

1 - God as Truth – The heart of what is ontologically true

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:7

When we begin to discuss what it means for God to be God, we are straight away faced by the Doctrine of the Trinity and its impact upon our understanding of who God is eternally. Of chief interest to many outside the church is the question “Why is God a Trinity?” and I hope in attempting to briefly answer this question we will discover one of the eternal aspects of God that is neglected in modern thought about who God is.

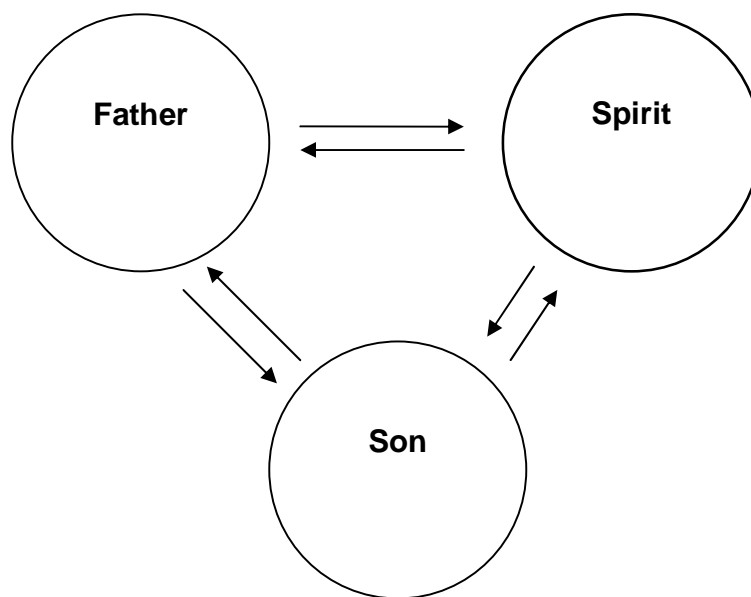
One way to answer the question “Why is God a Trinity” is to explore how God could be eternally a God of love if he were not. It is often common to hear preachers say something like “God created us in order to have something to love”. This at first seems an attractive idea – we are wanted and desired by God, created to be the object of his affection – but the question in its framing has an assumption of a temporal dependency of God upon humans to exhibit love, and this has the effect of actually stripping God of the description “God is love”. Were God to require to create something in order to have that thing to love (i.e. that before that thing were created he did not have anything to love) then that would imply that eternally God were not love, for love is a relationship between two (or more) persons and if the one that is loved does not exist then such love does not exist either.

And this leads us to another instant observation, for it means that one cannot speak of a Unitarian God (e.g. the God of Islam) as being a God of love, for eternally he is literally on his own and has no object of eternal affection. Before the creation of the universe and the unseen world, the Unitarian God is a creature devoid of affection, for he has nothing to affect. Indeed, one may even suggest that the idea of a Unitarian God creating something to love is ludicrous – where does he understand the concept of love from for he exists eternally as “un-love”.

This leads us to then ask, what is the difference between a Binity and a Trinity? Why is God three persons and not two (or four or five). And once again the answer is fundamentally simple – a Godhead of two eternal persons would be drawn in upon itself, each person concentrating on the other. Yes there is love but the love is 100% focused on the other. If there were the creation of a third person / being to be loved that would change fundamentally the relationship between the two original lovers, for they would have to accommodate their 100% love for each other to the new partner in the relational exchange.

An eternal Trinity does not have this problem, for even though A is relating to B, A is also relating eternally to C and is aware of that relationship at the same time as relating to B. This is the love of community, or as Boff calls it “The Communal Trinity”:

“The God of Jesus Christ, recognised by the faith of the apostles and accepted by the Christian community, is a Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The ultimate principle of the world and of history is not a solitary being, then, but God the Family –God-Communion. From all eternity, Yahweh is a bond of loving relations, an unfathomable Mystery – the unoriginated Origin of all ... This Trinity has not remained enclosed but has communicated itself, making human life its temple.”¹



But what does it mean for God to be eternally loving? Well, the next point to be made is that it is incorrect to speak of God as “eternally loving”, for “to love” is a verb, a function, an event in time. It is far more correct to speak of God as “eternally love”, and this is the key observation, for when we speak of things that

¹ Boff, Leonardo; *Liberating Grace*; p211

eternally are of God, we are in the realm of ontological statements not functional statements. What I mean is this – it is insufficient when saying “God is love” to use that to mean, “God acts in a loving way”. What we actually mean is that God is eternally a being who exists with an ontology of love. He **is** love, **before** he acts lovingly. It is an essential part of his very nature, not simply as something that he eternally does but something that he eternally is. Were God to undertake no other actions, have no interaction with his creation, or even create in the first place, he would still be love for it is part of his very being in the same way that humans have self-awareness and conscience, even if that conscience never interacts with another human.

This is what it means for God to be love, but it also leads us to say “God is True”. What we mean when we say this is that were any part of the Godhead concealed from the others then that would not be perfect love, for in concealment there would be a denial of the person to be loved (and to love). For a being of three persons to exist eternally in perfect community and love necessitates that all that there is to know about each of the three persons is known by the others². Less than 100% knowledge of the other, or the denial of 100% knowledge from one member to the others, would be to limit the nature of love within the Godhead for it would say “I love you with less than my entire person” or “I love less than your entire person”. To say that God is love is to demand that God is also true, once

² Of course, the esse of a being a person is both being and the potentiality of being (i.e. that which I may yet become and discover). The point that I am making is that the persons of the Trinity are totally open to each other, though of course there are some aspects of limitation of knowledge (e.g. the Son’s limitation on the knowledge of all that the Father will do (Matt 24:36), though there are of course questions as to whether this is a limitation based upon the constraints of the incarnation.

again not as a function, what God does, but rather a statement of who God is. God is eternally the true being – there is nothing within Him that is not known, open, naked and vulnerable to all persons of the Trinity. God is true not in a sense that everything that he does is true, but rather that everything that he **is** is true.

And this is of course why Christ can say “I am the truth” for he is literally the embodiment of what is true³ – once again not that in what he says is true or that the miracles he performs are truly miraculous, or even that he is the true path of salvation (though he is). No, what he is saying is that he is literally that which is true. That is why John later writes “we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”⁴

1.1 - Integration with Christ

*“Like a bridegroom, Christ went forth from his chamber.
He went out with a foreshadowing of his wedding into the field of the world...
He came to the marriage bed of the cross and there, in mounting it,
He consummated his marriage.
And when he perceived the sighs of the creature
He lovingly gave himself up to the torment in place of his bride
And he joined himself to the woman forever.”
St Augustine of Hippo*

This has led many Christian thinkers to develop the idea of *theosis*, the re-becoming like God of saved humanity through integration through Jesus Christ.

³ By this I mean that he is not so much a proposition, rather that truth is literally a person, prior to any assertion of what is true (propositional). Truth is essentially relational because God is personal.

⁴ 1 John 5:20

Rakestraw writes in his article to accompany Clendenin's "Eastern Orthodox Theology":

"Above all, theosis is the restoration and reintegration of the "image" or, as some prefer, "likeness" of God, seriously distorted by the fall, in the children of God. In this life Christians grow more and more into the very likeness and character of God as God was revealed in the man Jesus Christ"⁵.

It is my intent to explicitly explore this concept in regards to what it means to re-become the *imago dei* of the God who is eternally true. If we are created to be the *imago dei* of a God who is relationally true, why is the human environment so full of deceit? Furthermore, why do humans not comprehend He that is perfect truth within his being and persons and their inter-relation? This will therefore necessitate us determining how humans became fallen from a state of truth and how any "retruthing" then occurs.

Within the Evangelical world, when we think of "confession" we think of priests and clergy in wooden boxes, men and women hearing and forgiving sins. The underlying Greek word that we translate as "confession" though is "*homologeō*" which literally means "same words". To "confess" is to enter into "same words" as the hearer of your confession, whether that is the more traditional understanding of confessing the truth of a sin (for example James 5:16⁶) or the other commonly

⁵ Rakestraw, Robert; *Becoming Like God*; in JETS 40.2; p261

⁶ ἐξομολογεῖσθε ὁὖν ἀλλήλοις τὰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ εὐχεσθε ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων ὅπως ἰαθῆτε.

used idea, of “confessing” your faith (for example Romans 10:10⁷). Each time there is a point of coming into the same words as those who are hearing – in auricular confession allowing the truth about one’s inward nature and secret (or not so secret) actions being known by another brings one into *homologeō* with the rest of the Christian Community and with God; in confession of faith (or in liturgically confessing a creed of faith) coming into *homologeō* with that which is eternally ontologically true. In both cases the statement of confession is an alignment of the will and the soul with the way things actually are, a rejection of *heterologeō* from the truth. What is lost sometimes though in our confessional practice is an understanding that where in our culture we differentiate the two different “confessions”, the Greek root word and concept is the same. Morton writes:

“By acknowledging our sin and confessing it, we are recognizing the problem, affirming our desire for change, and inviting the Holy Spirit to execute that change. The process of confession is therefore a process of healing through which we are reconciled to ourselves, to our neighbours and to the Lord”.⁸

Russ Parker stretches the idea of confession even further when he describes Jesus as “the true representational confessor”. He says:

⁷ καρδία γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, στόματι δὲ ὁμολογείται εἰς σωτηρίαν

⁸ Morton, Mark; *Personal Confession Reconsidered*; p6

“Jesus actually pushes the boundaries of representational confession further by using it as a vehicle for vicarious suffering, delivering forgiveness and healing as a direct result.”⁹

Jesus is the one who ultimately brings into *homologeo* fallen humans with their divine creator. Human confession is simply a recognition of that divine act and moreover, an agreement with it. Christ’s death does not so much destroy the untruth as it overturns it, reversing as we shall see the challenge to God as truth that occurs in the Fall. Leslie Newbigin writes:

“In the cross Christ has disarmed the powers. He has unmasked them. He has not destroyed them, but – in Johannine language – has cast the ruler of this world out of his usurped throne.”¹⁰

Christ’s victory on the cross is the reversal of the rejection of God that takes place at the Fall, the setting right again that which is wrong, ultimately the replacement of *heterologeo* with *homologeo*, the *homologeo* which exists eternally within the being of the Trinity, a *homologeo* which Christ then recreates with redeemed humanity. But all this begs the question, how did humans come into a state of “un-truth” in the first place?

⁹ Parker, Russ; *Healing Wounded History*; p120

¹⁰ Newbigin, Leslie; *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*; p208

2 - Genesis 2 & 3 – A Story of Homologeo and Heterologeo

*Adam lay y bounden, bounden in a bond
Four thousand winter though he not too long
And all was for an apple, an apple that he took
As clerkes finden written in their book
Traditional English C15*

The doctrine of the Trinity makes important statements about what we mean by truth and whether truth is defined eternally not so much as an activity but more as a state of being. Given this, I want to turn to the subject of the Creation and Fall of humanity and whether there are theological and pastoral insights to be discerned in the dynamic of truth and deceit in the Genesis 2 and 3 stories. What we will do is exegete Genesis 2 and 3 with a particular reference to these issues, and we will find that this reveals a particular dynamic in the story which is often neglected, a dynamic which has huge pastoral insight. Specifically, we will read the two chapters not viewing the Fall simply as an act of wilful disobedience to the ordinances of God, a disobedience that is the Original Sin that lays down the type for all sins (though such a reading is of course correct and has been understood by the Church since at least Augustine who draws on Paul in Romans 5:19). Rather, we will additionally read the two chapters in terms of a story of truth and deception, and as the systematic challenge to the ontological truth of God and his Creative acts.

We begin by exploring further what it means for humans to be made “Imago Dei”, in the image of God. The church has taken that in the past to mean those characters and qualities of God that are viewed as human virtues – love, grace,

compassion, righteous anger from a correct moral sense of right and wrong. And I don't want to suggest in any way that these things when found in men and women are not aspects of the Imago Dei, but if the ultimate eternal fact about God is that he is ontologically true in his very being, and he is **truthful** in his being, then it is these aspects of humanity that are themselves the ultimate aspect of the Imago Dei, in that when humans exhibit and embody truth they strictly represent the truth of God.

We find these first significations of God in the description of the creation of Eve. God seeks a helper for Adam by passing all the creatures in front of him. Though Adam names each one, and in doing so affirms his superiority to them and his own position as the culmination of God's Creation, there is none that is suitable to be his partner. The point is clear – Adam is not **בְּהֵמָה**. He is not like the other creatures that populate the earth. He is different to them and none of them will fill the need to find an equal partner to rule over Creation.

God's response then is to make Adam sleep and to take from him a rib from which he makes Eve. Eve is totally human, yet she is quite different to Adam. This is accented by Adam's declaration in Gen 2:23 – “She shall be called **אִשָּׁה** because she was taken out of a **אִישׁ**”.

The next two verses are then startling in their theological significance. Often it is verse 24 that is picked up on and used particularly in the debate on human

sexuality, and we will return to it at a later point. But for now I want to examine verse 25 and see what it tells us about the original relationship of Adam and Eve to truth and to God and his ontology of truth.

Verse 25 reads “And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.”

Rowan Williams explores this imagery of nakedness as a signification of truth in his seminal work, “The Body’s Grace”. The main contention, a contention which I think is on the whole robust and leads us into much greater understanding of the way in which humans signify themselves, is that sexual activity, being normally undertaken naked, is a veritable **exposure** of one’s self to the other. This exposure is not just the obvious physical exposure of one’s naked body to the other, but because the sexual act is not just a physical and emotional encounter but also a spiritual one, the exposure of the naked body becomes a signification of the exposure of the entire self to the other, an exposure that reveals the entire truth about myself to the other, a dropping of the deception normally exercised, for example, in cloth-wearing, where we deceive those around us of the truth of our naked bodies by concealing them from view, so the truth about them is simply incapable of being known by the crowds we pass every day.

“The life of the Christian Community has as its rationale – if not invariably its practical reality – the task of teaching us this: so ordering our relations

that human beings may see themselves as *desired*, as the occasion of joy. It is not surprising that sexual imagery is freely used, in and out of the Bible, for this newness of perception ... All this means, crucially, that in sexual relation I am no longer in charge of what I am. Any genuine experience of desire leaves me in something like this position: I cannot of myself satisfy my wants without distorting or trivialising them. But here we have a particularly intense case of the helplessness of the ego alone. **For my body to be the cause of joy, the end of homecoming, for me, it must be there for someone else, be perceived, accepted, nurtured; and that means being given over to the creation of joy in that other** ... The discovery of sexual joy and of a pattern of living in which that joy is accessible must involve the insecurities of 'exposed spontaneity': the experience of misunderstanding or of the discovery (rapid or slow) that this relationship is not about joy ... it should be clear that the discovery of joy means something rather more than the bare facts of sexual intimacy ... Such things are learned in the fabric of a whole relation of converse and cooperation; yet of course the more time taken the longer a kind of risk endures. There is more to expose, **and a *sustaining* of the will to let oneself be formed by the perceptions of another.**"¹¹

Here Williams grasps the heart of the matter of sexual encounter – that there is a discovery of each other, a growth of perception, **a gradual emergence of truth.** Sexual activity and disclosure reveals the heart of the one who is willing to be

¹¹ Williams, Rowan; *The Body's Grace*; pp3-5,7

known. It is, for most humans today, the ultimate experience both of knowing the truth about another and being known themselves by another.¹²

2.1 – Shame

Today self-consciousness no longer means anything but reflection on the ego as embarrassment, as realization of impotence: knowing that one is nothing.

Theodor Adorno

Shame is an even more interesting aspect of the Genesis text. The fact that Adam and Eve felt no shame shows that there was no attempt to hide anything of themselves from each other or God. The fact that the author of Genesis has to emphasize that they were naked AND felt no shame indicates that he is aware of the natural inhibition that humans have with nudity (as in the Genesis 9:18-29 account of Noah and his sons and as pointed out by Williams). The situation in Genesis 2:25 is not normative for post-Fall humans, though it was before the Serpent's deception.

¹² **Excursus – Job and Nakedness**

Within the book of Job, nakedness is used to express not just vulnerability but a surrender to God's sovereignty, i.e. *an acceptance of what is true about God*. In the first chapter Job is stripped of his cattle, fire from heaven falls and burns away his sheep and servants, and what is left of his estate is carried off by the Chaldeans. Finally his very family is destroyed in a freak house collapse. What is Job's response?

“Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21)

The author's response is of course affirming of the sovereignty of God:

“In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing.” (Job 1:22)

Job's declaration of nakedness is a statement that he is standing truthfully in front of God. There is nothing that separates him from his Creator, nothing that he possesses that could in anyway provide for him to be attempting to usurp God's rightful place. He presents himself as though he were just born – no possessions and utterly vulnerable. In the second chapter his very body is attacked, but still he will not accuse God or in any way usurp his authority. His nakedness is a deliberate physical expression of his acceptance of ultimate truth – God is God and God is true.

The Hebrew word for “to feel shame”, בּוֹשׁ, is used 109 times in the Old Testament. The majority of the time it is translated as “ashamed” or “shame”, but it can also be used to infer a delay or confusion or to be confounded (i.e. 2 Kings 19:26). This seems to make sense, for when we explore what shame is, we find an emotion that is a response to truth and deceit.

Stephen Pattison in his work “Shame : Theory, Therapy, Theology” states that “there is no fixed essence of meaning or experience that underlies all usages and instances of the category ‘shame’. Like an onion, shame is made up of enfolded and overlapping, but also discrete, meanings and understandings; there is no ‘essential onion’ or ‘essential shame’ at the centre of meaning or experience.”¹³

But this is not satisfactory. What is shame? The English word is rooted in the German “skan/sken” which comes from the Indo-European “ken” which means “to cover up / to hide”. Pattison thinks though that this has more to do with the reaction to shame rather than shame itself:

“The urgent desire to cover oneself or disappear **succeeds an acute sense of unwanted exposure**. Adam and Eve find the fig leaves that cover their naked bodies (their ‘shame’) when they become conscious that they are exposed in a painful, undesirable way ... The painful personal exposure that inheres in shame and the desire to escape from or avoid it

¹³ Pattison, Stephen; *Shame*; p39

have meant that, until recently, few sufferers or investigators have examined shame closely or directly.”¹⁴

Furthermore, there are linguistic problems in articulating shame, both in that the English language is limited in its vocabulary’s expression of shame (compared to other languages) and more fundamentally that shame is often not an easily articulated experience. There is also the problem that the concept of guilt has “obscured” shame in such a way that we have confused the two. Pattison notes the difference between the **guilt** of committing a criminal act with the **shame** of how that person perceived themselves to be viewed by society following that crime¹⁵.

Lewis Smedes has a more concise definition of shame that I think is easily understandable. We have shame, he writes,

“When we persistently feel that we are not acceptable, maybe unworthy, and are less than the good person we are supposed to be. Shame is a vague, undefined heaviness that presses on our spirit, dampens our gratitude for the goodness of life, and slackens the free flow of joy. Shame is a **primal feeling**, the kind that seeps into and discolours all our other feelings, primarily about ourself but about almost everyone and everything else in our life as well”¹⁶.

¹⁴ Pattison, Stephen; *Shame*; pp40-41

¹⁵ Pattison, Stephen; *Shame*; p43

¹⁶ Smedes, Lewis; *Shame*; Foreword

Shame seems to occur when there is some hesitancy about how the interpersonal dynamic that we encounter with others will be affected by the revelation of truth. The general guardedness that we carry about others knowing us truly comes into conflict, either from forces beyond our control or by a dynamic that we could have some effect over. For example, if I am arrested for a misdemeanour then that becomes a matter of public record – I have little control over whether people will discover it, but I may live in constant fear and shame that someone may stumble upon it. However, I could choose to reveal that misdemeanour, though I may still experience shame upon doing that as more people discover my hidden past. In all these things I am constantly engaging in an internal emotion wrestling match with my response to others knowing the truth about me.

We see then that the simple statement, “And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed” is not simply a physical and emotional description of Adam and Eve at some point pre-Fall. Rather, it is a deep spiritual and relational statement that enters into the heart of what it truly means to be human. Adam and Eve exist in the Garden of Eden ultimately in a state of truth, and that state of truth is a reflection of their relationship with, and open dependence upon God. They are truly *Imago Dei* – creatures who in their own inter and intra-personal relationships reflect completely the ultimate truth of a God who is eternally, ontologically, **true**. Adam and Eve have no shame for there is nothing that is true about them that is hidden from each other or from God.

2.2 - The Fall and the Deceiver

*"I wonder that thou, being, as thou sayest thou art,
born under Saturn,
goest about to apply a moral medicine to a mortifying mischief."
Don John in "Much Ado About Nothing", William Shakespeare*

Genesis 3 then, is not simply a story of sin and the rejection of God's sovereignty (though as I have stated above that is still utterly true). Further than this it is a story of the rejection of God's truth, and not only of the truth of what he does but, and this is the ultimate act of rebellion which reveals the dynamic, the truth of who he is. As we shall see, when Adam and Eve choose to eat the fruit, they are not simply rejecting the commandments of God (and in doing so commit the Original Sin), they act in such a way as to wilfully attempt to create an alternative truth to the one that is actually true.

The serpent in Genesis 3 has traditionally been associated with the personification of Satan, Lucifer the fallen angel who rebels against God. We have one account in Scripture of his rebellion against God and it is found in Isaiah 14:12-15.

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!

You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon; I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High."

The story of the rebellion of Lucifer found beyond the Bible is that he was the chief of all the angels, an archangel who led the equivalent of the heavenly choir. His job then was to worship God, and worship of God is ultimately simply a statement and expression of the truth of who God is, the sovereign Creator and Lord of all things that exist, and that statement of the truth being done willingly and joyfully. Understanding worship as an expression of the truth of God's existence has been at the heart of Christian hymnody¹⁷, and despite a period in the 1990s where the new Charismatic hymnody has had an emphasis on the human experiential component of the worship relationship with God modern writers are producing as regards the literary content the same kind of worship material as the past 2,000 years.

Lucifer however was not content to simply deliver the worship to God. He craved to be the one who was worshipped. His desire was to supplant the true state of things, that God is the one who is worshipped, and in its stead to create an alternative reality to that which actually was, an alternative reality which placed him at the centre of the universe. Notice how we are choosing in this method of reading the Scripture to emphasise this act not simply as act of rebellion, but an attempt to alter what truth is. If, as we have discussed above, all truth within the

¹⁷ Where I here say "hymnody" I am not just speaking of classical hymnody, the kind of music found in Hymns Ancient and Modern, but the entirety of choral worship music, whether written by Martin Luther, Isaac Watts, Matt Redman or Cameron Dante. A large part of modern corporate church music does not fit the traditional pattern of "hymnody", but its literary content is largely identical (for example, modern songs like "Before the Throne of God" are true "hymns" though they are not intentionally written for the traditional hymn instruments (i.e. an organ).

universe is simply an expression of the ontological eternal truth within God, then seeking to change something about God **is** an attempt to change that which is true, a truth that is not fluid and can change over a period of time (for instance the truth that today I have £10 in my wallet and tomorrow I may have £30) but a truth that because it exists outside time simply **is**.

So Satan's rebellion was an attempt to create an alternative truth to that which actually was, to bring into being a deceit about who was the sovereign God. In response God thrust him down from his position as archangel and instead placed him in Sheol, the dark place¹⁸.

2.3 - The Fall – An Exercise in Deceit

*"times 17.3.84 bb speech malreported africa rectify
times 19.12.83 forecasts 3 yp 4th quarter 83 misprints verify current issue
times 14.2.84 miniplenty malquoted chocolate rectify
times 3.12.83 reporting bb dayorder doubleplusungood refs unpersons rewrite fullwise upsub
antefiling"
"1984", George Orwell*

The very first words from the mouth of the serpent in Genesis 3 are an attempt to distort the truth of God's sovereignty and his being. The question "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" presents two separate but connected attacks on the truth of God. The first attack is that the command presented ('You must not eat from any tree in the garden') is not the original command given by God (which is of course 'You are free to eat from **any** tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and

¹⁸ Isaiah 14:15

evil¹⁹). In actual fact, the command that the serpent presents is practically the diametric opposite of that which God gave (short of the injunction on eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil it is perfectly opposite). I want to suggest that given this is the first occurrence in Scripture of an attack on God and what is true, this is not insignificant. The attempted reversal of truth in Genesis 3:1 is almost **the** archetype for all sin from there on.

The second attack is related to the first. The specific phrasing of the question “Did God really say?” is not so much a direct denial but rather a raising of doubt. Though the quotation of God that the serpent uses is utterly false, his way is not through an outright denial of God’s truth but rather through a small questioning, going for just the first few percents instead of the full 100%. This raising of doubt though is coupled in the first verse with the outright falsity of the serpents quoting of God to make a subtle theological point. Whereas the misquoting of God is equivalent to a 95% untruth (for the serpent is in some sense correct in that at least one of the trees of the garden **is** forbidden to Adam and Eve), the way that the doubt is raised (“Did God really say?”) is phrased in almost an innocuous way, almost apologetically, a “5%” untruth for it doesn’t actually challenge the truth, it merely inquires of the listener to once again affirm that the truth **is** the truth. The underlying theological point though is neither of these non-polarities – the usage of these two opposite ended attacks on truth is to emphasise that **any** attempt to subvert the truth, whether an outright denial or simply an invitation to question **is** an attack on truth.

¹⁹ Genesis 2:16-17

Eve's response to the serpent is equally revealing. Though she affirms that the injunction on eating fruit only applies to the tree in the middle of the garden (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), she appends to the commandment by saying "... and you must not **touch it**, or you will die". Her words have already been affected by the serpent's words and out of her mouth come an untruth. It is not clear here whether she simply forgets at this point what the command is. This may be the case, but it could be that something with a greater spiritual dynamic is happening. What may be occurring at this point is that the untruth that the serpent has first propagated is in some sense infectious, that it has passed to the first human female and "contaminated" her. Such an occurrence would be compatible with the idea that words themselves have powerful spiritual force, that "mighty speech acts" are in some sense not simply the domain of God but also of angels and humans. Language, thoughts and the speech that articulates them are not simply a medium of communication but are the vectors upon which reality, and attempts to distort or deny reality, are carried. Though human beings are spiritual / relational creatures, that "spiritual-relationality" is changed from being an isolated individual experience to one of community by transmission, and that transmission requires a medium.

The serpent's words of deception then are now practised by Eve. It is almost as if once the serpent has spoken untruth Eve now engages herself in the exercise of untruth. If this is so, it raises an interesting observation, for it means that if we are

wanting to read the story of the introduction of sin into humanity in terms of truth and deceit **rather** than simply willful disobedience, then it is verse 3 in Genesis 3 that is the moment of the occurrence of Original Sin, not verse 6.

2.4 - There is knowing and there is knowing

'That is not said right,' said the Caterpillar.

'Not quite right, I'm afraid,' said Alice, timidly; some of the words have got altered.'

'It is wrong from beginning to end,' said the Caterpillar decidedly, and there was silence for some minutes.

"Alice's Adventures in Wonderland", Lewis Carroll

Now in the Fall narrative we reach a point that demonstrates linguistically the connections we made earlier between truth, nakedness and sexual expression. The serpent says to Eve – "You will not die; or God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." What it exactly means to be "like God, knowing good and evil" is at the core of understanding what the prize being offered by eating the fruit is.

There must be more to the meaning of knowing good and evil than simply cerebral understanding. What it cannot mean is simply that by eating the fruit of the tree Adam and Eve knew what good and evil was. They already knew that some things were not *tob*, for God had laid a prohibition on eating the fruit of the tree in Genesis 2 and Eve is aware of that prohibition in her reply to the serpent. She understands that the command has been given, and that to transgress the command would be wrong. She is aware of what good and evil are.

Is the knowledge that the texts speak of ethical? Vogel thinks:

“The Bible frequently uses the words “good” and “bad” separately, but sometimes “good and bad” are found together as an expression. Indeed, many texts speak of “the knowledge of good and bad” or of “the knowledge of good and evil” with a moral connotation. The expression “*tob* and *ra*” can be disjunctive in meaning: *tob* as distinct from *ra*. “And as for your little ones ... your children who today do not yet know (*yada*) *tob* and *ra*” (Deut 1:39; see Isa 7:15-16). This is generally translated: “these children are not yet able to discern good and evil”. This text can be used to confirm the interpretation which sees the tree as the symbol of moral discernment.”²⁰

This seems a satisfactory answer, but one question still remains to be answered. In what way does God know good and evil, given that on eating the fruit of the tree, the man “has now become like **one of us**, knowing good and evil”²¹? The statement by God begs the question, what exactly does it mean for God to *yada tob wahra*, and if we cannot say the same thing about God knowing good and evil that we can about humans, can we come to a conclusion about Adam and Eve “knowing good and evil” that we could not come to in regard to God?

What I mean is this. It would be absurd to speak of God knowing good and evil in that he came to discern what things were good and what things were evil. Such a

²⁰ Vogels, Walter; “*Like One of Us : Knowing TOB and RA*; in Semeia 81.1, p149

²¹ Genesis 3:22

view would be based in the assumption that the good and bad things were independent of God, that he came to be in a universe that already had good and bad things in them and that he has engaged in a process of discerning this particular “good thing” and that particular “bad thing”. I would argue that such a view is inconsistent with the traditional orthodox understanding of God.

But if that were so then the second option, that the humans come to understand the ethicality of certain objects and actions is simply untenable, because when applied to God it would imply that “good” and “evil” are concepts external to God and that he discerns them within the universe as moral poles within which he finds himself operating. In such a framework God discovers, almost accidentally, that he is “good”. Once again such an approach does not fit into the traditional understanding of God, for God is the creator of all things, heavens and earth, and is therefore the creator of good and evil, for these moral judgments operate in respect to him, not externally to him.

So in what way does God “know good and evil”? Vogels wants to argue that God “knows” good and evil in that he experiences it:

“Whatever the serpent meant to say and the human being understood, God states at the end of the story “See, the human being has become like one of us, knowing good and bad” (3:22). He thereby proves that the serpent who had promised that they would be like *Elohim* (3:5) was right. God’s statement could mean that the human being has become like God himself (grammatically, *Elohim* is plural) or else that he has something in

common with God and the members of the divine council. **In both cases the human being had become like God through the experience of good and bad.**

Knowing good and bad is, indeed, a divine attribute. God created the human being as a partner with whom he enters into communication. An authentic relationship must be based on the liberty of the two partners. If one dominates the other, there is no mutual respect. God does not completely dominate the human being but leaves him free. God runs the risk of experiencing not only joy and harmony but also anguish and disharmony in his relationship with the human being.²²

I want to argue that at this point that Vogels' analysis becomes entirely unsatisfactory. It is based upon a number of premises which are shaky in the extreme:

- 1) That God "runs the risk of experiencing not only joy and harmony but also anguish and grief" posits a passable God who is affected by his creation – that God "runs the **risk**" is further the language of Open Theists. While it is not the scope of this essay to enter into that debate, the work of Thomas Weinandy (Does God Suffer? 2000) is a serious reposte to the passable God of Moltmann et al.
- 2) On another note, and pertinent to the question at hand, this answer still posits that God is somehow subject to good and evil, that he experiences it in the same way that humans now experience it, that it is part of the

²² Vogels, Walter; *"Like One of Us : Knowing TOB and RA*; in Semeia 81.1, p154

extrinsic universe within which he operates. Is that an adequate thing to say of a God who says:

“Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?”²³

What I mean is this – can a God who created the whole universe be under the influence of good and evil things within it? The God that Vogels presents as interacting with Adam and Eve is one who is subservient to good and evil and their effects on his life in the same way as they are – otherwise they would **not** know good and evil in the same way that he does (Gen 3:23).

I want to suggest that this is an utterly inadequate way to speak of God “knowing good and evil”. Rather, there is something more subtle going on here, a “knowing” that transcends simply discerning the ethical content of something. For example, the first time something is called “good” is Genesis 1:4 (“God saw that the light was good”). Now we ask ourselves – when God saw that the light was “good”, was he observing that “goodness” as something that the light just happened to be (e.g. that God created the light and it just happened to be good, though it could have been bad)? Or, was it that the light was good because God had created it to be good – it could no more become bad than a caterpillar could become a bulldozer. The latter is the correct answer and that leads us to the important observation that becomes the hinge for understanding not just the Fall but the whole dynamic of sin. **When God “knows” something to be good in**

²³ Job 40:1

the Creation narrative, he does not just discern it to be such, rather he is the one who, by design, makes it intrinsically so.

To clarify – the knowledge of good and evil that God exercises is not so much a passive, receptive knowledge but an active determination of the moral content of an action or a being. Throughout Genesis 1, when God “sees” that something is good he is not simply passively observing a random by-product of his creative act. Rather, he is observing that which so is **because he has determined it to be.**

Now we see the temptation made to Eve by the serpent, and how it fits very clearly into his own rebellion against the sovereignty of God. When the serpent says “You will become like God, knowing good and evil” he means that Adam and Eve will become their own moral arbiters within the universe. They will be able to determine what actions and beings are good and evil, without respect to the one who actually created them. Ultimately, they will be able to, and will attempt to, construct an alternative truth to that which God has in reality made. They will engage in deceit in that they will willingly seek to alter the moral value of the universe, deciding for themselves what is good and evil – and their valuations of good and evil will necessarily conflict with those of God, with those that actually are. They will place themselves in a place of *heterologeō* to God, “other speaking”, declaring that which simply is not so to be otherwise. They will attempt to become like God, deciding (“knowing”) what is good and evil.

2.5 - Where are You?

*Bang bang, he shot me down
Bang bang, I hit the ground
Bang bang, that awful sound
Bang bang, my baby shot me down.
Nancy Sinatra*

The cry of God as he walks through the Garden after the Fall is not a lament at a physical violation of the space given to them by the humans, but of a relational absence. “Where are you?” is the cry of God to Adam and Eve when he realises that they are now out of synch with reality, the true state of being.

The significance of Adam and Eve “knowing” that they are naked is the anxiety of being found vulnerable and open; of their own truth, which now is set against that of God, being set up against God’s truth and not running concurrently with it. One could explore the significance of their initial covering of their sexual organs, but this has probably little to do with inter-human power dynamics. I want to suggest that the covering of the sexual organs may be because their function as tools of open and truthful union between male and female, and as agents of signification of the union between Christ and the Elect (Gen 2:24, Eph 5:31-32), have been severely compromised, for the humans are now living at “*heterologia*” with each other and God. The fig leaf is the largest of all the foliage of the Middle East²⁴, yet they still need to hide behind bushes and trees as God comes into their

²⁴ Hamilton, Victor P; *Genesis*; p191

midst. They can no longer be naked (truthful) at all in front of the Divine, rather they usurp his sovereignty:

“Walsh (JBL 96 : 161-177) has already drawn attention to the inversion of roles that characterises this narrative: how the man listens to his wife, instead of God, the woman to the creature, and so on. The very phraseology of these verses strengthens his observations. Actions hitherto characteristic of the creator are now ascribed to the woman. She “saw *that* the tree was *good*,” clearly echoing the refrain of Genesis 1, “God saw ... that it was good”. In chap.2 it is the LORD God who *takes* the man and the rib ... here she takes the fruit. Hitherto it has been God who has made all that man requires; now man and wife attempt to make loincloths. **The human pair are shown usurping divine prerogatives as well as explicitly disobeying God’s express word.**”²⁵

Adam and Eve are now trapped in their world of alternative truth set against God’s truth. For example, when God asks “Have you eaten from the tree which I commanded you not to eat”, the simple answer “Yes” would place them into “*homologia*” with God. Instead, Adam attempts to create justification for his new truth – “The woman gave me the fruit”.

The reversal of truth that Adam and Eve have engaged in is poetically indicated by the order in which the sins and curses are displayed by God; the sins are displayed as man, woman and serpent (vv9-13) and the judgements as serpent,

²⁵ Wenham, Gordon; *Genesis 1-15*; p75

woman and man (vv14-19)²⁶. This chiasmus is obviously a standard Hebrew poetic device, but in the context of the humans entering into heterologia it displays that they and the serpent are totally out of synch with God and even with what they have done.

2.6 - Covering Heterologia

Most truths are so naked that people feel sorry for them and cover them up, at least a little bit.
Edward R Murrow

Genesis 3 contains two references to God dealing with the act of heterologia that the humans have engaged in. The first is found in verse 15 and has been traditionally viewed as a messianic prophecy (“he will strike your head”) as far back as at least the LXX²⁷ and the 3rd Century BCE²⁸. Of at least equal interest here though is the making of clothes for the humans by God in verse 21. This seems almost incidental, but actually has theological significance.

It is God who makes the clothes to cover their shame. As we have discussed above, the shame experienced by Adam and Eve is the awareness of the vulnerability of their *heterologeo* with God. Smedes has an excellent set of “sources of shame”²⁹ and we can see on examining them that they are all founded in either an untruth about a person, a situation (the lover who promises reward for sex then leaves) or in humans living in *heterologeo* amongst themselves (the guilt of one who blames herself for the death of another) or with

²⁶ Hamilton, Victor P; *Genesis*; p196

²⁷ Hamilton, Victor P; *Genesis*; p199

²⁸ Wenham, Gordon; *Genesis 1-15*; p80

²⁹ Smedes, Lewis; *Shame and Grace*; pp17-27

God (the man who constantly seeks approval / never seeks approval because his sense of self worth which should come from God doesn't because he lives in a *heterologeio* world independent of the Divine). Shame comes from the necessity of concealing my truth from the others, or from the vulnerability which comes from them knowing what is true about me. Human beings are observably widely incapable of living in *homologeio* with each other, let alone God. The fig leaves that Adam and Eve have donned are a symbol of their shame of allowing God to see what is true about them.

God's solution though is to provide clothes himself. There is no attempt at this point in the Biblical narrative to address the issue of shame (though see point 2 below) but rather to equip the humans to navigate the world with their shame in the best possible way, that is, equipped by God to do so and not by human hands. There seems to be nothing initially in the text that suggests why God has to produce alternative shame-coverings for them to replace the fig leaves – the leaves serve the same purpose – but it is the fact that the clothes come from God that shows that the Divine is active in dealing with the consequences of Adam and Eve's rejection of His truth³⁰.

The Fall account closes then with the humans having sought to create their own framework of guilt and in doing so having placed themselves at odds with what is

³⁰ That said, there is a subtlety in the language used for the covering, for God makes coats of עֹר, meaning "skin" and if he has produced a covering of skin then that means that the animal which it came from has died. We see in the initial covering of shame by God's, not humans', hands the idea of blood being shed to deal with the humans' act of recreating truth.

actually true and living in the consequential shame. The point of hope though is that God rejects their attempts to manage the disaster which has befallen them and instead provides not only a management system “for the time being” but also an indication of the work he will do in the future to set humans back in *homologeo* with him. It is that work to which we now turn.

3 - Pastoral Examples

*I must be hallucinating
Watching angels celebrating.
Could this be reactivating
All my senses dislocating?
This must be a strange deception
By celestial intervention.
Leavin' me the recollection
Of your heavenly connection.
"There must be an angel", Eurythmics*

What up to now has been simply theology and biblical interpretation is in fact hugely applicable to our pastoral encounters. As one who has been pastoring now for a number of years, particularly in the area of sex and sexuality but also on a more general level, I have begun to make two critical observations:

- 1) A large number of pastoral situations seem to involve issues of truth and deception, both explicit situations of deceit and denial but also subconscious ownerships of "untruth" and denials of truth. When those being pastored came into a position of *homologeo* with what was actually true, transformation took place.
- 2) Given that the link between truth and sexuality is so clear, the vast majority of specifically sexual cases I have dealt with have been issues of non *homologeo* with God, i.e. that all sexual dysfunction or neurosis has at its root a wilful or subconscious recreation of reality which had led to a disconnection in the way the person was designed by God to operate sexually. It was the coming to a point of *homologeo* rather than any form of action to handle addiction etc that was the basis for recovery.

The examples below are varied and deal with a number of situations. I have been involved in them all, whether as a one-on-one pastor, the leader of a pastoral small group or have had the personal story of a previous pastoral encounter related to me by the one being currently pastored. In all cases I have changed some of the biographical background for obvious reasons. I will recount the encounter(s) and then make pastoral and theological observations.

A number of these pastoral encounters make certain theological doctrinal assumptions on whether specific actions are sinful. It is not my intent to discuss those decisions, but it should be observed that treating these certain actions **as** sinful and then coming into *homologeō* with God over them led to dramatic spiritual and relational breakthroughs. I leave it to the reader who disagrees with the traditional understandings of sin in these cases to deliver an alternative consideration of how freedom in Christ occurred in these cases.

3.1 - Promiscuity as a consequence of subconscious denial of truth

Love is the answer, but while you are waiting for the answer, sex raises some pretty good questions.

Woody Allen

Stefan was the son of two European immigrants into this country. The youngest of three children by at least a decade, he recalled how he was always the baby of the family. His parents came from a Roman Catholic background and, though not regular weekly Mass attendees, were sufficiently ensconced in Catholic teaching

that despite the fact their marriage was failing they had not considered divorce. The result was that Stefan grew up in an environment where he knew his parents weren't on the best of terms, and being the youngest and a boy, his mother would often use him as her confidant.

Stefan came to the pastoral group after a string of promiscuous encounters with girls. Despite coming to faith in Christ in his mid teens and being a faithful member of a local evangelical church, he had found himself drawn to serial sexual encounters without almost any ability to stop. He found it impossible to maintain any relationship for more than a few days, and desperately wanted to deal with these problems in his sexual behaviour.

As we discussed his family background he revealed that his mother had told him that he was "a mistake". The pregnancy hadn't been planned and it was actually a shock to his parents that he was going to be born. There was never a suggestion that his parents for one moment considered abortion or adoption, but it was very clear from that moment on that at some early point Stefan had developed a deep anxiety about his very state of being. Crucially, his mother, in not wanting and planning for him and in not realising that he was coming until a few months into the pregnancy had not "brought him into being".

There were two points of *homologeo* in his healing. The first was the full acceptance that his parents had sinned in the circumstances of his conception,

that he was created to all intents and purposes outside of a framework that wanted to create a child and to nurture and love it. His final, tearful and painful, acceptance of this truth, the way things actually were, was the gateway for the second moment of *homologeo*, where he faced up to the root cause of his sexual promiscuity. By accepting the truth of the circumstances of his conception we could see that at the very point of his life when he had been created he had lacked a “sense of being”. This had driven his sexual promiscuity, an almost cannibalistic desire to acquire “being” from those he had sex with (a desire which was the physical manifestation of the spiritual truth that he needed a theotic connection with Christ to “truly be” – Stefan was substituting coming into full being with and drawing his identity from Christ with sexual activity).

We then began a session of prayer for healing of memories, and prayed specifically into the subconscious memory that Stefan had of his conception. We prayed that God would come into that moment by his Holy Spirit and reveal, both today and that moment over 20 years ago, that despite the non-desire of his parents for him he would be totally aware of the truth that God desired him and had planned for him to be. This was the second *homologeo* for him to make, an agreement with the truth of God’s will for him from before the foundation of the world.

Leanne Payne, Andy Comiskey and Mario Bergner were some of the first to deal with “sense of being” as being key to the wholeness of a person. Though these

writers speak chiefly into areas of sexual brokenness, William T Kirwan talks of the same themes on a more generic level:

“Our views about ourselves are molded largely by the reflective appraisals we receive from people significant in our lives. Parents, siblings, friends, and peers are all mirrors by which we receive feedback about how we are acting: **those individuals constantly indicate to us how they feel towards us.**”³¹

The only difference between this and the view of Payne et al is that they write (and have found, like the author, to be pastorally true) that these views we form of ourselves are generated pre-natal as well as post-natal. Kirwan makes the observation that since the Fall humans do not live in a position of full truth but rather are in an environment of “assumptive truth” which is the creation of the human ego. As Kirwan writes:

“In spite of their creation in the image of God, Adam and Eve wanted to become equal with God, and so they ate fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Suddenly and catastrophically, the image of God in humankind was shattered ... Adam and Eve no longer viewed themselves and the rest of creation through the framework of the image of God, but through the framework of their own egos ... They had to look to themselves for their own integration. Their own egos became the axis around which their thinking, feeling and actions revolved. Their identity, no

³¹ Kirwan, William T; *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counseling*; p74

longer God-centred, became self-centered. **The human being instead of God became their standard of truth.**³²

What had happened in the case of Stefan was that his ego had constructed a truth that he was unloved and unwanted. Until he entered into *homologeo* with the real truth, that his creator had designed and purposed him, he was destined to attempt to resolve the disconnection between his ego's construction of truth and the actual state of affairs by "ingesting" his being from others through sexual encounters.

The effect of the prayer for a sense of being at conception was remarkable. The next week he entered the group with a completely different demeanour – confident and assured in his being as a man created and intended by God. A few months later he departed for another European country to spend 6 months as an intern at a Christian community and after this half year was invited to become a full staff member, organising weekend holidays / spiritual retreats and longer periods for church groups all over that country and the wider continent. He hadn't even considered himself capable of this ministry twelve months previously, but God had so remoulded his sense of self within God's truth that he had made enormous strides in his relationship with Christ over the previous year.

³² Kirwan, William T; *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counseling*; p78

3.2 - Coming into a homologue of gender identity

*Drive boy dog boy
Dirty numb angel boy
In the doorway boy
She was a lipstick boy
She was a beautiful boy
And tears boy
And all in your innerspace boy
"Born Slippy", Underworld*

From the age of 13, Edward had been attracted to men and boys. He began sexual activity, first with older teens but then with adult men. Very soon he developed a gender insecurity and, trying to become a woman, began taking oestrogen injections. Soon he was developing both small breasts and hips and his facial hair began to lessen. He describes being "both frightened and delighted" by what was happening.

Entering into a transgendered community, he paid to have his new breasts further enlarged with silicone gel. He continued taking hormone treatment, but was increasingly uncomfortable with the person he was physically turning into, not because he didn't want to look like a woman, but because despite the hormone treatment and physical changes he still felt lost in his identity.

Eventually Edward engaged in a moment of *homologeo* when, joining a local church, he decided to stop taking hormones and let his body revert back to his normal state of being. He was left however still with female breasts, so a member of the congregation paid for the surgery for them to be removed (this was the point at which the author came into contact with him). At the same time he began an internal spiritual examination to discover what had made him want to become

a woman in the first place. Working with a pastor, he began to see very clearly that as a child his father had been emotionally distant and that he had disconnected from him. However, not wanting to be a man like his father had left him thinking that the only alternative was to be a woman. Edward received prayer to heal his rift with his Father, his consequent rift with the first person of the Trinity and to establish a sense of “maleness” within in, the maleness that he had been created to exercise. The key to journey to wholeness was coming into *homologeo* with that which God had said was his identity – a human male.

Alan Medinger writes:

“Most little boys grow into manhood without ever giving a conscious thought to the meaning of manhood. In fact, most men would be hard pressed to define manhood ... [I asked] the husbands of my daughter and foster daughter – solid men, both of them – what it meant to be a man. Their responses were identical: a wide-eyed blank stare and “Huh?” ... They had grown into manhood without ever having felt any need to define or describe what it was they were becoming. The natural course of events, responding to the changes in their bodies and to their changing and expanding environments, had simply carried them along from infancy to adult manhood. No goals were set, no steps were planned, no conscious monitoring of progress took place; they just did what came naturally”.³³

³³ Medinger, Alan; *Growth into Manhood*; p67

Medinger writes that men are men both physically **and** relationally, that is, that there are obvious physical attributes (penis, facial hair, more height, weight, upper body build than women) that normally define male, but there are also relational attributes. How men inter-relate (both with the same sex and with the other), how they show and practice affection, what place they take within a relationship – all these things are an aspect of, though individually fail to really describe, what masculinity is. Medinger begins to explore this (but inadequately I feel) when he says:

“In looking at our sanctified bodies, then, let’s start by looking at what God did with us as men. God did not give us just give any bodies; He gave us the bodies of men. This means that, contrasted with women, He gave us an extra measure of strength in terms of muscle size, and He gave us the heart and lung capacity to support those muscles. He gave man a brain that would tend to focus on the physical world. God does nothing arbitrarily ... Our bodies give us an idea of God’s purpose for us as men. It is reasonable, then, that we usually find in a healthy man a person who not only accepts his responsibility to use his strength for God’s purposes but who also gains a sense of fulfilment both from using these strengths and from knowing that he has a reservoir of them to call on whenever it is required.”³⁴

Chiefly, it is the father who calls his son into manhood, for he presents the model for the child as to what a man is. Leanne Payne says:

³⁴ Medinger, Alan; *Growth into Manhood*; pp96-97

“Men capable of loving their families, and in possession of their masculine identity, are on the natural plane the chief channels God has ordained for passing manhood on to man. ‘A man is never a man until his father tells him he is a man,’ is the way the old folk-saying captures this important psychological insight.

Every boy or girl must separate his or her identity from that of the mother. We are born not knowing that we are separate from our mothers. Slowly we discover this, and begin the hard task of separating our personal and sexual identities from hers. Psychologists point out progressions from infancy to maturity which involve many steps of psychosocial development. There are the usual, normal progressions, and when we miss a step we are in trouble.

The step of self-acceptance ideally comes just after puberty. Puberty / adolescence is the narcissistic stage for all of us. While in it, we are overly concerned and self-conscious about ourselves (especially our bodies) and whether or not we are acceptable to others or to ourselves. This behaviour, if we continue to engage in it, translates into the wrong kind of self-love.”³⁵

For Edward, he came into *homologeo* with the fact that his father had been totally distant from him as a child, resulting in a rejection within him of maleness. Upon realising this, it was then his wilful *homologeo* to accept that God had created

³⁵ Payne, Leanne; *Crisis in Masculinity*; pp88-89

and designed him to be male that allowed that true identity to be placed within him by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3.3 - Existential Nihilism and the recreation of veracity

Nihilism is best done by professionals
Iggy Pop

Perhaps one of the most clear cut examples of the need for *homologeo* is the case of Daniel. A mature student, he presented with an internal lethargy that had developed into an inability to produce academic work. This had then been compounded by an attempt to fabricate an academic entry which had been disclosed.

Closer reflection revealed a built in pattern within Daniel of wrestling with the truth of events around him. Daniel was involved in a conscious attempt to alter the truth of his circumstances, to wish for what was not, ultimately to create a reality in response to that in which he found himself. Exploring his childhood it was discovered that he was one of a pair of identical twins, but his brother had been larger than him in the womb and sat on top of him, so his mother was unaware right until birth that she was expecting two children. The consequence of this was that she had not related to him at all while he was in the womb and this had left him with a sense of non-being which he described as “existential annihilationalism” – at his deepest point he felt he simply didn’t exist. This had led him to attempt to constantly create the reality in which he was operating

within, something that he had been subconsciously doing since childhood and increasingly been aware of doing consciously in recent years.

His existential angst had developed in the past as a homosexual neurosis as a reaction to his non-connection with any male role-models and this had been largely dealt with, but the underlying existential annihilationalism had never been addressed. There were then three points of *homologeō*. The first was a clear confession of his own sin in creating deception. The second was then the realisation of the truth of his gestation and pregnancy, that his mother had not known him and relationally brought him into being. This involved an acceptance and forgiveness of this “sin” of neglect against him.

The third stage in healing was entering into *homologeō* about his being in Christ, that his identity and the truth of who he was ultimately came from Christ and not only his parents. In particular, as he explored concepts of theosis he began to see his identity not so much as something independent within himself but as part of the life of community, amongst other humans and amongst and within God.

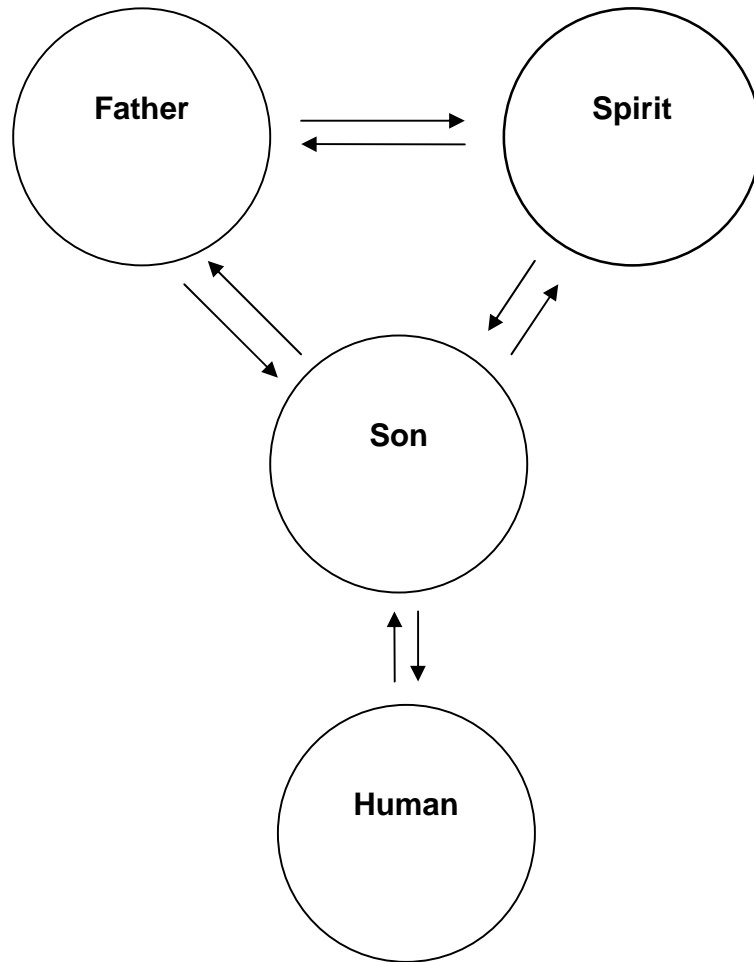
Christoforos Stavropoulos writes of Theosis that:

“The theosis of man, his perfect union with God made possible by grace, will be realised completely in the future age after the resurrection of the dead. However, beginning in this life, this union which divinises people can be made more and more real. Our corrupt and weakened nature

ought to be transformed little by little and adapted to eternal life ... The work of our theosis, our union with God, is not transmitted to us in some kind of mechanical fashion ... it will be realised with the cooperation of man and God. This subjective aspect of our union with God provides the way of theosis which we must follow ... The Holy Spirit is the great resident of the church. It is there that the Holy Spirit exercises all of his sanctifying and deifying power. The work of our theosis, which our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished objectively, is completed by the Holy Spirit, adapting it to the life of every faithful Christian."³⁶

If we think back to our picture of God as truth that we used at the beginning of our discussion, we can see the integration into the life of truth of the Trinity that theosis engenders.

³⁶ Stavropoulos, Christoforos; *Partakers of Divine Nature* in Clendenin (Ed.); *Eastern Orthodox Theology*; p188



The union with Christ (that is signified by marriage) places humanity back into the relationship of openness and truth with God that existed in the Garden before the Fall. Humans, in coming into *homologeo* do make two crucial acceptances – firstly they accept and repent from their own construction of truth and instead accept the eternal truth of the one who is existentially true, a God who is not just a God who acts truthfully but **is** truthfully, for nothing that is of him is not known by the other members of the Trinity. However, the second *homologeo* that is vital

is the recognition of Christ as the point of connection into the life of truth of the Trinity, for it is his act of *kenosis* that in fact integrates him with humanity, not the other way round. Without a *homologeo* of the incarnation (i.e. the case of those who reject the divinity of Christ or his humanity) the soul never comes into a position where theosis, integration into the life of the Trinity, can take place. Since “being true” is the pinnacle of divine existence, and since being restored back into full relationship with the true Trinity is the pinnacle of human destiny, rejecting the locus of that reintegration is a denial of the means to any progress in the Christian life.

4 - Coming into Truth

*In Xanadu did Kublai Khan
a stately pleasure-dome decree,
where Alph, the sacred river, ran
through caverns measureless to man
down to a sunless sea,*
The Ballad of Kublai Khan, Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Human beings are engaged everyday in the attempt to construct reality on their own terms. The post-modern society that we live in is perhaps the clearest example of that – everybody has their own truth and no-one’s truth is superior or inferior to the other’s. In rejecting the concept of the “Metanarrative” modern humans have specifically formulated a world-view that dismisses the idea of an ultimate truth they need to come into *homologeo* with. Stanley Grenz writes:

“The postmodern outlook entails the end of the appeal to any central legitimating myth whatsoever. Not only have all the reigning master narratives lost their credibility, but the idea of a grand narrative is itself no longer credible ... The postmodern era is a period in which everything is “delegitimized.” Consequently, the postmodern outlook demands an attack on any claimant to universality – it demands, in fact, a “war on totality”.³⁷

However, the attack on truth in today’s generation is possibly even worse, for in some cases there is a less than liberal disregard for meta-narratives. What we are finding increasingly in the past decade is not so much the rejection of any meta-narrative but instead the creation of an alternative one to that which the

³⁷ Grenz, Stanley; *A Primer on Postmodernism*; p45

Bible presents, and a conscious decision to reject, and even prohibit, the Scriptural one. Some might say that this culture conflict is the main current struggle at the moment in the USA (typified by the Bush / Kerry Presidential election) as it attempts to decide as a nation what exactly “is true”. Even in the UK we are seeing shifts towards corporate truth statements that may bear little or no scientific evidence but are held as objective staging posts in social debate³⁸. What we are seeing in the West then is a full scale corporate engagement in *heterologeo*, both with God and with each other. Given that it *homologeo* that

4.1 - Pastoral Homologeo

*I wanna know the structure of your heart
Why do you tear my broken soul apart?
Is it a dream? Or my reality?
Love comes without "after warranty"
"Runaway", Groove Coverage*

These are just three pastoral examples and if I had space I would provide more. The point made is clear though – it is the exercise of *homologeo*, whether accepting the reality, in relation to the Divine, about ourselves or the reality about God that initiates the re-integration of a human into the life of the eternal and true Trinity.

³⁸ I am of course unashamedly referring here to the current view in the West, even propagated in Parliament, that homosexuality is something that is built into a human and not something that is developmentally formed. This view is now held by a large majority of the social and political makers of society, despite the fact that the scientific work that is often cited to support it (Kinsey, Hamer, LeVay etc) has all been to a large extent discredited.

As long as men and women live in *heterologeo* with God, each other and themselves, and not just their selves now but throughout their entire lives, they will be operating in some state of dysfunction. Coming into *homologeo* is in every sense coming literally into God, for by placing ourselves at one which is true we place ourselves with the One who is ultimately true.

It is the role of the Christian pastor then to help those he is pastoring to come into this place of *homologeo*, and to help get them there to assist in exploring and recognising *heterologeo*. And, I say with far less caution than some might, it is the actions of many “Christian” pastors who connive with, acquiesce with or simply ignore or even embrace *heterologeo* that is the cause of the continuation of many deep wounds within our congregations today. One cannot simply pastor someone to “do what seems best for them” – such an approach was shown over 2,500 years ago to be pastorally redundant³⁹.

The only resting place for wounded souls is integration into the life of the Trinity and that necessitates *homologeo* with God. *Homologeo* is literally the path to God, for as we mentally and wilfully become one with God, we become spiritually the same. *Homologeo* now on earth is a symbol of *homologeo* in eternity – the union of naked and unashamed persons, all knowing and all accepting and all loving, centred around the throne of God crying “Holy, Holy, Holy” – not unclean, or even clean, but Holy as God is holy.

³⁹ Proverbs 14:12

When the psalmist cries “You desire truth in the inner parts” he is not joking. What God desires most of all from his people is to be at *homologeo* with them, so they may be integrated into His life. From *homologeo*, the very essence of who God is, springs love and life to all who are connected to him. The call of the disciple is to enter into a life of increasing *homologeo*, engaging in the work of sanctification till the literal consummation of the Elect into the life of the Trinity on the final day.

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