

## APPENDIX II

### WHO IS YOUR HIGHER POWER? <sup>1</sup>

Any discussion of higher powers will be biased from the outset by the beliefs of the writer. For that reason, the least I can do is share them. They are expressed in the following prayer, which I strive to say each morning: “Almighty, ineffable source of all being and non-being. Gracious Father and Gracious Mother of all creation who by the power of the Holy Spirit conceived our Lord, Jesus Christ. Enter, Jesus, my Heart, and be the God of my personal salvation. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Save us in time of trial. Deliver us from all evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.”

One day, I was prompted to ask a client if she would name her higher power. I was surprised by the answer. For the past several years she had evoked an image of Christ every time she *went inside*, so I honestly expected her to name him. But without hesitation she named God. I asked if she could be more specific, how did she imagine or think of God? “It is God, the Almighty, omnipotent...God the Father...our Father in Heaven.” Over time, I would ask most of my clients this same question, and with few exceptions, they gave me the same answer: God the Father. Not Christ, but God the Father. In their therapy, all of them regularly called on their image of Christ channeling the Holy Spirit to effect changes in their lives; but this reliance on Christ notwithstanding, their higher power remained God the Father, *the first named person* of the Holy Trinity.

Theologically, there is no ‘*first person*’ of the Trinity. The Father does not precede the Son in power or precedence. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three co-eternal *persons* comprised of the same spiritual substance.<sup>2</sup> As co-equal manifestations of God, their relationship is circular not hierarchical. But as one client observed, practically all of the formalized prayers in church liturgies – especially the Nicene Creed, explicitly or implicitly address ‘God the Father.’ There are very few prayers addressed to Christ. We are Christians who pray to ‘God the Father.’ In no small measure this is so because, while he lived on earth, Christ instructed us<sup>3</sup> to pray to Abba ‘who art in heaven.’ Variants of the Lord’s Prayer are offered in two different gospels. Both begin by addressing ‘Our Father in heaven.’

Any religion that traces its origin to the Old Testament needs to accept that YHWH – or the equivalent name, and ‘God the Father’ – as a *person* of God, are two different experiences. YHWH is ineffable, inexpressible, and ultimately unimaginable; YHWH is without form and substance and all form and substance; YHWH is the Godhead, the uncaused cause, the first cause, the source of all being and non-being. In contrast, ‘God the Father’ is a godly father, who is sometimes given the attributes of a mother, but in his default mode is definitely a father. YHWH is both all-substance and non-substance. ‘God the

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Higher power’ is the term used in AA and comparable support groups to identify the ‘God of your understanding’: the power greater than yourself who can free you from the bondage of your addictions and shame, and restore you to sanity. It is always a personal choice and never challenged by other members. But it is also rarely if ever discussed publicly or privately. The closest comparable concept that I am aware of is *Ista Devata*, which is a Hindu word meaning *the God of your personal salvation*.

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, who lived in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, is purportedly the first to define the Holy Trinity as three persons and one substance. He is called the father of Latin Christianity as he wrote extensively in Latin as well as Greek. See Barnes, T. D. (1971), *Tertullian: A Historical And Literary Study*, Oxford Clarendon Press.

<sup>3</sup> See Luke 11:2-4 and Matthew 6:9-13.

Father' is a particular manifestation of the substance. In contrast, Jesus Christ is asserted by the four gospels and Letters of Paul to be the living incarnation of YHWH.<sup>4</sup>

In Jewish cosmology, any incarnation of God *that is not the totality of YHWH* is an unpardonable sin.<sup>5</sup> Before Christ, YHWH was assigned many human attributes in the Old Testament, feminine as well as masculine, *but no image*. Even the Old Testament's primary *name* for God – YHWH, is not spoken out of respect for the awesomeness of the name. Some Jewish scholars would argue that we no longer know how to say the name as it was only verbalized once a year in the Temple, which was destroyed in 60 C.E. When YHWH's name is read in the Synagogue, this name of God is called *Adonai* – Lord; and in conversation, most devout Jews refrain from using either name when referring to God. Instead, they use *HaShem*, which means 'the name.' There are five primary names for God in the Old Testament, and numerous variants.<sup>6</sup> None of them refer to YHWH as father. Insofar as early Christians equated 'God the Father' with YHWH, they were understandably reluctant to image him. To equate YHWH with a father image would be an unpardonable violation of the First commandment. But since the Council of Nicaea YHWH has been divided into three idols of God, i.e. three distinct *persons* of God comprised of the same substance. And insofar as 'God the Father' is a *person of God*, it is possible to anthropomorphize him; and images of 'God the Father' have been created since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The most famous is the mural of 'God the Father' touching the hand of Adam in the Sistine Chapel.

The Council of Nicaea adulterated the New Testament's assertions regarding 'God the Father.' ('Adulterated' is a strong word, but even that may fall short of the near blasphemous confabulation wrought by Constantine and the Nicaean Council.<sup>7</sup>) The theologian, Richard Bauckham, makes this abundantly clear in his treatise on Jesus and the God of Israel.<sup>8</sup> Bauckham's exegesis clearly demonstrates that well before 200 C.E., St. Paul and the Jewish exegetes who wrote the Gospels had developed a high Christology within the construct of Jewish monotheism – the belief in and worship of the One God.<sup>9</sup> In the New Testament YHWH is referred to as 'Father.'<sup>10</sup> This was the name for YHWH chosen by Christ when he directs us to pray to Abba,<sup>10</sup> who is in heaven. It is comparable to the Jewish use of 'Adonai' in naming YHWH during their prayers.

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<sup>4</sup> See Bauckham, R. (2008), *Jesus And The God Of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids: MI.

<sup>5</sup> The first commandment: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:2-6).

<sup>6</sup> I have yet to find a definitive reference text that authoritatively describes the names of God in Judaism. They do exist and a number of them can be purchased from Amazon, but I have not read through them all. However, in the interim, the interested reader can simply 'Google' the phrase *names of God* on the internet and find numerous descriptive sites describing the 'names of God' in Judaism and Christianity, as well as sites that address 'God the Father.' Google can also be used for definitions of 'HaShem' and 'Ista Devata,' which I use earlier in the endnotes and text.

<sup>7</sup> The interested reader is referred to *Constantine's Bible* by David Dungan to gain a fuller appreciation of Constantine's inordinate role in shaping Christian faith in the West. Dungan, D.L., (2007), *Constantine's Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament*, Fortress Press: Minneapolis; see also Richard Rubenstein, who writes from the Jewish perspective as someone interested in conflict resolution: Rubenstein, R. (1999), *When Jesus Became God: The Struggle to Define Christianity during the Last Days of Rome*, A Harvest Book from Harcourt, Inc.

<sup>8</sup> Bauckham, R. (2008), Op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Even today, devout Jews begin their prayers with the Shema: the passage in Deuteronomy (6:4-6) which begins, "Hear, O Israel: YHWH our God, YHWH is one," and continues with the requirement of total devotion to this one God: "You shall love YHWH your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your might."

<sup>10</sup> 'Abba' is a term of endearment used by Jewish children to their fathers. It is still used today in Jewish households.

While the Nicaean confabulation – equating YHWH with a person of God, makes it permissible to image 'God the Father,' Christ in the Gospels clearly cautions us against doing so when he tells us:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. *No one comes to the Father except through me.* If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works (John 14:6-10, *italics added*)."

Luke and Matthew express the same caution in their gospels when they assert that no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the son chooses to reveal the Father.<sup>11</sup>

What can we deduce from the foregoing? As a Nicaean *person* of God, 'God the Father' cannot be equated with YHWH. Either the Father is YHWH or – as a mere person – he is a blasphemous expression of YHWH. The same is true for Christ: he is either the human incarnation of YHWH, or as a mere person of God he is a blasphemous expression of YHWH. In effect, Christ cannot be the earthly incarnation of YHWH, if he is merely a Son of 'God the Father.' If Christ's very words are heeded, we can only know the Father through Christ. As Christ himself cautions us, only he can be the living incarnation of YHWH, as YHWH has never incarnated on earth apart from Christ and the felt presence of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, there is a problem with choosing 'God the Father' as a higher power. A higher power needs to be accessible to the Mind in order to relate to our conscious sense of self; and the Mind cannot conceive without imagining. Unlike Christ, and except for Christ, 'God the Father' lacks a consensual image, which must be the case, as YHWH has never incarnated apart from Christ.

Christ's cautions notwithstanding, most Christians appear to assign various attributes of YHWH from the Old Testament to their understanding of 'God the Father.' Many of those attributes are contradictory; and none of them are definitive. Even more problematical, many people appear unable to differentiate between the Moral authority of their own fathers, which can be unmitigatingly harsh, and the Moral authority they attribute to 'God the Father.'<sup>12</sup> Moreover, as Jesus rightly observed, 'God the Father' abides in heaven, so it is difficult to imagine him as immanent (e.g. pervading us; here present) as opposed to transcendent (e.g. beyond or above the range of normal physical human experience).<sup>13</sup> The person of 'God the Father' has never become human, except in Christ. Unlike the contradictory images of the Father, images of Christ are consensually definable by the vignettes of his earthly life in the four gospels; and via his human form he is potentially immanent in all of us.<sup>14</sup>

The role of the Holy Spirit is also at issue here.<sup>15</sup> Those who have read my book know that the convicting power of the Holy Spirit is crucial to the most significant interventions it offers. Like 'God the

<sup>11</sup> "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22)."

<sup>12</sup> For many clients, the image of their father, or mother, *is the highest power in their Mind.* This is easily demonstrated by juxta-positioning the father with an image of Christ. Invariably, and often with some chagrin, the client will own that the parental voice is the more powerful of the two. The interested reader is referred back to Chapter VI of the book.

<sup>13</sup> The theologian, Marcus Borg, devotes an entire book to the exploration of God as immanent and transcendent. See Borg, M.J. (1998), *The God We Never Knew: Beyond Dogmatic Religion To A More Authentic Contemporary Faith*, Harper One: San Francisco.

<sup>14</sup> I say 'potentially' because he has to be invited to incarnate within the Mind, although he does not have to be invited as the individual's higher power for the incarnation to occur.

<sup>15</sup> This is true in ways that I had not even begun to imagine when I started thinking about 'God the Father.' It appears that our attitude toward 'God the Father' can have a negative effect on the flow of the Holy Spirit. A surprising number of my female clients have negative feelings toward 'God the Father' that seem to stem from developmental issues with their fathers. They have learned to detach from those fathers and be less reactive to them, but still find it difficult to

Father,' the Holy Spirit has no anthropomorphic form. In active imagination, it must have a conduit, be it another person-in-the-world who prays on our behalf in the name of Jesus, or an interior image of Jesus Christ. Christ is Christ because he is conceived by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, he is anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit by God,<sup>16</sup> and by completely submitting his will to God, he can extend the Holy Spirit's discernment, forgiveness, and miracles to any who ask in his name. Stated another way, Christ is the ever-living incarnation of YHWH and channel of the Holy Spirit. Christ is God, not merely the Son of God.

I am careful when clients assign the Holy Spirit's convicting power to a higher power other than Christ, but I do not exclude the possibility. In the last two chapters of my book I examine one higher power other than Christ who seems to effect changes comparable to Christ when he convicts with the power of the Holy Spirit. I assume that the Holy Spirit can use any vessel in the world or in active imagination to bring us closer to the Godhead; that the source of the Holy Spirit is YHWH. S/he is the 'Spirit of God over the waters.'<sup>17</sup>

We are "indoctrinated" from early childhood to accept the *person* of 'God the Father' as our higher power because he is so often confabulated with YHWH. It is an osmotic assimilation reinforced by family, religion, and patriarchal values. The formalized prayers and Nicaean creed of the Christian faith assert a hierarchical relationship (i.e. the throne<sup>18</sup>) that subordinates Christ and the Holy Spirit to the Father; and most Christians appear to unreflectively accede to it. But so far as I can determine, few Christians *consciously* choose 'God the Father' as their higher power. Given a choice between a distant, judgmental, person of God and an abiding presence within us who is loving and forgiving, I believe most people would choose the latter, especially when they understand that YHWH and the Holy Spirit incarnate through Christ. He is, after all, the reason for our faith and the instrument of our salvation.

One final observation: In 315 C.E. Constantine was intent on making Christianity *the official religion of the Roman Empire*; and that did not require the Jewish Christian insistence that Christ be the human incarnation of YHWH. By 315 C.E. most Christians in the Roman Empire were non-Jewish. Making Christ *a person* of God would make him much more palatable to the Greek/Roman understanding of God. Zeus, for example, had numerous progeny by human mothers. One of them, Dionysus, was worshipped in the Greek and Roman cultures long before Christ, and his life story has numerous, uncanny,

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relate positively to 'God the Father' even as they continue to treat him as their higher power. Of course, it would be difficult to relate to him in the best of circumstances since he is supposed to be invisible and transcendent and essentially without form. But one of his primary roles in the New Testament is directing the Holy Spirit. I asked these clients if their negative attitude toward 'God the Father' might in any way inhibit the flow of the Holy Spirit? Might their negative images of 'God the Father' be blocking the flow of the Holy Spirit in their lives? I have suggested that Christ be allowed to contain any negative feelings or images of 'God the Father' that have any potential to block the flow of the Holy Spirit, and then dispel whatever he captured so the Holy Spirit could flow unblocked through Christ. In a number of instances this intervention had a noticeable positive effect on the client.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 3:16-17 – "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." If my surmise is correct, this reference to God is not 'God the Father.' Any Jew writing this – or reading it, would immediately equate it with YHWH who also spoke to Moses through the burning bush; and first appeared before the beginning of time as the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2).

<sup>17</sup> Genesis 1:1-5 - In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind (Spirit) from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>18</sup> According to the Nicene Creed, Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. This is a place of honor not to be confused with actually sitting on the throne, which is the Father's seat. Four books of the New Testament assert that Christ rose to heaven and sits at the right hand of the father (Mark 16:19, Luke 22:69, Matthew 22:44 and 26:64, Acts 2:34 and 7:55). The New Testament was written before the development of a Nicaean God. As such, any reference to the 'Father' has to be treated as a synonym for YHWH. That being the case, Christ cannot share the throne until the end-time when all returns to heaven. Until then he sits at the right hand of YHWH. See Bauckham, R. (2008), *op.cit*, especially, *'The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus, pp.153-181.*

parallels to the life of Christ.<sup>19</sup> Orthodox Jewry also pushed for separation. The Jewish Temple, and the culture organized around it, was completely destroyed in 60 C.E. This destruction forced the Jews to reorganize their religion around the Torah of the Old Testament rather than the Temple and its sacrifices. To that end, and even before Christian Jews wrote the New Testament gospels, the Post-Temple rabbis formalized the Torah and Hebrew Bible and declared it whole and complete.<sup>20</sup> That formalization discouraged any assimilation of the Christian apocrypha written afterward, though the Old Testament writings remained vital to an understanding of the New Testament and therefore could not be set aside. Post-Temple Judaism disowned Messianic Judaism, but Christianity could not disown its Biblical origins. The Nicene solution redefined Christianity obliging the Orthodox Christians (circa 315 C.E.) to *accept two different understandings* of Christ. The first one, derived from the Old Testament and explicit in all the Gospels, asserts that *Christ is God* and the living incarnation of YHWH. That is the essential statement of faith put forth in our orthodox Gospels and the Letters of Paul. The second understanding is that Christ is merely a person of God. The latter is promulgated by the liturgies of most churches that accept the particular Trinitarian formulation established by the Roman church. These are radically different conceptions of God. The Nicaean creed encourages the confabulation of YHWH with a Zeus-like ‘God the Father.’ In sharp contrast, the Yahwistic understanding holds that any *personage* of God is idolatrous. From the Yahwistic perspective, *Christ must be the human incarnation of YHWH* or he is only an idol promulgated by Greek and Roman paganism. Most people believe that the Nicene creed summarizes the faith expressed in the Gospels and Letters of Paul. In fact, it dramatically alters our understanding of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. In the Roman assertion, Christ is merely the Son of God, not God incarnate. And ‘God the Father’ is either a totally new person of God or an idolatrous image of YHWH.

Most of my clients can attest that ‘God the Father’ is an unreflected choice. But they would also attest that making a conscious choice for Christ or any other higher power – other than ‘God the Father’ – is exceedingly difficult after decades of indoctrination. Soon after discovering that most of my clients named ‘God the Father’ as their higher power, I began drafting an interventional prayer that would give them a conscious choice. Few were eager to act on it; and most of them actively resisted. One reason is that I make it difficult. I insist that they ask a person, other than me, to vocally pray it on their behalf and act as a witness of their conscious choice. But I also suspect another more gut wrenching reason. ‘God the Father’ is supported by the entire foundation of the Nicaean church. He is a backbone of a subordinating patriarchy. In 2010, that is less so in America, but still apparent; and most of my clients were born well before 2010. In other parts of the world patriarchy is still a largely unquestioned cultural precept with the force of law to back it up.

Those of my clients who have opted to freely and consciously choose a higher power have only done so after weeks or months of soul searching and reflection. Some are finally “driven” to it by a renewed need for a higher power or the growing awareness that sitting on the fence has become unceasingly painful. I have given each of them the following prayer to be prayed out loud by someone of their choosing – other than me. I tell them that any portion of the prayer can be altered to fit their needs, including who they designate as their higher power;<sup>21</sup> but I do encourage them to consider their higher power’s potential as a conduit of the Holy Spirit,<sup>22</sup> for I am convinced that this is the source of forgiveness

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<sup>19</sup> See Freke, T. & Gandy, P. (1999), *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the “Original Jesus” a Pagan God?* Three Rivers Press, New York.

<sup>20</sup> This formalization culminated in a malediction injected into the Jewish community’s daily prayers known today as the Birkat ha-minim. The insertion of this one malediction into the heart of the daily prayer services amounted to a de facto spiritual excommunication of Messianic Jews. See Skolnik, F. (2006), *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 22 Volume Set, Macmillan Reference USA, 2nd Edition.

<sup>21</sup> While I have not explored this extensively, I have come to appreciate that Christ can comfortably co-exist with a feminine counterpart that enriches and succors the client’s sense of self, be it goddess, archetypal mother or consort.

<sup>22</sup> To the extent that any of my clients have experienced the Holy Spirit through Christ, or another freely chosen higher power, while working inside, they have done so *before using this prayer to consciously acknowledge their higher power*. The prayer is not a pre-condition for evoking Christ or asking him to grace them with the Holy Spirit. He willingly enters any Mind when invited, whatever his initial stature in the individual’s pantheon. The changes that take

and discernment as well as the reason for Christ's incarnation on earth and in the Mind. I would also note that this prayer is addressed to God Ineffable – YHWH – not God the Father. The *person* of 'God the Father' can be the God of your personal salvation, if you so choose, but not the ultimate source of the Holy Spirit's convicting power as that must remain with YHWH.

I PRAY THAT GOD INEFFABLE,  
WITH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,  
CONSECRATE YOUR IMAGE OF [JESUS CHRIST]  
AS THE GOD OF YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION;  
TO ABIDE LOVINGLY WITHIN YOUR HEART AND,  
WITH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,  
GUIDE, FORGIVE, AND INFORM YOU EVERMORE.

This prayer is only a beginning, but for the clients who have taken it, it has proven a significant first step.

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place after a client has freely chosen Christ as their higher power are subtle. Basically, they seem to walk closer and more frequently with Jesus as a daily companion of their interior life, and more readily accede to his discernment in matters put before him.