands. How many of us are trained to use this divinely offered power correctly?

Because of it's importance and human inadequacy, it is wise for man to voluntarily choose God's help in the use of his will even though he may be sure of his right doing. Consequently, Jesus instructs His disciples throughout His consecrated mission and says:

1. "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will and purpose; but to do the will and purpose of Him Who sent me". --John 6:36.

2. "He wo speaks on his own authority seeks to win honor for himself. But he who seeks the glory and is eager for the honor of Him who sent him, he is true; and there is no unrighteousness or falsehood or deception in him"--Jon 7:18.

3. "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, you will realize that I am He; and that I do nothing from Myself but I say what My Father has taught Me" --John 8: 28.

4. When Martha the sister of Lazarus heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. Martha then said to Jesus, "Master, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And even now I know that whatever You ask from God He will grant it to You."

Jesus the living Revelation said to her:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, whoever believes in Me, although he may die, yet he shall live"--11:25.

Modern man runs senselessly to satisfy his "I am". But the believer, having seen the heavenly vision, comes out of his earthly shell and sacrifices his only valuable self to his Creator--the Giver of Life. The Antithesis of "ego" and ambitiousness is the dimension of FAITH, the ideal life, and the world of morality and beauty. Our greatest enemy is our "ego" if we do not dedicate it for the service of God. The soul should crack the shell of "I am", step out and present it to God.

When a person offers his "I am" to God, then he becomes the disci ple of Jesus Christ. Jesus has said to His followers,

"If any one desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever is bent on saving his life, shall lose it: and whoever loses his life for My sake, shall find it"--**Matt. 16:24-25.**

Denial of self means to disregard, to lose sight of, to forget yourself and your own interests and to cleave steadily to Jesus. It means to comform wholly to His example in living and, if need be, in dying also. Our Lord Jesus Christ dropped His heavenly glory, His dignity and His "I am" for the salvation of humankind and "became flesh", a human. Through all this self-denial--, the incarnated Jesus was not a toy, dummy or substitute. He confesses and says:

1. ***"I am not alone, but, I and the Father Who sent me"--John 8:16.***
2. ***"I am one bearing testimony concerning Myself, and My Father Who sent Me, He also testifies about Me"--8:18.***
3. ***"You know My Father as little as you know Me. If you Knew Me, you would know My Father also"--8:19.***
4. ***"I do nothing from Myself--of My own accord, or on My own authority--but I say what My Father has taught Me"*--8:28.**

For example:

Why does a student of music entrust his learning and calling to a master musician? The student humbles himself--his ego, in order that he also will become a master musician. A learner should put his "I" in the service of others to find himself. Catholicos Khrimian of Armenia was called "hairig" or "daddy" by all Armenians. How did he get that glorious name? By bribery? Not at all, but by putting himself at the service of his nation. Through selfishness, man receeds, deteriorates and gets cut off from God. Under the banner of selfishness, a person, instead of rising to become God's image, tumbles down to evil and to destruction.

There can be no real and lasting life if self perception is separated from God. Let us read the precise words of Jesus--John 15:1-16:

1. ***"I am the True Vine and My Father is the Vinedresser".***
2. ***"Dwell in Me and I will dwell in you. Just as no branch can bear fruit of itself without abiding in the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in Me".***
3. ***"If you live in Me and My words remain in you and continue to live in your, hearts, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you".***
4. ***"Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments (surrender your "I am" to my might) you will abide in my love and live on in it.***

To comprehend our deep down carnal ego we should read in profound admiration and respect the following mystical prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ,

***"I pray so that they all may be one as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe and be convinced that you have sent Me. I have given to them the glory and honor which You have given Me, that they may be one, [even] as We are one: I in them and You in Me , in order that they may become one and perfectly united, that the world may know and recognize that You sent Me, and that You have loved them as you have loved me"*--John 17: 21-23**.

January 7, 1998
Toronto

THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke 15:11-32

A graphically painted picture speaks more vividly than the contents of a whole book. Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, had the ingenuity to humanize God in man's understanding. Jesus not only taught His followers but He painted and projected His narrations.

The parable of the "Prodigal Son" inspires and stimulates the minds and hearts of adults and grown ups. With spiritual insight, Jesus penetrated into the human psyche and transformed his audience towards the Good. The story of the "Prodigal" is the autobiography of each sinner who, seeing and recognizing his predicament, grieves for his deeds and repents. He returns to the beloved and cherished bosom where he was conceived to become the heir of divine characteristics and moral virtues.

Those who read the story of the "Prodigal Son" usually see in it a disobedient son of a loving father, who at last finds a deserving punishment for his licentio us and wanton desires as a starving swine-herder.

Why does the idea of "punishment" become so obvious?

In the previous and following parables, Jesus is speaking about the "Good Shepherd" and about the woman who "lost her money". It is deeply educational to find in the instruction of Jesus, that His approach to sinners is not according to our vengeful measurements.

1. Let us compare the approach of Jesus and the Pharisee when a public woman, Mary Magdalene, weeps and washes Jesus' feet with her tears and then anoints them with perfume.
2. Also consider the encounter of the Samaritan woman with Jesus at Jacob's well in Sychar, Samaria. Jesus is very friendly and speaks naturally with her, while the disciples are perplexed by his un-orthodox behaviour.
3. In another unique incidence, four men bring a paralytic while Jesus is preaching. When they could not get him to a place in front of Jesus because of the throng, they dug through the roof above Him; and when they had scooped out an opening, they let down the quilt upon which the paralyzed man lay. Tender Jesus speaks to this paralitic and calls him "son" instead of "you sinner".
4. Jesus chooses two tax collectors, Matthew and Zacchaeus, and participates in their banquets rejoicingly and without judging them as sinners or usurers.

The biting rebukes of Jesus usually are directed toward pious and religious hypocrites. In Matthew's Gospel chapter 23, the Galilean Prophet exclaims "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees", "Woe to you, blind guides", "You blind fools!", and "You serpents! You spawn of vipers! How can you escape?" The celestial Jesus approaches the sinner with love and forgiveness because a conscious sinner is already remorseful and sorry for his misdoings. But the heart of a pious hypocrite is petrified and in need of hard blows. How softly and tenderly Jesus spoke to the crucified man who besought His forgiveness on the cross. Jesus opened the door of Paradise to him.

Let us return to the parable of the "Prodigal Son" which is the revelation of the heavenly Father to mankind. The eternal Son, with His radiant brush, has painted the unseen and the unknowable so that all mankind and languages will comprehend. In this parable we see the gracious Father Who unselfishly gives His possessions and His privileges to his sons--(mankind), to both the obedient and to the disobedient. The Father knows that the younger son will waste his inheritance. In the parable, God is seen as an anguished Father and under great distress because such love is very painful. We cry only for our own, not for strangers. So God without murmur muffles His affliction and hugs and kisses him and lets the son to go.

A father cannot give or transmit his character to his son. He can only give his physical likeness. Only the son can imprint upon himself the spiritual and the intellectual

stamp, if he wills it. A father cannot exercise in order to develop big muscles for his son. If the son wants to be physically strong, he must exercise for himself. For this most difficult and confounding reason, we, the earthly creature, have our being in a painful and excruciating world where the Face of God smiles, but His Heart weeps. The prodigal's father foresaw his son as a starved swineherder, but still he divided his estate because the heart of his son, had already gone away.

God is not a despot who will use force to keep us from going astray or being seduced. By running away from God, the human being will degenerate. But inspite of this disattachment from God, there will remain a divine spark which distinguishes us from the animals. That spark, or flash, is his "thinking" and it reminds him of the divine gift--man's unique inheritance of divine sonship.

The holy Gospel says of the prodigal:

"Then he came to his senses and cried aloud".

How does a man "come to his senses"? In other translations it says: *"when he came to himself*". Is it possible for a man to wander away from him self? Man's identity is that divine spark or "personality"--which constitutes the distinction of being a person. When a man loses his personality, he is transformed into a beast of burden. There are people who lose their personality under duress such as restraint by fear or force or imprisonment or war. There are others too, who lose their personality in licentiousness and debauchery.

To"think", elevates man to his divine status, because, only by meditation, can we communicate and dialogue with God. The strategy of Satan is to keep man so busy that he will have no time to think and "come to himself". The famine of the 20th century is the famine of "thinking" and meditating. Mankind, specially Westerners, are so busy that they have no time to think. That is why the "fast food" businesses are thriving.

Where was the prodigal's self [thought] that "came to himself"? The Prodigal's thought had become a captive of the devil. The physical pain and anguish, which often are negative aspects of life, sometimes will also have positive end results. Hunger and feelings of humiliation awoke the Prodigal son to see his factual misery. The fear and the defeat of the devil begins when man starts to think and pray.

Many have questioned saying: "What does God do"? God waits patiently with great expectation and hope. He waits to see the return of His children, because each individual person has the seal of the Creator. Though we discriminate against each other ethnically, religiously and denominationally, in the sight of God we are all stamped as His children.

***"While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity and tenderness, and he ran and embraced him and kissed him"*--Luke 15:20.**

What an authentic and genuine description of God! It is almost impossible for an earthly person to be the interpreter or expositor of the resplendent and dazzling love of God. This parable is also a testimony of the Sonship of Jesus Christ. What other religion in this world has represented God with such loving and forgiving tendencies? No other religion or faith, only Jesus Christ.

Scientists observe the cosmic luminaries through the distance of millions of years. God Who is also the Lord of time, hopefully waits for your and my return. God does not call a sinner or an apostate to judgment, but rather He runs towards the penitent. The return of a self-convicted person is already a self-accusation and self-condemnation. God Himself goes to meet and welcome a lost sinner. He neither notices the torn and tattered rags nor smells the stink of His son. The eye of the Father is fastened only on the person who carries his image and each pulse of the heart which stutters: "Dad, I am sorry".

God does not hesitate to hug a dirty ragged, and stinky swine-herder because God sanctifies and consecrates everything He touches.

When the good will of God gives sight to the blind, heals the leper, saves the demoniac and resurrects the dead through Jesus Christ, how much more would He not bring a

sinner to repentance, be it Zacchaeus, the tax collecter, Peter, who denied Him, the spiritually broken like Mary Magdalene or the unbeliever like Thomas, His disciple.

"And he kissed him". As a painting characterizes a whole book, similarly a "kiss"-- is the mark of reconciliation and love.

A parent who welcomes the return of a Prodigal child is like a successful birthing after a long wait. There are some people who would bury their grief and sorrow in dance halls, drugs or alcohol. But Jesus reveals the Father who prepares a feast and entertainment and re joices after the heroic victory of his loving patience and faithfulness.

The profound love and mercy which the father reveals to his prodigal son is a great step which closes the gap between God and mankind. It teaches us to not only obey and believe in God, but rather to love and trust in His mercy and compassion.

The only secure pledge that the penitent prodigal could rely on, was his father's unreserved and candid spirit of love. Christianity is founded on this type of unshaken faith and trust.

May this vivifying and Christlike faith and consciousness inspire our faith and enlighten our way.

May 20, 1990
Toronto

MEDITATION 6

Am I thy gold? Or purse, Lord, for thy wealth,
Whether in mine or mint refined for thee?
I'm counted so, but count me o'er thyself,
Lest gold washed face, and brass in heart I be.
I fear my touchstone touches when I try
Me and my counted gold too overly.

Am I new minted by thy stamp indeed?
Mine eyes are dim I cannot clearly see,
Be thou my spectacles that I may read
Thine image and inscription stamped on me,
If thy bright image do upon me stand,
I am a golden angel in thy hand.

Lord, make my soul thy plate, thine image bright
Within the circle of the same enfile.
And on its brims in golden letters write
Thy superscription in a holy style,
Then I shall be thy money, thou my horde:
Let me thy angel be, be thou my Lord

--Edward Taylor (ca. 1642-1729)

GOD FORMED MAN OUT OF DUST
GOD CREATED MAN
FROM DIRT ON THE GROUND

Why did God create man out of dust?

Being created out of dirt from the ground does not belittle man's creation. The dust of the earth is neither debasing nor degrading. In the whole cosmos, only the dust of the ground has fertility, gives fruition and sustains life. What can be produced from gold or silver dust? Do we plant our wheat seeds in diamond or ruby powder? Not at all. All life-giving seeds will rot and perish when thrown into valuable gem dust! The dirt that we trample and kick, and where we throw our garbage and left overs, is more valuable than gold.

It is the humble dust of the earth which feeds all the existing life on this planet. It is the earth which gives us the timber and the raw materials with which we build our joyful homes and use for fine arts. Because of the produce of the earth, man becomes industrious and also artistic.The earth is an inexhaustible storehouse, provided we do not pollute it through misguided progress and products of civilization such as chemical pesticides.

We should take into account that although God created the living world, their becoming into physical and objective being of fish, plants and animals, was performed by mother nature [The Earth]. We read this in The Bible--Genesis 1:20-25:

1. **And God said, *"Let the <u>waters</u> <u>bring</u> <u>forth</u> abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven".***
2. **And God said, *"Let the <u>earth</u> <u>bring</u> <u>forth</u> living creatures after his kind, cattle, and creeping things and beasts of the earth after his kind: and it was so".***

The Lord God made man from the best and most prolific raw material that ever existed--the dust of the Earth. If ever the dust of the earth gets polluted or destroyed, the only life that man has ever known will disappear from the face of the earth.

Man is made from the dust of the Earth [*for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return]*--Gen. 3:19. But man has something more than dust within himself. The additional part of man which supplemented his unique make-up and supremely elevates him from the rest of the creation, was the <u>image</u> of God and His likeness which was sealed in him. This image of God and His <u>likeness</u> in man, converted this earthly creature into a god with a small 'g'. This new creature, man, began to have free will, intellectual and moral reasoning and a sentimental soul with which to commune with his Creator, God the Father.

The earthly and clayish substance of man is not to make him inferior, but it is a testimony which shows only that he is unfinished or incomplete. In the creation of Adam, God <u>began</u> to make the man. It does not say that God completed this creation...! If it were so, Jesus would never have said,

"Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect".

For example:

Parents give birth to children who have their resemblance. They are blond or dark, tall or short, and have blue eyes or brown. A parent trains and educates his child in faith, morality and spiritual values, but the parent cannot oblige or compel the child to be religious. He or she cannot force the son or daughter to go to university. A parent taking university lessons, cannot make the son or daughter a university graduate! So, it is the child who is to <u>will</u> and <u>choose</u> whatever he or she wants to become--good or bad.

The other side of the divine image and likeness of God that humans were privileged to receive was obligation, duty and responsibility. <u>Duty</u> is that which is owed or due; obligation, that to or by which one is bound; <u>responsibility</u>, that for which one must answer. In this duty, obligation and responsibility, I regard man as an imperfect being, not because God couldn't make man perfect, but because man's perfection should be achieved

by himself, not by God. Man couldn't have free will and also have a programmed life as animals have. God, in order to create a demi-god with free will, did not program the creature called "man". If God had programmed man, we would have lost our free will.

Except for man, all other sentient beings--(creatures and animals) are programmed. The cow is a milk-producing machine. The bee specializes in honey making. Birds without previous education, will build their nests exactly like their predecessors. A duck's chick will swim, but the chicken's chick cannot swim even if you try to force it.

In the world that we live and know, it is only man which has changed his environment, welfare and thinking. The creature which has emerged out of a cave, has built humble homes, palaces, and cathedrals, and has also invented transportation, television, computers and space ships. Which of the wild beasts has built even a den? Those prehistoric savage animals, such as crocodiles or turtles, which did exist before humans, haven't even built a tent!They cannot even talk to one another.Why? Because the divine image and His likeness was not given to them.

All animals except man exist only to eat and reproduce their likes. But *God made man*, transforms his life to thought and then converts his thought to action. History is the record of man's inherent spiritual dimension, his art in sculpture, music, painting, architecture and his social behaviour. The excavations in caves of Spain have revealed to modern man the artistic drawings of prehistoric man. The excavations in Crete have shown us the Minoan civilization's artful sculptures. In Athen we gaze at the Parthenon whose architectural beauty and balance make us stop and ponder.

Man, throughout history, not only has transformed his immediate surroundings, but also his intellectual, rational and spiritual innerworld. All this he owes to the Creator who enriched mankind with many of His own characteristics.

As a kidnapped boy tries to search for his father and mother when he grows up, so also the creature which we call *man*, in all ages, has sought to find his God through philosophy, religion, animal and human sacrifices, pilgrimages and by prayer and meditation. It does not matter if he was wrong or right, but he has always endeavoured to find the God in Whom he so warmly believed.

St. Gregory of Nareg writes,

«Կաւակերտ շինուածիս բոլոր տկարութիւնները...
երկրածին մարմին...անլոյս և մրած ճրագարան».

The above quotation represents man's involuntary impulsions and sinfulness.

Paul, the apostle, in his theological writings, links man's earthliness and impulses together, saying,

a. "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it.-- I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out; for I fail to practise the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds that I do not desire to do are what I am doing"--Rom. 7:18-19.

b."Who will release and deliver me from this body of death" -- 7:24.

c. "The first man was from out of earth, made of dust and earthly-minded. The second Man is the Lord from out of heaven. Now those who are made of dust are like him who was first made of the dust-- earthly-minded; and as is The Man from heaven, so also are thosewho are of heaven--heavenly-minded. And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, so shall we and so let us also bear the image of the Man of heaven"--I. Cor. 15:47-49.

St. Paul, by joining the earthly and heavenly aspects together, is trying to explain our irresistible impulses and uncontrollable urges. Where do these involuntary desires and

lusts come from? They all come from raw material--the dust of the Earth--mother nature. This fabulous Earth, in order to insure and keep its plant and animal life alive continually, has transmitted selfish and innate egoism.

Animals think only to keep themselves alive. It is the same thing also in the plant life. If someone is indifferent about his flower garden, within a few months weeds will take it over and the flowers will disappear.

The Incarnation of our Lord Jesus *"and the Word was made flesh"*, is a touching proof that man has the power to conquer his uncontrollable impulses. Until then, these impulses ruled over the earthly-minded man.

St. Paul returns to the earthly-minded soul and shows him the spiritual possibilities that man has. He writes to the church of Rome saying,

"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of all the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies--presenting all your members and faculties--as a living sacrifice, holy and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service and spiritual worship"--12:1.

Although we complain and grumble about our present civilization and the shameful, irreverent and immoral record, never the less in comparison to the distant past, the 20th Century was still a golden age.

Man, in spite of his earthly-mindedness and immodesty, has something within him more than blood, bone, and nerves. Man is not immortal, but he can become eternal, not because he leaves behind monuments in the world as a memorial, but because he can create victory in his defeat and reach the Divinity in his dying.

Man in his god-like image carries a mighty garland by which he has the means to become supernatural by determining and accomplishing his obligation and duty. However by rebelling against our Lord God, we can deny and betray our Creator, unite with evil and achieve transient mortality. Man has the power to will, but not enough ability to accomplish it. Paul the apostle has confessed, saying,

"I do not practise what I wish,
but I do the very thing that I loath".

Though man is earthly and clayish in nature, he also is an incomparably marvellous achievement. He has the need to go on pilgrimage to Gethsemane and Golgotha. As the value of clay vases are decided after they are kiln-baked, so dust-minded man must pass through the kiln of devotion, pain and tribulation before he is sanctified. This will result in the fruition of Jesus' faith. Our Lord Jesus said,

"In the world ye shall have tribulation:
but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world".
John 16:33.

The disciples of Jesus Christ who became apostles, witnessed by deed and word saying,

"It is through many hardships and tribulations
we must enter the kingdom of God"--Acts 14:22.

Mary Magdalene, through tears and penitence, turned out to be the first missionary to announce the glorious Resurrection of the Lord. Zacchaeus, the tax collector, became a believer by confessing his usurious cheating of the destitute and then compensating his victims. In the same way the clayborn and earthly man is an unfinished being. His impulses are more powerful than his sensibilities. He is like a ray of light ready to be extinguished at sunset. If he wants to become eternal, he should pass through the kiln of pain--the denial of the self and the surrender of his will to the will of Him Who loves him the most.

All clay vessels which do not pass through the kiln return back to clay because they were dust of the Earth and return to dust. But those who dare to take the challenge become eternal. Man's passions are violent, his glory intemperate and his nature clayish. He suffers and grieves in this world because he has lost his manliness. Men, usually prefer the call of carnal passions--envy, revenge and hypocrisy.

Man, who is the crown of matter and spirit, death and eternity, has theduty of repentance and accountability for his conscience to God. Repentance and spiritual inner birth are synonymous conceptions.Repentance is the turning point of the spirit to freedom and to God. We have to resign and renounce false gods, deceptions and delusions. The life of a Christian is to become a path of ongoing repentance. Because a Christian lives within a sea of clay and earth, his ambitions are many and also contradictory. Therefore, his eyes should look always to the crucified Incarnation--the Son of God.

"You Who are the most material in all matters,
O~ Crucified Incarnation. You are our song, our melody,
our Perception, our Ideal, our Meaning and our Force.
You are the Spirituality of our soul.
You are the only tangible, and unseen connection to our
f athers, ancestors,and dispersed kindreds.
You--a r e my Prayer of today.
Display Your unexplainable mystery--Your miracle.
The breaking of Your Body.
O~ Impenetrable, closed Altar, mysterious world.
The miracles have no explanation.
If they had an explanation, they wouldn't be miracles".

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