

*For the invisible things of him
since the creation of the world are clearly seen,
being perceived through the things that are made,
even his everlasting power and divinity.
(Rom 1:20a)*

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God and *Creation ex-Deo* revisited

This thesis has thus far arrived at the concept of the universe being created *ex-Deo* instead of *ex-nihilo* as the answer to reality, and this contradicts neither Scripture nor the dictum “nothing comes from nothing” that everybody knows as self-evident truth from experience. The universe was created by God, who is greater than and distinct from it. This does not mean that the universe, although derived from God, is eternal; not in the least, because it had not existed before God created it. The universe, in the nature that it was created *ex-Deo*, is therefore capable of independent imparted existence and self-sustenance with all its attendant properties or given sets of physical laws as it came from a spark of the self-sustaining eternal God. It is as temporary or as permanent as God has allowed it to exist and be sustained in its current state, depending on His purposes. This is the fundamental point that is argued in this book. The universe is temporal and sustained from what has been converted from God. God could reconvert all or part of the universe into something else or back to the original part of Himself as He so wishes at any time in the future. This is consistent with our idea of His almighty-ness. In His revelation, He has given us a glimpse of what He plans to do with the universe in the near and far future. Scientists, trying to discover the future of the universe by making projections from the current physical laws that govern its processes, could only make speculations at best, and without accepting the existence of God and His revelation, the picture of the future world painted by them does not look optimistic at all. This is understandable, as after all, how could anyone know the plan of God without hearing from His revelation?

Coming back to our main point, since only a small part of God has been transformed into the universe, as we believe, this does not change God's overall essence. A part of Him *unbecame* (that is, no more a distinct part of Himself) so as to become distinctly something else – with its own assumed unique attributes or properties – with a particular self or personality! What has become from that bit of God is no longer part of the original God, although it of necessity retains a trace or vestige of God's own characteristics. In turn, God might have 'lost' a bit of His substance, but his loss is the universe's gain. His loss is also our living personal gain, as we shall see later the impact of this thought reflecting on His tremendous love for His creation. Creation *ex-Deo* is really *the unifying solution* to the many encumbered arguments offered over the years in upholding and defending the providence of God in creation.

In their rightful zeal to defend creationism (and most of all the classical concepts of God) against other *'isms* (e.g. pantheism, deism, materialism), theologians in the early years of Christianity have resorted to the axiom of *creation ex-nihilo* as the shield of defence because it was thought to be "admirably suited for cutting off all sorts of errors at the root"*¹ – notwithstanding its logical impossibility as we, and others no doubt, have argued. "Nihilists" have said that the expression *ex-nihilo* is not a description of a pre-existing matter from which the world was made. The physical world that exists was rather "called into existence" by God's almighty power. This very thought comes ever so close to the concept of *ex-Deo* and yet misses it by just a mere non-admission of the logical conclusion! If only we could just ask: "Called into existence from what?" The background presupposition of a classical attribute, the "indivisibility" of God, is (in the opinion of the author) the stumbling block preventing acceptance of or clear insight into this logical sequel. Perhaps we should reflect upon the distinguishing difference between God's thinking and acting, to be discussed shortly.

Divine self-sacrifice

It would be timely for the main schools of Christendom to do a serious review of their stand on *ex-nihilo* in the light of a growing body of research and thoughts welling up against this traditional concept. Everyone would like to revere the living God and levy praises on Him for His almighty works and to avoid staining Him with imperfections

and 'defects' as we perceive them in our piety. Engaging ourselves calmly in further thoughts on the subject should reveal to us that *ex-Deo* is the ultimate ground and substance of all knowledge, the end of all contradiction. It leads us to God, the unmathematicable theory of everything. Creation *ex-Deo* in fact provides the first glimpse of divine self-sacrifice, the reality that *God truly gives of Himself that others might exist and live!*

The whole creation is a genuine give-away from His Self. Out of His abundance He gave, truly in the ontological sense. Let us reflect upon this for a moment. We have a glimpse, nay, more than a glimpse, of this reality as portrayed in all living creation for all to see – a grain of wheat must die so that a stalk might grow to produce more grain and feed other living creatures. Creatures die and their dead matter provides manure for the growth of seed-yielding plants that live and die in turn to nourish various other levels of life. And the cycles continue, day in and day out, in every generation. This familiar pattern, written all over the natural world, is (as it were to me) to press home the point of Creation *ex-Deo*.

Sir Norman Anderson, quoting C S Lewis' thoughts, argues that this pattern or principle of death and rebirth "can be found in nature precisely because it was first there in God."^{*2} This principle is supremely illustrated by the incarnation [of God's Son], according to Sir Anderson. I find myself compelled to agree with him wholeheartedly. Does this not call for God's supreme worthiness of worship by everyone? Each one of us is derived from the "substance" of the living God, by whatever name He is called, and whether we chose to believe in Him or not! Everyone and everything owe his/her/its existence to this original "Something." Bits of God died (ceased to exist) that others (transformed bits) might live as separate individuals in their own right.

Without divine self-sacrifice, there would be no creatures to echo their appreciation to the Life Giver with dance, music and songs of praise. Whilst suffering is part of the package and all too familiar to us in the present life, what would it mean to be given the promise of an eternal life of bliss and edifying interactions with fellow cosmic immortals in some future time when the lessons from suffering and evil have been learnt by all? It may be unimaginable now as to what is in store for mankind, as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath

prepared for them that love him” (1Cor 2:9). A tantalizing glimpse of the new “paradise on earth” is given in the last chapters of the Bible. To the believer seeing this hope, it sufficiently brings forth praises from his heart.

Praise Yah!

Praise Yahweh from the heavens!

Praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels! Praise him, all his army!

Praise him, sun and moon! Praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you heavens of heavens, You waters that are above the heavens.

*Let them praise the name of Yahweh, For he commanded,
and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever.*

He has made a decree which will not pass away.

Praise Yahweh from the earth, you great sea creatures, and all depths!

Lightning and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling his word;

mountains and all hills; fruit trees and all cedars;

wild animals and all livestock; small creatures and flying birds;

kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth;

both young men and maidens; old men and children:

let them praise the name of Yahweh, for his name alone is exalted.

His glory is above the earth and the heavens.

(Psalms 148:1-13)

Substance of God

What is the substance or essence that God is made of? Scripture reveals that God is spirit (*John 4:24*). This spirit is invisible and non-material. Is this invisible spirit simple or complex? We have argued that God has transformed part of Himself into the complex physical universe. He must therefore be anything but simple. He did not ‘evolve’ complexity from simplicity or from nothing. He must be a unique spirit that is fluid, of multiple complexities and capable of change or transformation. This does not mean that his overall essence changes. When Scripture says that God does not change, it

refers to His unchanging character (not His spiritual substance) – character and qualities like love, goodness and truth, which are all part of His nature. “He cannot deny Himself,” according to the Christian scripture (*2Tim 2:13*). He is what He is and He cannot change it (what He is). He cannot *not be* what He is. “I am Who I am” (*Exodus 3:14*). He finds Himself with whatever He is made of! The marginal reading (given in *NIV*) “I will be what I will be,” is interesting. God can become. And what He is made of, that He may become, is apparently fluid and complex indeed. It is difficult for me to envisage how complex creatures could come from a being if it were of a simple (or homogeneous) substance. God’s complexity would equate to His fullness and abundance, from which He could freely give.

God either finds Himself alone originally with all His true attributes or else He finds Himself with an environment (*materia*) that differs from Him. This has been touched on earlier. Whichever the situation, we are told that there is no competitor to Him. He is the greatest. Does this mean that God is not free? Yes, only in a sense. In reference to His nature, He is not free to be not what He is or what He is made of. He is not free to be not complex, full and abundant. He necessarily self-exists in being what He is. God is limited by His nature, so theologians recognise. However, He is free to move in Space, to do what He wants to do with all the power that He has and limited only by His nature. Since He can transform a part of Himself into something else, He must inherently be free and most powerful indeed! As theologians speak of God in a personal way and that man is made in the image of God, as they believe, would it not be possible to understand God better if we also understand man better? Not only was man created in the image of God, but also One who is called the Son of God came to earth to take the form and image of man, an image that was in the first place the Son’s own! How truly personal can God be so that we might be able to relate to Him through His Son? Is it any wonder that the Son of God affectionately calls His followers “brethren”? And that God calls his believers “sons of God”? In the lineage of Jesus Christ given in the Gospel of Luke, the first man Adam is called a son of God.

Christ himself, like a human, is said to have a soul.*⁵ Most interestingly, God (the Father) too is said to have a soul also in the Scripture.*⁶ This should not be surprising, as Scripture says that humans are made in the image of God (as we have quoted in chapter 1) and Christ is the express image of his Father (*Heb 1:3*). We are all

anthropomorphic-theomorphic in form, as we concluded earlier. However, humans are said to be made from the dust or soil and became living souls upon being imparted with the breath or spirit of God.

Form of the invisible God

Does God have a form or shape? Or is God formless (shapeless)? If so, what does formlessness (or shapelessness) mean? Because Scripture says that God is spirit, many believers think that God has no shape (form). The Hebrew *ruah* and the Greek *pneuma* both refer to spirit as well as to wind.

The wind blows where it wants to, and you hear its sound, but don't know where it comes from and where it is going. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. (*John 3:8*)

The apostle John anticipates the time of the resurrection when believers are “born of the spirit.” In the earthly life of the person before he is to be “born of the spirit” he has a shape – the shape of a human being. After being born of the spirit, he must continue to have a shape thereafter, in order to be recognisable – assuredly, he does not become “shapeless.” The above scripture simply means that we cannot see the spirit or the wind, which is invisible. It does not mean that a spirit has no shape. What cannot be seen is not synonymous with shapelessness. Angels are invisible spirits and we are told that they have shapes – like those of human beings, as we gather from Scripture. God is also called the “father of spirits” (*Heb 12:9*). The word “father” conveys to us the thought that a father looks like his offspring in the natural sense, and this is strengthened by virtue of *Rom 1:20*.

An entity by definition, whether of spirit or of matter, must have a shape to exist in space. Whether we speak of one entity or many entities, they all necessarily have shapes. Shapes are inherent to entities. The sun in our galaxy has the shape of a ball of fire, throwing out flames of heat and light into space. Water has a shape in that it takes the shape of the bottom of its container, a jug or the ocean basin. Evaporated water vapours associate to form into the shapes

of clouds. Atoms and molecules have their own shapes. A collection of gaseous atoms and molecules takes the shape of its container or they float freely in collection as a whole in the atmosphere, being governed by gravity.

In the book of Genesis, we read that the Spirit of God moved (hovered or brooded) over the surface of the waters covering the original earth. Is the Spirit of God that moved like a huge invisible cloud? A closer scriptural analogy is that the Spirit of God, being invisible, is likened to the wind. An invisible *windlike* energetic personality moved over the waters, and further things were created. The spirit of God *emanates from* God the Supreme Being. To be precise in our view of creation, it is the overarching fluid-like spirit of God that transformed portions of itself into the things created. This presupposes that God is embodied – He has a shape or form, and His spirit emanates from Him.

If the invisible Supreme Being has a shape, what does He look like? Can we know? Can we ever know? Such questions have been asked by believers in time immemorial, and we have been given some scriptural answers.

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him (*John 1:18*).

And the Father himself, who has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape (*John 5:37*).

Not that any man has seen the Father, save he which is of God, he has seen the Father (*John 6:46*).

The above scriptures show that Jesus Christ, the one who came from heaven to reveal the invisible Father, has seen the Father, but no humans has, as yet.

No man has seen God at any time (*1John 4:12*)

Christ is the visible *image* of the *invisible God* (*Col 1:15, 2 Cor 4:4*). Therefore, the Supreme God must look like Christ but invisible from human sight and in great glory (brightness and splendour)!

(Compare *Matt 20:21, Romans 1:23*). Will we be able to see God? The apostle Paul gives us a tantalising hope that this is possible.

For now, we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (*1Cor 13:12*).

Seeing someone “face to face” is always used in the Scripture in the usual literal sense of seeing another person visually in close proximity. More scriptures will be quoted to support this shortly.

For the time, Scripture tells to be content in that knowing Christ is like having known the Father (the Supreme Being). The apostle Philip once asked Christ to show him the Father. Note Christ’s reply:

Jesus said unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father? (*John 14:9*).

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him (*John 14:7*).

Those who have seen Christ are *as good as* having seen the Father (Supreme God). The simple implication is: because Christ looks like his Father. The Bible is replete with anthropomorphic images of God, and Christ frequently draws us to view his Father anthropomorphically – so that believers may know God as He is represented by Christ. An anthropomorphic image of God is *a given* in Scripture, and this biblical image is encouraged rather than shied away from. It would not seem justified therefore to hold a dogmatic view that the Father is not anthropomorphic in actuality, even if one does not accept the preponderance of God’s biblical anthropomorphic image as evidence of its truth. Even if God were not anthropomorphic, it does not mean that He has no other shape. It may just mean that His shape is not revealed to human eyesight as yet.

God - a Title

At this point, it is useful to note that the word *God* is a title, not the actual name of the Supreme Being, which in English is commonly rendered as Jehovah (or Yahweh), although the use of the word God almost invariably refers to Jehovah (or Yahweh), unless the scriptural context says otherwise.

The title God or god has also scripturally been applied to angels and to men.

God presides in the great assembly. He judges *among the gods*.
(*Psalms 82:1*)

I said, *You are gods*, all of you are *sons of the Most High*.
(*Psalms 82:6*)

Yahweh said to Moses, "Behold, I have made you *as God* to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet."
(*Exodus 7:1*)

I will give you thanks with my whole heart. Before the *gods*, I will sing praises to you.
(*Psalms 138:1*)

For though there are things that are called "*gods*," whether in the heavens or on earth; as there are many "*gods*" and many "*lords*;" yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we live through him.
(*1Cor 8:5*)

For Yahweh your God, he is God of *gods*, and Lord of *lords*, the great God, the mighty, and the awesome, who doesn't regard persons, nor takes reward.
(*Deut 10:17*)

For you, Yahweh, are most high above all the earth. You are exalted far above all *gods*.
(*Psalms 97:9*)

Even Satan is called a god – “the *god* of this world” (2Cor 4:4).

The word “god” is a title, which simply means someone with great authority and power and to whom respect is due. When it is used of the Supreme Being, it means someone with supreme authority and supreme power, and there is only one such Supreme Being in the universe – his name is Jehovah (or Yahweh), according to the Old Testament. Other beings given similar authority may also be called gods in relation to beings with lesser authority, as seen from the above scriptures.

As the above scriptures indicate, humans have the potential to become “gods.”

In Scripture, the supreme God is usually called “The God.” There is a definite article “the” in the Greek Scripture to distinguish the supreme God from many other “gods” (1Cor 8:5-6) in the ancient Greek and Roman world. In *John 1:1*, we read that “the Word was with *The* God” – a particular and singular “God.”

Anthropomorphism

Some might say that God is incomprehensible and we cannot and must not understand Him in human (anthropomorphic) terms. Many believers see the human form as limited whereas God, they think, cannot be limited. Scientists would like to see God as a non-personal mind process in nature. However, a search into Scripture yields quite a different portrait. It must be admitted that we do not now know the Deity as much as will be possible to know Him at a later time, as we are assured, we nevertheless see that Jesus Christ is the *Mediator between God and Man* (1Tim 2:5). Christ is not the Supreme God (the Father), but he has revealed Him to us as much as is possible to reveal at this time, through the Scripture, and whilst he was on earth.

Now a mediator cannot be the person he is mediating for. For instance, Moses is also called a mediator in Galatians 3:19. Moses, like Jesus, shared a special relationship with God. Both were even called by the respectful title *god* (*Exodus 7:1; John 1:1*) though Jesus is mightier than Moses (*Isaiah 9:6*). One might think that a mediator is required because God Himself cannot be known. In Scripture,

the contrary thought is the case, as the Mediator says that he comes to reveal, not hide, the Father (*Matt 11:27, Luke 10:22*).

In the Old Testament, the book of Daniel (chapter 7) reveals a personality with whom “one like a son of man” interacts. That personality is the *Ancient of Days* who sits on a heavenly throne (a Grand Old Man in the sky, so to speak), whose garment is white as snow, and whose hair on his head is white like pure wool. Anthropomorphism? Yes, viewed literally. The vision is not meant to be an illusion but a revealing. This is the image the Bible has given us of God. This is the image that Christ takes after. And Christ is the image that tells us we can know God. And, we are made in the image of God.

God “is always represented as having organs like those of the human body, arms, hands, feet, mouth, eyes and ears. By such sensuous and figurative language alone was it possible for a personal God to make Himself known to men.” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*). Academic theology, as quoted, views these descriptions as figurative language. Other parts of the body of God quite freely mentioned in the Bible include: head, hair, face, nostrils, tongue, lips, fingers, chest, back and waist. I wonder why the Bible gives us such detailed “anthropomorphic” descriptions of God if it is not trying to tell us that God is truly like us in form or shape. An embodied God might be more real than assumed otherwise in theological academia, which say that these humanlike descriptions are a literary device called anthropomorphism. What then is God really like behind this device?

In the New Testament book of Revelation, the apostle John was given a vision of heaven where he saw Christ (“one like unto the son of man”) as having a great similarity with the image of God given in the book of Daniel. Christ is pictured as dressed to the feet and girded with a golden girdle around the chest; his head and hair are white as white wool and as snow, and his eyes as a flaming fire, and his feet like white bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice is as the sound of many waters, and his face is like the sun shining in its brilliance (*Rev 1:13-16*). Here the ascended Christ looks very much alike the Ancient of Days, His Father, in full glory. Christ in His glory speaks of His God (*Rev 2:7, 3:2, 3:12*) and His Father (*Rev 3:5, 3:21*).

Scripture here provides yet another link of Christ's likeness to His Father.

We get a similar picture from the book of Hebrews:

Who [Christ] being the *brightness* of God's glory, and the *express image* of his [God's] person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down *on the right hand of the Majesty* on high (*Hebrew 1:3 KJV*).

There are two separate thrones in heaven, so we are told by Christ himself (in His revelation to John):

He who overcomes, I will give to him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father on his throne. (*Rev 3:21*)

Christ is in the shape *and tone* (glory) of the Father. The form of a being is not only its external outline shape but also all of its tone and other intrinsic inner and outer qualities peculiar to and infusing that being. Christ was in the form of the glorious God before he "emptied himself" of glory and came to earth in the form of an abject servant (*Phil 2:6-7*). He is now back in the glorious form of God in heaven. We can know the Father at this time only through the Son, so we are told in Scripture. Many a philosopher has been trying to know God without first knowing or acknowledging the Son, and no wonder then that we find prevalent vague images of God in the philosophies. God is frequently viewed as a kind of nebulous collection of mind processes with no particular shape. The Bible on the other hand tells us that there are celestial bodies as contrasted to terrestrial bodies with varying degrees of brightness (*1Cor 15:37-53*). Time and again, the Scripture conveys to us that God is an embodied individual, and as such He would have a celestial body.

That which you sow, you don't sow the body that will be, but a bare grain, maybe of wheat, or of some other kind. But God gives it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own.
(*1Cor 15:37-38*)

There are also celestial bodies, and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial differs from that of the terrestrial. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

(1Cor 15:40-41)

So also, is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is also a spiritual body.

(1Cor 15:42-44)

Jesus Christ is also known as the last Adam, who is a life-giving spirit, and He as a spirit obviously has a form too.

So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

(1Cor 15:45)

Humans bear the image of Adam, the “image of the earthy” – a form that is temporal. Glorified humans will eventually bear the “image of the heavenly” – a form that is eternal (1Cor 15:49).

God’s thinking, willing & acting

To me, anthropomorphism in the Bible is literal, real and legitimate. In this context, we can understand that God’s mere thoughts or reflections do not move events. His actions or acts of willing do so – they somehow, for reasons yet not clearly known to us, cause a creative intelligent personal force to bring about things from His life-substance. Bits of His spirit became converted into those things that He willed. He acts upon His decisions and things are. He ceased to act or work on the seventh day of creation. He obviously did not cease to think on that seventh day when he ‘rested’ to enjoy the entire creation He had created in the earlier six days. His *expressed act* of calling or willing, in contrast to His mere act of thinking or reflecting, is what brought the world into being. He spoke things into existence. His expressed act *acted upon* His own spiritual substance (not on matter or chaos) and converted it into

the world! His initial creation consisted of raw physical materials and more complexly formed things – both must have been a conversion directly from the God substance. God could also have created other things from the raw materials initially formed, that is, secondary creation. And these creations were seen by God as “very good.”

All things continue to function when God rested. God knew He had set up a blueprint for the salvation (which is essentially a further step of conversion – this we will look at later) of all those beings created in His image and He “foreknows” (planned or thought of beforehand) the future key events that He had written up in His blueprint for the goals of the universe. He will act to bring about these key planned events when the time comes for Him to do so according to His plans (“the counsel of His will” in religious terminology). All that God brings about is the reality. All that exist in space, whether spirit or matter, are real. The only unreal is non-existence. The background architecture for things that exist is likely to be beyond the scope of human discovery in this life. Notwithstanding this constraint, the invisible background architecture must necessarily provide the basis and the possibility for all our sciences. The laws of physics are not “thoughts in the mind of God.” They are properties of created matter, and since created matter came from God, such laws must necessarily find their source in God Himself.

“Mind over matter” or “psychokinesis” is a phenomenon of the direct influence of the will over matter, such as moving a distant object and bending a metal. A few men possess this ability to some extent. Obviously, God has this capability in a far greater extent. This ability gives Him the power to create.

Mediator between God and Man

The Biblical revelation conveys that knowledge of the Father (Supreme God) is given through the one *Mediator between the one God and Man* – the man Jesus Christ. This has been referred to earlier.

For there is *one God*, and *one mediator* between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.
(1Timothy 2:5)

I seem to be moving into a sensitive issue: the doctrine of the Trinity, formulated in the fourth century and upheld by many mainline churches even today as the prime doctrine of the church. This doctrine says that there are three persons in one God and they are all co-equal in status. These three personalities form what is termed the “Godhead” which is said to be a mystery beyond human comprehension and is to be accepted on faith as true. In my review of all my beliefs from first principles, it is of necessity that I re-examine this belief among others that I had held. Since it is supposed to be a humanly incomprehensible doctrine as commonly acknowledged, I take it therefore that it is an article of faith that is *not* “essential for salvation.” The Bible is my basis for spiritual truth and revelation. Church dogmas are secondary and if they conflict at some points with biblical revelation, the latter will for me take priority in determining the accuracy of the dogmas, especially ones formulated long ago in an early age where advanced biblical research tools were not available. Besides, there are many sincere believers adhering to a non-Trinitarian view, and they to me are no less reverent of Jesus Christ than Trinitarian believers. I see that the non-Trinitarian view is an attempt to understand God better. And I think no one should impose on others a limit on what can be known or knowable about God just because of a fear of misconceiving Him. Let each believer be persuaded according to his understanding of the Scripture.

The concept of the co-equality of Christ with the Father (which is part of the Trinitarian doctrine) is an issue that has a contentious history. It came to be sanctioned at the Church Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. It is also known as the Arian controversy that had hotly engaged Christendom even after the Council of Nicea, for about 60 years, before it was “unanimously” adopted or decreed into the mainstream Church’s official dogma by another council. The non-Trinitarian view did not die off however. This view, being still the minority view, is today adopted by a growing number of believers among various wings of Christianity, if the internet is any guide.

In the Trinitarian creed, Christ is defined as “God the Son,” a phrase that is not found in the Scripture. Christ in Scripture is frequently (46 times in the New Testament) called “Son of God.” He is also called “son of the Father” (*John 1:14, 2John 1:3*).

Is Christ co-equal with the Father? The biblical title given to Christ does not seem to indicate so. There are a significant number of scriptures that says or implies that Christ is subordinate to his Father, from beginning to end. Let us go straight into the Bible to see what Christ himself says of his relationship to the Father.

I go unto the Father: for *my* Father is *greater than I*. (John 14:28b)

The above scripture convinces me as a clear statement supporting the non-equality view. We have it from the mouth of Christ himself that his Father is greater than he. This record is written by John long after Christ has gone back to heaven after his resurrection. This means that the statement is not only true when Christ was on earth, but is also true presently when He is now in heaven.

In the book of John, there are twelve instances where Jesus said he was *sent* by the Father. Among which, Jesus said that the sender was greater than he who was sent. Note particularly these sample verses:

I *proceeded forth* and came from God; neither came I of myself, but *he sent me*. (John 8:42b)

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, *he gave me a commandment*, what I should say, and what I should speak. (John 12:49)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is *not greater* than his lord; *neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him*. (John 13:16)

Those words “*Verily, verily, I say unto you*” are spoken in truth and with emphasis (stated with authority none other than Christ’s own) and they refer to a statement that is true or applicable whether Christ was on earth or after He has returned to heaven.

Christ also said that the believers’ spiritual Father is also his own Father. Jesus said to Mary who came to the tomb of Christ shortly after Christ’s resurrection from the dead:

Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. (*John 20:17*)

This scripture, quoted directly from Christ's own mouth, tells us that Jesus Christ has a heavenly Father who is also His God.

Here is the clincher for me:

The *Head of Christ is God*. (*1Cor 11:3b*)

The apostle Paul (who received an immense amount of revelation from the *ascended* Christ) frequently refers to the supreme God as "*the God and Father of*" our Lord Jesus Christ (*2Cor 11:31, Eph 1:3, Col 1:3*), clearly indicating that Christ is subservient to his Father, who is also His God. This denotes a filial family relationship.

Four times in one single verse (as below), Jesus Christ himself (speaking long after His ascension to heaven in a final revelation to the apostle John) reverently acknowledges his Father as *his God*.

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will go out from there no more. I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.
(*Rev 3:12*)

How intimate and dear the Father is to the Son! Is there any wonder that the Father (in a voice coming out of the sky) told the early believers that He loved his Son in whom He was well pleased! (*Matt 3:17, 12:18, 17:5, Mark 1:11, 2Peter 1:17*). Yes, the Son is subservient to the Father *even at the very end* of the revealed scheme of things (at the consummation).

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.
(*1Cor 15:28*)

In the telescopic context of the above verse, we can see that God is the supreme *Subjector* who will subject all to Himself through Jesus Christ who is, in the current process as an active *subjector* himself,

working towards subjecting all things to His Father at the consummation. Jesus Christ, the second in command, is therefore without contradiction also called God, though not in the supreme sense. All others who are called gods (*subjectors*) are also definitely not spoken in the supreme sense, but in a lesser sense than that applicable to Christ. Human beings, acting in the image and likeness of God, can also be viewed as *subjectors* (gods) to those of the lower created order.

The above treatment on the non-equality of Christ with the Father cannot be exhaustive in this essay; only key scriptures are provided. The reader may search the Bible for more scriptural support.

Creators in Genesis and image of God

In the beginning *Elohim* (God) created the heavens and the earth
(*Genesis 1:1*).

“The first form of the Divine name in the Bible is ‘*Elohim*, ordinarily translated “God” (*Gen 1:1*). This is the most frequently used name in the Old Testament (as its equivalent *theos*, is in the New Testament), occurring in Genesis alone approximately 200 times. It is one of a group of kindred words, to which belong also ‘*El* and ‘*Eloah*. Its form is plural, but the construction is uniformly singular, that is, it governs a singular verb or adjective, unless used of heathen divinities (*Ps 96:5; 97:7*). It is characteristic of Hebrew that extension, magnitude and dignity, *as well as actual multiplicity* [emphasis mine], are expressed by the plural. It is not reasonable, therefore, to assume that plurality of form indicates primitive Semitic polytheism. On the contrary, historic Hebrew is unquestionably and uniformly monotheistic.” (*ISBE*)

“It is the reasonable conclusion that the meaning is ‘might’ or ‘power’; that it is common to Semitic language; that the form is plural to express majesty or ‘all-mightiness,’ and that it is a generic, rather than a specific personal, name for Deity, as is indicated by its application to those who represent the Deity (*Judges 5:8; Psalms 82:1*) or who are in His presence (*1Sam 28:13*).” (*ISBE*)

In the Gospel of John (*1:3, 10*), we learn that all things were created *through* Jesus Christ. Therefore, the implicit conclusion is that the

Elohim of Genesis 1:1 includes Him and His Father (the supreme God), working together with the same purpose. From this, humans made in the image of *Elohim* would refer to the image of both Christ and His Father.

We should not be offended to think that God could be anthropomorphic in reality. It is not that God has been “created” to look like man, but that man has been created to look like our Father in Heaven. The likeness is therefore similar and mutual. Rather than God being anthropomorphic, it is man who is theomorphic. This belief is not something new to Christianity. In seeing the likeness, we do not in any implicated adverse sense “raise men up and bring God down.” No, it is rather seeing that men can be raised to the God level, to be as possibly “perfect” as He is. (*Matt 5:48*)

The apostle John, among the apostles, has given us very intimate glimpses of the Father. He spoke more of “knowing” when he wrote to believers of all age groups – fathers, young men, little children – in his first epistle (*1John 2:12-14*). To John, knowing an earthly father is like knowing the heavenly Father. The Father is therefore not unknowable, nor utterly incomprehensible. The basic truth, plainly taught in the Bible, is that Christ is the Son of God, and God is the Father. The father-son image given in the Bible as in all creation reflects this truth. We know that a child looks like its father, and this reality of look-alike image between child and father is never differed in view by any of the scriptural writers. So we conclude that Christ looks like His Father in Heaven.

Hebrews 1:3

[Christ] who being the shining splendor of *His* glory, and the express image of His essence, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, having made purification of our sins through Himself, *He* sat down on *the* right of the Majesty on high. (*LITV*)

Christ is also said in another translation to be “the very image of His [God’s] substance” (*Hebrews 1:3*). The word “very” is not in the original Greek. Translated thus, it gives the impression that Christ is “the” image of God’s substance, whereas God Himself is not having that very image. The Son then may not look like his Father, or the Father may not look like the Son. Another rendering has it that Christ is “the Emblem His assumption” (*CLNT*). An emblem, according to Collins National Dictionary, is “an object, or a representation of an object, symbolising and suggesting to the mind something different from itself.” This rendering shows the translator’s view in a firmer tone that God does not look like the Son. The word translated “very image” and “emblem” here in this scripture is the Greek word *charaktēr*, which appears only once in The New Testament. A slight change of nuance in translation would therefore easily provide a different meaning to this Greek word.

Strong’s #5481 says the Greek *charaktēr* means a *graver* (the tool or the person), that is, (by implication) *engraving* (the *figure* stamped, that is, an exact *copy* or [figuratively] *representation*) – express image.

The meaning of “exact copy” or “imprint” for *charaktēr* would be consonant with all of Scripture.

Let us suppose we take the figurative meaning, that is, representation rather than exact copy. This representation must then be a reflection of an original idea in the Mind of God from which the representation is made. Is the original idea, the choice of it, taken from God’s own form or from an idea that differs from His form? Did God have Christ represent Him differently in form? If so, then there is no way of knowing God’s real form, no way of getting into clear intimate personal relationship with God but only with an idea of His, His representative idea. There would be an unimaginable gulf between God and Christ, and between God and man, because the likeness between God and the Mediator is lost or incomplete.

The word translated as “assumption” in the CLNT, is from the Greek *hupostasis*. Strong’s #5287 says it means: a *setting under* (*support*). This word appears in five instances in the New Testament, and the CLNT has commendably translated this word consistently in all places. (I must say that I have benefited a great deal from this most consistent translation: The Concordant Literal New Testament. I recognize too that no single translation of the Scripture is perfect.)

If God merely “assumed” the form represented by and in Christ, His Emblem, where God Himself is not in that form, then this single instance of such translation appears to be at odds with the anthropomorphic image presented generously by numerous verses throughout the entire Bible. The word “Emblem” is closer to being an interpretation rather than a translation.

Adam Clarke’s Commentary says: “The *hypostasis* of God is that which is essential to him as God; and the character or image is that by which all the likeness of the original becomes manifest, and is a perfect facsimile of the whole. It is a metaphor taken from sealing; the die or seal leaving the full impression of its every part on the wax to which it is applied.”

Let us look at an all-important scripture given below in four translations:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.
(Romans 1:20 KJV)

For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, *even* his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse:
(Rom 1:20 ASV)

For from the first making of the world, those things of God which the eye is unable to see, that is, his eternal power and existence, are fully made clear, he having given the knowledge of them through the things which he has made, so that men have no reason for wrongdoing:
(Rom 1:20 BBE)

For His invisible *attributes* are descried from *the* creation of *the* world, being apprehended *by His* achievements, besides His imperceptible power and divinity, for them to be defenseless,
(Rom 1:20 CLNT)

The principle stated in the above scripture (shown in four translations in a similar manner) is an important one. It is recognized by the hermetic principle “as above so below.” We know from God’s creation that every mature offspring takes after the image of its parent, each kind of living things follow after its own kind. This is defined upfront in the book of Genesis and this fact is seen all over God’s creation. Then, does not theomorphic man look like his Parent? Again, upfront in Genesis do we read that man is made in the image of God. Adam could readily see that a sheep is made after the sheep kind; a particular bird is made after the bird kind; a lion after the lion kind; and so on. Adam first made could not see an Adam kind around him, so God made him a woman, and told him they were both made after the image of their Creator – the God kind (*Gen 1:27, 2:21-23*). Paul in *Romans 1:20* tells us that God’s eternal power and divinity are clearly seen from the things created. Many things are created with the purpose of reflecting the Creator to the minds of men by real life analogy and teaching. Paul in *Colossians 1:15* also tells us that Christ is the (visible) image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Does the picture portrayed by the word “emblem” contradict other passages of the Bible? Most assuredly it does. The same verse (*Hebrews 1:3*) says that Christ is “the shining splendor of *His* glory.” Is God’s glory in Himself or in an idea (unlike God’s form) from which Christ is represented? In Scripture (*Isaiah 42:8, 48:11*), God tells us He will not give away His glory to another unlike Him. In *Hebrews 1:3* also, Christ in shining splendor is seen sitting down “on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” It is difficult to understand what biblical phrases like “sitting on the right hand” and “standing on the right hand” would mean in some kind of figurative sense, other than their natural portrayal of an actual scene from which figures of speech are derived and convey their meanings secondarily. The anthropomorphic images are found throughout the Bible and such images are encouraged, never at all challenged in Scripture.

Stephen, a disciple of Christ, just before he was martyred, saw both God and Christ in a vision empowered by the Holy Spirit.

But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, “Behold, I see the heavens

opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"
(Act 7:55-56)

The phrase "right hand of God" can hardly be "figurative" here, as Stephen's vision presented to him both personalities appearing side by side, God Himself and Jesus Christ, with Christ standing right next to God, and this picture is repeated for emphasis. There is no context to read the phrase "standing at the right hand of God" in any figurative sense (such as Christ, the Son of God, being the second-in-command "right hand man" of God, which every believer knows). Stephen saw something glorious happened. It was a simple clear vision seen and described in every detail truly.

[Christ] who subsisting in the form of God, thought *it* not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking *the* form of a slave, having become in *the* likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, having become obedient until death, even *the* death of a cross.
(Phil 2:6-8 LITV)

The above verses from Paul's letter to the Philippians indicate that Christ was "inherently in the form [Greek *morphe*] of God" (CLNT) before he became man. He then took on the form of a slave. The "form of God" must be similar in outline as the "form of the slave," the difference being that one has great radiance, power, immortality and the other is lacking in these. The shapes of both are the same – *morphe*. Christ had similar radiance with the Father before he came to earth (John 17:5). The similarity in shape and radiance is so alike that Christ considers it "not robbery" to be thought of as "*equal* with God."

The form resemblance between Father and Son conveys close likeness such that (John 14:9) Christ could say to Philip: "he who has seen me has seen the Father." The obvious natural meaning of Christ's statement is clear. Christ as the Son looks like the Father – and He also looks like us. Christ is having an image like ours, and He has a physical, tangible body, though it is now immortal and radiant (glorious). After He was resurrected, he appeared before his disciples bodily, showed them his hands that had the nail marks on them, and had his disciples feel them to remove all doubt that He was alive, resurrected, and not just a different spirit being (Luke 24:36-43).

He even went so far as to eat food in the presence of his apostles to make sure they understood that he was the same person who died and that his body after the resurrection was not someone else in unrecognised shape.

Christ is in the image (or shape) of God (the Father), and we are created in their image. The substance or material, however, of Christ's form may not be exactly the same as before, as Christ underwent a change in the incarnation and another change at His resurrection. If this is so, then Hebrews 1:3 would make good sense. The "express image" (Christ) is the engraving of God's assumption into visible form, whatever the substance of Christ's composition may be. Christ as the Express Image acted for and represented His Invisible Father in the creation of the universe (*John 1:1-5*). We know that the engraving of the form of a man may be done on different materials – clay, wood, stone, plastic, metal, even ice. There are sculptures of the human figure seen in some public places; the material used among them may not be exactly alike (even as the flesh of different creatures are not the same – *1Cor 15:39*). Likewise, the material of the engraving of God may be quite different from that of God in this sense. God stamped His living shape (and other glorious characteristics) in a living Christ – the Son who indeed looks like the Father! That which is cast looks like the die; that which is moulded looks like the mould; that which is engraved looks like the engraver. A representation should not convey a meaning opposite to that of the source from which it takes its figure.

Image in a coin

There was an occasion where a group of listeners were prompted by Jesus Christ to show him a penny. A Roman coin was produced to Jesus, who then *initiated* the question: "Whose is this image and inscription?" The unanimous simple response was: Caesar's. Three Gospel writers quote this same incident of the people's natural response to Christ's question, likening the "image" imprinted or engraved on the Roman coin literally to that of Caesar's (*Matthew 22:20, Mark 12:16, Luke 20:24*). Caesar's engraving in a metallic coin looks like his real fleshy person in image. I do not see further need for me to be convinced otherwise of the meaning of the word 'image' [Greek *eikon*] as used and illustrated in the Bible. It includes likeness in shape as an inherent meaning. And such a word is scripturally used to relate God with Christ (*2Cor 3:18, 4:4*), to relate

God with man (*1Cor 11:7, 15:49*) and to relate a believer with Christ (*Rom 8:29*). The association of visual likeness between God, Christ and man is complete. I do not see a contrary picture suddenly being introduced by *Hebrews 1:3*.

Going back to Genesis, we read the first use of the word image and also likeness:

And God [*Elohim*] said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:
(*Gen 1:26a KJV*)

God here is given in the plural form *Elohim*, which would be the Father and the Son, both of whom have the same inherent and common image and likeness among them. Therefore, in making man, *Elohim* could compare man to “our image” and “our likeness” – the image and likeness of both the Father and the Son. Later on in the narrative, man is said by *Elohim* to have “become like one of us” (*Gen 3:22*).

Mankind is also said to be the “offspring of God” (*Acts 17:29*) and this is another confirmation that mankind must look like its God.

According to an article in *Harvard Theological Review*^{*3}, “ordinary Christians for at least the first three centuries of the current era commonly (and perhaps generally) believed God to be corporeal,” – that is, embodied like a human. “The belief was abandoned (and then only gradually) as Neoplatonism became more and more entrenched as the dominant world view of Christian thinkers.”

Having a body or bodily form does not “limit” God in any negative sense, as some might fear. We do not limit God any more than the intrinsic limitations that the Bible tells us He has. It might possibly (speculatively) have been the case that in the remote past when He was alone, He might not have been in the form that Christ and humans now took after. He assumed an Original Image from which subsequent “images of God” are stamped out at least when He began the process of creation and *revelation* of Himself. He is not hidden in invisible nebulous processes that cannot be seen or felt by *any person*, and yet be *personal*. He has a spiritual body, as does Christ. They are distinct beings, yet connected in one, just as the followers of Christ should be one (*John 17:20-23*) – meaning one in “heart and mind”

– not one substance, but oneness of spiritual unity – a unity infused with a common denominator (a portion of God’s pure spirit).

Man a god?

In *John 10:34*, Christ in answering the religious leaders of his day, told them that their law at one point (*Psalms 82:6*) said they were gods! Humans, created in the image and likeness of God, are said to be gods! And this is affirmed by none other than Christ himself! A wise and righteous man of old by the name of Job understands that God, in forming man after His image, will have a desire to (a longing for) the work of His own hands. Job anticipated that one day he would be transformed and be reconciled to God (*Job 14:14-15*), as he too is God’s offspring. Yes, those who realise the ultimate import of creation *ex-Deo*, do intuit that we will ultimately become gods or rather like God, as children of His. This tremendous thought, and hope, is found in the writings of early Christian theologians*⁴ although it is not clearly taught nowadays. But is this not what salvation is all about?

In recent times, scientific studies have indicated that our brains seem to be “hard-wired” for God. It is natural to expect that this innate thought will find (or be granted) its ultimate fulfilment if life is to have a thoroughly satisfying meaning. It all depends upon God. He has the power to create, and He has the power to de-create. He also has the power to recreate or retransform. Revelation tells us that He is going to do away with the sea some time in the distant future (*Rev 21:1*). Will He do away with creatures made in His image? Hardly a possibility if His love as emphasised in Scripture is anything to go by.

Christ created?

Among the views of the non-Trinitarian tradition is the belief that Jesus Christ had a beginning. Although I do not subscribe to every particular of this tradition, I do see that this view is not without strong scriptural support. And I can see that these non-Trinitarian believers hold Jesus Christ in the highest reverence and esteem as many Trinitarians do. Among the supporting scriptures brought into attention by them are:

- a) That Christ is acknowledged repeatedly as the (begotten) Son of God, therefore indicating by real-life analogy (*Rom 1:20*) that the Father comes before the Son was begotten.
- b) That Christ is stated as the firstborn of all creation (*Col 1:15*). The significance and meaning of this scripture is further enhanced by other “firsts” spoken of about Christ: the *firstborn* out of the dead (*Rev 1:5*), the *firstborn* of many brethren (*Rom 8:29*), the *first* fruits of those who are asleep (*1Cor 15:20*).
- c) That Christ himself says: the Father *granted* the Son to have life in himself (*John 5:26*). This means that Christ’s eternal life derives from the Father. *Therefore, there must be a time when Christ was not.*
- d) That Christ is the beginning, head or chief of the creation of God (*Rev 3:14*), reinforcing *Col 1:15*.
- e) God is addressed as “the God and Father of” our lord Jesus Christ in no less than five times in the New Testament (*2Cor 1:3*, *2Cor 11:31*, *Eph 1:3*, *Col 1:3*, *1Pet 1:3*), thus showing the superiority of the Father, as recognised by Christ’s own apostles.
- f) Christ Jesus is said to be “faithful to him that appointed him.” (*Heb 3:2*)
- g) Jesus Christ addressed His Father as “the only true God.” (*John 17:3*)

The above scriptures indicate quite clearly to me that Christ is not synonymous with God, His Father.

Whilst I find it most difficult to ignore or reinterpret the above clear scriptures on the status of Christ, and His distinctness from the Father, I do not wish to engage in quarrels with fellow believers who disagree with me and who wish to maintain an “incomprehensible” yet nonetheless reverent view of God. I respect their view. Let each have the freedom to search and to discover and his personal prerogative to draw his own conclusions from the biblical data. Let each convince himself according to his meditations on Scripture. After all, we only know in part now, as the apostle Paul says, but in the future, we shall know as we are known (*1Cor 13:12*).

Seeing God face to face

In the creation story, we are told that man or Adam is made in God's image and likeness (*Gen 1:26-27*). In "the book of the generations of Adam" man is said to be created "in the likeness of God" (*Gen 5:1*). At the age of 130 years, Adam "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (*Gen 5:3*). Many generations later, after Adam's death, and after the great flood of Noah, man is still said to be made in the image of God (*Gen 9:6*). So-called "fallen" men do not lose that image of God to which they are patterned.

We thus see that Scripture carefully conveys with unbroken links that every human since Adam is made in the image and likeness of God. This image is not severed or drowned out by the great worldwide flood. Man is therefore theomorphic as clearly put forth at the commencement of Scripture, and as we concluded in chapter 1. Created man looks like his creator God, and conversely God looks like man, His mirror image. The Father, the Son and man are in the same image, but not of the same glory or radiance. The Father is invisible and glorious, residing in heaven; likewise the Son. Man, too, will one day be like the Son now is, as we are assured quite clearly in the scriptures. We are seen and well known to God at this time, and we shall in future know God as well as He knows us today.

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I was also fully known. (*1Cor 13:12*)

What a tremendous statement! We shall see God face to face even as He now sees us, and to know Him fully as we are now fully known to Him! This seeing is not some kind of deeper hazy spiritual sight, imagination or visualization.

Jacob tussled physically all night with a spirit being, perhaps a representative of God, at Peniel, and he said he had "seen God face to face" (*Gen 32:30*). The anthropomorphic image of God was ever on Jacob's mind, and this image is not disputed at all in the Bible.

With him [Moses] I will speak mouth to mouth, even plainly, and not in riddles; and he shall see Yahweh's form. (*Num 12:8a*)

“The LORD” was said to have *spoken* to Moses “mouth to mouth” and also “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (*Exodus 33:11, Deut 5:4*), even though he could only be allowed to see God’s “hind parts” (*Exodus 33:23*). Here again is another anthropomorphic image that is not disputed, but rather emphasised, in Old Testament times.

The King James Version of *Numbers 12:8* is:

With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: (*Num 12:8a KJV*)

Strong’s #8544 for similitude is Hebrew *tēmûnâh tēmûnâh*, meaning “*something portioned* (that is, *fashioned*) out, as a *shape*, that is, (indefinitely) *phantom*, or (*specifically*) *embodiment*, or (figuratively) *manifestation* (of favor): - image, likeness, similitude.”

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. (*Deut 34:10*)

“Knowing face to face” can hardly be just conveying a kind of hazy intimacy or spiritual insight. The emphasis is made that out of many prophets in Israel, Moses is singled out as the most privileged to have been acquainted intimately with this anthropomorphic image of God, just “as a man speaking to his friend.”

Another prophet, Gideon, is spoken of as having “seen an angel of the LORD face to face” (*Judges 6:22*). Seeing an angel “face to face” can easily be believed as literal here, as angels (spirit messengers) have appeared to men in human form. So must the phrase “seeing God face to face” be also literal.

The apostle John said to Gaius: “I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face” (*3John 1:14*). Speaking “face to face” is an expression in Scripture that relates literally to communication and visual sight between two or more persons at proximity.

The apostle John also wrote to “the elect lady” thus: “I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full” (*2 John 1:12*). Is there a hint here that when we are able to see God face to

face, when He ultimately reveals Himself at the grand finale, that our joy will indeed be full?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says (*Matt 5:8*): “Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” Christ is referring to the Father here and in a future time. In another discourse elsewhere, Christ says “...their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven” (*Matt 18:10*). If angels are seeing the Father’s face in heaven, will future glorified children of God be less privileged?

He who came from the Father has seen the Father. No mortal has heard God’s voice or seen His form except the immortalised Christ (*John 6:46, 5:37*). In the future, this special privilege of Christ will be made available to all.

No mortal has seen or can see Him who is “dwelling in unapproachable light” in heaven at this time (*1Tim 6:16*). The day will come, if we have trust and hope in John’s vision, when God Himself will come out of heaven and dwell with men in a new earth (*Rev 21:3*). Redeemed people in the new era, being pure in heart, will be able to see God’s face (*Rev 22:4*). Then will be realised the old tantalizing hope that Yahweh’s own form shall be seen (*Num 12:6-8*) – at long last!

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it is not yet revealed what we will be. But we know that, when he is revealed, we will be like him; for we will see him just as he is. (*1John 3:2*)

The apostle John confirms what blameless ancient Patriarch Job was inspired to know:

But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives. In the end, he will stand upon the earth. After my skin is destroyed, then in my flesh shall I see God, Whom I, even I, shall see on my side. My eyes shall see, and not as a stranger. My heart is consumed within me.
(*Job 19:25-27*)

“Seeing” has to do with light, which is part of the wide range of electromagnetic spectrum of wavelengths and photon energies. It is recognised that light used to “see” an object must have a wavelength about the same size as or smaller than the object. We cannot use visible light to “see” molecules because molecules are smaller in

wavelength than visible light. Some insects, like bees, can see light of shorter wavelengths than humans do.

Scripture tells us that God is light (*1John 1:5*), a term which is quite obviously more than figurative in usage here. Brightness and pureness associated with light must have an ontological significance intimately associated with the Spirit of God. His Spirit must in some way be expressible in fine light energies. If we are to see the invisible God, our eyes must be transformed to be able to do so. Now, a future transformation of our bodies is promised in Scripture (*1Cor 15:53-54*). At that time, we can literally be able to see light and see Him.

For with you is the spring of life.
In your light shall we see light.
(*Psalms 36:9*)

Yes, we are given yet another glimpse that in a future time, we (then transformed into finer glorious substance) will be able to literally see light, see God in His radiance, as we will then have a good amount of radiance ourselves. How marvellous the future for us will be! In ancient days, even some non-prophets have been enabled by God to have a glimpse of powerful invisible radiant beings and things in existence (*2Kings 6:17, Num 22:31*).

In the future, when we are transformed from corruption into incorruption, we will “become partakers of the divine nature (*2Peter 1:4*), having a celestial spiritual body (*1Cor 15:40-44*), bearing the “image of the heavenly” (*1Cor 15:48-49*). Yes, indeed there are real tangible heavenly images. There are living spiritual “beasts” operating in heaven, not to mention the numerous angels. There is also a heavenly sanctuary and its paraphernalia there from which the earthly ancient sanctuary of the Israelites was patterned (*Heb 8:5, Exodus 25, Book of Revelation*). Even the precious stones of heaven are glorified in crystalline form, from which much of the heavenly City of Jerusalem is constructed (*Rev 21*). The main street of the City, constructed of crystalline gold, is made worthy for the glorious feet that walk on it!

All our bodies individually by the time of the consummation will “*be filled with all the fullness of God*” (*Eph 3:19*), even as in Christ now all the fullness (the richness of all divine qualities and perfections) of

the Godhead dwells bodily (*Col 2:9*). The earnest of the Spirit in the believers now will then swell into the full essence of the God stuff by the time of the end. Grand indeed will be that time when individual bodies are energized with the full strength and faculty of the Spirit of God generously imparted to all – so that God may be “All in all” (*1Cor 15:28*) – His All in all others – all His children having come into full maturity and perfection just as God is (*Matt 5:48*), and they are all subject to and dear to Him, the Father who has finally reconciled all to Himself. The adage “like father like son” is never truer than in that glorious time; the only difference being the Father is the most senior personality in time, and this seniority no one is able to take from Him, the Father of one great luminous family. It is simply mind-boggling to meditate upon and penetrate into this intimate knowledge or realization of God! (*Eph 1:17-23 WNT, CLNT*)

Footnotes:

- *1. *“In The Beginning” by Herman Bavinck, p 37*
- *2. *Christianity and World Religions, p 55*
- *3. *David L. Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses,” Harvard theological Review 83 (1990): 105-16; quotation from p. 105*
- *4. *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions, page 553 as mentioned in ‘Salvation and the Biblical Doctrine of Deification’ by Ernest L Martin, www.askelm.com. See also Gregory of Nyssa’s Cathechis, chapters 35 & 38 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, from the website www.ccel.org.)*
- *5. *Matthew 26:38, Mark 14:34, John 12:27*
- *6. *Judges 10:16, Psalms 11:5, Isaiah 1:14, Lev 26:11, Isaiah 42:1, Jeremiah 5:9, Zech 11:8, Matthew 12:18*