

11. The essence of Christianity (part 1, 26 p.).

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Click on the chapter you want to read.

Content

1. The Supreme.....	1
2. The snake as proponent of good- and- evil.	3
3. The Days of Noah	5
4. The days of Noah (further explanation).....	7
5. The days of Lot.	9
6. The lifeline of humanity.	10
7. The servant/servant of the Lord.....	12
8. He who does not serve the Lord.	13
9. "Lord, I see that thou art a prophet" (John 4:19).	15
10. The letter kills but the spirit makes alive.....	17
11. Slain according to the flesh, raised according to the spirit.	19
12. Baptism: from flesh to spirit.	21
13. Old Testament model/ New Testament original.	22
14. Eucharist as spirit.....	24

1. The Supreme.

In this introduction to the language of the Bible - Old and New Testaments - we will begin by talking about the one who radically controls the universe and its course, and who is usually called "God" or "Yahweh.

Yet we dwell with *R. Schroeder, Le messie de la Bible*, Braine-I'Alleud, 1974, 26ss., on the generic name "Elohim.

"The first term used in the Bible - *Genesis 1:1* - to designate God is 'Elohim,' i.e., the plural of 'Eloha'" (o.c., 26). Indeed the first phrase of the entire Bible reads "In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth." This establishes once and for all the main characteristic of the Most High: only God is capable of creation. Everything that exists apart from God, as created, is His work.

It is also said that God creates out of nothing. This is a figure of speech: it means that he creates from his inexhaustible "spirit" (understand: life force) and not from anything outside him. One reads on this subject *Wisdom 1:7*

("The spirit of the Lord fills the world") and 12: 1 ("Your undefiled spirit is in all things").

The plural concerning Most High.- It may be a majesty plural to denote the exalted (as individual rulers say of themselves 'we'). The generic name in Hebrew for "Most High," however, is "Elohim," the plural.- To which Schroeder:

"In reality, 'Elohim' should be interpreted as a plural in several texts."

So in *Ex. 18:11* (where it talks about a meal "in the presence of Elohim"), in *Ex. 20:3* ("You shall honor no other Elohim apart from me (Yahweh)"), in *Deut. 13:3* (speaking of a prophet or miracle-worker inciting to follow "other Elohim"), in *Judges 10:13* ("You left me, Yahweh, and served other Elohim").

However (says the author) in other texts, insofar as Elohim does not denote either deities or judges (*Ps. 82: 1,82:6*; cf. *Job 1/6*), Elohim is the subject of a singular verb. This sometimes occurs. Thus in *Gen. 1:1* ("In the beginning Elohim created heaven and earth"). But in other texts where it is indisputably about the Most High, Elohim is the subject of a plural verb.

Thus in *Gen. 20: 13* ("(...) Where Elohim caused me to wander far from my family"),

in *Gen. 35:7* ("Elohim revealed himself there"; cf. *Gen. 28:12*).

In *Deut. 4:7* ("Yahweh our Elohim") and *Josue 24:19* ("Yahweh is holy Elohim, zealous Elohim").

Conclusion.- Can one not infer that the Bible speaks of one God (singular) but in multiple persons (plural)? This was indeed the interpretation of the Church Fathers - the Christian thinkers of the first centuries of the Church - who saw in that duality concerning Elohim a kind of designation (a model) of the Christian belief in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (the Holy Trinity as a later original) who nevertheless possess a single supreme nature.

In *Gen. 1:26* it reads, "Elohim said, 'Make we man in our image.'" One can interpret this as a consultation of God with His heavenly court, His angels (cf. *Gen. 3:5* and *3:22*; - *Ps. 8:6 (Heb. 2:7)*). But one can also recite the other interpretations of "Elohim.

Note - Schroeder also cites the dialogues of God.

Thus *Gen. 1:26* (so briefly cited), *Gen. 3:22* ("Man has become as one among us through the knowledge of good and evil"), *Gen. 11:7* ("Come! Do we

descend and confound their tongues"),- *Isaiah 6:8* ("Whom shall I send and who shall go in our name?" (at Isaiah's calling by God)).

Adonai.

This term means "Lord" but it is the plural of "Adon" with the suffix "i" meaning "my. Which is the first person singular.

The creators.

Ps. 149:2 reads, "Celebrate Israel with joy its creators ('be' osa(y))."

Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 12:1 says, "Remember the creators of you ('bor'eika')."

Conclusion.- If one reads the texts purely historically, then the interpretation of the Church Fathers (and that which e.g. Schroeder advocates) is without much foundation. But a Christian tradition reads the Old Testament texts as models of Christian originals according to a "typological" method that begins in the New Testament.

2. The snake as proponent of good- and- evil.

We dwell on *Genesis 3* which we bring up in its essentials.

"The serpent was the most cunning among all the beasts that Yahweh had made."

From what is further said about the appearance of "the serpent," it appears that the term "the serpent" is a mythical creature that, if one looks for a model of it, still best resembles what in the fields the serpent displays: outsmarting.

The whole story rests on the duality "woman/male." The cunning being has a well-defined purpose: to seduce the primal couple, Eve and Adam, into "the knowledge (understand in a Biblical sense: intimate intercourse) of good and evil. Such knowledge is typical of deities as *Gen. 3:5* says according to one translation. In that case, the ordained writer means the pagan higher beings. Another translation says that such intimate knowledge of good and evil is peculiar to "God. In that case, "knowledge of good and evil" means something thoroughly different. This is evident from *Gen. 3:22*: "Yahweh God - at the end of the great calamity which the serpent was about to bring about - said, 'Man has now become like one among us: he knows good and evil.'"

God as the rest of the Bible defines him, "knows" good and evil as a reality brought into the world by creatures but thoroughly rejected by him.

Whereas the pagan deities 'know' an 'intimate' intercourse with good and evil in such a way that good and evil are of equal value and so, if evil fits into its intentions, it does. Among those 'deities,' given the totality of the story, is the serpent. Whereby her 'divine' being immediately shows itself much more clearly: she tempts Eve and through her Adam to the intimate knowledge not only of good but also of evil!

Remark. - In favor of the term "deities" argues the fact that the ordained writers by and large possess a solid knowledge of the pagan religions. One has only to read A. Bertholet, *Die Religion des alten Testaments*, Tübingen, 1932, to be convinced of that. And as to those pagan religions, one reads W.B. Kristensen, *Collected Contributions to the Knowledge of Ancient Religions*, Amsterdam, 1947.

Decisive in that work as far as our subject is concerned is o.c., 231/290 (*Cycle and Totality*) in which the author shows that major ancient religions worship deities that are "demonic" in the religio-historical sense of "intimately at home in good and evil" such that, if evil fits into their plans, they practice it. The serpent, in that language, is a demonic being within itself that, moreover, aggressively seeks to establish that demonic interpretation of good and evil from the first parents.

The primal sin.

Eve counters the serpent's view: "The woman saw that the tree (understand: of the forbidden fruit) was good to eat and tempting to the eye, and that that tree was desirable for the purpose of gaining insight. She plucked of its fruit and ate."-What exactly is the original to which this model - the tree and its fruit stand metaphorically for something else of course - refers, remains the secret of the ancient sacred writer. Yet the moral quality is in no doubt: God could not approve of that "eating" because it involved unscrupulousness.

Both genders.

"The woman also gave some of it to her husband who was with her, and the latter also ate. At that moment their eyes opened and they knew at once that they were naked." Commentators argue that this signifies the awakening of the "evil"(understand: unscrupulous) desire and is a first symptom of the disorder making its appearance in the primal order.

God's judgment

Following that is God's action. He judges. Which implies that those

involved will have to swallow the nasty consequences of the deviation.- The serpent is cursed amidst the wild animals. Which insinuates that the deities are at home in the animal world. Dust will eat the snake: the snake is apparently a chthonic (earthbound) being. Which refers to the underworld deities.

Curious

God establishes a contradiction between the serpent and the woman, between both offspring so that the woman's offspring will crush the serpent's head.

3. The Days of Noah .

Genesis 6:1/8 is a kind of introduction to *6:9/ 9:17*, i.e. the days of Noah.- However, to get specific, we read briefly what Tobit (Tobias) tells us about Sarah (Sarrah). She was being harassed by an "evil demon" (*Tob. 3:8*), Asmodeus, who is "in love" with her (*Tob. 6:14*) and who harms no one except those who approach her erotically.- One keeps this model well in mind to understand *Genesis 6:1vv.*

Genesis 6:1/4.

"When men began to become numerous on the face of the earth and to have daughters, the sons of God (understand: high beings) saw how alluring the daughters of men were, and from those daughters they each chose a wife. But Yahweh (Yahweh, Jehovah) said, "My spirit of life (understand: God's creature life force) will not remain with man forever for he is but a puny creature. The duration of his life will be one hundred and twenty years".

Remark. - Another translation of God's judgment reads, "That my spirit not remain indefinitely responsible for man since he is flesh (mean: substandard life force)."

It was observed that between "flesh," substandard life force, and the recoil of "spirit," God's inexhaustible life force, there is a causal relationship. The flesh makes it impossible for God to make His spirit available.

It should be emphasized that this pair of opposites continues to dominate biblical thought and life after *Gen. 6:3* until the final pages of the New Testament. Especially with S. Paul, the pair explicitly plays a leading role. If one can speak of Biblical dynamism (belief in life force), then already from our Genesis text.

'Giants' - Gen. 6:4.

"In those days - and also afterwards - giants lived on the earth because the sons of God had intercourse with the daughters of men who had given birth to their sons. They were the aggressors of ancient times".

Another translation reads, "The nephilim were on the earth in those days (...). They are the heroes of ancient times, those infamous people".

Note - It is established that the nephilim are sons of the unification of sons of God and daughters of man and that they possessed extraordinary life forces such that they appeared as notorious heroes. It seems that they possessed those extraordinary life forces because their "fathers" were sons of God who were high beings precisely because of their life forces.- Again, it shows how dynamism plays a leading role!

Remark. - Now one may understand why we spoke of the Son of God Asmodeus and his role in Sarah's life as a kind of introduction.

The Flood.

"When Yahweh saw how much on the earth the wickedness of men had increased, how much the lust of their hearts went out all day to evil, he became sorry that he had made man on earth." Follows then the flood as the according consequence - "punishment" - of the substandard vitality of (most) men. For, whoever does not have God's essential life force at his disposal, is exposed to all possible dangers of creation without being able to offer serious resistance.

The "nephilim/ deluge" connection.

Without the sacred writer explicitly saying so, it is clear that he is making a causal connection between the influences of the nephilim and the going up into evil of the contemporaries of the nephilim ("and also afterward")! Unspoken in this is but insinuated the causal connection between flesh and the receding of God's spirit as the dynamical explanation of the "nephilim/degeneration/flood" connection.

Conclusion.

It is immediately clear that the three passages of text discussed above are logically very rigorously related, - if at least one situates them in the whole basic biblical language with its dynamical pairing of "flesh/spirit."

It may be that the ordained writer took as his motive some folk myth

(legend) about 'nefilim' and such at first sight 'fantastic' beings but from the text itself it is clear that for him the nefilim are anything but fantasized beings. This is already evident from the fact that because of their life force he esteems them 'high' (divine) and calls them sons of God.

4. *The days of Noah (further explanation).*

The text of *Gen. 6:1vv* is very succinct. It poses major problems for readers who are unfamiliar or too unfamiliar with the pagan religions surrounding Israel. Therefore, these further explanations.

We began by quoting *Tobit 3:8* and *6:14*.- The reason is that invisible beings - in Sara's case an evil demon - erotically approach people of the opposite sex so much so that the latter come under severe pressure, especially when it comes to their normal erotic life. For example: when they seek a marriage partner, they themselves are inhibited and the partner is stalked (up to and including death threats). Sara's case includes all the elements of such a situation.

Sacred eroticism.

One frequently encounters the term "sacred prostitution" or "temple prostitution" in the literature concerning religions. This term is to be avoided where sexual rites are part of an established religion. At best, it fits cases where consecrated eroticism was mixed with ordinary prostitution.

The vocation

The vocation of women who end up in sacred eroticism can be similar to what Sara experienced. More often they are "ordinary" women, but they get into the sphere of some invisible being who has consecrated eroticism for her.

This is then called, within a religion that involves sacred eroticism, a "vocation. That was far from the case with Sara of course who was simply bullied.-The girls in the days of Noah could be of either type, bullied like Sara or called.

That a religion includes a portion of sacred eroticism is evident from *Numbers 25:1vv*.

"Israel settled in Sittim. The people engaged in fornication with Moabite women who invited the people to the sacrifices of her deities. The people ate - understand: partook of the sacred meals that accompanied the sacrifices - and bowed down before her deities."

The sanctuary of Baal-Peor (*Numbers 23:28*) was situated on the border between Israel and Moab. People from both nations went there. In doing so, it appears that Moabite women sought to engage Israelites in their religious rites and convert them immediately to her deities.

That multiple cultures honored the center is evident from *Numbers 25:6* and *25:8*: an Israelite shows up with a Midianite woman and enters a consecrated dormitory with her. This in itself brief description nevertheless shows how pervasive "sexual religion" was there then.

It bears the hallmarks of an established practice. Seen through the eyes of the believers involved, one does not speak of fornication. It was simply religion.

Moreover, this is evident from *Numbers 25:14v* ... - "The Israelite who was killed along with the Midianite - understand: according to Israelite custom of that time - was named Zimri, the son of Sallu, the head of a family from Simeon. The Midianite woman who was killed was named Kozbi. She was the daughter of Sur, a chief of the Midianites". In other words: both were not "ordinary" people!

Well, the brief narrative in *Gen. 6:1vv*. presupposes something in the nature of Sarah but certainly something in the nature of the sanctuary at Baal-Peor.

That the result is "heroes" is evident from what is known about such phenomena elsewhere. Whoever takes into account that sexual intercourse - even if only in imagination - can have a possibly profound after-effect on the biological fruit, is on the way to understanding the phenomenon of the nephilim.

God's judgment.

Reading *Deut. 4:3vv* . - Moses dwells on the commandments. - "With your own eyes you have seen what Yahweh your God did in Baal-Peor: everyone who had run after Baal - understand: the god who was worshiped there - he exterminated from among you. But you who have remained faithful to Yahweh your God are alive today."

Perhaps the text of *Gen. 6:1vv*. has now become a bit more understandable.

5. The days of Lot.

Genesis 19:1vv.

Yahweh appears to Abraham accompanied by two men (*Gen. 18: 1 vv.*). At some point Yahweh announces judgment: "Loudly rises the cry for vengeance from Sodom and Gomorrah!".

In passing, it is about homosexuality which was very widespread in Canaan but highly abhorred by the Yahweh religion as a "counter-natural sin." Yahweh stays with Abraham who asks for forgiveness, but the two men' (angels) head toward Sodom where they arrive towards evening while Lot was sitting at the city gate. Lot offers them hospitality.

"They had not yet laid themselves to rest when the Sodomites crowded around the house, young and old, the whole population, all together. They called out to Lot, "Where are those men (...)? Get them out that we may have intercourse with them." Lot tries to dissuade them from their gay practices. He even went so far as to give up his two virgin daughters - according to the beliefs of those days - to those encroaching men. - "But the men (understand: angels) seized Lot, pulled him into the house and shut the door. Those who stood at the door, small and large, they struck with blindness so that they could not find the door."

"The men (angels) thereupon said, "(...). We are going to destroy the city, because the cry for vengeance (understand: God's justice) over the inhabitants is so loud that Yahweh has sent us to destroy the city."

Remark. - This is a form among many of what the Bible calls "judgment of God," i.e. a conspicuous intervention of God in the natural course of creation. The reason is called "vengeful sin," i.e. unscrupulous behavior that prematurely provokes its unpleasant consequences.

Remark. - The text must be situated and understood in the context of Lot's days.

Today a great discussion is going on about the true nature of homosexuality, which is being conducted from the scientific side, among others. At that time, the plague of homophilia was so culturally destructive that the healthy religion of Yahweh could do nothing but denounce it as ultimately unjustifiable. This is already evident from the very description of the aggression with which then homophilia threw itself upon its victims.

So one does not deduce from this sacred text that every case of homophily or lesbian relationship is utterly condemnable.

Note *Jude* 7 says to this effect: "Sodom, Gomorrah and the neighboring cities ... surrendered themselves to a 'different flesh' ... while thereby suffering the punishment of eternal fire."

The apostle means by "other" flesh the fact that the two men (angels) were not human flesh but apparitions in the guise of men. In its ferocity, the homophilic attack urge at once seized not ordinary people but high spirits acting in the service of God.... This exacerbated the homophilic evil.

"That my spirit be not endlessly responsible for man since he is flesh."- This basic statement (in *Gen* 6:3) that makes the Bible the Bible has one of its most remarkable applications in the days of Lot. Indeed, "Yahweh rained down from heaven sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah: He destroyed those cities and the whole region with all its inhabitants and all that grew there" (*Gen*. 19:24).

Note: Just as Noah's contemporaries, lacking God's creature life force ("spirit"), gave themselves up to what is called "the elements of nature" (the flood), so Lot's contemporaries gave themselves up to "the elements of nature" (burning sulfur).

The sacred writer does not say it explicitly but the basic statement about "spirit/meat" is the light that makes the judgment of God at the time of Lot biblically understandable; those who fall to substandard living through unscrupulous behavior are preparing for unpleasant consequences, which the biblical language attributes directly to God but in such a way that that same language knows full well that the victims are very much partly responsible.

6. The lifeline of humanity.

We begin with what Jesus says very explicitly concerning the lifeline of humanity in *Luke* 17:26vv.

"As it was in the days of Noah (Noë), so will it be in the days of the Son of Man (understand: Jesus). (...). The flood came which destroyed all - Or as it was in the days of Lot, (...). On the day that Lot departed from Sodom, it rained burning sulfur from heaven which destroyed all."

What is said of the time of Noah refers to *Genesis* 6/8 (deviation of

mankind resulting in deluge (understand: ruin)) and what is said of the time of Lot refers to *Genesis 19:1/29*.

In passing, *1 Pet. 3:19v.* refers to the days of Noah, while *2 Pet. 2:5* talks about the days of Noah and *2 Pet. 2:6* talks about the days of Lot. Finally, *Jude 6* repeats the days of Noah and *Jude 7* the days of Lot.

Conclusion.- The couple "days of Noah/ days of Lot" typifies the basic destiny of humanity from the beginning of salvation history and, according to Jesus, that couple will continue to control the destiny of humanity until the days of the Son of Man (understand: Jesus' return).

Egypt more guilty than Sodom.

Wisdom 19:13vv. - The dominant aspect of Egyptian culture, especially religion, is identified by the sacred writer with a far-reaching naturism, understand: a polytheism that indulged in the horror of magical excesses. Yet, as in the days of Lot, so also in the days of the then Egypt: "The nasty consequences - 'punishments' - came down on the sinners (understand: the Egyptians with their far-reaching naturism). Not without the unpleasant consequences being announced beforehand (...). Rightly did they undergo the suffering attached to their own crimes".

The text attempts to explain further.

"For they had shown an all too heartless hatred for the stranger (mean: the indentured Israelites). Those others (meant: the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of Lot) had indeed not given hospitality to the strangers (meant: the angels visiting Lot) who arrived. But they (the Egyptians) enslaved strangers who were benefactors!".

Note. The ordained writer makes an a fortiori observation: the Sodomites were rated as the greatest criminals but the Egyptians violated the laws of hospitality even worse.

"They too were struck with blindness, as were those others (the inhabitants of Sodom) when they stood before the door of the conscientious Lot to try - surrounded by thick darkness - to force the door (understand: of Lot) with all their might."

So much for the essence of the sacred text. In which we skip *Wisdom 19:15/16* since the transmitted text seems too corrupted. This one, by the way, is not so essential for proper understanding.

Conclusion.

For what reason do we dwell on the passus from Wisdom? Because it shows that the reprehensibility of Sodom - not to mention that of the Flood culture that runs parallel to it - also occurs in the meantime - between the days of Lot and the days of the Son of Man. Which clearly points to the fact that, as Jesus puts it, the aberrations of mankind continue, some worse than others. Deviations which, if not thoroughly repented of, are necessarily followed by unpleasant consequences ("punishments").

This prompts us to view the days we experience with the insight (deviation/ unpleasant consequences) outlined above. According to Jesus' perspective, the duality "days of Noah/ days of Lot" also occurs in our days. So do we take a closer look!

7. The servant/servant of the Lord.

Ecclesiasticus (Jesus Sirach) 2:1/18. The text is an outline in the style of the wisdom books of what that is: the servant/servant of the Lord.

Testing.- Those who want to serve God will be unfailingly sure to be "tested" by God Himself, for, as it says on every page of the Bible, God wants to know what He has on the one who serves Him.- In this light, we read the text.

"If ye would serve the Lord, keep yourselves ready for testing! So make thyself a conscientious man. Be strong and, when things go against you, do not let yourself go. Keep contact with the Lord and do not remove yourselves from Him. Thus at the last day (understand: ultimately, at the last judgment) you will share in his glory.

All that befalls you: accept it! Amid the vicissitudes of your poor conditions of existence: show patience! For, as gold is tested in fire, so the elect in the furnace of fire of humiliation.

But trust in God: He will give you help. Go through life conscientiously and count on him.- You, if you fear (understand: deeply respect) the Lord, count on his mercy. Do not deviate. If not, you may perish. Thou, if thou fear the Lord, hope for eternal joy thanks to his mercy as a benefit. Check the generations in the past: who, if he counted on the Lord, was disappointed? Or who, if he stood firm in the fear of him, was abandoned? Or who, if he appealed to him, was not heard? For the Lord is compassionate and compassionate:

sins he forgives, and in the day of need he saves."

Review by prosecution.

Ps. 119 (118):86 says, "Truth are all your commandments: help me, when falsehood persecutes me." Since the days of Noah and those of Lot (*Luk. 17:26v.*), it has never been otherwise: those who live conscientiously (in the truth) will have to endure from dissenting fellow men (falsehood). *Matt. 5:11v.* says it abundantly clear: "Blessed are you when people will insult you or persecute you (...). It is so that one has persecuted the prophets, your predecessors". - We read.

"Woe to the one who is cowardly and falls through. Woe to the unscrupulous whose behavior goes both ways. Woe to the one who for lack of (understand: living) faith just goes his way because (understand: being protected by God) he will not. Woe to you if you do not stand firm: what, if the Lord calls you to account, will you do?"

To love God is to keep his commandments.- "Those who fear the Lord do not depart from his words (understand: directives). Those who love him keep his ways. Those who fear the Lord are for His sake. Those who love him are full of his law. Those who fear the Lord always keep themselves ready (for him) and know themselves ready for humiliation in his service.- So throw ourselves into his arms and not into those of men, for as his loftiness is, so is his mercy."

"If ye love me, Jesus, ye shall keep my commandments ". So it sounds in *John 14:15*. And in *John 15:9v*, Jesus says, "As the Father has loved me, so I also have loved you. Abide in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments."

Jesus, therefore, was Old Testament! Or, if one likes, the Old Testament was already New Testament! Love, then, is more than a pious feeling cherished without deeds.

8. He who does not serve the Lord.

Isaiah (Isaias) 24:116.

This text is the beginning of what is called "the Apocalypse of Isaiah," which includes chapters 24/ 27. Over the then approaching events a final judgment of God is meant or rather: in those approaching events the final judgment already shows itself. What will later be called "the apocalyptic literature" - *Daniel, Zechariah (9/14)* and the Book of *Enoch* - begins here. It continues as one of the later texts of Isaiah.

Orphans.

The reason we situate the text here now is that it paints the antithesis of what Jesus Sirach called the servant of the Lord.

Indeed, *Isa. 24:10* speaks of the "city of nothingness" being a ruin (*25:2; 26:5; 27:10v.*).

In *27:10v.* it reads, "The fortified city has become a desolate solitude, left to its fate like a desert where calves graze and eat all the bushes bare." - Behold Isaiah's text.

Here is Yahweh ravaging and destroying the earth! Her appearance he turns upside down! He drives the inhabitants apart! - The same fate befalls priest and people, lord and slave, mistress and slave, seller and buyer, borrower and borrower, creditor and debtor. Devastated, destroyed the earth will be. It will be plundered, plundered empty.

For Yahweh has spoken this word (understand: this prophesied event). The earth grieves. It perishes. The world withers. The world perishes. (Even) the upper classes wither away.

The earth has been desecrated under the feet of its inhabitants because these have broken the laws, raped the commandment (mean: the code of conduct advocated by God), broken the eternal covenant. This is the reason why the curse has eaten away the earth. Its inhabitants have disappeared except for a few people.

So far for Isaiah's text.

The eternal covenant.

Here experts refer to *Gen. 9:19*, where it is said that after the Flood the descendants of the three sons of Noah (Noë) populated "the whole earth." In other words, the term "everlasting covenant" would not refer to the everlasting covenant with Abraham or the everlasting covenant with Moses but would have the extent of the population of the earth with whom in Noah God made a covenant. This would not then be a private covenant like that with Abraham's descendants or that with the Israelite people whom Moses led into the Promised Land, but a "universal," meaning all people without question.

The disaster communicated by Isaiah that threatens "the city of nothingness" can then be seen as a sample of the universal final judgment "on the last day" about which the text of Jesus Sirach quoted above also speaks.

In other words, either one serves God as the previous text outlines, with the favorable outcome, or one does not serve God as Isaiah's text outlines, with the unfavorable outcome. That is the shuffling that God has been doing since primal beginnings of the creation of sentient beings.

Remark. - Such typically Biblical texts imply that the general demonic theory of e.g. W.B. Kristensen contains only a portion of the full truth. Whereas Kristensen holds that all higher beings who control the cosmos presuppose good and evil, salvation and calamity as equal, the Bible holds that in the midst of indeed very many demonic-good and evil, salvation and calamity as equal- higher beings God, the God of the Bible, towers over by his conscientiousness.

That is precisely the lesson of the fact that God, through Moses or angels, proclaimed the Decalogue - the Ten Commandments - as a universally applicable code of conduct. With God Himself being the first to live up to His code of conduct.

Thus, we say (not "private code of conduct" but rather) "universal code of conduct," viz. that compels choice in the form of "either ... or," and radically excludes free, autonomous conclusion in the form of "both if" as the norm of behavior. Certainly on the last judgment.

9. "Lord, I see that thou art a prophet" (John 4:19).

Beginning with an observation.- John 2:23v ... "While Jesus was in Jerusalem on the occasion of the Feast of Easter, many began to believe in his name at the sight of the signs he performed."

Here we see dynamism, i.e. the conviction that Jesus' miracles ("signs" says S. John) have a "name," i.e. a life force, as their reason, literally at work: many come to a faith that relies precisely on the visible and tangible manifestations of Jesus' name.

Popularly said, "Anyone who can do that must possess a more than ordinary life force." Such reasoning - from the miracle to the sufficiency of its miraculousness - is valid reasoning.

The text continues.

"But Jesus had no confidence in them because he knew all of them.

Moreover, he needed no testimony concerning man because he himself knew what is in man."

Note - What exactly did those who believed then, who distrusted Jesus, miss? Evidently they were absorbed in the miraculous of his healings and exorcisms - we say pure dynamism - and in the solution of their problems as they saw them but remained blind to what he meant, namely, that the miracles were (as S. John says) "signs" that referred to his actual mission, the thorough - and not some superficial - salvation of mankind. This type of salvation is the main concern of the whole Johannine gospel.-.

Jesus as prophet.

Jesus - *John 4:5vv.* - comes into Samaria. He strikes up a conversation with a Samaritan woman. At some point he says to her, "Go call your husband." To which she says, "I have no husband." Jesus replies, "This thou sayest rightly (...) for five thou hast had! The one thou hast now is not thy husband (...)". Whereupon she: 'Lord, I see that thou art a prophet'".

And indeed: she had to do with the clairvoyance - typical of a valid prophet - of Jesus. She herself tells it afterwards in the city, "He told me all that I had done" (*John 4:39*).

Remark. - In passing.- In *1 Samuel 9:9* it reads, "At that time in Israel see what people said as they went to consult God: 'Go therefore unto the seer,' for instead of 'prophet' as at present they said at that time 'seer' ". Cf. *2 Kings 17:13*.

Jesus' actual mission.

So this one was not performing miracles no matter how good and beneficial they were. He puts it in his Johannine way in *John 4:14*. He speaks of a "water" bubbling up from the depths of the one who correctly understands Jesus' command. This mysterious text becomes clearer in *John 7:37*.

"On the last day of the feast - the great day - Jesus stood there and cried, 'If anyone thirsts, come to me, and let him who believes in me drink.'" This according to the scripture, "Out of his depths shall gush forth streams of living water." He was talking about the Spirit to be received by those who had come to faith in him. For Spirit was not yet there because Jesus had not yet been glorified".

Bottom line.

Jesus wants to live up to the New Testament degree of believing life as *Hebrews 8:8/12* says in the wake of *Jeremiah (Jeremiah) 31: 31/34*. Jesus apparently considered the time ripe for God to lead each individual directly from the depths of his soul. This amounts to a bubbling up of inspirations specific to the Holy Spirit of the New Testament (since Jesus' glorification immediately after his death). This is that "living water" that bubbles up like an inexhaustible spring within.

So those who see in Jesus' miracles only the solution of earthly problems - however serious, see only a first layer. Behind such utterly vindicated miracles, Jesus' true mission emerges, namely the New Testament God-contact.

So Jesus as prophet saw from the beginning that his true message was not getting through to "many. This testified to his seership in a most impressive way.

10. The letter kills but the spirit makes alive.

With this sentence from *2 Cor. 3:6* we begin a clarification of the Biblical pair of opposites "flesh/spirit." By "letter," St. Paul meant the Old Testament revelation, which already testified to a blinding glory (meaning God's unfolding vital force) (as *2 Cor. 3:7* says), whereas by comparison, New Testament revelation is only truly "spirit," God's vital force.

What was meant was that the spirit of the New Testament - since Jesus' glorification immediately after his death - was, in terms of spirit, an immeasurable step further in the evolution of God's work of salvation, which stands or falls with the giving of spirit. In other words, Jesus' action marked a radically new phase in terms of spirit.

Ethical.

Galat. 5: 17vv . - "The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. Between the two there is such opposition that you do not do what you would like to do. (...).-

Well, all that the flesh causes is known: fornication, uncleanness, debauchery, - idolatry, witchcraft,- enmity, strife, envy, attacks of anger, intrigues, quarrels, partisanships, - drinking parties, orgies and the like. I warn you as I have warned you before: those who so misbehave will not inherit the kingdom of God (understand: God's salvation)."

Behold the ethical content of "flesh," substandard life force, outlined through a few groups of behavioral types.

Ethical.

Galat. 5:22vv ... - "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, modesty. (...). Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts."- This is an approximate outline of what "spirit," God's essential life force, means as a behavioral type.

Fate.

Galat. 6:7vv ... - By "destiny" is meant "the understanding of fate and destiny," here in connection with the two Biblical types of life force just outlined. - "Do not deceive yourselves! God will not be mocked. For what one sows, that one reaps. He who sows in the flesh will reap corruption from the flesh. He who sows in the spirit, out of the spirit he will reap eternal life."

Remark. - In *Genesis 6:1 vv.* the sacred writer paid attention to the sowing-harvesting law insofar as flesh runs to nasty consequences in the elements of nature: "He who sows in the flesh, reaps ruin (deluge)." In *Genesis 19:1vv*, the sacred writer paid attention to the sowing-harvest law insofar as flesh is headed for destruction from the elements of nature (burning sulfur). "He who sows in the flesh reaps ruin (burning sulfur)."

In *Galat. 6*, S. Paul pays attention to the sowing-harvesting law insofar as it continues after death and decides eternal destiny - to death or to eternal life (*Dan. 12 :2/3 ; John 5: 29*). In both cases it is about eternal life but one is flesh, nasty consequences, doom, the other spirit, eternal salvation.

Conclusion.

Ethical is one perspective on the basic opposition pair. Fate is a second perspective. The ethical decides fate either already somewhat on earth (flood, burning sulfur, - two forms of vengeance) or in the hereafter. And in such a way that one can speak of a kind of legality (understand: predictability). It is in this sense that one must understand S. Paul's sowing-harvesting language. It is not a natural law but it is nevertheless a law of destiny.

Those who now read *Wisdom 19:13vv* clearly see that the ordained writer puts the paulinic sowing-harvesting law first:

"The unpleasant consequences came down upon sinners (*note*: those who are flesh). Not without the nasty consequences being announced beforehand.

Rightly did they undergo the sufferings attached to their own crimes (*note: flesh*). - Those who want the cause (*flesh*) want - willingly - the consequence (unpleasant consequences). One could put it this way. What one sows (cause), that one will reap (consequence). So there is a well-defined causal relationship between ethical behavior and fate (before and after death).

Conclusion.

The Biblical couple clearly involves an interpretation of history and in this sense is a view of history.

11. Slain according to the flesh, raised according to the spirit.

Reading *1 Pet. 3: 18vv* . - "Christ also suffered once for all for sins (...). Slain according to the flesh he was raised to life according to the spirit".

Remark. - Jesus became flesh from the virgin womb of Mary. This means that he took upon himself the earthly existence that in Biblical interpretation (*Genesis 6:3*) has been flesh since the Fall, with the entire exposure to the fates - except those in his life's course not provided for by his heavenly Father - that every earthly existence involves.

Revived.

"Life" here means his "risen life," which began immediately after his last breath on the cross. In other words: he dies as an earthly man (*flesh*) but immediately rises as a heavenly man (*spirit*).

Remark. - One sees that even the transition ("Easter") of Jesus is described by Peter in terms of "flesh/spirit," common since Genesis. Such fundamental is the basic couple !

"In that spirit Christ went and proclaimed His message to the spirits in the dungeon." (*1 Pet. 3:19*).

In other words, the spirit, understand: God's essential life force as it was available from Jesus' risen life (from his glorification), is the power (glory) with which he descends "into hell (dungeon)." This means that in the midst of "darkness" suddenly, like a thunderclap in a clear sky, the risen one proclaims his message.

"To the spirits (understand: non-corporeal beings) in the dungeon) who had refused faith in the days when Noah built the ark, when viz. God's longsuffering exercised patience." (*1 Pet. 3:20*).

Note - One can see that the days of Noah make up a fixed point of reference in that the radical and vengeful unbelief of the spirits that helped provoke the flood left a deep mark in the course of salvation history. There is a salvation history before such degree of unbelief and there is a salvation history after such unbelief.

Not surprisingly, Jesus (*Luke 17:26*) summarizes, "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will still be in the days of the Son of Man (understand: at Jesus' return in glory)." Humanity - at least in part - in the days of Noah adopted a type of behavior that is permanent. With all its unpleasant consequences.

It is therefore not surprising that Jesus, who became human expressly from the virgin womb of Mary in order to fundamentally change this unfavorable turn of events, immediately after his death on the cross, "in the spirit of resurrection," descends into hell where the radically unbelievers are "kept in eternal bonds in the depths of darkness" (*Jude 6*). They THERE, those spirits, bore a very great responsibility and were heavily guilty! And yet Jesus whom they had caused to be crucified proclaimed His message to them of all people!

Remark. - Between his death on the cross and his resurrection, Jesus descends into hell. This hellish descent was apparently a fixed part of the creed at the time of the early church, as is evident when texts such as *Matt. 12:40, 16:18, Acts 2:24, 2:31, Rom. 10:7, Ephes. 4:9, Heb. 13:20* taken together and taken to their substance.

Remark. - Some refer to the spirits in the dungeon to whom Jesus proclaimed the Good News as "the bound demons" spoken of in the book of Enoch (cf. *1 Pet. 3:22, Jude 6, Ephes. 1:21*).

Others interpret the dungeon spirits as the souls of those who died in the Flood and were driven in the dungeon for reasons of unbelief.

Still others refer to *Matt. 27:52*: "(The veil of the temple tore in two from top to bottom, the earth trembled and the rocks split). The tombs opened, and the bodies of many holy people who had fallen asleep rose up. After Jesus' resurrection, they came out of the tombs and went to the holy city where they appeared to many." By "holy city," understand the heavenly Jerusalem about which *Apocalypse 21:2, 21:10, 22:19*. We now say "heaven." But this third interpretation is talking about an entirely different kind of dungeon creatures:

they were people of conscience waiting for the new spirit of resurrection.

Conclusion - God's goodness apparently reaches into the dungeon.

12. Baptism: from flesh to spirit.

1. Pet. 3:21.

Peter explained in a moment how Jesus died as an earthly man (flesh) to live immediately thereafter as a risen one (spirit). He immediately mentions how Noah was saved with his own "through the waters (*op.*: of the flood)."

Remember the structure "immersion in water/ salvation from water." There Peter sets forth the structure of Christian baptism: "What corresponds to this (understand: the salvation of Noah and his people) is the baptism that now saves you, which is not the removal of carnal (understand: habitual) uncleanness but the commitment of a good conscience entered into with God by virtue of the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, - he who ascended into heaven seated at God's right hand after submitting to himself the angels, the powers and the forces."

The explanation.

Those who were baptized explicitly made a commitment before solemn immersion that reads - typically put biblically - "I want the passage from the flesh to the spirit" (like Jesus at his death and glorification on the cross). The good conscience, i.e. being in order with one's conscience (which in fact always means asking forgiveness for wrongs committed), is the ethical requirement. For spirit involves living up to God's commandments including forgiveness of sin. In other words, being baptized is first and foremost a matter of conscience, if not it is flesh, substandard living.

The explanation.

One noted the structural identity of Jesus' death and glorification and of the baptismal event: both are transitions from flesh to spirit.-. With Jesus, it is the case that he took upon himself carnal life, apart from sin, for the sake of salvation as the servant of the Lord as the prophet Isaiah describes him (*Isaiah 42:1/4, 49:1/6, 50:4/9, 52:1/ 53:12*): as a "man of sorrows, accustomed to suffering" (*53:3*) but also as "the one thanks to whom the will of Yahweh is fulfilled" (*53:10*).

In the case of the baptized, however, the carnal life including sin (in all its Biblical meanings) is renounced in view of a life "in the spirit" (which is available thanks to Jesus' glorification).

The explanation

For what reason does Peter talk about his submission of angels, powers and forces in the same breath as Jesus' resurrection? The term "powers and forces" refers to state officials (cf. *Luke 20:20, 12:11, Titus 3:1*). The powers are the judges.

For since the Fall (most certainly since the Flood and Sodom's downfall) evil spirits - called "angels" in our text - have controlled state power (including jurisdiction). It is they who, in the person of the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman governor, condemned Jesus to death. *Matt. 4:7/9* says it clearly: Satan, the head of the evil angels, controls the empires of this world!

Luk. 4:13 says that after Jesus' rejection of an earthly (understand: carnal) kingdom Satan awaits "the favorable moment," i.e., that moment when he draws in the traitor Judas (*Luk. 22:3; Jn. 13:2, 13:27*). Jesus at his apprehension says, "It is your hour and the power (!) of darkness" (*Luk. 22:53*). Darkness is the dungeon of evil angels, of powers and forces.

Well, whoever is received into this world enters that darkness. He becomes flesh and immediately a subject to the powers and forces. He who is baptized, however, shares in the subjection by the glorified Jesus of those powers and forces: he is withdrawn from its grasp in the rite of baptism. In other words, that Peter mentions the subjection of the (evil) angels is not an unnecessary statement: it expresses an essential element of the baptismal situation.-

It is not because typical modern and postmodern humanity does not (no longer) appreciate the role of the angels mentioned, that this role nevertheless represents a fundamental aspect of our world. Even in baptism as it is still administered daily. It is a tragic aspect of our present society and its culture that, precisely because people no longer believe in them, the powers and forces, as the French poet Ch. Baudelaire once put it, exercise an all the more profound grip on present-day humanity: "Satan's greatest cunning consists in making faith in his existence disappear."

13. Old Testament model/ New Testament original.

1 Cor. 10: 1/13.

A paradox - Paul sums up the fate of Jewish ancestors.

1. All were under the cloud at the exodus from Egypt (*Ex. 13:21*); all passed through the sea (*Ex. 14: 22*); all were baptized by Moses through cloud and sea; all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink (*Ex.*

16:4v.), for they drank from a spiritual rock (...) (*Ex. 17:5v.*).

2. Yet God did not accept most of them for they were cast down in the wilderness (*Numbers 14:16*).- Summary: all did/ most did not.

Paul's interpretation.

"These facts occurred to serve us as a model, namely, that we may not harbor evil lusts like them."- Then follow the divine judgments that show for the umpteenth time how unscrupulous behavior (flesh) leads to absence of God's spirit and causes unpleasant consequences.

1. "Do not serve false gods as some of them did and of whom it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play" (*Ex. 32:6*). Notably: while Moses was on the mountain, they lapsed into the religion of the golden calf "as a god before them" (*Ex. 32:1*).

2. "Do we not practice fornication as some of them did so that in one day twenty-three thousand fell" (*Num. 25:1/9*)-.

Indeed, "When Israel stayed in Sittim, the people fell into fornication with Moabite women who invited the people to the sacrifices in honor of her deities. The people took part in these (understand: the sacred meals) and bowed down before her deities." Which of course involves decay into a pagan (carnal) religion. To which God with his spirit no longer considers himself responsible with all the unpleasant consequences.

3. Christ is referred to by Paul as already active before His Incarnation from Mary as *1 Cor. 10:4* expressly states, "That rock was Christ." Meant is Jesus as the pre-existent second person of the Holy Trinity. Now one understands what Paul says: "Do not challenge Christ as some of them did: they perished through serpents."

Indeed, *Num. 21:4vv.* relates, "On the way the people lost patience: they spoke to God and to Moses, 'Wherefore hast thou brought us out of Egypt to die in this desert? For there is neither bread nor water available. We are tired of this famine food!'. Whereupon God sent burning (understand: poisonous) serpents upon the people. These bit the Israelites, and many of them died."- One can see: those who, through unscrupulous behavior - flesh - lack God's essential life force, are exposed to the elements of nature (here: poisonous snakes) with their substandard life force and suffer God's judgment.

4. "Neither express your displeasure against God as some did: they were killed by the persecutor." *Num. 17:6vv.*

All the community of the Israelites expressed their displeasure against Moses and Aaron: "Thou hast caused the people of Yahweh to perish!" Whereupon a scourge made fourteen-thousand-seven hundred victims.- Needless to repeat that for the umpteenth time the mechanism was at work: God does not invest His saving spirit in what is flesh with the nasty consequences. The cosmos is full of harmful elements that come to full effect in such situations.

Original.

In the (Old Testament) model Paul sees a representation of the (New Testament) original in such a way that the old model (called *typus*) provides us with information concerning the later original (called *antitypus*).-

"This happened to them to serve as a model and is recorded for the purpose of our formation, for us who are experiencing the end of time. Consequence: whoever thinks he is standing, take care that he does not fall".

Review

God is constantly testing to know what inner condition He is dealing with in us. To this end, by being conceived in our mother's womb, we are on this earth with its natural elements of all kinds that pose a constant threat.

But do not fear: "Hitherto, Corinthians, you have not passed any test beyond human measure. But - understood: do not fear unnecessarily - God is faithful (understand: to his own code of conduct): he will not allow you to be tested beyond your strength (understand: life force). With the testing he grants the way out of it and the strength to cope with it."

14. Eucharist as spirit

1 Cor. 11: 23vv.

"(...) The Lord Jesus on the night in which he was delivered, took bread and after giving thanks broke it and said, "This is my body for you; do this to my remembrance." Likewise after the meal the cup with the words : "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do it, every time ye drink it, to my remembrance."-

That is the setting story told the first time but in such a way that all subsequent times are the visible and tangible representations of that first -

and fundamentally only - time.

The repetition

"Do this to my remembrance" - must be understood in that realistic sense.- Behold the core issue of Christianity! *John 6:54* says it clearly, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." For the sacrificed flesh and blood of Jesus is bearer of "spirit," God's creature life force, which yields to eternal life, as in the primeval trace of *Gen. 6:3*. S. John specifies, "Spirit it is that makes alive, flesh serves to nothing."

Jesus' transition

Paul's statement is very clear. He says, "So whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."-Jesus' transition from this earth (flesh) to eternal life (spirit)-that unique salvific historical moment-is visibly and tangibly present! Precisely because of this, the Eucharist bestows "spirit."

God's judgment

The emphasis with S. Paul is on the fate one prepares for if one underestimates, indeed, misunderstands, the reality that is the Eucharist.

"Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner sins against the body and blood of the Lord. We must examine ourselves before we eat of the bread and drink from the cup, for whoever (unworthily) eats and drinks, eats and drinks his own judgment ('krima'), if he does not distinguish the body (and blood) (from the rest)."

God's judgment.

"This is the reason why there are many sick and weakened among you, and more have died.-If we judged ourselves ('diekrinometha'), we would not suffer judgment ('ekrinometha')."

Note - The mechanism that 'works' in this - it is after all about life forces that obviously cause something - is apparently the supremacy of God's spirit over human, all-too-human flesh! Those who violate the inviolable - understand: what must not be violated but can be violated - nonetheless prepare themselves for unpleasant consequences ('punishments') because as *Gen. 6:3* says, God, given the substandard behavior (flesh), is not further responsible for the gift of his spirit. Which includes miscalculations.

With this Pauline text we are faced with yet another application of the judgment of God which, in the absence of life force, yields to the elements of

nature - here: the elements of nature that work in our bodies. The structure of creation is such that if one lacks God's essential life force, that structure sooner or later breaks down.

God's judgment

S. Paul, however, emphasizes the potentially instrumental nature of God's judgment. -"While we are being judged by the Lord ('krinomenoi'), we are being raised up ('paideuometha') so that we are not condemned with the world ('katakritomen')."

In other words: not every God judgment is final doom but there are God judgments that are "with reservation." So in the sense of: "Learn from the nasty consequences to watch thy conduct so that, converted, thou art not subject to any judgment in the future."

Jesus' hell-fall is evidence of God's unimaginable goodness because he offers his salvation to adamantly refusing beings. The debilitations, illnesses and deaths that occurred in Corinth Paul apparently sees in the stark light of Jesus' hell-fall: the offer of salvation remains.

Conclusion.

The concept of "judgment of God" shows the bloody seriousness of our behavior but does not at all include the concept of "god of doom" with which one confuses "the god of the old testament. On the contrary.