

# The Apostle Paul's Epistles verses the Church Cultures' Worldviews

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There is a resounding question posed in Job 14:14, the significance of which is impossible to be overstated. Diverse terms and responses to this question express multifarious meanings of what existence engenders and what defines destiny. Moreover, the responses offered express humanly perceived meanings of existence, in terms of the underlying framework of mankind's dreams, accomplishments and heartfelt passions, which form the basis for all the goals of temporary life on the Earth in the Time Capsule. Note that the question in itself is deceptively simple, i.e., if a man should die, will he live again? The answer is not comprehensible utilizing basic creation and time centered words, no, not even for a moment. Such must be considered instead beyond the actions and attitudes of human life and how it might pose a response to the question in terms other than a trite phrase or a theological reflection. No, the answer to this question is the answer to destiny, which is not a human goal that one can in and of oneself travel to in this life, as such implies mankind's capacity and determination of travel to get there. How one perceives ones destiny influences how one answers this question and is reflected in how one lives ones life. Unfortunately, most of today's Church is no more informed than the world in understanding what the most important Scriptures' answers to this question entail, which are conveyed by the writings of the Apostle Paul's Epistles.

Hence, in setting this question aside for a moment and considering the actions and attitudes of one particular human life, reflections on that life expresses a most compelling response to this inquiry. The Scripture's initial mention of Saul of Tarsus (known better by his Hellenized name, Paul) presents an imposing figure as encountered in the early writings of the Acts of the Apostles. There he was envisioned standing under a blazing Palestinian sky outside of the wind-swept gates of Jerusalem, commending Stephen's executioners while the perpetrator's garments laid disheveled at his feet and forgotten until their brutal work was completed. Later, Saul is depicted breathing out murderous threats, charging into the homes of God's people and mercilessly dragging men and women alike off to prison and despair. This un-questionably certifies Saul as a most fervent enemy of the Kingdom Church, as the zealous guardian of his ancestral traditions, who was bent on the destruction of Israel's Messiah and His followers. This is the same Saul that revered in the acclaim of the Hebrew culture and the Mosaic Law. He was a product of its finest pharisaic training, a member of the spiritual elite, a zealot for the Torah and albeit a legal citizen of the most powerful empire (Rome) on earth. Today, this would be tantamount, from the modern vantage-point, in Saul's times in the eyes of Hebrew culture of his extremely significant status. Thus, he had the respect of his peers, the acclaim of his people, and the support of his religion ...in other words, the upward mobility of the proverbial "pat on the back."

Note how Paul, at a later stage in his life, mentions these cultural acclamations in his writings to the church at Philippi (Philippians 3:5-6). In verse 7 he states, "but whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ." In other words, all the things that were considered valuable in this elitists' culture, he now considered to be utterly worthless. Something (someone) had caused Paul to completely reorient his system of values. This man who, at an earlier point in his life, zealously and mercilessly persecuted the Kingdom church, now considered it a privilege to share in the sufferings of the Lord Jesus .....even to the point of following the example of His death (verse 10). So what happened? There is something essential here that needs to be addressed, a foundational point worth discussing, because whatever happened to Paul, whatever caused him to reject the prevailing value

system of his culture and live for a life of radical obedience to Christ, is something that is almost entirely foreign in today's church cultures. What happened to Paul? He met a man, no, not incarnate in flesh but in Spirit! This MAN changed everything for Paul, as HE manifestly appeared to him on a dusty road outside the city of Damascus and spoke to him from within a blinding light ..... "SAUL, WHY DO YOU PERSECUTE ME?" Hence, it was the power of this Man's Words that drove Paul down to the ground (Acts 9:4-5), to bow for the very first time before the One who had been foreordained as his Lord and Savior, in that Paul had been eternally called by God's Divine Decree (Galatians 1:15-16).

It should not be construed that Paul's intelligent was subverted by an emotional episode, i.e., a "feel good" religious experience, which many view as the most convenient way of relating to God. On the road to Damascus, Paul experienced reality that contradicted the belief system of the world in which he lived, the culture in which he had conformed to and the values, which he had adopted. Saul, the irresistible force, the impassioned persecutor of the church; met the immovable presence of Jesus Christ and in that encounter, it was not Christ who yielded but Paul and all his strengths and passions that were manifestly forever turned in a new direction .....toward his preordained destiny. His very words, "Who are you, Lord?" reveal the beginning of his fundamental change in attitude. Paul's values were not reoriented out of either coercion or convenience but because God from eternity had purposed that they would manifestly align with reality. Hence, reality stood before him in the person of the resurrected Christ, which shaped the perspective of his revelation in the Truth that engendered an eternal culture. In this sense, reality is absolutely antithetical to the worldview enjoined by the religious and social communities of Today's Church Cultures, which values are invalid. The culture values, which were previously perceived by Paul as coherent; made perfect sense and corresponded with the actions and attitudes of his earlier life in perfect harmony but they weren't based on truth!

The reality that Paul encountered en route to Damascus changed the course of his life because it entailed his eternal destiny, embodied in the testimony of someone who had died and now lived again. The very essence and presence of Christ answered Job 14:14 in abstract terms, exclusively validating not a life of acclaim and convenience but a life of sacrifice and sharing in both His sufferings and resurrection-life (Philippians 3:10). In reflecting on sharing such a life, Paul concludes, ".....and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:11). In other words, to share this same identification of suffering preordained for him (Paul) on the Damascus road implies that designated ones will also share the same destiny. In effect, ones destiny is not the goal, which one wills to travel but it implies the way in which one is caused to travel. Hence, Paul rejoiced in accepting this destiny on the terms that were manifestly assigned for him to follow in action and attitude, which identified with the pattern of sacrifice and suffering, experience by Jesus Himself.

This is in stark contrast to consideration of a different answer to Job 14:14 in view of what, in so many words, exemplify in the values and lifestyles of many of God's people today. In the current contemporary Church Cultures, lifestyles are postured as if there is no life beyond today's amenities. The prioritized emphasis of this trend is: immediate gratification, self-centeredness, meaningless euphoric encounters, reckless consumerism and unbridled self-indulgence, which is in a very tangible way, their answer to Job 14:14. Paul himself stated it succinctly, "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (I Corinthians 15:32). The questions that come to mind are: 1). why is it that the current Church Cultures "go for the gusto," i.e., why are so many of God's people allured to the things, which seem to typify a fantastic version of the so-called "good life right now," on a prioritized basis? and 2). how are so many of God's people so enticed by images of non-eternal things? These answers lie in their understanding or lack of it, in assessing their culture as validating "the great, good .....even ideal will and work of God," as consistent with their naturalistic answer to Job 14:14. In light of Paul's revelation of Church Truth, it is very difficult for the enlightened to understand why so many of God's people can just sit in their congregations staring at things that are perishing and think, "that looks really good."

It seems clear why the world's focus is so much on physical life, which is short lived and geared to make them "happy" while they can. But it's more difficult to understand why God's people fall into this syndrome, except that it is a lack of them knowing that revelation of Paul's writings, which espouses enlightenment of the knowledge of eternal things, as that knowledge is worth everything in the spiritual sphere of things actualized in God's mind (Divine Decree). Internalized comprehension of the eternal perspective, in reality engenders the unaltered perspective of actions and attitudes, in strict conformity to Christ, in contradiction to today's prevailing Church Cultures. With Paul's revealed perspective, emerged an accompanying manifested change in his behavior. He not only counted all things to be a loss but according to human conceptually in physicality; he actually suffered the loss of all things (Philippians 3:8). But Church Cultures of today are not for the most part driven to this same conviction, as Paul. Today's prevailing portrayal of discipleship does not include a participation in Christ's sufferings. Why not? Because it is only Paul's messages that exclusively and completely grip the coherent eternal perspective, in accommodated portions of scripturally dominant views of the unseen or non material culture. Consequently, eternal values do not stand in contradiction to eternal cultures in any way that really divert attention away from what really matters. However, the so-called practical exigencies of life exert Earthly influences on some of God's people and they are cohered into doing everything the same way as everyone else in the world.

The child of God's life should not be modeled after the rhetoric of the so-called religious obedience and sacrifice. Contrariwise, the particularly life, which should be espoused, is the powerful life (Philippians 3:10), that is this pattern of living that brings one into essential agreement with the place of view that grips, reorients and impassions spiritual eternal things. A better understanding of the dilemma of Today's Church Cultures and the tasks that lie before them highlights the vacuum in their lives of becoming powerful and significant for Christ. This critical term "Church Cultures" must be examined, as to its difficulties in depicting bold and consistent testimonies mirroring life according to the Grace Covenant.

### **The Eternal-view: The Blueprint of Reality**

The Earthly viewpoint may serve as the prevailing perspective of the world but it is not the blueprint of reality; even though such might seem to depict a coherent system of conceptions used to interpret human experiences of life in the sphere of time. Many of God's people view of the world comprise their picture of the way things are, which exudes their concept of nature, self and society, in lieu of things in sheer actuality. In this sense, their most comprehensive ideas of order merely adjusts the worldview to their religiously perceived Church Culture's "ethos" or values systems but the relationship between them is so integral that one can correctly interchange them in terms of referencing both. Hence the expression of relationship between worldview and religious values merely denotes the Church Cultures' worldview as an adjustment of centralizing their systematizations or conceptions of reality to align to their culture assent (essentially unconsciously) from which stems their value system.

Note that in speaking of the "Church Cultures' worldview," it is more properly the religious individuals within society that possess given perspectives, thus forming these cultures themselves, which are simply anthropomorphize teaching devices. And yet it is also correct to describe their worldview as shared conceptions, since none of them operate entirely outside the bounds of humanly perceived cultures. Thus, the "Church Cultures' worldview is amalgamated into individual human perspectives of reality, as societal ideology within which the majority have been indoctrinated, which forms the basis and tendencies for them to exert so-called "meaningful interactions and shared experiences" with others. In this sense, there are many "worldviews" in the Church Culture .....as many as there are doctrinal persuasions. Hence, there are equally dominant religious ideologies forever pervading the traditional cultures or the "Church Cultures" .....specifically adopted as automatically achieved fluency in humanities yet they are not realistic perspectives.

In Paul epistle to the Church at Thessalonica, II Thessalonians 2:15 states, "so then brethren, stand fast and hold the deliverances that you were taught, whether through word, whether through our epistle." The conveyance of this verse is that God's people are exhorted to **stee-keh-teh** rendered

“stand fast” or stand firm and **kraht·ee·teh** rendered “hold” or lay hold of the **pahr·ahth·os·ees** rendered “traditions or deliverances” that were **eh·theeth·ahkh·thee·teh** rendered “taught” either through **log·oo** rendered “word” or through **ehp·ees·tol·ees** rendered “our epistle” or “our letter.” Here reference is made to traditions or more accurately, truths that are delivered and transmitted orally or in writing (II Thessalonians 3:6; I Corinthians 11:2). Note, the Greek verb from which the noun **pahr·ahth·os·ees** comes is conveyed in I Corinthians 11:23 and 15:3. The three passages in which the word “tradition” is used argues against accumulations of uninspired traditions and everything virtually overriding God's Word while concomitantly espousing the coordinate authority of it.

At the time of Paul's writings in these passages, he was stigmatizing mankind's uninspired traditions. In this case, oral inspirations were necessary until the written Word could be completely wrought in support of Paul's new revelation of the Mystery, which accorded the all-sufficiency of the Grace Covenant Scriptures for salvation, as well as daily instructions. Therefore, by inspired traditions, God's people must be constrained to cast off all traditions not contained in or not provable by these Scriptures. These are valuable witnesses, which give force to the genuineness of Scriptural Traditions. No sense of humanly inspired testimony can establish scriptural doctrine or authenticate these facts. Inspired traditions, in Paul's sense, are not supplementary oral tradition that are competing with the written Word but are identical, as the latter (in written form) continues to this day. Hence, the Grace Covenant Scriptures are the complete and sufficient rule in all that appertains to making “the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 3:16-17). Church Cultures are instituted by forsaking God-inspired traditions for human traditions, which have become the forerunner and parent of erroneous interpretations of the Scriptures, as distinguished in a “letter AS from us” (II Thessalonians 2:2), namely that which purports to be but is not.

The majority of Church Cultures' worldview focuses on three aspects correlating existence and their world of things and ideas. Each of these aspects can be formulated as a simple question or as a technical term representing one of the three main branches of philosophy in physicality. The first is beliefs (metaphysics), which poses the question, “What is real?” or “What exists?” The second is ideas (epistemology), which inquires, “What is true?” or “What can be known?” The third aspect is values (ethics), which inquires, “What is good?” translating to the carnal mind, “What is desirable?” If a comprehensive answer to each of these inquires was offered from the perspective of the Church Cultures, the sum of their responses would be the worldview. Each of these questions can be broken down into innumerable more narrow and specific questions, which will prove helpful in evaluating the different worldviews and ideologies encountered in comparing such to the Scriptures. They may also be applied to the cultural influences of artifacts that yield various worldview influences, i.e., movies or television programs. In such cases, answers to these inquiries are derived from the vantage-point of human characterizations or from the perspective of humanly coherent patterns; emerging as answers provided with so-called human insight, which are no more authentic than human guessing.

The Scriptural rectification of defining three aspects of existence in terms of the world's view, as they influence today's Church's Cultures' formulation of things and ideas engenders the following:

### **Beliefs regarding what and how Things are Actualized.**

Here, the inquiry should focus on what is scripturally the essence of existence rather than what is the physicality or nature of the world? In other words, is the originality of things materially and/or spiritually created in God's Divine Decree in Eternity or are they accidentally, chaotically, arbitrarily or even orderly the results of ontologism in the Time Capsule? In this sense, the greater question as to whether God is the source and reason behind all things or just some things is considered. If God is not completely the source and reason, where is such power and /or impetus found? How do things happen in the world? Do things happen purposefully, by accident, by the decisions of independent agents (either human or spirit)? Here the bottom line inquiry is do humans have the free will to control the destiny of things in their lives or are they at the mercy of something or SOMEONE else?

The anthropomorphic approach to such inquiries exudes unscriptural tendencies of hypothecating that many things and all human beings are autonomous entities. Often, the hypothesis is put forth that the purpose for creatures having souls is their free or independent thinking and functioning lest they will be considered merely machines. Hence, this hypothesis continues in defining what it construes as the underlined difference between humans and lower tiered animals. The mainline cogitation in this vein is that creatures must be either "in control" of their status or position in existence or they are merely "victims" of God's arbitrariness, as they view His purposes. Another element that surfaces in these type discussions is the invoking of human pride with the questions: are humans merely robots and doesn't the absence of human determination usurp mankind's self-esteem? These inquiries cascade to the ultimate consideration of what is death (the end of physical life) all about and what in essence constitutes life?

The essence of life and existence reside in God's Eternal purpose, plan and will, as enacted in His Divine Decree in Eternity. It is exclusively in this view that all things exist in Him, as the enactment of and by His power and determination of every event and occurrence that transpire. It is absolutely in this sense that all things are by (in) Him, through Him and for Him (HIS purposes) (Colossians 1:16-17).

### **Spiritual Ideas consist of what is Scriptural Truth.**

Here, the inquiry should focus on what is scripturally the nature of truth verses unscriptural truth-claims? Much of what is averred in today's Church Cultures has no foundational value or even scripturally exegetical role, historically speaking. Hence, much of what is macerated (softened and worn away, especially as a result of being steeped) as truth is not even spiritually purposeful, though it may be deemed to be mysterious. Unfortunately, the majority of what is focused on constitutes mere trivialized facts of the Scriptures. In the scripturally epistemic sense, what really counts for the most part toward conveying proper directives and instructions to the Grace Church is not understood by the rank and file of Christendom, thus there aren't many of God's people that comprehend what the role of spiritual logic and reasoning is.

The underlying question is .....what spiritual value is there in unscriptural perceptions? In other words, what has actually been accomplished in ministries if God's people have not internalized and actually appreciate the Eternal Things, and are for the most part ignorant and deceived regarding the essence of what realistically comprises life? Humanly inspired ideas and goals exert spiraling toward uncertainty, which amass surrealism rather than what can be relied upon. Such can not and does not provide answers and solutions to the complexities of existence nor can it position its continuity whatsoever. Absent of the revelations of the Scriptures, life is simply proverbially "drifting without a sail," i.e., it is meaningless in purpose and intent. The meaning of this life as well as the life to come (in manifestation), can only be discerned from knowledge conveyed by its Creator (God); as such comprehension is not available through any other source.

The essence of life resides solely in God's intent for the creation of everything incorporated in it. It is only in this view that life can be traced to its reliably documented origination and inevitable intrusion into the scheme of God's design. In following this Divine Cogitation, the assurance of all things is solely dependent upon and exclusively determinant in the Eternal Decree of God. Every other hypothesis and conjecture fall short of explicating the sequences of events and occurrences that defy consistency of compliance with any logical order and reasoning in the universe; according to: what history has documented, currents transparencies are recording and future inferences are projecting. In other words, the intent, purpose, reason and cause of everyone and everything exclusively exude the pleasure of God in producing such.

### **Scriptural Values evince what is Spiritually Good**

In considering the question of what is actually good or moral; an assessment is made, as to what constitute genuine acts of morality and what is the motivational impetus of their functionalities? In

effect, moral absolutes are distinguished from moral options, which are acts deemed moral because they accomplish what is construed as moral ends, because they are what seem to be good or to whose end such produce rewards. These premises obviously lead to other questions: 1). what actually constitutes immoral acts? 2). are such gauged solely by whether they cause others to feel bad? 3). are such that which society construes to be condemnable or punishable deeds? and 4). is the conception of good associated with reward? Also, how or in what way is "right" and "wrong" distinguished or learned? In other words, what is considered good or valuable? Why is it good? In the pursuance of such, is it supremely what should be lived for and/or what time should spent on? These Morales cascade to the inquiries of: 1). what is the value of human life and how does such compare to the value of the lower tiered animal or plant life? and 2). what determines the value of human life in assessment to what meaning is there in life?

In human religions, ethics and philosophy, goodness and evil or simply stated, good and evil refers to the evaluation of human desires and behaviors across the dual spectrum, wherein in one direction are those aspects, which are deemed morally positive (i.e., wisely reverent of life and community) verses what are deemed morally negative (i.e., in vain reverence toward death and destruction). Hence, many religious and philosophical views tend to aver that "good and evil" are abstracted concepts and not absolutes, as there is no clear consensus among them whether or not goodness is intrinsic to human nature or whether or not it is based on the "natural" love, bonding and affection that comprise personal development. In this sense, differing views exist as to why evil might arise or that goodness stems from learned behavior (communal knowledge of truth) but even most religious and philosophical traditions agree that evil behavior itself is an aberration that results from imperfect human conditions wherein evil itself is ultimately based in mankind's inherent ignorance of truth.

Human Depravity is the inherent nature of mankind, thus it is essentially the theories of human moral goodness that inquire into what sorts of things are good and what the word "good" really means in the abstract. As a philosophical abstraction, goodness represents a hope that natural love can be continuous, expansive and all-inclusive. Hence, in a strictly religious context, it is by this hope that a concept of God is derived, as an infinite projection of love, manifested as "goodness in the lives of people." The belief in such hope is often translated as "faith" and wisdom itself is largely defined within religious doctrines as knowledge and understanding of innate goodness. The concepts of innocence, spiritual purity and salvation are likewise related to a concept of being in or returning to a state of goodness, according to various teachings of "enlightenment", as an approach to a state of holiness or humanly perceived godliness. However, the chief ingredient of what is missing in all of these concepts is depraved mankind's inability to discern or abide in the truth that engenders goodness. It is in this exclusive sense that scriptural values evince what is spiritually good.

### **Church Cultures: the Interplay between the World's view and Religious Societies**

There is an influential connection between how the Church Cultures view the world and how the average children of God live. In this sense, the majority of God's people encounter life in the sense of the varied aspects of experiences in their earthly beliefs, ideas and values in lieu of what they have gleaned from the Scriptures. Moreover, the sense of what they make of the world is communicated into behavioral responses consistent with their beliefs. For example, consider the world's view and belief that "supernatural" entities exist and that such have the ability to move freely about the Earth and affect the physical and even spiritual realm in either some malevolent or encomium manner. In stark contrast, the Scriptures emphatically negate every concept of superiority of natural or physical entities in whatsoever form such may manifest. Further, the jargon "supernatural" is both unscriptural and illegitimate in the aspects of its usage in some apparition modes whether momentarily menacingly or friendly .....in that all things are simply either natural or spiritual (II Corinthians 4:18).

Unfortunately, for the most part, the world's view has provided the framework for interpreting the life experiences of God's people. What is important to note is that it is in this manner that most of their daily behavioral responses resonate. Hence, it is completely predictable in light of the worldview and it is to this degree that they share these common ideologies and behavioral responses. Most humans

living in communities will similarly follow predictable patterns and as such these patterns become transmitted over time and through shared experiences become identified as "normal customs." Ultimately, the demands of living in communities create patterns of behavior, which emerge as broader, more coherent structures or institutions such as family and marriage, education for the youth and civil government. Such institutional structures necessarily cohere, as they in general seek perpetuity in a changing and hostile world. In plainer terms, the acceptable scheme is that societal institutions coherently support one another and validate the worldview, which gave rise to them so that "society doesn't crumble and self-destruct."

Now there is absolutely nothing wrong with this in the general sense except when such consequently transmogrifies into a progression from society's ideology (i.e., how they see things) in the broader social patterns (i.e., how they live), to how God's people ultimately view and live their lives. This progression from worldview to societal structures, indeed establish societal cultures and also Church Cultures but such should not limitedly define the ultimate hopes and aspirations of what are totally dependent on the Eternal-view. It is standard practice in contemporary social and anthropological theory to emphasize this dual nature of cultures in partnership, i.e., world and Church. Because they are convergent, there is very little, if any distinguishes between these cultural systems; comprising the same prioritized focus of knowledge, beliefs, theories and conceptual schemes i.e., originally called the worldview and the socio/cultural levels, which are focused on a causal relation between these groups and individuals in a purely social context.

Similarly, in terms of doctrines, there is very little, if any distinguishes between these cultures as a bearer of meaning, which provides "orientation, wards off chaos and directs behavior toward certain lines of action" and the social world comprised of social structures and patterns, which the worldview's dominant ideologies reflect. More importantly than the duality of Orthodox Church and worldviews and social structures, however, are the cultures viewed as the cyclic process by which worldview gives rise to society and even more critically, by which society validates and shapes worldviews, as such gives rise in conflictual meanings and directives to the Scriptures. The Word of God indeed recognizes the suitability of the process, as long as its directives define the role of God's people in the formulation of certain sectors, as an integrated pattern of acquired knowledge, particularly ideas, beliefs and values (ideologies) mediated through the Scriptures. They alone should actually serve as the standard used to interpret experiences and generate patterns of behavior, technological, economic, social, political, religious and artistic Morales, and serve as a guard against what is construed by the worldview as absolutely necessary for adaptation to the world's relentlessly changing circumstances.

It is the scriptural definitions, which must formulate, validate, shape and sustain the doctrines that encompass movement away from the dominant influence of humanly inspired worldviews and ideologies. Unfortunately, the latter have been mostly upon relied to dictate the interpretation of experiences and develop patterns of behavior, which ultimately become expressed as concrete societal structures. A schematic of this progression is important to emphasize that the Scriptures' structures of society are not affected by worldviews of society, as they don't exist in some objectively motivational sense and they are free from cultural ideology. Rather, undeterred by popular preferences, they mirror in most instances, the antithesis of the dominant worldview, as surely as the worldview reflects society's whims. A particularly interesting example of this is developed in juxtaposing the Ethical directives of the Grace Covenant with the religious-based/worldview capitulations that gave rise to the system that has dominated the world's morale for centuries. It vividly compares the role of worldview to that of non spiritual ideas plus material and ideological interests that directly govern men's conduct. Yet, very frequently, these "world images" have been created strictly by human ideas and have determined the tracks along which societal actions have been pushed by the dynamics of human interests rather than the disciplines of God's purposes.

The Church Cultures' worldview has unequivocally invoked its sense of reality in the stream of material interest, which has unfortunately shaped how God's people pursue their interests. The Eternal Doctrines exude divine callings and predestination, which negates both the suggestion and



idea of one determinately pursuing the vocation to which one is "called," as well as ones selective sense of duty in the details of ones life. It is a fact that whatever one construes as charting ones approach to salvation inevitably influences ones approach to life in general as well. As such approaches are rightly or wrongly applied, the corresponding worldviews beget variedly or complex societal structures in ones mindset.

For example, an array of religious worldviews mostly set the tracks along which their constituencies continue to pursue their lives. This foists a reverse process, which is even more critical to influencing the Church Cultures' processes by which their worldviews give rise to the resulting societal structures and also the processes whereby secular society validates and shapes the Church Cultures' worldview. This is not a chicken-or-the-egg paradox nor is it a question of "What came first, the worldview or the society?" but rather how these steadily revolving cultures resonate in the face of relentlessly changing circumstances. The Church Cultures operate in a cyclic fashion, supporting the entropies (the process of degradation, running downhill or trend to disorder) of their own structures while resisting regimentation to the Scriptures. These resulting systems function by strongly forcing its values and institutions on its members less it falls apart, as this is the manner by which Church Cultures endeavor to survive.

These mal-functionalities both reflect and perpetuate the prevailing ideologies of carnality in the contemporary Church Cultures. It can be argued that the most effective instrumental utilization of the mass media (as a cultural structure) foist such ideologies as socially accepted but scripturally miscalculated evaluations of life, which are unfortunately endemic (belonging or native to their particular characteristic or prevalent environment of self-indulgence) to traditionalism's consciousness. This is truly sad, in that they exhaustively classified their rhetoric as effective speech and writings when in effect such can only be scripturally classified as an "oxymoron," which evinces in the true spiritual sense, literally "pointed foolishness." Actually, the composition of these ideologies constitutes the deliberate juxtaposing of contradictory messages, misconstrued as "sharp" or "keen," which merely proliferate their self-descriptive aggrandizements guised as meaningful but such when condensed are only effectively paradoxical depictions, i.e., "precious banes," "lonely crowds," and "sweet sorrows."

However, because of gross ignorance in many instances, their "oxymoron" can also refer to some unintentional contradictions, mirroring "a plastic glass" but such nevertheless can be shown to portray and perpetuate actions without an accompanying sense of what the Scriptures teach. These actions accompany the motivations of personal gain and emotional satisfaction (e.g., when directives and information are portrayed according to what makes their recipients feel good). Hence, the influence of the Mass media affects sensibilities and perpetuates this rhetoric on an even broader scale. Another example of this can be seen in the religious devotional work ethic. For too many of God's people, the structure of Church Cultures' "economics" provides a context wherein ones priority is focused in the ideology of consumerism and acquisition of the "good life" in the present world. Thus, what is valuable is seen as the ability to enjoy the best things in life that money can provide. This posture them to evaluate their lives in predictable ways: "I am unable to buy things and am therefore unhappy." "If I work hard enough to get all the money I need, I can acquire many things and become satisfied." These evaluations of their lives lead them to a variety of behavioral patterns in assessing God's blessings solely on the basis of "success," which is obtained through ones diligence in pursuing divers' secular careers while lightly esteeming purely immaterial spiritual things.

True success in life comprises success in the spiritual sphere of abiding in the directives of the Grace Covenant. Spiritual thinking in the abode of "eternal prioritization" overshadows the Church Cultures' worldviews of succeeding at all costs, driving ambitions and excessive attention to the workings of forging Earth-centered behavioral patterns, simply because they embody mankind's dominant cultural values. The structures, which validate ambition, excessive work and devotion in the business world, generally run counter to ones commitment to God. These economic exigencies' structures, for the most part, seemingly validate the worldview beliefs by allowing a select group of driven people to



achieve what they conceive to be the good life. And so even from the Church Cultures has evolved the cogitation: "Yes, the best things in life are expensive but they're worth the effort." In the interim, attention to the Eternal things of God continues to wane, true spirituality has been alienated and pure faithfulness in Christ has dipped to new levels of superficiality. Hence, the Church Cultures' worldview system indeed functions as a coherent, cyclical process but it is absolutely counterproductive to the Eternal Purposes of God.

## **Creatures of Cultures**

The workings of the Church Cultures or worldviews on an individual level avails understanding of the process diagrammed in predictable patterns of behaviors conveyed in the personal experiences of various life aspects. In these respects, individual behaviors are contingent on the evaluation of specific life experiences. An example of this is documented in Acts 28 wherein Paul was shipwrecked on the island of Malta. The islanders were polytheists, whose worldview included a belief in many gods, as well as the principle of reciprocity, which governs the dictates of nature (everything happens incidentally according to one receiving what is due them rather it is good or bad). Hence, when Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake, the islanders assumed (evaluating this incident in light of their worldview) that the goddess "Justice" has judged Paul so that he must therefore have been a murderer (Acts 28:4). But when Paul didn't get bloated nor did he die, they changed their minds (reevaluating their former expectations in light of this new experience but using the same worldview) and concluded that he was a god (Acts 28:6).

In a similar sense, ones experience in an isolated environmental confrontation (e.g., a wraith (specter, ghost) in the woods) would hinder upon whether such one is an avowed spiritualist or a materialist. The latter's influence would engender exploration rather than running in fright, in that the first reaction would be "there's no such thing as ghosts!" and the second would be to reach for the apparition, expecting to defrock someone holding a flashlight under a sheet. Note that the question as to whether or not the "ghost" was real is less important than the observation that ones actions perfectly reflect ones perceptions of reality. Now it is factual and fair to state that that all of mankind has been culturally conditioned to respond to life in certain ways. Hence, human actions are not as much determined within certain limits, as they are utterly predictable according to specific experiences.

Hence, the life-history of individuals is first and foremost accommodated to the patterns and standards traditionally handed down in their communities. From the moment of ones birth, the customs into which one is born shape such ones experiences and behavior. By the time one can talk, such is the little product of ones culture and by the time such ones grows, matures and is able to take part in cultural activities, the culture's habits are such ones habits, its beliefs are such ones beliefs and its impossibilities are such ones impossibilities. It is in this vein that humans are understood to be totally, inextricably immersed in their cultures, in that each individual is born into a particular socio-cultural context. From that point on, such ones are conditioned by the interrelationships of their environs in countless, largely subconscious ways to accept as natural and to follow rather uncritically the cultural patterns of that society. Thus, it is largely ones culture's influence that impresses such with a sense that certain things are appropriate and others inappropriate, hence such ones are conditioned to accept certain things as being "natural" and thus "correct" .....far apart from the directives and instructions gleaned from godly documentations, i.e., the Scriptures.

Some crude examples of this are: it's only natural to put on clothing before going outside, yet among the Gava people of Nigeria, one covers one's body only if one is hiding something, hence, to walk about clad is therefore a sign of sincerity and integrity. Also it's only natural to get upset or complain when someone treats you unfairly or inequitably, yet among the Hopi, who are Native Americans residing in northern Arizona, it is considered detrimental to one's own mental health, not to mention the well-being of society, to become upset or to complain for any reason. In their particular society, mental equanimity (the controlling of ones emotional or mental agitation by ones effort of will or as a matter of habit) and social harmony are significant values in Hopi culture but individual rights (seen apart from the community) are not. Consequently, they will typically accept whatever treatment they

are offered without complaint. Lastly, it is certainly natural to expect someone to return something that they have borrowed because it's part of general cultural ideology, yet among the Yaps, who are Micronesians from the western Caroline Islands, ownership is primarily a function of need. Property is borrowed freely and one is under no obligation to return what is borrowed until or unless it is needed by the previous owner and even then the item might have passed through several other hands.

Both the cultural and individual behavioral interrelationships and interactions are fully dependant upon the dictates of the Scriptures rather than the prevailing morale and experience of one's culture. In other words, the behavioral patterns and experiences of God's people should mirror the Scriptures' directives, instructions, admonitions and exhortations that are evidenced in their equanimity, composure and sangfroid (the influence of the evenness of mind under stress and general dispositions). Here the Scriptures' emphasis is on things "spiritual", in opposition to fleshly or "natural intellectual matters," thus its focus is on the doctrines or subjects revealed under the auspices of the Grace Covenant. The nature of the words, message and information intended for the Body of Christ must be comprehended to state that "spiritual things" are explained by words, which the Holy Spirit communicates to "spiritual minds." Hence, communications from God are adapted to the subject-simple pure and elevated thoughts of God. The characteristics of such information are not gross, turgid or distinguished for rhetoric that are designed to address the issues of human wisdom but spiritual wordings that are such as the Spirit of God communicating great, sublime, yet simple truths to His people. These are in effect God's views in lieu of general worldviews or even Church Cultures' worldviews.

Hence the array of varied behaviors, which are expressive in the light of some sensibilities, are predictable patterns in light of the specific worldviews of their respective cultures; just as Church Cultures' behaviors are predictable in light of their prevailing trends and cultures. What must be considered at this stage is not whether these cultural sensibilities are natural but whether they are right. This is the critical question, since it lies at the very core of Christendom's dire situation in general. In fact, it can scripturally be stated that much of the dominant ideologies of cultures are to some degree, evil. This won't come as a shock to the ardent student of the Word of God that many of the cultural worldviews are in large measures antithetical to His worldview. In light of this, how can one be expected to live according to godly beliefs and values on a consistent basis when the worldviews have been acculturated into the self-centered, live-for-the-moment, consumer-based ideologies or when the majority are in general "little creatures" of the cultures that they were born into?

All the world's cultures, as varied as they might be, are essentially humanistically depraved, as have been originally manifested by "the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden." The conveyances of Ephesians 2:2-3 are: "in which once you did walk according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that is now working in sons of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," which definitively entail depraved structures engineered in sinful humans and to varying degrees are shaped under the dominate influence of Satan, "the evil one." It is factual that some cultures are manifestly more evil and oppressive than others but none can even remotely be considered good. A crude example of this engenders the equating of a Las Vegas slot machine as culturally functional. It is a device which gives the appearance of fairness and equitable returns but which in fact is programmed to make the players lose. To cogitate this as morally acceptable is scripturally ludicrous even though such may be deemed socially correct.

Yet, many of God's people are functioning as players in a rigged game, as the structures of human cultures perpetuate corrupt values and beliefs, which do not correspond to Scriptural reality. And behind these cultures stand the unseen and often unapprised influence of the adversary and accuser of God's people, who wages war on them through the vehicles of the unscriptural cultures. After his fateful meeting on the Damascus road, Paul wrote that he considered everything his culture valued a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:8). It can be thence

conducted from this that as God's people are struck by the enlightened message of knowing Jesus, i.e., really internalizing Him ...it makes the entire difference in their lives also. Hence, as certain ones actually mature to the point of knowing Him, they will adopt His principles and values while forsaking theirs in gladly sharing His sufferings.

Perhaps then, most of God's people do not truly know Him at all .....at least not the way Paul did. For too many, the daily experiences of this life forge a struggle not to live for the moment on a prioritized basis. According to Philippians 3:12: "if the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" but it is a fact that the dead in Christ were raised in eternity and are raised in time. Paul met a Man who had risen from the dead and that changed everything because that same One laid hold of his (Paul's) life. And so it is Christ that has laid hold of all His elect. The informed are not living just for the moment but for the manifested instance when all such will stand in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and realize the joy of being just like Him. Everlasting happiness is not experienced in going for all the gusto that one can get in this life, as a means of quickly obtaining that which is without question, temporary. It is in Eternity, which cannot be determinately defined as a moment .....that all who are His will manifestly experience what life has always been about, i.e., perpetually abiding in HIM! In the light of the message of the Grace Covenant, the resounding question posed in Job 14:14 simply offer expressed humanly perceived meanings of existence. The question in itself "if a man should die, will he live again?" must be considered beyond the actions and attitudes of human living.

Comprehension of the answer to this question is reflected in how one lives ones life but does not engender the destiny of human goals that can be traveled to in this life by implication of the perception of mankind's capacity and determination. Ones informed perception of the essence of life and destiny influences what is reflected in the immovable presence of Jesus Christ and in it encounters the manifested strengths and passions that are revealed in ones fundamental change in attitude. Hence, genuine scriptural values are not reoriented out of either coercion or convenience but from God, as purposed by what manifestly aligns with reality in eternity. Hence, life's reality abides exclusively in the resurrected Christ, which is shaped by the perspective of revelation in the Truth engendered in the Eternal culture. In this sense, life is absolutely antithetical to the worldviews enjoined by the religious, social and political communities of Today's Church Cultures, which values are invalid. Only the culture values as perceived by the Scriptures make coherent and perfect sense in correspondence to the actions and attitudes of life in perfect harmony based on truth! Accordingly, the question that was posed: "shall or can one live after death" does not take into account the eternal accomplishments of God. Life for the moment is irrelevant but for the future resides in knowing that all that is presently Earthly must die; as though it was never in existence but amazingly that which is Eternal can never die because it was, is and forever must be!