

Essays and Poems

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YHWH

In this essay we will seek to discover the very essence of the Bible - whose very name means the Book - and the significance of God's Name: YHWH. And what is a book but words? And what are words but spirit? And this Word (YHWH) is the pure expression of the Spirit, of God - it is the Name of God, the WORD itself.

Let me begin by saying that all is by words, and all comes from God. God is the origin; God is the source of all.

The Bible tells us that in the beginning God breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of man, and so he became "a living soul." The breath is the life of the soul, and our words are its expression; breathing in and breathing out, we find the source of the words we speak. And the words I speak of are not only the audible words we use when conversing with another, but, more importantly, the words we speak inside - for these, our thoughts, come from deeper in our souls.

You have no doubt heard the expression "you are what you eat." This is certainly true of the body: the food we eat becomes our flesh. But as for the soul, it is equally true that "you are what you speak," for a man is judged by his words.

Yes, all is by words, all occurs as a result of the words we speak. Even the most astounding action performed by man has its source in words, for actions spring from words - we act according to our thoughts.

And this is why there is no greater power than the power of prayer - sincere, true words, spoken in the Spirit of God may indeed move mountains. This is why Jesus says, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would be done." Ask in truth and you shall receive.

Let us now speak of the Spirit. The WORD. God. The Source of all Life - and of His Name: YHWH.

Jesus tells us that God is Spirit, and the Spirit is like the wind - but what does He mean?

Some of you may recognize this Word - YHWH - as being similar to the Name 'Yahweh,' one name for God. But Yahweh is a much later version of the Name, with vowels added in. The original form of the Name is this Word, YHWH. It is called the tetragrammaton. There are other derivations and names for God - like Jehovah and Adonai, or Lord - but this is the original Name.

This Name was revealed to Moses at the burning bush when God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery. God gave the Name to Moses that he might know God and be confident in speaking to the Israelites. This Name is a lasting gift for all generations (surpassed only by the coming of Christ - the Word become flesh).

This Name is translated in the Bible as "I AM WHO (I) AM," simply as "I AM," or as "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE," and it is said to be related to the Hebrew verb "hayah," which means "to be." These interpretations are very enlightening about the nature of God. They tell us, simply, that God IS, God EXISTS; He is Life and the Creator and Master of Life - able to do and be what He will.

These definitions lead us to an understanding of the nature of God as Life itself, but still I wonder when I look at this Name - what is its significance?

I asked this question of the Spirit in 1986 after reading that archeologists had unearthed a priest's vestment circa 500 BC with these four letters on its front and the Aaronic blessing on its back.

I had read that no one was certain of the significance of this Word. All scholars could say was that it either could not be pronounced or should not be pronounced... but they were not sure.

Going on this alone, and with the simplicity of a child, I thought, in the Spirit, to pronounce it - as it is, without the added vowels.

What I found, miraculously, was a word whose pronunciation is silence itself. A word that leads to no words. It defies pronunciation, and yet has a pronunciation - its pronunciation is silence... living, breathing silence.

It is a word of pure breath, for it allows the passage of air - air that is of the wind, that is of the Spirit - to pass through us without any human interference, without any movements of the tongue or lips or vocal cords... And so I found that it is the Word of words, the Tongue of tongues, the Spirit, the Breath that is in all words, in all languages - it is the silence from which all words come.

And I thought of that ancient priest standing in a field, looking at the dome of clouds overhead, listening to the wind in the trees - and just breathing, just being - one with Nature and with God, no words or thoughts to trouble him... the purity of the Spirit filling him.

In speaking the Name, you will find that the 'Y' opens the throat and poises the mouth for speech, but the 'H' immediately leaves it open - allowing the Spirit, the breath, to enter in purely and fill the mind with light. (This is breathing in the pure Spirit of God.)

Then, with the 'W' the lips move toward one another, as if to ask a question - but are left open by the final 'H.' (And so we breathe out and offer our lives to God.)

And we are left in utter awe and wonder - with mouth agape and tongue quite still - as a smiling child before the Father and His inexpressible beauty, majesty, and love.

(It is important to note that at the same time God gives us His Name, He lets us know that we cannot put our finger on Him; we, as His creation, as His clay pots, cannot in human ways, with a human tongue, name God - for God is beyond our words: God simply IS.)

Now, let us found this idea in the Word of God.

First, let us look at 1 Kings 19: 9-18. In this passage, Elijah listens for the Lord at Mount Horeb and finds Him not in the strong wind that rents the mountain in two, or in the earthquake, or in the fire - but in a “still, small voice.” And after having heard this voice, Elijah rises, and God commissions him to anoint a king and a prophet.

Next, let us discuss two pairs of related readings, taken from the Old and New Testaments.

First, in Genesis we read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” Nothing had taken shape yet, but the Bible tells us that “the Spirit of God (or wind) was moving upon the waters.” So, all that was in the beginning was this Spirit, this wind, this breath of God.

And then, what happens? - God speaks. “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” And so all things come into being by the Word of God. So nothing becomes something by the Word of God, the origin of Life.

Related to this passage is the beginning of the gospel of John, which reads, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Again, the Word is the origin. The Spirit gives Life. God is the Spirit, the Word.

John goes on to tell us that Jesus is the Word, is God, made flesh. He is the Word come into being; He is the Son of God, the Father - the Light of the world. And so the gift given Moses is fulfilled in Jesus.

Finally, to emphasize the importance of breath and its relation to God, I remind you that Genesis tells us that God breathed the breath of life into man's nostrils, and so he became a living being. (This is the first birth.)

Then I draw your attention to a passage directly related to this one - that which speaks of the second birth. And what is it to be born again, to be born from above, to be, as Jesus told Nicodemus, like the wind of which no one knows "whence it comes or whither it goes." We see a clear parallel to the first birth in John 20, when the risen Christ commissions the apostles: He breathes on them, first saying "Peace be with you," then "Receive the Holy Spirit." (And so the Church is born.)

In closing, I would like to say that I believe the understanding of the Name of God as the silent Word was lost due to the impatience and weariness of the people. I believe that the Name warranted a pause whenever it appeared in the scriptures being read aloud in the synagogues and that people's ears and hearts grew dull to this pure silence, and so words more understandable and pronounceable - more human - were added in its place.

I pray we are not the same as they. I pray that we will find the great life in the silence of God, in His Holy Word - not tediousness or emptiness. And so I greatly encourage you to pray to God to find the still point of the turning world, to find His Silence, His silent Word from which all comes and which holds all Life. Give yourselves over to His wonder and awe. "Be still and listen for His voice" which speaks in all words and is at the heart of all sound.

Peace be with you.

“666”

(The Mark of the Beast)

Let us begin our discourse by reading the passage which refers to the mark of the beast - Rev. 13: 11-18. There are two points I would like to discuss regarding this passage. One is that the beast itself comes to us as a lie, an illusion - a mere image, dead in itself, but given the appearance of life, false and vain though it is. The other is the role of money, of riches, of mammon in the work of the beast. We see this both in the fact that “no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark” and also in the number itself.

To clarify the significance of the number, I propose we turn to 1 Kings 10:14. We read here that “the weight of gold that came to Solomon was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold.” This is the same Solomon who, as verse 23 tells us, “excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom,” and who, as we find in the next chapter, took to himself seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, and whose heart turned away from the Lord to foreign gods.

But to the point at hand - the number so mentioned as the measurement of Solomon’s gold appears nowhere else in Scripture; this is the only other reference to “666” (except for the number who returned from exile of the family of Adonikam, mentioned in the Book of Ezra but changed to 667 in Nehemiah). And so we thus find substantiation for linking the mark of the beast to the riches of this world.

Now, as we have said, Solomon had become a great king, a rich king - the foremost king of the world, and builder of the glorious temple his father, David, had in mind to make. This was just what the people sought when in 1 Samuel 8, they rejected the rule of God over their lives, and asked for a king, that they might indeed be like other nations - with riches and militias, serving as soldiers and commanders of armies and slave drivers. Here in Solomon they found the power of this world they sought so stubbornly.

But what had they lost. They had, in essence, lost God. They were no longer a spiritual people, a holy people, the blessed children of God - now were they a material people, a worldly people of riches and fame. And so a fall into sin was upon them.

God’s chosen people replaced Him with a king. God who dwelt so closely to His children and had shown them such great signs and wonders, now would have His face turned away. Gone was the humility of Noah, of Abraham, of Moses - come now was the pride of Solomon. And the history of the people would subsequently read like a bad soap opera - with the rises and falls, the ups and downs, the good and bad kings... the confusing repetition of shadow and light that plagues this world of darkness.

And, brothers and sisters, just as the obedience of David was followed by the licentiousness of Solomon, so Christ is followed by the beast. For the beast does come now in attempts to lead even the elect astray. He holds up the illusions of this world, the temptations of this mortal sphere, to lead our souls into such darkness.

Let us consider now the second characteristic of the beast - that it is a lie. Remember first that it comes as a mere image, into which the breath of false life has been breathed, and consider also the relation of the scarlet beast on which the whore of Babylon rides in Revelation 17. This beast is described as "the beast that was and is not." This beast, too, is false illusion, for though it comes to tempt us, yet it does not exist, it is not real - it is as a dark cloud passing, which vanishes in the light. For only God Is, only Life Is - and the beast is of death; it comes from the chasm of vainglory and is but an illusion. It is as when losing our souls to carnal pleasures we endow the substance of our lust with the appearance of life... we lose ourselves in such empty images.

And beware, brothers and sisters, for there are many such images which would entrap us today - there are many dead things which take the appearance of life. Just as in primitive times pagans bowed down to their graven images, just as the Israelites had their golden calf - so do we make our gods of money and fame and power and sex.

And money is the leading lie. Let me ask you - is there life in a dollar bill? - Of course not. Money is but paper, it is but metal - it is but what *man* makes of it, for it has no breath from God. The dollar bill itself is a virtually worthless object.

And I beg you, please, not to take this idea too lightly. Not to joke too easily about the power and desire for money - lest you add unto the life of the beast. Be sure in your hearts that when the death of the harlot comes, when Babylon falls and this world fails, you shall not cry in anguish like the merchants in Revelation 18.

For a better sense of what false image is, let us think a moment about television. Television gives the appearance of reality. We see images of people and places and things - and yet what is there but dots on a screen? And I wonder how many of us are truly aware of the illusion of television when we watch, and how many of our hearts are caught up in its vain snares of power and sex... How many of us wish to be seen on *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*? (Again, I beg this matter not be dismissed in jest too easily.)

Finally, I would ask, "Is Jesus of this world?" Was Jesus of the world of power and money? Most certainly He was not. And if we are to be of Him, we must not be either. We must make the distinction, as Jesus did so eloquently, between the world of Caesar (or king) and the world of God, and choose, however difficult the road, to live with God.

When Jesus was asked by Pilate, He confessed that He was *not* of this world. He could have had legions of angels defend Him from the powers of darkness if He wished to be saved in this world. But He even rebuked His servant, Peter, for suggesting so. For His face was set toward His Father in heaven, not on the things of this world - not even His own life.

And so I say, beware my brothers and sisters. It is indeed hard for a rich man to enter into heaven. Give freely of yourselves if you wish to find His kingdom. Love your brother and not your money, for your brother has the breath of life in him, not your money. Remember that Jesus never touched money; Judas was the moneyholder. Keep yourselves free of the greed and illusory pleasure of this world. Store up goods not on this earth - store up treasure in heaven, and the beast will indeed be as nothing to you.

Ask yourselves, are you waiting, as were the Jews, for a Messiah to restore the power and kingship of this world? Or are your sights set upon heaven alone?

Cry, America!

*Cry, America,
for the blood of the innocents
is upon your hands!
inhumanity.*

*Cry, America,
shores
and join Rachel
weeping for her children!*

*Cry, America,
for those who are trained to save
are murdering instead!*

*Cry, for those
whose brains are sucked dry,
whose limbs are torn apart,
whose lives are denied,*

*cannot cry for themselves —
nor can they cry for you
who have lost your soul in violence!*

*Save us, O Lord,
from a fate worse than death;
save us from our*

*What life is there upon these

if we do not cry
for what is lost?*

*Christ was once crucified;
the innocent Lamb of God
has died for our sins
once and for all —*

*yet He suffers repeated crucifixion
in the slaughter of the innocents
and the hardness of our hearts.*

Declaration of War

This is a declaration of war on the sin of abortion. And lest there be confusion of any kind, I shall make explicit the terms of this war.

This is not a war which compounds murder with murder; the participants in this war carry neither swords nor guns. Our weapons are the power of Light and the pure fire of the Holy Spirit, for only by these means may we overcome the darkness so pervasive, and triumph in this war.

This is a war in quest of the salvation of souls. We believe all life to be sacred and in God's hands - we do not take the sword of vengeance upon our brother. Christ shall return soon enough (perhaps before this sentence is through) with winnowing fork in hand, and condemn the souls and bodies of the wicked by the justice of His word and breath. We shall leave retribution to the Lord and His angels - we cannot presume greater judgment than He. Our purpose is to call men to the blood of Christ, to save men's souls from condemnation before this time when there shall be no turning back.

Man's inhumanity to man mounts up daily, and no greater sin is there than the shedding of innocent blood. The blood of the children cries out from the ground, calling us to save our souls from utter condemnation.

Ghost Town

When I was a child
these streets were alive
with children playing.

In the houses there were mothers
 watching us from the windows
 as they prepared the evening meal.

My father stood on the porch at dinner time
and whistled,
and from the park we'd come
rushing home.
Never late.

But now a child is not heard:
there is no movement on these streets,
 and the houses are empty.

The neighborhood is filled
with those who stay a year or two,
maybe three,
as they milk money
from the big City across the way.

Soon they will be gone to another house
for a year or two...
No roots.
No roots, no branches, no leaves...
No roots – no tree.
Four walls, empty.
Four walls: a vacuum.

And they do not seem to mind
that they have no home,
no children – well, maybe one,
despite the houses they own...

(What makes them so diligent in their pursuit?)

The womb, our first home,
that place of sacred wonder,
 no longer brings life;
 yes, it
 is empty.

Four walls: a vacuum.
Empty.

A third of a generation has never been,
and no one seems to notice;
no one seems to care.
The loss is hardly felt
 as we celebrate our freedom
 in this
 ghost town.

Love and Wisdom in the Computer Age

In this age of science, when the eye becomes our principal tool, when our technology takes precedence so thoroughly in our lives on Earth - what need there is for the heart to open, to balance these actions of the mind. Yet we find our ears shut to the cry of the poor; we wish only to keep their needs at arm's length, well apart from the matter we possess.

We see not the necessity for eye and ear to balance; we recognize no relationship between the work of the mind and the life of the heart - we see not that without love there is no wisdom, as without wisdom there is no love. And so our eye is blinded by overuse, as love decays within our hearts. No nourishment find we for the pathways of the brain, for the blood needed to cleanse them so remains stifled within our dark heart's walls.

The Lord calls us to open our ears to the presence of His word, to yield to His blessed saving grace - but what nonsense this seems to us, who need nothing but the power of our wills and the skill of our own hands, who need the guidance of nothing but the artificial light we create.

And so we stare into computer screens and televisions, into telescopes and microscopes... with nary a thought of thankfulness for the living God. Because our ears are closed to those in need - not to mention to His still, small voice - because we ignore the least of our brothers, whom the Lord has given to test our readiness for heaven, thus we find ourselves doomed to despair, depression, and thorough heartache.

And so the question remains - will we see that we are so blind? Will we recognize the vanity in our own inventions? Will we turn to His holy voice, speaking in all around us? Will we yield our hearts to Him, and find the love that secures wisdom?

And can we expect the country or the world to do so if we as Christians, if we as Catholics, do not?

MANNA

As the Israelites fed on the manna in the desert, as they awaited their coming into the promised land - so we feed on the Eucharist in the wilderness of this world, waiting for the Lord to return. But our food is a spiritual food; theirs fed only their bodies.

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Our broken history needs a mending

I beg the Protestants among us to be careful how you judge, for as you judge so you shall be judged.

I ask you, who is the husband of Mary? By whom did she give birth to Christ? And is it not so that when you attack the wife, the husband is hurt (for the two become one indeed)? And does not the husband defend the honor of his wife - particularly one so deserving of tribute, one so blessed? Remember that the sin against Jesus and His bride, the Church, shall be forgiven, but the sin against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.

And as for the Church: do you not know that the Church is comprised of human beings and human beings are by nature imperfect? Do you not expect their frailty? And yet are you so judgmental as to condemn those who falter?

And does not the Church teach the truth? Have you taken the time to find this out? Or do you judge by hearsay?

And are there not individuals who strive to follow that truth? And yet you see only the sinfulness; you strain out the gnat and so fail to see the log in your own eye - for is it not the darkness in yourself that causes you to condemn the sins of your brothers and sisters and see not their faith?

Do we not feed on the very Body of Christ while you feast on the food of rebelliousness? Should this sacrament and the blessing of the Church which comes from Christ not be available to you? Must we not be united?