

## The Grafts of God

The middle of March: winter is finally over here in southern Illinois. I walked through the garden this morning, checking the condition of young apple trees I moved from Idaho last year. Most of these trees are on fully dwarfing rootstock, meaning that their root systems are undersize and are unable to handle drought or poor soils. They suffered badly in Idaho the summer of 2001, when I was unable to be there to water them. They suffered by me moving them after they leafed out spring 2002. They suffered more by then experiencing one of the driest summers in recent history here in Illinois. They suffered in the heavy clay soil in which I temporarily planted them. It's a wonder that any of them are alive. None of them would be if I had left them in Idaho.

*Do trees possess a will to live? Are they like people, with some determined to hang onto life despite the difficulties, the hardships, the neglect, abuse, mistreatment? Or are they botanical idiots, machinelike in their lack of self-awareness?*

Spring 1997: I grafted 600 apple scions of various varieties on P-2, P-22, and Bud-9 rootstock, all winter hardy varieties recently introduced from Eastern Europe. Most of these grafts took; less than 20 didn't. So I then had nearly enough trees to plant an acre of high-density orchard, and I had an acre of ground inside the city limits of McCammon, Idaho. The acre was over the crest of a knoll overlooking I-15. Its air drainage was excellent. In addition, the city delivered unmetered water to the acre; plus, with the acre came three-quarters of a share of ditch water, meaning that I could flood irrigate for approximately 20 hours a week. So despite being in the arid intermountain region, water wasn't a problem. All I lacked were the additional three or four acres necessary so that a living could actually be made from an orchard of dwarf trees.

During that spring of 1997, I began looking for acreage, with water, on a slope in or near McCammon. Not much was available, though. There was a small commercial orchard in Walker Creek Canyon between McCammon and Inkom, and another up Mink Creek Canyon between Inkom and Pocatello. Both of these orchards were established, and both were for sale for much more money than I could afford. Both used the small canyons' depth to shelter the trees from the worst of the winter weather, and both orchards were on semi-dwarf rootstock, making for larger trees than I wished to manage and harvest.

*If either orchard was truly successful financially, why was it for sale?*

The varieties planted in the Walker Canyon orchard were McIntosh and Rome, while the varieties in Mink Creek orchard were Red and Yellow Delicious. This Mink Creek orchard's crop was in direct competition with Washington State apples. Wholesale, Delicious apples were selling for \$5 and \$6 a box. McIntosh, though, were selling for \$18 a box. But I wanted to market Honeycrisp, a new variety to the intermountain West and a variety then going for \$24 a box. I knew I would have to plant the orchard myself, as well as graft the trees— I couldn't afford an orchard any way other than to wait for it to begin fruiting.

By the end of the summer of 1997, most of my grafts were four feet high, some five feet. All were growing. Everything was going well, except I still hadn't located the acreage I wanted. I had a couple of leads, both close to town but open to the weather. Then God began moving me out of my comfort zone to begin doing a work for Him.

(This work has been on-going: it is, as I finish this essay, late summer 2004. I'm in Port Austin, Michigan— here after spending a year at Bedford, Pennsylvania.)

I know of no way to describe what has transpired from summer's end 1997 until now. God had/has a work for me to do that wasn't/isn't geographically located in southeast or northcentral Idaho, or southern Illinois, all locations I have lived since grafting Honeycrisp scions to fully-dwarfing rootstock. Of course, I wasn't, in 1997, looking to be employed by God, even though I had

been part of the Body of Christ for twenty-five years. I was content letting others declare the mighty deeds of Christ to the world; I was mostly content to pray and pay. Only on occasion would I wonder why there was no outlet within the Church of God for individual evangelism. I had some skills. By 1997, I had been writing for 18 years. I had earned a M.F.A. degree in Creative Writing from University of Alaska Fairbanks, with additional graduate coursework in English at Idaho State University, Pocatello. I had then been in business in one form or another for thirty years. I felt I could make a contribution, but within the Church of God, doors were closed. As a person under authority, I could pray and pay, and read the words of others, words warning of an impending superpower in Europe. I could attend Sabbath services, and Holy Day services, and fellowship with others who were also praying and paying and not doing much of anything else. My concern for all of these twenty-five years was that I made very little money: God wasn't getting much return from His investment of having drafted me into the Body of Christ. At best, I was an unprofitable servant—and I knew it. I felt it. But there was always the issue of being presumptive. Christ places a person in the Body of the Son of Man where He wants the person. If that placement was to pray and pay, my belief was that the person was to pray and pay until Christ reassigned the person. Until given a job, I wasn't going to poach upon another person's.

Orofino, 1998. In the canyon of Idaho's Clearwater River, the only radio reception available was of a local transmitter broadcasting *Moody Radio*. I listened as I carved totemic bowls for Alaskan galleries. The alder of northcentral Idaho was like the alder of Alaska, in that it was denser, struggling to grow at the limits of its climatic range. The alder of the central Oregon coast was very soft, almost corky in texture, making carving raised lines difficult. But there in upper Idaho as in Southeast Alaska, struggling against the elements, the alder was more like soft maple, but with smaller cells, allowing fine detail to be cut by knife. And as I struggled to pay more rent than prudent, I listened to sincere disciples of Christ broadcast messages about salvation, but without any understanding of the plan of God. Their knowledge of God was far less than their love for Him. They seemed genuinely unaware of their bondage to a spirit of lawlessness. And I began to question whether they were genuine disciples of Christ, this sentence actually inverted in meaning—since thirteen years old, I had thought of all Sunday-observing Christians as apostates. They were not keeping the laws of God, which, as a condition of the new covenant, are written on hearts and minds of drawn disciples. They mocked Christ by teaching disciples that the laws of God were fulfilled in Christ so Christians don't have to keep them because Christ resided in the born-again Christian's heart. Even a cursory application of logic will cause a person to gag on that reasoning: if Christ kept the commandments of His Father, and if He lives in a person, logic will have the person also keeping the commandments of the Father. If a disciple doesn't, the disciple wars against his or her heart where Christ resides—and a divided house will not stand. Christ, who kept His Father's words, did and will always keep the commandments. If we love Christ and love the Father, we, too, will keep the commandments as a descriptive condition of receiving spiritual life from the Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Agion*]. Born-again disciples are no longer under the law, but the new man within the person has become the spiritual ark of the covenant. The law of God is now spiritually written on tablets of flesh rather than upon slabs of stone. Thus, to erase the commandments written on the hearts and minds of all disciples through neglect or malice is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Therefore, within the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God it had become customary to dismiss the genuineness of Sunday-observing "Churchianity." And it was this easy dismissal that was being called into question by the daily broadcasts of *Moody Radio*.

The Apostle Paul writes that there will be schisms among brethren to determine who is genuine. This determination isn't by which faction has the more correct position on a doctrine, but by whether a disciple will have love for those who do not agree with him or her. Jesus' disciples will

love one another; by their love for one another they will be known, or proven genuine. They will even love their enemies. They will not shed their brothers' blood.

A student caught me off-guard a few semesters ago: she asked, without any apparent introduction of the subject, if I thought Mormons were Christians. Without thinking, I said, "I know that Southern Baptists don't recognize them as Christians, but the Apostle Paul wouldn't recognize the Southern Baptists as Christians." By this time my mouth had been open for long enough I realized the need to qualify my answer, since among my Composition students was the wife of an associate Baptist pastor. And for the remainder of the class I discussed hypocrisy. The truth is that both Mormons and Baptists have an equal claim of discipleship. They both know the mysteries of God only in part. They are of differing houses of spiritual Israel. And both will have many disciples in the kingdom of heaven, but not all disciples even though it remains Christ's desire that all are saved. Hypocrisy, though, will send some disciples of each denomination into the lake of fire.

How can both a Baptist and a Mormon be in the kingdom of God when their belief systems are so opposed to the other? For that matter, how can Mother Theresa, as a Roman Catholic, be in the kingdom of God? And if a Baptist, a Mormon, and a Catholic can be in the kingdom of God, than can a Muslim be there? Answer: there is only one name by which salvation comes. Not until the Muslim accepts Christ's sacrifice will the Muslim receive life everlasting. And therein lies the message heard in *Moody Radio*. Not the message taught by broadcasters, but the message Christ moved me into the Clearwater canyon to hear. He has one flock, but sheep in many folds. Thieves and wolves have decimated the flock in every fold. The shepherds He has appointed have been hirings, who either sought their own little folds or who fled when danger approached. Thus, the flock has been badly scattered, poorly taught, and taken captive by the Adversary. Actually, the flock was sent into captivity just as the ancient houses of Israel and Judah were sent into captivity because of their lawlessness.

The Apostle Paul wrote about his flesh being in bondage to the law of sin and death: his flesh died as a result of this bondage. But Christ Jesus liberated Paul's mind from spiritual bondage. Paul's name was written in the book of life. And with liberation, Paul could rule his mind even if his body was not yet in subjection to his mind. He was as spiritually liberated as Joseph was physically liberated when Joseph was made second to Pharaoh in all of Egypt. Yes, Joseph was set free from prison, but he remained in Egypt— and he remained under the authority of the Pharaoh. His father and brothers were not then under the authority of the Pharaoh, nor was Israel under Pharaoh's authority when God liberated the nation from physical bondage during the days of Moses. And this juxtaposition lies at the heart of understanding the seventh chapter of Paul's epistle to saints at Rome. Just as Joseph remained under Pharaoh's authority even though he was liberated from custody in the house of the captain of the guard, the Apostle Paul remained subject to the law of sin and death that dwelt in his flesh even though he was liberated from the law that produced its works of death in him. The new creature that remained in Paul's tabernacle of flesh had spiritual life. Joseph, after long imprisonment, received a new life as the overseer of Egypt. His father Israel, though, was a free man in Judea. The Logos as Theos was not subject to the law of sin and death. Not until the patriarch Israel and his sons go down to Egypt are they subject to the Pharaoh. (Israel's sons go for grain, which they bring back to Judea just as the Logos brings the enslaved nation of Israel into the promised land. The Judean spring barley harvest represents the fruitfruits of the harvest of God, with the autumn wheat harvest representing the main harvest of humanity in the great White Throne Judgment.) Likewise, the Logos was not subject to the law of sin and death until He came as the man Jesus of Nazareth. And He didn't sin; thus, Jesus never became a bondservant to sin and death. He had to be made sin in order to justify His death. But because he entered His creation as a flesh and blood human being, Jesus could not escape death. Entrance into time meant death, for all that is in the world will die. He had to die.

Satan is today the ruler of this world; he is the spiritual king of Babylon, and he reigns over humanity as the prince of the power of the air. He reigns over the mental topography of humanity just as Pharaoh reigned over the flood plains of the Nile, and Nebuchadnezzar reigned over the plains of Shinar. The physical landscapes of both Egypt and Babylon serve as the visible reality of the invisible spiritual landscapes of humanity. Likewise, the hill country of Judea serves as the visible reality of the invisible mental topography of the children of God. Judea was not a land watered with one's foot like a vegetable garden (Exod 11:10), but a land dependent upon the earlier and the latter rains, a land God cares for (v. 12), a land that the eyes of God are continually upon. And Moses, quoting God, warned Israel that if the nation obeyed His commandments and served *YHWH* with all their heart and with all their mind [*naphesh*], He, *YHWH*, would give the rain that becomes a metaphor for receiving the Holy Spirit. Israel would gather in grain, wine, and oil, the harvest of the land— the spiritual harvest of the mental topography of humanity would be the many sons of God that He will bring to glory when the judgment of the Body of Christ is revealed. Thus, as a tithe of the land was brought into the storehouse of God, a tithe of the Body will enter the house of the Bridegroom.

Once the patriarch Israel went to Egypt, he made himself subject to Pharaoh, with Pharaoh serving as a type of Satan, the spiritual king of Babylon. Again, physical Egypt and physical Babylon represent the world that is today passing away. They both represent slavery and by extension, subjection to death. They represent the flesh— and the flesh will pass away. It will not be saved. And all who teach otherwise lack spiritual understanding.

The glorified Jesus is no longer subject to the law of sin and death: His flesh was subject to the Cross, thereby causing Him to experience the agony of death. The man Jesus of Nazareth died. Again, the flesh [Gr: *soma*] as part of the world did and does not have life. When the flesh loses its breath [*psuche*], it dies. So it is not just in darkness, but it is darkness, for that which is flesh is not spirit. Not until a human being is born from above and receives the Breath of God [*Pneuma 'Agion*] does the person have Light, or spiritual life. And this Light or life is what's liberated from bondage to sin through spiritual birth.

An important correspondence needs remembered: light equates to life, and darkness to death.

Paul could rule his mind. It was his body that he could not rule. So he was like an Israelite born in Egypt during the period between the patriarch Israel's arrival and when the new Pharaoh that didn't know Joseph (Exod 1:8) began to reign. He was subject to the law of sin and death, but he functioned as a free man within the nation.

However, just as God sent first the house of Israel, then the house of Judah into physical captivity because these peoples would not keep His laws, statutes and commandments, God sent the spiritual nation of Israel into mental captivity because it would not keep His laws that were, under the second covenant, written on hearts and minds. Spiritual Israel is no longer under the old written code. Rather, the codified laws, statutes, and judgments of God have been, through receipt of the Holy Spirit, written on all disciples' hearts and minds; they are written on tablets of flesh. They are not far from disciples, but within disciples. They are not outside of the disciple, but in the disciple's conscience. Thus, when a disciple refuses to keep these internalized laws, which includes the Sabbath commandment, the disciple patterns him or herself after the circumcised nation that refused to keep the commandments of God even though they had the law read to them every Sabbath day. Hence, the spiritual nation of Israel became like the physical nation in Egypt and in Babylon. Its slavery, though, was and remains of the mind. It is in harsh bondage to sin and death just as the circumcised nation was in harsh bondage to Pharaoh when God sent Moses back down to Egypt.

The spiritual nation of Israel will be liberated from its mentally harsh bondage to sin when the death angels pass through spiritual Egypt or Babylon— we have been living through the long

spiritual night between when the Paschal Lamb was sacrificed for the household of God and the midnight hour. We have been roasting with fire the Lamb of God through our lawlessness; we have been eating of this Lamb whenever we have taken the sacraments. And we have been awaiting liberation from spiritual bondage (from bondage to sin and death).

Ten plagues came on ancient Egypt before Pharaoh would let Israel leave to worship *YHWH*, three days journey into the wilderness. The tenth was the death of all firstborns not covered by the blood of a paschal lamb.

The paschal Lamb of God has already been slain, so the spiritual nation will not experience these plagues prior to its liberation. However, during the first half of the Tribulation, a repetition of these plagues will occur prior to the other half of humanity becoming the children of God when the Holy Spirit poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28). Just as the nation that left Egypt didn't enter into the promised land because of unbelief (Heb 3:19), the spiritual nation that is liberated from bondage to sin at the beginning of the Tribulation will not enter into God's rest because of its unbelief. It will believe the evil report of the ten witnesses rather than the two; it will believe that the giant of obedience to God is too large to conquer; it will not believe that by faith it can walk blameless before God. Therefore, because this nation doesn't love righteousness enough to attempt walking blameless even though the nation has been liberated from bondage to sin, God will, 2300 days before Christ's return as the Messiah, send a great delusion over this nation so that the nation cannot turn and repent and be saved. It will be their spiritual children that enter Christ's rest, just as it was the children of the nation that left Egypt who enter the physical promised land. And the good news that must be proclaimed to the world before the end comes is that all who endure to the end shall be saved. Everyone will, during the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, have the Holy Spirit; everyone will be a child of God. But those individuals over whom God sent a great delusion take for themselves the tattoo of the Cross, thereby marking themselves for death. They will not have endured in faith to the end. They will miss out on salvation because they didn't love righteousness enough to practice walking blameless before God prior to when the Son of Man was revealed. They determined for themselves good and evil, how they would worship God, and who was of God. And their history in the spiritual realm is revealed through the physical nation's history in Judah: God sees the spiritual nation that bears His name as we see the physical nation that bore His name from the time of the Judges until Christ's earthly ministry. The portrait is vile.

An immediate objection should form: God would not again slay firstborns. Yes, He will. *YHWH* calls the circumcised nation in bondage to Pharaoh His firstborn son (Exod 4:22). Again, even though the death angel passed over them and they were liberated from physical bondage, they were unable to enter the promised land because of their unbelief. Except for Joshua and Caleb, all of *I AM*'s firstborn son died upon His orders. This firstborn, physical son of God (i.e., all of Israel that left Egypt) died in the Wilderness of Sin because they believed the report of the ten spies that said there were giants in the promised land; they died because of their lack of faith. And their lack of faith or unbelief became disobedience when they tried to enter the promised land on the following day.

Jesus of Nazareth is the firstborn spiritual son of the Father, and the first of the firstfruits. Again, He was, while a human being, without sin— He had to be made sin to die. Because He was without sin, He was not in bondage to sin. Therefore, since the wage for sin is death— He had not earned this wage— death had no legitimate claim to His life. He had to be given the sins of humanity, of each individual human being, in order for death to claim His life.

God the Father allowed His firstborn spiritual Son to experience physical death just as *I AM* allowed His firstborn physical son to experience physical death in the Wilderness of Sin. But Jesus was the first of the firstfruits. All of the firstfruits constitute the firstborn spiritual son of God. Thus, spiritual Israel (the greater Christian Church) is the spiritual firstborn son that will experience

spiritual death because its unbelief becomes disobedience when it tries to enter the spiritual promised land [glorification] on the following day: Sunday. This firstborn spiritual nation will spiritually die in a spiritual wilderness of sin, or lawlessness. Only the portion of this nation represented by Joshua and Caleb will be glorified. The remainder will die the second death because of their lawlessness.

Again, just as the uncircumcised children of the nation that left Egypt entered the promised land under Joshua and Caleb, the half of humanity that doesn't identify itself as Christian when the Tribulation begins will, if it endures to the end, enter the promised land of glorification. And this is the good news that must be proclaimed to the world before the end comes (Matt 24:13–14). All who endure to the end shall be saved, for the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, thereby causing the lion to lie down with the lamb. The kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ. Death will have been defeated. The testimony of the two witnesses through their public deaths and resurrections will establish death's defeat. Nevertheless, those who do not love righteousness will be marked for death by them taking the mark of the beast, which is the tattoo of the Cross [*chi xi stigma*]. The Cross represents death and is the image of the fourth beast, whose body has been given over to be burned.

All who endure to the end will refuse the mark of the beast. They will not be a part of Babylon. Rather, under the leadership of a spiritual Joshua and Caleb—the seven named churches of Revelation chapters two and three, and the single congregation of every other sect and denomination—they will spiritually fight against Babylon until Christ's return when He will bring this holy people out of the north country (the land of death) and from the far corners of the earth. This spiritual nation will reoccupy spiritual Jerusalem and all of greater Judah. They will be the nation that is glorified, not the nation that because of its lack of faith refused to walk blameless before God.

The first son of Abraham (Ishmael) was rejected because he was born to a bondwoman; the promise came through Abraham's second son (Isaac). The first son of Isaac (Esau) was rejected because he didn't value his birthright; the promise came through Isaac's second son (Jacob). The first son of Adam was rejected because he was a murderer. The first son of God (Adam) was driven from Eden because of disobedience; the second Adam (Jesus of Nazareth) was glorified as a life-giving spirit. And the rejection of the physical nation of Israel (the firstborn son of *YHWH*) foreshadows the rejection of the spiritual nation that had the laws of God written on hearts and minds, but would not keep these laws. Although all firstborns belong to God, the model seen is that few will obey God. Few will value their inheritance. Few will celebrate their liberty. Most will return to bondage because they do not love righteousness enough to walk blameless before God. Most will not chafe against their bridle and bit of sin presently covered by Christ Jesus' righteousness.

The natural branches of Israel were rejected when they killed the Covenantor of the covenant by which they were made the holy nation of God (Exod 19:5–6). Wild branches were then grafted onto the rootstock of righteousness that is Christ Jesus. But these wild branches, like the Honeycrisp scions I grafted to fully-dwarfing rootstock, continued to bear the fruit of lawlessness. An apple scion doesn't bear the fruit of the rootstock, but the fruit of its own genetics. And so it has been throughout these first hours of the long night that began with the sacrifice of the paschal Lamb of God.

The rejected natural branches have languished as they await a messiah that came first as a man to die for their sins and by their hand. These lopped off branches will be grafted onto the rootstock of righteousness throughout the first half of the Tribulation, when the Head and Body of the Son of Man are revealed. The wild branches that have continued to bear the fruit of lawlessness will be pruned away; these wild branches will attempt to enter Christ's rest on the following day. The Sabbath will, when the Son of Man is revealed, mark who is of God, and who is of the lawless one,

the Man of Perdition who comes by the working of Satan. The wild branches that have consistently determined for themselves what is good and what is evil is today the greater Christian Church— and because of the fruit that these branches bear, these branches will be rejected. They have not borne the fruit of the rootstock, and by nature, they will not bear that fruit. Instead, they have borne fruit verifying their bondage to sin. They are the natural sons of bondage who have not valued their inheritance enough to strive for righteousness. Rather, they have sold their inheritance of everlasting life for that which gratifies their lusts.

Exceptions exist: just as there were a few righteous men and women in every generation of physical Israel, even when the nation was sent into captivity in Babylon, there have been a few wild branches that have loved righteousness enough to practice walking blameless before God. Grace covers their failures. They have arrived individually at the promised land, where they await entrance in the timelessness of death so that no one precedes another. But the majority of the firstborn spiritual Son of God refused to leave Egypt, and continues to refuse. When this spiritual Son is driven from Egypt following its liberation from spiritual bondage, this firstborn spiritual Son will reject the testimony of the two witnesses and will elect for itself leaders who will return the nation to living in lawlessness. These wild branches will again bear their natural fruit. And they will bear this fruit without spiritual self-consciousness.

A child is not aware of his or her mortality. A newly born infant has no sense of life, or of death. He or she has life. Only with maturing does this child realize that he or she can die, that life is a gift that can be lost. Likewise, a newly born disciple has life without awareness that this life can be lost. These spiritual infants make statements akin to *Christ will finish the good work He has started in the person.* Indeed, He will. But He will finish this good work as He finished the good work He started when He liberated Israel from bondage to Pharaoh. Joshua led the children of the nation that left Egypt into the promised land just as the seven churches will lead the spiritual children of today's greater Christianity into glorification. And as with the children of the circumcised nation, these spiritual children are either not now born, or have not yet reached the age of their physical majority.

Today, not a single broadcaster on *Moody Radio* will admit that he or she needs to be liberated from spiritual bondage to sin. If anything, they would collectively chastise me for even suggesting that they were enslaved by sin. Yet, they are truly the spiritual children of a bondswoman, for the greater Christian Church was taken captive by spiritual Babylon and its king when it accepted the lie that the first Eve swallowed. In Eden, the serpent told Eve that she would not surely die if she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan as the spiritual king of Babylon convinced the second Eve that she would not surely die— she had an immortal soul— as the Church determined for itself what is good and what is evil. Rather than remaining silent and learning from her husband, Christ Jesus, the woman determined for herself what was sound doctrine. And by the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, this enslaved woman needed the secular emperor of Rome (i.e., Constantine at the Council of Nicea ca. 325 CE) to make this determination, for she could not longer agree with herself. Her bondage was finally formalized through the forced adoption of Sunday as her day of rest, the day on which she will try to enter God's rest after her liberation.

Again, the nation that left physical bondage in Egypt refused to believe the report of Joshua and Caleb and enter the promised land when God said. Rather, this firstborn son rebelled because of unbelief. It was rejected after its rebellion. Then in an attempt to please God, it turned its unbelief into disobedience by attempting to enter the promised land the following day— and it was turned back mightily.

Likewise, the firstborn spiritual nation will, through lack of faith, refuse to enter the spiritual promised land by living as spiritual Judeans. They will be rejected as the formerly rejected natural branches are grafted back onto the rootstock of righteousness. And these wild branches that have long taken their strength and substance from the rootstock of Christ Jesus will attempt to please

God by entering His rest on the following day. But God will send a great delusion over them so that they will spiritually die while remaining physically alive. But they, as with human infants, will not be aware of their own mortality. And they will believe they do God a favor when they persecute those disciples who practice walking blameless by faith before God.

I handled with care each of my grafts spring 1997. I cut the long angle on the rootstock, and its matching angle on a length of scion having two or three buds. I fit cambium layer to cambium layer, and held the joints tightly together while I wrapped the splices with cut rubber bands. I then covered the union with plastic film to keep the joint from drying out. And only after buds had started to open did I set these benchgrafts in their baby rows, where I nurtured them through April, May, June. I could almost say that I personally knew each graft. I certainly remembered the ones that didn't quite mate. I noticed the ones that grew faster or slower than the others. I paid special attention to them, and to the grafts of the red-fleshed apples. I wanted them to grow; I willed them to grow. And some grew unbelievably well.

Organic life is more complex than an internal combustion engine, yet both do work from the release of stored energy through the oxidation of fuels. Spiritual life has a similar relationship to organic life as organic life has to a mechanical engine. A television series features warring robotics. In each episode, several robots attempt to wreck or destroy other machines, their movements control from above by their creators. Little regard is given to the "feelings" of these robots as they rip or tear or saw or pound other machines into submission. I'm certain that each machine's builder feels some form of attachment to the creation of his or her hands, but not love in the sense of how the word is normally used. *We love people, not things* is the admonishment I heard while growing up. But the Creator of our universe loved humanity enough to actually die for us. Not almost die. Not figuratively die. Not partially die. But die just as a deer does when hit by an eighteen-wheeler.

If God the Father had not resurrected the man Jesus of Nazareth, "I AM" of the Old Testament would have ceased to exist in both body and spirit.

Endtime prophecies are about spirit beings, who, since *the time of the Gentiles* began, have been manipulating people and national governments by remote control, through the insertion of thoughts, attitudes, and visions into human psyches. We are like the more advanced robots that battle for dominance. Our self-awareness, however, adds another dimension to these robot wars, which would seem to be scripted by the Most High God. The implication of Scripture is that God knows what the angels do not, that God occupies a higher tier or dimension than do the angels, that Lucifer as the pinnacle of God's creation was unable to appreciate the gulf between himself and his Creator, a gulf that allowed the Most High to reveal what Lucifer/Satan and his confederates would do without them knowing He had revealed their actions ahead of time. If the fallen angel that is the prince or *sar* of Persia knew prior to him provoking the spiritual king of Greece that the king of Greece would trample him and utterly destroy him, would the *sar* of Persia still have pushed against the king of Greece? Perhaps, since we see Saddam not backing down from the United States. But more realistically, if the demons knew the outcome of each of their ploys, of each of their manipulations of humanity, would these demons not change what they do? Could this be a major reason why endtime prophecies were sealed and secret until the time of the end? God the Father revealed the actions of the fallen angels before any of them knew what they would do. He literally knows the end from the beginning, which introduces a possibility that the Most High occupies a dimension above the angels just as the creators of the robots, comprised of the same physical elements as their machines, are vastly superior in what we regard as life. Yes, the machines are ingenious. Yes, they have shared attributes with their creators. Yes, they reflect the thoughts of their creators. But the robots lack the self-awareness and self-sustenance of their creators. Likewise, we lack the self-sustenance of the Elohim kind. Apparently, while having self-sustenance from being



composed of the same spiritual elements as the Elohim, angels lack the self-awareness of Elohim, that self-awareness an attribute of the Holy *Pneuma*. If Satan knew that prophecy has fire coming from his belly and consuming him, would he continue the same course of action he has been following? Either he truly doesn't believe God about anything, or he is convinced the Most High will repent of what He intends to do, or he entirely lacks the self-awareness necessary to see himself as God does.

Apparently, two correspondences exist: robots correspond to humanity as angels correspond to Elohim, with an additional correspondence occurring during *the time of the Gentiles*. Humanity during this period has the same relative relationship of manipulated and manipulator with the dragon of Revelation 12 as robots do with humanity. These correspondences break, though, when disciples of Christ are born from above or born again. The new creation remains contained in a fleshy body, but has the self-awareness of the Elohim. It has the promise of self-sustenance and of even greater self-awareness. It is as if a human brain were inserted into a mechanical body alla Hollywood. This new creation is of this world, but not a part of it. It is something not adequately describable by direct language. Just as the Most High is using indirection to create children, linguistic indirection is required to convey what the Most High is about, especially so when that old dragon succeeded in deceiving the whole world.

By spring 1997, the doctrinal changes made by the fellowship with which I had attended for twenty-five years had caused several schisms in the denomination. At last count there were three hundred plus splinter organizations, none as visible as the fellowship had been, but each contending that it is the rightful spiritual successor. At one time, more than a hundred fifty thousand members attended the fellowship's holy day services. Today, the attendance in all of the splinters together is about twenty-five thousand, with the membership of each splinter being exaggerated. (I am consisted a member of three of the splinters, yet I don't attend with any of them.) So somewhere, there are a hundred thousand members of this formerly most visible administration of the Church of God who are no longer attending with any fellowship. There are a hundred thousand individuals who were grafted onto the true vine that is Christ who are on spiritual sabbaticals. They are sheep who have been scattered, and who are fearful of anyone looking like a shepherd.

I know the pleasure it gives me when my grafts put forth new leaves, as they are doing today. I'm certain that Christ and the Father feel an equal sense of satisfaction as we bud out. Not only did the graft take initially, but the young tree survived another winter, this time in its permanent location... when I left McCammon to buy an older store building near Orofino, I had to sell the acre of ground. I asked the new owner if I could leave the rows of nursery stock where they were until they went dormant later in the fall. The new owner agreed. He also agreed to water the rows until I could move them.

I never received possession of the store building even though I made the first two of twelve lease payments; I was sued for the remainder of the lease when I eventually walked away from the deal, but I won a small judgment against the plaintiff. So my moving onto the Clearwater was fraught with difficulties from the beginning. Without the building from which I had intended to conduct business, other plans had to be hastily made. All of these other plans left me critically short of money. I didn't get back to McCammon to move those rows of nursery stock early in the fall (McCammon was 509 miles away from where we rented acreage along the Clearwater). By the time I return, snow had drifted over the rows. The ground was frozen. I wasn't able to move them until spring. What I didn't know was that the grass between the rows hadn't been mowed since I left. Mice had moved in. And under thirty inches of heavily crusted snow, mice gnawed bark on trunks and limbs, killing nearly two hundred. So by the time I was able to move them, I had half the number with which I had started; I had enough for a half acre. But I had no ground onto which to move them other than the front and back lawns of the residence I still owned there in McCammon.

We would leave the Clearwater for the reason we went: money, or the lack thereof. In addition to carving, I taught English Composition as adjunct faculty for Lewis-Clark State College's Outreach Program. Pay was per student enrolled, \$105. per student. Classes hadn't been held at Orofino for a couple of years, so there had been a backlog of students waiting to take classes locally. Pay was light, but tolerable. However, one year took care of that backlog. I had nine students enrolled for the following Fall semester. I couldn't continue renting where we were for that number of students; plus, the landlord wanted to sell the property for more than I could afford. Thus, we returned to McCammon. Only now, I had both front and back yards planted in rows of young apple trees.

The grafts didn't benefit from my neglect while we were on the Clearwater. They didn't benefit from being moved after a difficult winter (they were drought stressed going into the winter). And they didn't benefit from being exposed to fireblight at my residence. They were the same size at the end of their third summer as they were at the end of their first. I was deeply involved in the lawsuit over the remainder of the lease for the store building; I couldn't afford an attorney so I had to do my own legal work. The plaintiffs had retained a legal heavyweight, who wasn't a bit impressed by a *pro se*. I was playing a game for which I didn't know the rules, and I was playing in his ballpark, but \$14,000 was nearly a year's carving wages for me. I had to win, even though the lease had no "out" clause. So I let the grafts fend for themselves as I learned about interrogatories and rules of evidence. As I mentioned earlier, we won the lawsuit, and even received a small judgment against the plaintiff. In addition, two community colleges in mid-America hired me as adjunct faculty. So the grafts struggled to survive another year of neglect: they were still the same size at the end of their fourth year as they were at the end of their first summer.

Spring 2002: now five years old, severely drought stressed, blight inflected, the grafts were in sad shape when I returned to McCammon in May. Many were snow broken. Perhaps fifty remained alive. And all of these had leafed out. It was much too late in the spring to transplant them, but I wouldn't be returning to McCammon until later summer. By this time, I knew I couldn't rely on others to water these grafts. If any of them were going to survive, I had to move them even though I knew the odds of losing them. I figured, though, that they stood a better chance in Illinois than in Idaho. What I didn't know was that my wife would be diagnosed with cancer, that southern Illinois would experience drought, and that I would publish three books over the summer and early fall. Again, the grafts were neglected throughout the summer.

But a couple dozen of them have green tips showing today. I will trellis them within a few days— they should have been trellised last summer.

There are still a dozen or so grafts trellised at McCammon. Those were the ones too large to move, the ones I thought might have enough root system to survive another summer of neglect where they were. I don't know if they survived the winter; I haven't been west since late July. Instead, I have been writing the literature that theologically positions an endtime work of God, perhaps the endtime work that so many claim to be, the Church in Philadelphia. Certainly what I write has been affected by that year spend deep in the Clearwater canyon, not far from where Lewis and Clark hewed the canoes that would take them to the mouth of the Columbia; that year when I only received *Moody Radio*. Likewise, what I write is effected by living in McCammon, a town of 700, a town that supports three wards. The nearest church of any other denomination is twenty miles away.

It's easy to dismiss everyone who doesn't believe as you do. It's easy to utter the termination clause, *They're not Christians*. It's easy to create God in your image. It's easy to graft scions to rootstock. It's hard to admit that few of us can answer the questions posed by Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein...* God hasn't abandoned His creation. He hasn't gone AWOL; He isn't missing in action. He has been watching those hundred thousand grafts not in Sabbath services anywhere, three of whom are my own daughters.

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