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Commentary — From the Margins

Silver Christendom

You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Dan 2:31–35 emphasis added)

1.

God is light, and light casts no shadows. There is no darkness in light ... darkness requires that a thing blocks the light: darkness is then the shadow of the thing that blocks the light regardless of whether the thing can be seen by human eyes. And death is the ultimate expression of darkness, with death in this earthly realm forming the shadow and copy of death in the domain of God, the second death.

Death is the darkened shadow cast by disobedience or lawlessness.

God is life, with light forming the metaphor of this life in the heavenly realm—and as light in this earthly realm has both the characteristics of energy and of particle matter, life in the heavenly realm has characteristics similar to the properties of energy as well as having characteristics that give the appearance of solidity without being “solid.”

Lawlessness or sin functions as an object in the heavenly realm. It is this object, sin that blocks the life/light that is God and leaves the son of God “dead.” So death is only casual separation from God—separation of the type exemplified by Israel’s exile to Babylon—but is better visualized as the absence of life/light on the back side of sin or disobedience.

Sin always blocks the life/light that is God from reaching an object, or in the case of a physically living human being, from reaching the person. Therefore, sin or disobedience must be removed before life that is God and is from God can reach a person so that he or

she can receive a second life, or in Christian parlance, be born again, or born anew, or born from above, or born of spirit, the divine breath of God [pneuma Theon], all expressions for receiving life that is God, thereby making the person a son of God in the same way that physical birth causes a person to be a son of Adam (i.e., a son of man).

Theologically, the greatest obstacle to understanding that God is life in the heavenly realm is silver Christianity itself; for silver Christianity (as well as rabbinical Judaism, Islam, and Greek paganism) teaches that human beings are born with immortal souls that need regenerated. This dogma is contrary to Scripture and especially contrary to what the Apostle Paul taught: Paul wrote, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23). ... An immortal soul is eternal life, which was not given to the first Adam who was driven from the Garden of God before he could eat of the tree of life (Gen 3:22–24). And if immortal life was not given to the first Adam, from where, pray tell, did the sons of man receive immortal life? Or is it that the sons of man believed the lie of the old serpent, Satan the devil, as Eve believed the serpent when it said, “You will not surely die” (v. 4)?

There is only darkness and death on the backside of lawlessness. There is no everlasting life that needs regenerated; there is the utter absence of life.

A shadow exists in one less dimension than does the object casting the shadow; hence, a three-dimensional object casts a two-dimensional shadow. In the case of the nation of Israel, a nation now consisting of peoples all born anew as sons of God, a nation circumcised of heart (Rom 2:18–29) as natural Israel was circumcised in the flesh, Israel has received life in the heavenly realm, or more properly, life in the inter-dimensional portion of the heavenly realm. God is this life/light; thus all Israelites are sons of God. Therefore indwelling sin in these sons of God causes Israel to cast a spiritually lifeless shadow that is the entirety of natural Israel, identified as the firstborn son of God (Ex 4:22), which suggests that Yah is the type and copy of the Most High as natural Israel is the type and copy of circumcised-of-heart Israel. By extension, Yah is the Logos, who was Theos and who entered His creation as His only Son, the man Jesus of Nazareth; Yah as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob forsook His glory [immortality] to be born of Mary as a mortal human being. But He was his own Father, a statement sure to cause confusion. He doesn't become the Son of the Most High until the divine breath of the Most High descends upon Him as a dove, lights, and remains (Matt 3:16–17). He was before (as Yah) the Beloved of the Most High, existing in relationship with the Most High as a wife is one flesh with her husband ... when Elohim created man in the image of Elohim, He created them male and female (Gen 1:26–27). And it is in the unpronounced Tetragrammaton YHWH where the two are seen to be one deity as a man and his wife are one flesh. So to see the man Jesus of Nazareth was to see the Father (John 14:8–11), for the man Jesus was the type and shadow of the Father.

God [Theos] is the name of the house in which the Father and the Son dwell as Olympus was where the Greek pantheon [i.e., many gods, or all the gods] dwelt. And as definite articles of Greek nouns are often used as pronouns, “—Theos” functions as a pronoun for

both the Father and the Son; for Greeks had no word and no linguistic ability to create a word like the Tetragrammaton YHWH. To Greeks, Zeus in nominative case; was the most high deity of the pantheon, a linguistic reality bound to cause confusion and apparently one utilized by the Father and the Son to conceal knowledge from Christian converts not truly born of spirit. And the lawlessness of natural Israel prevented Hebrew scholars from perceiving the obvious: the regular plural noun Elohim was plural for a reason apart from emphasis. Elohim is plural because it was Yah functioning as the Helpmate or Spokesman for the Most High, not the Most High, who created all things that have been made, then interacted with the patriarchs before entering His creation as His only Son, the man Jesus of Nazareth. But as Helpmate, Yah did nothing and said nothing that the Most High didn't direct Him to do or to say. Thus, the two functioned in absolute unity as one entity or one God even though they were two and will be more when younger siblings (Rom 8:29) of Christ Jesus are glorified.

Unless a person thinks like the Father, the person can never be one with the Father and the Son; for ephemeral thought in this world has "substance" in the heavenly realm, which is why disobedience can block the life/light of God and leave the person dead, or utterly without life. Therefore, the person who will be one with the Father will keep the commandments as Jesus kept the commandments. But as long as disobedience continues to dwell in the fleshly members of disciples, thereby bringing death to these fleshly members, disciples need the covering of Jesus' obedience or righteousness. But a disciple cannot ride Jesus' coattails to glory, for all judgment has been given to the Son (John 5:22) who knows whether the disciple has practiced walking uprightly before the Father while under the garment of grace.

Death is the absence of life; it is the dark shadow cast by disobedience. So to name a person or entity "Death" is to declare that this entity is the shadow of Sin ... it is sin that blocks the life/light that is God, with this Sin making merchandise (buying and selling) of disciples already born of spirit [barley] and those human beings who will be born of spirit later [wheat].

John the Revelator records, "When he [the Lamb] opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, 'Come!' And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth" (Rev 6:7-8).

Death is difficult to describe other than to say that it is the absence of life ... an American soldier with his squad bursts through the door of an Iraqi house from which someone had fired shots at the squad; he bursts through the door shooting. And a little girl the age of his daughter is killed—he sees himself having killed his daughter, and this image of death haunts him, that of a bleeding, bullet ridden child.

The image will not go away regardless of how the now ex-soldier attempts to deaden it.

When my brother returned from Vietnam, there were things he didn't remember. At first I thought he choose not to remember things, but over time, when he wanted to remember events that had happened before his tours of duty in 'Nam and couldn't, I realized that his mind had truly blocked portions of his memory so that what happened could not be retrieved ... Mom said Dad wouldn't talk about what he had experienced in WWII, and it might be that he wouldn't talk because he couldn't remember, or couldn't bring the memories forth until they had been dulled by time. This seems to be the case for many who have truly seen too much death.

Dad died before those silent memories were given utterance.

Americans, especially, insulate themselves from death. The nation warehouses its elderly in nursing homes where parents and grandparents can die without seriously disturbing the routine of daily life. It leaves dealing with death to professionals, so the image of a bullet-ridden child shocks in a way that a steak in a meat counter does not. Why? Solomon wrote, "I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath [spirit], and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return" (Eccl 3:18–20 emphasis added).

The Saturday before Dad died, Mom miscarried in her fifth month and gave birth to a dead fetus I only briefly saw; I was eleven ... as an older graduate student in Alaska, I had a very liberal woman professor tell me of her miscarriage in a remote cabin along the Tanana River: she was at the end of her fifth month, and the fetus was born alive. With its hand, it reached up and grasped her finger before it died. Only in her opposition to abortion did we agree politically.

Was Solomon correct when he wrote that God tests the children of men to see what we will believe about death? Do we see that we are but beasts, sharing DNA with chimpanzees that eat steak and can be taught to drive cars—and can tear the face off a person? Or do we, because we attempt to inoculate ourselves from the pain of death, think that somehow we are different from cows and sheep, that we have an immortal soul that will return to heaven when we die, that our deaths are far in the future and not something about which we should be concerned? Is this why half of all moneys spent on medical expenses are spent in the last six months of a person's life? Is this why an inordinate amount of money is spent in a vain attempt to prevent the inevitable? What about the young killing the old by withholding medical resources from them, an idea that will be a necessary attribute of any national health care plan in America? What about a fetus in a womb trying to escape from the saline solution filling the womb? How ethical is abortion or euthanasia or a suicide bomber entering a crowded bus? Is the killing of one person morally permissible, but the killing of another reprehensible? Really, is there a difference between a mother aborting a fetus that if born would grasp her finger and a female suicide bomber entering a tent of weary pilgrims? There isn't, is there? Yet Americans will vigorously condemn the suicide bomber while voting to use public funds to assist family planning clinics.

Ours is a culture of sanitized death, the spilled blood blotted with paper money, now not as “green” as it was before.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ... Who will deliver me from this body of death” (Rom 7:18–20, 24). Who indeed? Only the Lord is able to deliver the flesh from sin and death.

Elsewhere Paul wrote, “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23); thus, sin dwelling in the flesh produces death, for this sin blocks life that would continue the physical existence of the person indefinitely so that a 1,000 year lifespan would not seem unusual. But with the flood of Noah’s day, the world was baptized into death so that all living things will die shortly after reproducing another generation that in turn shall reproduce another generation or go extinct. Since the Flood, every species is only one generation away from extinction.

Paul said, “So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom 7:12); then he asked, “Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin” (vv. 13–14).

Although in the above passage Paul suggests that breaking the commandments or law-breaking is sin, the Apostle John is more specific:

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he [Jesus] appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:4–10)

Anyone who practices sinning—that is, who makes a practice of breaking the commandments that are holy, righteous, and good—is a child of the devil ... let’s see, how many Christians practice breaking the commandments, for to break one is to break them all (Jas 2:10) for breaking one makes the person a law-breaker? How many Christians walk in darkness, walk in death, walk as dead men? Certainly every Christian who practices lawlessness does. And what is that Sabbath commandment doing in Scripture if it’s to be

ignored?

If the Sabbath commandment is part of the law—and it is—then would not transgressing the Sabbath make a person a sinner and by extension, a child of the devil? Is not the Christian who worships on the 8th-day a sinner and a child of the devil? The person is if John is to be believed.

Instead of addressing coveting, the tenth commandment, can Paul's words be rewritten to address the fourth commandment: "Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to break the Sabbath if the law had not said, 'Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.' But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of Sabbath-breaking. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me" (Rom 7:7–11).

Sin kills ... make no mistake, the death of the flesh does not come from a "natural requirement" that the human body die, but from indwelling disobedience originating from humanity being consigned to disobedience because of Adam's lawlessness. Yes, the preceding statement will bring smiles to the face of scientists, who should know better; for what causes the body to begin killing itself? Why should cell-division be limited to a finite number? What exists to stop a human being from living a thousand years? Scientists know: somewhere around thirty years of age the body begins to systematically kill itself, a process that could be delayed infinitely if humankind could unravel forces that are not well understood.

But because a human being will not, by the person's received nature, walk uprightly before man and God but will practice disobedience (i.e., will transgress the law of God), the person will physically die, a situation unaffected by grace ... if grace were truly unmerited pardon and not the covering of sin by the mantle of Christ Jesus' righteousness, the fleshly body of a person would not die from internal causes. Oh, the person could still be killed as righteous Abel died when slain by his brother, but unmerited pardon of sin would absolve sins and leave the person in the same physical state as righteous Abel. There would be no need for judgment or the revealing of judgments upon Christ Jesus' return. The person would be righteous and would pass from death to life without coming under judgment (John 5:24). However, this requires hearing the words of Jesus and believing the Father who sent Him; this requires the person to keep the commandments because they are the words of Yah, the Logos, who entered His creation as His only Son. And the person who keeps the commandments doesn't come under the law, for the power of the law is in its sentence of death for its transgressions. This is what Paul was trying to express when he wrote, "Apart from the law, sin lies dead" (Rom 7:8); for sin is unknowable and undiscoverable apart from the law.

If there were no transgression of the law, no lawlessness, there would be nothing that blocks

the life/light of God so the person would pass from death, resulting from the first Adam eating forbidden fruit (Rom 5:12), to life received from the Father without coming under judgment. The person would not be under the law; for to be “under the law” is to be in the shadow of the law where there is darkness/death. The law, now, blocks the light. But the law only comes into play when it has been transgressed, a concept that will cause most Christians to pause.

God is love, and in love there is no transgression of the law even when the law is unstated and undefined linguistically. It is only when there is a failure of love that the law emerges, for it is through the law that the failure of love can be discussed ... when one person shows hospitality to another there is no need to define hospitality, for all parties know what hospitality is, but when there is a failure of hospitality then the need to define hospitality emerges so that the failure of hospitality can be discussed. Likewise, when one person shows love to brother and neighbor there is no need to define love, for all parties know what love is, but when love is not shown as in a neighbor stealing from a brother or a brother slandering another brother then a codification of love must emerge so that the failure can be discussed. And it is in this way that the commandments which promise life prove the death of a person.

Abraham entered into God’s rest by journeying by faith to the land of Canaan. Isaac, born as the son of promise, remained in God’s rest by remaining in the land of Canaan; Isaac didn’t even leave to get himself a wife from among his father’s people (Gen 24:6–8). But Jacob deceived his father and surreptitiously obtained his brother’s birthright and inheritance, then hastily fled from the land of Canaan to the land representing death ... in fleeing to the land of Haran in Assyria, Jacob entered into death and had to wrestle with God before he could return to Canaan (Gen 32:22–32). In wrestling with God, Jacob entered into God’s presence in a way analogous to Moses entering into God’s rest or presence to contest for the lives of Israel (Ex 33:14–16). But endtime disciples enter into God’s presence when they keep the Sabbath (cf. Ps 95:10–11; Heb 3:16–4:11; Num chap 14). And as Israel in the wilderness of Paran could not enter into God’s rest on the following day, Christians cannot enter into God’s presence on the 8th-day.

A person of the nations, a Galilean, a Gentile, a Georgia Baptist, goes hunting on Saturday, goes fishing, does his weekly shopping—in fact, Saturday is for a Georgia Baptist his or her primary shopping day, the day for watching Georgia Tech football, the day devoted to “the self.” This Georgia Baptist doesn’t know what it is to break the Sabbath, for this Christian habitually practices law-breaking without being consciously aware of the law, which is a condemnation of his or her pastor or minister. Thus, sin lies dead in the Christian, not because our Christian is under grace but because this Christian remains spiritually dead. He or she remains a child of the devil, a son of disobedience (Eph 2:2–3) consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32), the faithful bondservant of the Adversary (Rom 6:16).

Jesus said,

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven,

but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?” And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” (Matt 7:21–23)

Workers of lawlessness—teachers of iniquity ... these (anomial — against the law) teachers of Israel prophesied in Christ Jesus’ name; they cast out demons in Jesus’ name; they did mighty works in Jesus’ name. And Jesus will deny knowing these anomian teachers when judgments are revealed. Why? Simply because as anomian teachers, they never knew Him regardless of how many times they shouted praise to Him or publicly professed to Know the Lord.

Those who teach Israel to sin take upon themselves responsibility for what they teach: the death penalty a Christian earns for sinning—for walking away from grace, the mantle of Jesus’ righteousness—condemns the anomian teacher who told this Christian that he or she was no longer under the law for the law had been abolished, when Jesus, Himself, said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt 5:17).

Again, Jesus of Nazareth canceled “the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands” (Col 2:14) so that infant sons of God would not be born under condemnation ... Paul writes, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life has set you [me] free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:1–2). Disciples are born of spirit as sons of God with the entirety of the record of debt accrued by their old natures or old selves abolished—as the reality of the goat sacrificed on the altar on Yom Kipporim, Jesus paid the death penalty in this earthly realm for every Israelite, but a death in this earthly realm does not pay the death penalty for sin committed in the heavenly realm, or in the inter-dimensional portion of the heavenly realm. Therefore, Jesus as the reality of the Azazel goat, the second goat that serves as Israel’s sin offering on Yom Kipporim, bears the sins of Israel in the heavenly realm but does not pay the death penalty for these sins—and yes, it is possible to sin in the heavenly realm, the reason Lucifer was cast from the Most High’s presence. The disciple who lusts after another person but never acts upon this lust in any way is guilty of adultery (Matt 5:27–28) and as such has sinned in the heavenly realm and is thus subject to the death penalty, the second death. However, the glorified Jesus as Israel’s high priest covers this sin with His righteousness (i.e., His obedience) so the death penalty isn’t immediately enforced as animal sacrifices covered but did not pay the death penalty natural Israel earned between Moses and Jesus; for Jesus is the reality of all of Israel’s animal sacrifices.

Silver Christendom, the Christianity of the cross, deceives endtime sons of God who would strive to keep the commandments and walk uprightly before God if not for the many anomian teachers who harangue these infant sons of God until they strap upon themselves the suicide belt of disobedience and condemn themselves to the lake of fire. What’s to be done about the John Hagees and Joel Osteens of this world? Should genuine disciples

ignore them and allow them to continue sending infant sons of God into the lake of fire, especially so once the Tribulation begins, or should they be confronted, realizing in advance that they, like Al-Qaeda, will send forth spiritual suicide bombers to kill and maim sons of God?

Without faith, no one can please God ... infant sons of Gods have to believe the Father by faith, not through the force of powerful oratory or public miracles or fear-mongering. Spectacular miracles will again occur, but not until the Tribulation begins and disciples are filled with, or empowered by the Holy Spirit—and then these miracles will be witnesses to the third part of humankind that will not be born of spirit until Satan is cast from heaven on day 1260 and the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh that same doubled day.

A different dynamic exists today than in the 1st-Century CE when Gentile converts had to go into a synagogue each Sabbath to hear Moses read (Acts 15:21) to learn the precepts of God. Nearly every home in America and in much of the rest of the world has a Bible somewhere in it, with the book seldom read but an apparently necessary household fixture. So a convert to Christianity, or a Christian youth reared in a biblically lawless home has available to the person the codified precepts of God. Therefore, faith enters here: will this person believe man or God? When Jesus says,

I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? (John 5:42–47)

Will the convert believe Jesus or believe a man, any man from the Pope down through the corner preacher who mimics financially successful televangelists?

My neighbor will accept Joel Osteen as a man of God whereas he will not accept what Jesus said about believing Moses. He knows so little about Moses that he really knows nothing of him, but he doesn't want anything to do with Moses or the Old Testament ... my neighbor is not born of spirit. Although he considers himself a Christian, to him being a Christian is like being an American: to him both come with birth in the United States—and what's wrong with America is that not enough Americans are any longer "Christians."

The Christianity that comes with human birth is that of the silver kings of Persia. It is a dogma of this world, foisted upon infant sons of God by lawless teachers, and perpetuated by the traditions of men. And it is from this silver Christendom that endtime disciples will come to God, but not before entering into God's rest on the Sabbath.

The John Hagees and Joel Osteens of this world serve Satan although they will vigorously deny doing so. "Their end will correspond to their deeds" (2 Cor 11:15). They are, indeed,

anomian teachers of Israel who will be denied by Christ Jesus when judgments are revealed—unless they repent before the Tribulation begins ...

Are they able to repent or has God sent a delusion over them so that they cannot believe what is true? The answer to this question belongs to them. My prayer is that they can be “turned” and become agents for God rather than continue as most effective agents for the Adversary.

But of more pressing concern are former pastors of the Worldwide Church of God who, today, cling to the errors and fear-mongering of Herbert W. Armstrong ... can they renew their faith and by faith accept what wasn't known to anyone while Armstrong lived? It would truly be a shame if they continue to lay by the wayside where they have presently fallen when victory is in sight.

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