

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 15

For 12 Sept 2010

Dear Friends

God keeps on emerging in the headlines. Books keep on being written. Some are for, some against God. We have Richard Dawkins with his book *“The God Delusion”*, and Karen Armstrong and her book *“The Case for God”*. I’m sure you can sense disagreement. If I try to deal with the issue it could get very heavy even in the short space of this Shalom. So let’s start with a light touch. It’s a much used story. A child was busy drawing at the kitchen table on a wet afternoon. Mother asks “What are you drawing, dear?” The reply was “God”. After a pause mother said, “But no-one knows what God looks like.” Response, calm and confident: “They will when I have finished!”

How did I get drawn into this absurd exercise of defining the indefinable and ‘unscrewing the inscrutable’? Well, I found myself intrigued by a brief review of a book— *“God is not One”* by Stephen Prothero. I haven’t read it so that leaves me free to disagree with bits that might make good sense if I read it! The review indicates that the book looks at the main world religions. The author sees them mainly as rivals. Each tries to solve a different problem. And different problems require different solutions. Hence these world views produce different Gods. The summary in the review is as follows:

- For Islam the problem is pride: and the solution is submission.
- For Christianity the problem is sin: the solution is salvation.
- For Buddhism the problem is suffering: the solution is awakening.
- For Judaism the problem is exile: the solution is returning to God.
- For Confucianism the problem is chaos: the solution is social order.

(Apparently the author deals with 8 religions so 3 are missing here.) Personally, I think the author has a good grasp of the problem/solution of each religion. However...

However I feel the whole summary needs to go to a deeper level. Beneath the differences there runs a river of common concern which is the source and nourishment of these world religions. So I question the “God is not One” approach. To change the metaphor I think there is a thread which holds them all together. I’m suggesting that each problem is a “Fall” of some sort. For Islam the pride is just a step away from a fall; For Christianity sin is a falling short of the goal; For Buddhism suffering is a fall into a sleep of ignorance; For Judaism exile is a falling out into isolation; For Confucianism chaos is a falling apart and lack of cohesion. There is more to this than playing with words. So I invite you to consider (1) the common elements of world religions, and (2) the more profound meaning of the Christian idea of a fall.

Sincerely - Lester

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 13 September:	40:7-11	1 Cor 11:17-26,23	Luke 7:1-10
Tuesday 14 September:	100	1 Cor 12:12-14, 27-end	Luke 7:11-17
Wednesday 15 September:	33:1-12	1 Cor 12:31b-13:13	Luke 7:31-35
Thursday 16 September:	118:1,2,17-20	1 Cor 15:1-11	Luke 7:36-end
Friday 17 September:	17:1-8	1 Cor 15:12-20	Luke 8:1-3
Saturday 18 September:	30:1-5	1 Cor 15:35-37, 42-49	Luke 8:4-15
Sunday 19 September <u>Pentecost 17</u>			
Ps 79:1-9; Jer 8:18-9:1; 1 Tim 2:1-7; Luke 16:1-13			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 20 September:	15	Prov 3:27-34	Luke 8:16-18
Tuesday 21 September:	119:1-8	Prov 21:1-6,10-13	Luke 8:19-21
Wednesday 22 September:	119:105-112	Prov 30:5-9	Luke 9:1-6
Thursday 23 September:	90:1-6	Eccles 1:2-11	Luke 9:7-9
Friday 24 September:	144:1-4	Eccles 3:1-11	Luke 9:18-22
Saturday 25 September:	90:1-2, 12-end	Eccles 11:9-12:8	Luke 9:43-45
Sunday 26 September <u>Pentecost 18</u>			
Ps 91:1-6,14-16; Jer 32:1-3a,6-15; 1 Tim 6:6-19; Luke 16:19-31			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 27 September:	17:1-11	Job 1:6-end	Luke 9:46-50
Tuesday 28 September:	88:14-19	Job 3:1-3,11-17, 20-23	Luke 9:51-56
Wednesday 29 September:	88:1-6,11	Job 9:1-12,14-16	Luke 9:57-62
Thursday 30 September:	27:13-16	Job 19:21-27a	Luke 10:1-12
Friday 1 October:	139:6-11	Job 38:1,12-21; 40:3-5	Luke 10:13-16
Saturday 2 October:	119:169-end	Job 42:1-3,6,12-end	Luke 10:17-24
Sunday 3 October <u>Pentecost 19</u>			
Ps 37:1-9 or Ps 137; Lam 1:1-6; 2 Tim 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10			

**... Trailing clouds of glory do we come from God,
who is our home ...**

Here's a good start to considering the oneness or what we so casually call "God". There is "a world view that has been embraced by the vast majority of the world's greatest spiritual teachers, philosophers, thinkers, and even scientists. Its called 'perennial' or 'universal' because it shows up in virtually all cultures across the globe and across the ages. Wherever we find it, it has essentially similar features. We moderns, who can hardly agree on anything, find this hard to believe." This is Ken Wilber writing. He goes on to make his brief list of the commonly held essentials of this perennial philosophy:-

1. Spirit exists and is found within.
2. Most of us don't realise this Spirit within because we are living in a fallen or illusory state.
3. There is a way out of this fallen state of sin and illusion—a path to our liberation.
4. If we follow this path to its conclusion the result is a direct experience of Spirit within.
5. This marks the end of sin and suffering and issues in
6. Social action of compassion towards all sentient beings.

- ⇒ If we look back at the Prothero summary of world religions we find all the problems he lists—sin, suffering, separation, ignorance and illusion—are key aspects of perennial philosophy's diagnosis. Different problems maybe, but one underlying well trodden path to a profound solution—whether we call it salvation, awakening, returning (new birth), commitment to the path or compassion among people.
- ⇒ The image of a fall, is a downward movement from an existing higher state. It assumes we have lost something we had—a knowingness, an awake-awareness of what is real. The most common term in the Bible for 'sin' is about falling, or falling short. It is an archer's term for failure to pull the bow back with enough energy. When it is released the arrow falls short of the target. We fail to tap our inner energy or spirit and miss the goal. We fall short of our potential. We are like 10 speed bikes and yet we seldom use more than 2 speeds.
- ⇒ On a deeper level we have fallen short of knowing who we are. We have stopped short of knowing our true nature. "Know Thyself" is the centuries old call of the great saints and sages. Not to explore this is to fall short of knowing we are infinite, compassionate, loving and blissful. The work is to unfold this. We fall short when we stop before we reach the Source. We can be like people who read the map but never reach their destination, or like people who study the menu but never 'taste and see that God is good'.

**Beyond Names
— into Silence**

- * It has been pointed out that in the Bible there are 52 names given to God.
- * In the Hindu religion there are 108 beads on the meditation mala. They are sometimes said to represent the 108 names for the different forms of God.
- * Some references hint at the thousand, or even the infinite, names for God.
- * Sam Keen makes a significant comment about all this when he writes:-
"In the end religion collapses back into mysticism as it recognises that after we have said all we can say about God, we are still surrounded by an impenetrable silence."

(Hymns to an Unknown God)

Falling — Flying

Come to the edge!
It's too high.
Come to the edge!
I might fall.
Come to the edge!
They came.
I pushed them.
They fly!

(A poem—source unknown)

Sitting quietly
doing nothing
spring comes,
and the grass
grows by itself.

(A Zen poem)

"To discover God is not to discover an idea, but to discover oneself. It is to awaken to that part of one's existence which has been hidden from sight and which one has refused to recognise."

(Bede Griffith in
"The Golden String")