

RUMINATIONS OF A FORMER HEATHEN

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Mulling it over

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Why would a person want to know God? Or, why would anyone want to know anything about God? Even those who deny the existence of God (the God of the Bible) are consumed with the constant effort of denial. Why deny so hard something that does not exist? Nothing will happen, nothing will happen, nothing will happen. Close my ears, shut my eyes, pull away the shoulder. Nevertheless, there is a point in life when we see death coming and coming with nothing to stop it. It becomes something to ponder. What will happen after death? Or, will anything happen after death? From this side nobody can tell. And the fence to keep death out does not exist. So, there is a natural inclination to wonder, to want to know, to think about what's in the future beyond our life on this Earth. What the future holds after death is very simple; something will happen, or nothing will happen. That's what's in the future. People can believe what they want, that nothing will happen, when you're dead you're dead, that God is an illusion, a crutch for the weak-minded, mind control by the Church, that the fear of hell is a tool used by the Church to keep people under their command, that the hope of Heaven is vain, pie in the sky by and by, etc. The problem with that is it doesn't change the fact that death keeps fast approaching. No matter what you believe you still have to die. What is ahead is: something or nothing. Everybody dies and beyond that, nobody knows. Those who deny the existence of God, the existence of hell and the hope of heaven, don't know either. And, if something happens, of course, there is the added uncertainty of whether it can be good or bad. Nothingness, or, something good or bad. That is the future.

To be sure, it is a dismal situation. You can ignore it only for so long. The word death means separation, and as long as we are against God we are separated from him, we are dead to him. However, though the spirit of man may be dead to God it is alive within man. And the spirit of man knows there is something wrong, there is something missing but don't know just what it is. We know there is another dimension, an invisible realm of spirits; we want to connect with that

dimension, this place we are separated from, dead to. Sometimes that takes us into attending certain workshops, with special gurus, self-proclaimed masters, places where we can hear something related to the invisible world, our psyche, the places we don't know much about in ourselves or don't know how to access. Long (expensive) weekends, long retreats, filled with rituals and exploration. We look for something that will guide us on the way ahead. We want to know what we can do to live on.

He came softly to me one day, when I had stopped running for just a moment and was leaning on a tree, panting. He said to me, in a sort of casual way, do you know you are a dead man? And I said yeah, yeah, of course I know, I've known that since I was a little kid. What else is new? He paused for a moment, this guy is insolent all right, he might have thought. Umm, do you know what is going to happen to you after you die? No, I don't know, maybe I'll reincarnate, I'll figure it out when I get there. Well, yeah, sure, he said, you can try that, but what if you don't reincarnate? Or you reincarnate in a really bad place? How is your karma doing? How pure are you at this point to deserve to go up and not down? By the time you die it might be too late, you may not have any control over what happens to you next. Look around, everybody dies. And then what? Do you know? I don't think you know. You are too young. I am from everlasting to everlasting. How long is that for you? I'm telling you this, please consider: the death of Jesus Christ, my son, is the payment for all your sins, past, present and future. And if you partake of that payment, that is, if you claim that gift for yourself, you can come and live with me for ever and avoid going to hell after you die. If you appropriate the payment you can come with me. If you don't take the payment, you will go to hell. We'll see how you like it, thrown into outer darkness, where you will burn and writhe in some kind of horrible heat that burns but does not consume. Wouldn't it be interesting, he said to me, if you could avoid going to hell after you die? And I thought, yeah, yeah, sure, sure, it would be interesting, as I was catching my breath. I didn't think much of it at first, but as I focused a bit more on that, I thought yes, that would be interesting, wouldn't it? You know, as a matter of fact and speaking for myself, it sounds pretty interesting, I say maybe terrific maybe unique maybe oxygen giving maybe the best thing I ever heard of.

When I momentarily stopped running, I had no idea I had been running. It

was only when I read Leviticus 26, a chapter that contains blessings and curses, that I realized I had been running. In the group of curses God says a few times (with slight variations), "... and ye shall flee when none pursueth you." I had been running without knowing I had been running. Nobody was pursuing me, yet I was fleeing. I recognized God immediately. No one, no man, could have known me that intimately, and no one but God himself would have written that. That he used the hand of a human, Moses, to write it makes no difference. It is his writing. Certainly, no man would have written that in that way. It doesn't make sense, why would anybody flee when none pursueth? I can understand a person fleeing if someone is coming at them with a sword or a big stick or something like that. But why would anybody flee when *no one* is pursuing? It doesn't make sense, unless it is God himself speaking. Only someone all powerful, all wise, all knowledgeable, all present, even hid to our eyes invisible being could have that effect on us. The tendency of man is to run away, to hide, as Adam did in the garden. Why did Adam hide? Because he was afraid because he was naked. What was his nakedness? He had been physically naked all the time before he ate of that tree and it never bothered him, it never caused him to hide. The nakedness was that he had done something he should not have done, and that made him naked, defenseless, in front of the terrible pronouncement of God. God had said, the day you do this thing that I am telling you not to do, you will surely die. The word death means separation. How can you access God if you are separated from him? When Adam transgressed he became separated from God. God told Adam that he could eat of any tree in the garden except for one particular one. The fact that it was the tree of knowledge of good and evil doesn't say what kind of tree it really was. It could have been a plum tree, a peach tree, it doesn't matter, the consequence is what matters. Satan was set on destroying the whole creation of God and by tripping up these people he would not only destroy humans but the earth and the whole universe itself. That tiny transgression of Adam had universal repercussions, the whole creation became polluted.

Adam's hiding reflex was an admission of guilt, an awareness of deserving punishment. That is how God can enforce what he says: "Ye shall flee when none pursueth," guilt is what makes man run. The man flees from everywhere in an effort to escape God, because man has a keen awareness of deserving punishment. But, there is nowhere to run, God cannot be avoided because he is everywhere, he

does not have to pursue us for us to feel his presence. The wrath of God makes us want to hide and rightly so, but the goodness and mercy of God manifested in Jesus the Christ can bring us back to him.

When God wrote the Law in tablets of stone, he gave them through Moses to Israel, his chosen people. The choosing of Israel was, is, to make of the Israelis a showcase to the world of what it is like to be under a covenant with God. God said to Israel in Exodus 34, 10: “And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.” Personally, I believe that the whole world is under this covenant, whether they know it or not. The heathen with their false religions are under this covenant and they are violating it with their non-existent gods. I did not know I was under this covenant when I was a heathen, but I was. The Israelites were to be the ones who would display to the whole world the blessing and the curses of God. If you are chosen of God and you continue to rebel against him, he may have to do terrible things to you. God has set before us blessings and curses. Whosoever is not convinced by the blessings should pay close attention to the curses, just in case they turn out to be true. The ultimate curse is hell itself, a place of torment, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.

The transgression of Adam polluted everything God had created. God had said the day you eat of it thou shall surely die. How did Adam die? He certainly did not reach the end of his life at that point. What was the death of Adam? The word death means separation, when Adam did what he had been warned not to do, he became separated from, dead to, God. Heathendom does not know this death. Unbelievers think of death only as the end of life, with hopefully something good beyond. They don't know about spiritual death. They feel it but cannot identify it, nor its. When someone becomes a believer (and only the highly repetitious reading of the Bible can make a person a believer) the hunger for God becomes intense. Much of that hunger represents separation. When we first become saved we become aware of our separation. We are safe on the shore, but where is he who loves me? Where is he who rescued me? I want to know him, I want to meet him, I am going to find him.