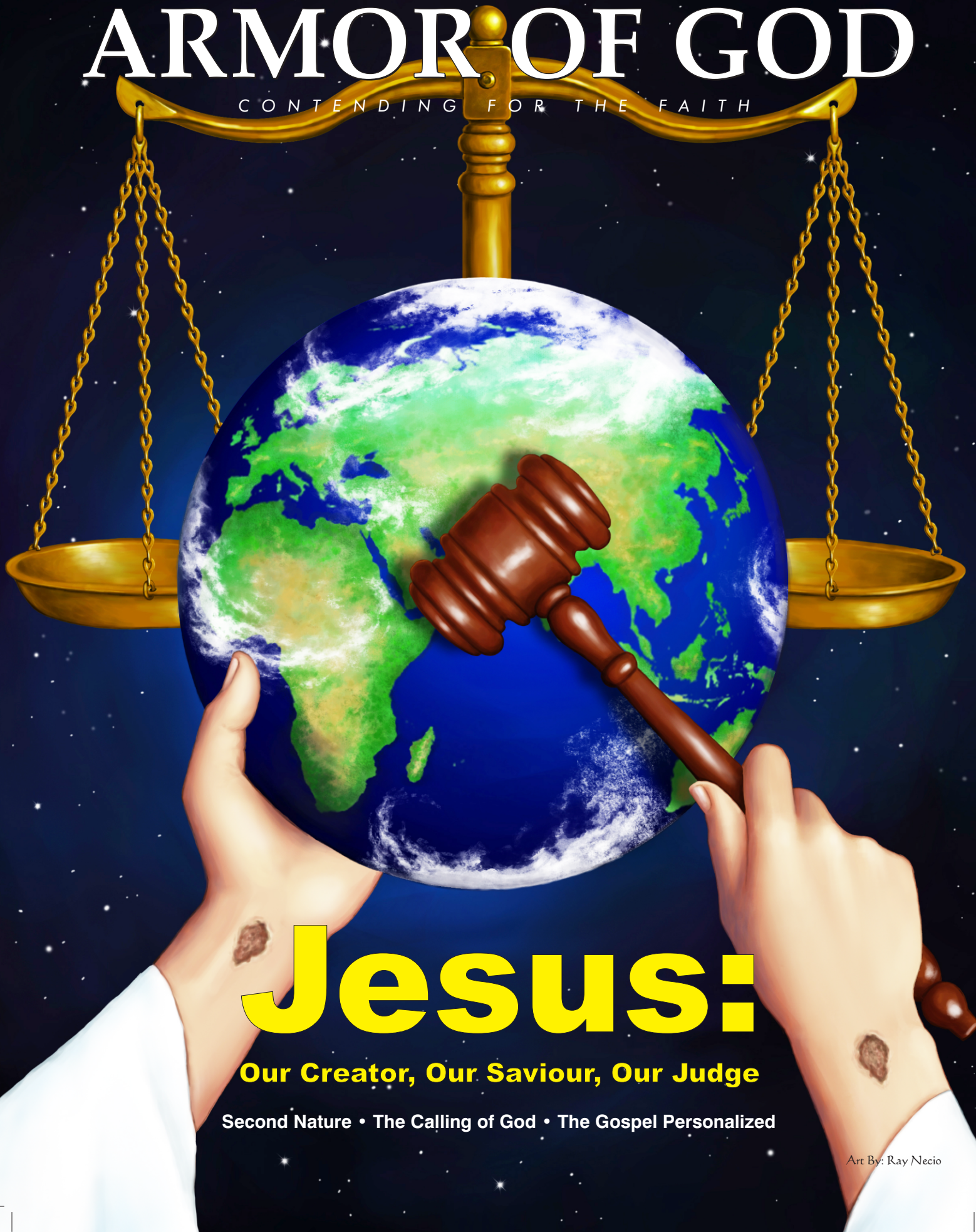


July - September 2017

ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH



Jesus:

Our Creator, Our Saviour, Our Judge

Second Nature • The Calling of God • The Gospel Personalized

Art By: Ray Necio

IDEOLOGY

As of this writing, the fighting between the forces of the state and the terrorist group led by the Maute siblings in Marawi City has no indication of coming to an end. The deadline to put the uprising under complete control was not met. It will be recalled that while in Russia, the president declared Martial Law in the entire island of Mindanao in response to the crises. And he has 60 days (which is allowed by law for Martial Law to take effect) to do whatever it takes to quell the uprising.

Meanwhile the death toll continues to rise in both camps with the rebels incurring heavier casualties. According to the latest military bulletin, the strongholds of their enemies have been reduced to a few barangays. Surprisingly, despite all these field reports that sound victorious on the part of government, there are no indications (as of this writing) that the terrorists will surrender.

What kind of determination and perseverance are these people possessed with that despite the overwhelming odds against them their fortitude remain indomitable? What is it with their cause that made them appear "unconquerable and tough"?

According to the President, the enemies are closely allied with one of the world's notorious group – the ISIS. It is common knowledge that the ISIS and their breed of extremists are passionately driven by their uncompromising ideology. And "dyed-in-the-wool" adherents to a particular ideology do not regard nor respect views which are contrary to their own. They are ready to do anything in behalf of their ideology.

According to the experts, an ideology is a set of beliefs that affects our outlook on the world. Our ideology is our most closely held set of values and feelings, and it acts as the filter through which we see everything and everybody. In fact, these beliefs are often so close to us that we do not realize that they are there.

Since there are many ideologies "peddled" around, perhaps an ideology inspired by a Superior Mind is what humanity must seek after especially when the condition appears like "every man to his own". We need an ideology that doesn't hurt, nor force or "cram it down our throats", or pressure and coerce us to accept; an ideology that provides the freedom to choose, and weigh things up judiciously before making a decision to embrace it. The God of the Bible gave us an option, saying: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live (Deuteronomy 30:19).

God's way of life, His principles and His "advocacies" are gird towards what is best for man. He wants us to be happy, be healthy, prosperous, and finally live forever in blissful existence with Him for all eternity. In John 10:10 Jesus spoke of two contrasting ideologies saying, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Obviously, the latter is the only choice if we want life to work in our favour.

Eli Mellomida

ARMOR OF GOD

July - September 2017 • Circulation: 15,000

The **Armor of God** magazine is published by The Church of God International (Philippines). It is made possible through the freely given tithes and offerings of members and fellow laborers of **The Church of God International**.

Publisher: Rene D. Corpuz

Editor-in-Chief: Elino S. Mellomida

Writer: Winston S. Co

Contributing Writer: Ferdie Padilla

Cover Art: Ray Necio

Layout: Cornelius Mellomida

PHILIPPINES

Church of God International, P.O. Box 2450
MCPO Makati City, Metro Manila 1264 Philippines
Phone: (632) 995-0294 • Fax: (632) 995-0577
Website: <http://www.cgiphils.org>
E-mail: cgiphils@yahoo.com
Mobile: (63917) 811-6365

UNITED STATES

Church of God International
P.O. Box 2525 Tyler, TX 75710
Phone: (903) 939-2929
Website: <http://www.cgi.org>
E-mail: info@cgi.org

AUSTRALIA

Church of God International
P.O. Box 171 Boonah, QLD 4310
Phone: 011-61-7-5463-2949
E-mail: h-thaupt@bigpond.com

CANADA

Church of God International, 1299 Oxford St. East
P.O. Box 33034 London, Ontario N5Y 5L4
Phone: (519) 741-0455
Website: <http://www.cgicanada.org>
E-mail: johncoish@rogers.com

JAMAICA

Church of God International,
P.O. Box 776 Kingston 19 Jamaica
Phone: 1-876-925-2260

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** Jesus: Our Creator, Our Saviour, Our Judge
- 7** Second Nature
- 9** The Calling of God
- 13** The Gospel Personalized

Jesus:

Our Creator, Our Saviour, Our Judge

by Eli Mellomida

Christianity, mainstream or otherwise, are in complete agreement that Jesus is the only Saviour of all mankind. Definite and specific passages of scripture sustained this undeniable fact. Famous among them is found in the inspired message of the apostle Peter saying: "...then know this, you (this include all nationalities) and all the people of Israel; **It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth**, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is "the stone you builders

rejected, which has become the capstone.' **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.**"(Acts 4:10-12)

Christian preachers incessantly hammered this truth passionately Sunday in and Sunday out, Sabbath in or Sabbath out, or on any day of the week they chose to congregate as their day of worship. "Jesus Saves" is a very popular hymn sung in almost every church meeting as a sublime declaration of the saving power of Christ.

Sometimes, out of eagerness to concentrate on the saving power of Christ, the other important functions of Jesus are inadvertently overlooked.

It is important therefore for every Christian to be fully aware about the scope, the magnitude, the capabilities, and the role of Christ in the over-all scheme of God's plan for mankind. And the Bible is not silent about them. It reveals who Jesus is, what He has done and what He will do in the coming times. But in this article we will deal only with the most basic yet the most important role of Jesus that has

everything to do with your and my existence. These are:

Jesus is our Creator

How did it happen? The following self-explanatory passages will attest to the fact that Jesus is the actual creator:

John 1:1-3, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*

Jesus admitted that He has a Father who is greater than Him (John 14:28), who delegated to

Him all things consist."

Ephesians 3:9, *"...and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God (the Father) who created all things through Jesus Christ (KJV).*

Finally Hebrews 1:1-3, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He (the Father) made the worlds." (Colossians 1:16-17)

after they came out of slavery from Egypt. God the Father was the one whom Israel acknowledged as their one and only God (John 8:54; 8:41-42). To them, the Father was the one and only Being described in Deuteronomy 6:4. The *Shema*, as they termed it, is the main foundation upon which their belief on a 'one and only' God is sustained.

Yet Jesus, during His earthly ministry talked extensively about God the Father. He revealed, not only to His followers but even to His critics, that He has a Father who sent Him and who is greater than Him (John 5:36; John 13:16; John 14:28).

Jesus highly exalted the Father's name. His John 17 prayer is in itself a living testimony to that effect. He also tells us that the Father hasn't manifested Himself to the world, at least not yet. Notice: "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. **You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.**" (John 5:37) John added: **"No one has seen God (the Father) at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him** (John 1:18); and 1 John 4:12 says **"No one has seen God at any time"**. Obviously, the invisible God could be none other than the Father.

Among those who set foot on planet earth (except the angelic beings), no one has ever had the chance of having an actual

Sometimes, out of eagerness to concentrate on the saving power of Christ, the other important functions of Jesus are inadvertently overlooked.

Him the actual work of creating all things. Notice Colossians 1:13-17: *"He (God the Father) has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Jesus), in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in*

Brief info on the Father

Jesus tells us that He was always with the Father since the beginning. He said: And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began (John 17:5). Since when did the Father and Jesus exist is beyond the human mind to comprehend. It is safe to say then that "they have no beginning nor end of life", their existence dates back to eternity.

Yet uncommon to many, it was God the Father whom Israel "recognized" as the God who dealt with them all throughout their journey in the wilderness

face-to-face contact with the Father. Only Jesus claim He had. Definitely though, the Father is coming to bring down His throne on earth and dwell with His own people (Rev. 21). That will happen once all things that the Father commissioned Christ to do shall be completed; and during that time Jesus will finally hand over the overall control of all things to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:23). Clearly, God the Father's will stands supreme—even our Saviour has to finally submit to Him. But the actual work of creation has been entrusted to His Son—our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Certainly, the second member of the God Family (which is no other than Jesus Christ) is the same God who created all things, and the Being that watched, protected and took care of Israel especially during their bad times. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was I AM" (John 8:58), a strong indication of His earthly presence even before Israel came into existence; a clear admission that He was the "I AM" who instructed Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 3:14).

Jesus is our Saviour

Jesus role as the saviour was announced immediately upon His birth. Luke narrates: "And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and

they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord**" (Luke 2:8-11).

As the Saviour of all mankind, He had to live the kind of life few would dare experience. We already know how Jesus took upon Himself the death penalty we deserved out of breaking God's law. Mankind is cut off from the true God because of sin. Isaiah wrote: Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2)

sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." (Genesis 6:5-7) Why? Because all have sinned and come short of God's glory (Romans 3:23); and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23); therefore all deserve to die.

Yet, Jesus died a brutal death in our stead so that reconciliation with God and forgiveness of past sins leading to salvation is made possible. Notice: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much

***Jesus highly exalted the Father's name.
His John 17 prayer is in itself a living testimony
to that effect.***

Disobedience to God's way of life has already been committed at the earliest stage of man's existence. It started with Adam and Eve down to the succeeding generations so that at one point in time God regretted in creating man. Notice: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was

more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (Romans 5:6-11)

Referring to Christ, Peter wrote: "...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus came and died to save mankind especially sinners (1 Timothy 1:15; Romans 5:8; Luke 5:32). He epitomized the kind of love Christians need to emulate if they consider themselves one in the "Christian sense" of the word.

Mankind, regardless how many and what kind of gods they are worshipping and are beholden to, have only One Saviour. He is the Creator of all things who died to save His own creation from a situation that leads to extinction, to a condition that is bound to exist for eternity. The famous verse that can be quickly drawn from the Bible summarizes it all: "For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him (John 3:16-17).

Jesus is our Judge

Whether we work for someone or operate as entrepreneurs, we are held accountable for the things we are entrusted with, and the task we are responsible for. The same holds true with Christianity. The chance to be saved offered by God, including the full knowledge and

understanding of the truth acquired through the infusion of God's Holy Spirit, is not an ordinary opportunity to be taken lightly.

intercession for us."

In conclusion, it is only fitting that He who created us, He who risked His divine nature to save us, He who went through the

Clearly, God the Father's will stands supreme—even our Saviour has to finally submit to Him.

To those who are blessed with the divine endowment of being called today, Peter said: For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17, TNIV) God's people shall be held accountable in accordance with the things they have been gifted with at present. Now, who will weigh the facts and render a judgment on God's people? Paul, writing to Christians in Corinth cautioned: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

He reiterated the same warning albeit in a much more defined manner in Romans 8:33-34: "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes

most vicious, ruthless and merciless way of dying, will be the same God who will finally weigh, assess, evaluate, calculate and consider through a justly principled methodology what each of us deserve.

Finally Jesus assured: "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5:30). Then He tells us what the will of the Father is: "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:39-40).

Now we know our Creator, our Saviour and finally our Judge!

AG



Second Nature

by Winston Co



How many of you know how to drive a car? How about a motorbike? How about a bicycle? Or are you very proficient with your computer's keyboard? Can you type 60 words per minute without looking at it? People who are skillful in the few things with ease and expertise are admirable. Their proficiency on a given task easily amaze those who can't do what they can. Their performance without any conscious thought are

sometimes interpreted as special gift on them.

But, we call this kind of subconscious behavior "second nature". For people who drive a car, they do not have to think about it. A driver does not have to think that he needed to accelerate or make a conscious decision to brake. They can talk, tap, sing, listen, think and even have a heated discussion while driving. All the driving movements and reactions become automatic to them.

Second Nature

Second nature (as an idiom) is a mindset, skill, or a behavior that is ingrained, embedded, built-in and well-established into our system through habitual and constant practice so that it becomes natural, automatic, or without the need for conscious thinking (<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/conscious>).

The second nature creates in us an auto response mechanism. Auto response refers to a set of reflexes as an

involuntary movement of the mind and body in response to a stimulus.

The auto response comes with training and practice. When you practice something long enough, you become so proficient that it seems instinctual - something that you would do sub-consciously and naturally.

This is known as “automaticity”. Automaticity is the ability to do things without any thought, allowing it to become an automatic response or habit. It is the result of learning, repetition, and practice.

Examples of automaticity are common activities such as running, swimming, playing sports, assembly-line work, and driving a car. After an activity is sufficiently practiced, it is possible to automatized activity like singing a song or strategizing a plan while driving a car.

Second nature development allows us to engage in an activity in certain predictable ways in response to a situation, circumstance or environment. Hence, the action and behavior becomes intuitive, spontaneous and instinctive.

Human Nature

The human nature is enmity against God. If we continue in our human nature which is prone to sin, we will die. Therefore, we need a second nature which is the nature of God. This nature is perfected

through training and constant practice. Paul wrote: *“Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come (1 Timothy 4:7-8).* Then Hebrews 5:14 says, *“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil”.*

We must train and practice to the point that God's laws and righteousness becomes an auto response. This will allow us to develop the kind of “automaticity” that can easily repel temptations. When we are exposed to the dangers of temptation, we automatically walk away. We do not have to think or rationalize whether it is good or bad, sin or not, lawful or not or righteous or not. Our auto response system should instantaneously alert us whether it is either right or wrong. Then, we learn to act and react like Christ.

Spirit Nature

We need to be imbued with God's nature. The mind of Christ should become our second nature. It should be our auto response mode. This is what Paul said in Galatians 5:16-26: *“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what*

is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

Eventually, this second nature will become our first nature—when we will be born into God's family and become children of God. 1 John 3:2-3 says, “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.” **AG**

The Calling of God

by Rene D. Corpuz

***We came into being, not by random chance, but by purpose and design of a loving Creator.
The Father is building a family—and we are created to become a part of that Family!***

Mankind was created and destined for great things. It was all part of a deliberate and careful plan of an intelligent, powerful, generous and loving Creator. We are to be His sons and daughters. And God intends to accomplish this great plan. This is why we are here today.

Paul wrote: (Ephesians 1:3-6)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

If the Earth is at least 4 Billion years old, then God's plan to bring us into existence goes that far back. But how will God accomplish this great plan in a world where the people doesn't even know God's purpose?

Enter the Calling

First, a couple of basic statement of facts about who's in charge of 'the calling':

John 15:16

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

John 6:44-45

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

The Father is the primary agent of our calling, He 'recruited' us. This is of prime importance, we need to understand this well if we are to have a better perspective and realization that God the Father isn't very kind to those who would reject His offer. Being offered this wonderful chance is an opportunity we should not take lightly.

And how does this calling actually work in real life? God calls us in many different ways, at various circumstances, and at different times. To let us know of His awesome plan, first, God reveals His plans to His servants, the prophets; Second, He sends out these servants, including His Son, who had always been there by His side, to deliver the message to us (Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 1:1-2; Romans 10:15).

Hebrews 1:1-2

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father

and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

Romans 10:14-17

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,

Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Just as we have read, the servants are instructed to deliver, to declare this good news of the establishment of God's Kingdom, and we who are being called are expected to respond positively to the calling.

Jesus clearly said “no man can come to me unless the Father draws him.” God opens our eyes to the truth, reveals to us the purpose of our existence. And having understood that purpose, God expects us to pursue and fulfill that purpose, regardless of what it may cost us. When we understand and realize that this is the plan and objective of God, our calling, our “invitation” begins!

And having understood that purpose, God expects us to pursue and fulfill that purpose, regardless of what it may cost us.

What Are The Ways of Calling?

How does God “call” us? The parables given by Jesus illustrate the various ways of how God opens the eyes of those He calls. You will find yourself being called in a similar fashion in at least one of these ways.

The Parable of the Sower

Mark 4:3-9

“Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

And He said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Mark 4:10-20

But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that

‘Seeing they may see and not perceive,

And hearing they may hear and not understand;

Lest they should turn,

And their sins be forgiven them.’

And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

In this parable, we are presented with various

scenarios where the sower (representing Jesus) throws seeds all over the place not minding where the seeds drop. Ordinarily, a careful farmer will make sure that the seeds fall on the ground intended for and capable of making the seed grow well and yield a good harvest.

But this is a parable representing Jesus' method of calling people. The seeds represent the "word of God," or simply, "the message." The seeds falling on the wayside, the stony ground, and the thorns represent the hearts of those that had received the message, but for various reasons, whether of personal nature or influenced by others, and by materialism, they did not hold on, did not continue and had come to nothing. The good ground represents the hearts of the people changed by God's Word and produced fruits when they received the message.

Here we see how Jesus plants seed in everyone's heart irrespective of who they are, what they are, where they are and we see how people who are called respond differently to the message. A person who is being called is one in whom the "seeds of the Lord had entered the heart," regardless of how they responded at first and how they lived with it afterwards!

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:44

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure represent those who have stumbled upon the truth of the Kingdom of God, it was not meant to be found by everyone, it was hidden after all, but God led them in a direction where they would have chanced, or stumbled upon it along the way. And when these individuals recognized the value of what they have found—the Kingdom of God—the hidden treasure—they decided to leave everything else behind and determined to pursue this hidden treasure.

The Parable of The Pearl of Great Price

Matthew 13:45-46

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

In this parable, the merchant represents those who are actively seeking for their purpose in life. Because of this desire, God led them to find the Kingdom of God. Having discovered it and recognizing its value, they disposed everything else and went after the Kingdom—the Pearl of Great Price.

There is a common attribute found in every one whom God calls as they are presented in the parables of the Lord, each one takes the risk of giving up everything to obtain what they have found. They recognize the value of the calling, of being a part of the Kingdom of God and courageously undertake whatever is necessary to pursue and enter the kingdom.

Jesus knows too that it is not easy. But Jesus is telling us the best way by which we can enter the Kingdom of God is by removing all the hindrances, the baggage, the potential sources of difficulties we now have, drop them all and focus on the Kingdom of God.

These parables make it seem like it's too easy to just leave everything behind and seek God's righteousness. But no it's not as easy. Jesus knows too that it is not easy. But Jesus is telling us the best way by which we can enter the Kingdom of God is by removing all the hindrances, the baggage, the potential sources of difficulties we now have, drop them all and focus on the Kingdom of God.

All of these parables represent the many different ways of how God calls those whom He has chosen. Each of us would fit into one of these conditions and ways of calling.

Train a Child

Proverbs 22:6

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when

he is old he will not depart from it."

More than what appears to be simply 'taking chances' in the many ways of calling presented to us through the parables, God is primarily calling the children of the parents who were already in the body of Christ, the Church.

This is very likely what God had in mind when he instructed the parents, and 'future parents' included, twice, in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:18-20:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

The Lord expects the children of 'called-out' parents to be lovers of God and followers of Him. In fact, God expects these children to 'never depart' from God's teachings even when they had gotten old. They are to be trained, taught from their young age and are to stick with that teaching 'all their lives.' God expects them to be faithful through and through!

It is important, that we realize the importance of being given the privilege and chance to be saved at this time, right here, right now. It is also important to realize that when God decides to offer us this opportunity, we should not hesitate to say 'yes Lord, I accept!' Especially when we know that God is not kind to those who ignore or do not respond positively to His offer of salvation.

The Calling IS like a Profession

Receiving a calling from God is like pursuing a profession. The apostle Peter understood it as such and referred to it as a "vocation." A vocation or a profession, as we all understand it, requires hours of study, training and years of practice in order to be skillful and proficient. Skill and expertise does not come overnight; it is developed over years of hard work, persistence, and perseverance.

Peter strongly encouraged the Christians of his time to make their calling and election sure, and to diligently work for it, 2 Peter 1:10-11,

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

To emphasize the importance of our calling, Paul advised that we should make sure we are worthy of the calling, Ephesians 4:1-3,

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Being called to salvation today is a wonderful opportunity, and should not be taken lightly. This is the primary lesson of each of the parables. The message of Jesus to the Jews of His time is that they must take heed and seriously consider their calling, and so should we. Jesus portrayed each primary character in the parables as having understood the significance of their calling and were willing to give up everything to pursue that calling, to show us an example of how we are to respond to our own calling. That same message is delivered by the apostles in their letters. Like the pearl of great price, or the hidden treasure, or as the good ground for seed to grow, we must consider our calling to be so precious that we are to be willing to leave everything, and everyone, including our own dreams and desires behind and dedicate our lives to the calling of God.

A calling is a call to obedience, faithfulness, loyalty and SERVITUDE. If God has chosen you, it would be because He has found a quality in you that is capable of obedience, faithfulness, loyalty and the capacity to serve, or be useful for His purpose, in one way or another.

May God open your heart to gladly accept the call of God, to respond positively to the calling, and remain true and faithful to that calling to the very end. AG

The Gospel Personalized

by Ferdie Padilla

In this article, we will be sharing with you a few things which are helpful in our appreciation and understanding of the subject of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is a major doctrine of the true church, and we have heard or read a lot of messages dwelling on this particular subject. Interestingly enough, though we hear or read about this subject time and again, there are still a lot of things that we can learn and add to what we already know. And, if we look back at our stock of knowledge and try to examine them, we can come to the conclusion that truly it represents a very good news for all of mankind. If we understand what it really means, then we can make it top priority in our lives because we understand what is at stake here. We realize the promises pertaining to this Kingdom and the future of mankind with respect to it. And not only that, we would want to share this knowledge with everyone else. In fact, that is one of the things that Christ commanded His disciples before He was taken to heaven—to share and preach it. We can read that in Mark 16:15 “He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” And the true church

has done so ever since. The gospel of the Kingdom was meant to be shared with others. In this article, we will dwell more on the “personal” aspects of the good news that is the Kingdom of God. Since it is a good news, then it has to affect us in a personal way. The gospel is more than a theological concept. It has a personal effect on each and every one of us and those whose hearts and minds it will touch. It is hoped that we eventually see it that way—the gospel was meant to be something personal and that it should not be treated lightly. If we do so, then we will take into heart this biblical teaching and live our lives accordingly. The gospel aims to make a change in our lives.

“Personal” Aspects of the Gospel

So here are some aspects about the Kingdom that would make it personal for us.

1. Attitude change is necessary.

It is interesting to note one thing that Christ said when He started to preach the gospel:

Matthew 4:17 “From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”” When He started to preach, Christ’s call was one of repentance. Why should people repent? Because the kingdom of God is at hand. The word repent used in the passage we have read is “*metanoeo*”. According to Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, it means “to *think differently or afterwards*, that is, *reconsider* (morally to *feel compunction*): - repent.” Compunction means “anxiety arising from awareness of guilt” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compunction>). That means we are deeply distressed by our wrong doings or wrong ways of living. But, let us note the first entry in Strong’s dictionary and think about the implication of the Greek word for “repent” and that is, to think differently. To think differently implies that we currently have a mindset that is different from the required mindset that is needed in the kingdom of heaven. Why are we being instructed to repent, to think differently than this world?

The answer is quite obvious. The world we live in, influenced by Satan, has lived contrary to God's ways and laws. The Kingdom of God has standards so different from what we have been accustomed to. From childhood, we all have been exposed to behaviors and attitudes that lean on selfishness, that encourages materialism and that extols self-glorification and gratification. This is a world where hatred and strife has become the norm for most, seeking revenge and becoming unforgiving in the process. This is a world where lust is encouraged and unabashedly proclaimed. This is a world where respect for others is not so common. These wrong attitudes and behaviors run contrary to God's ways. Hence, for us to enter the kingdom of God, we must repent, think differently, have a change of heart and mindset and attitudes and align these with that of Christ. The kingdom of God will only be ready to receive those who have a change in mindset, according to its ways. We should repent and be ready for it is coming soon.

2. Personal sacrifice is required.

Corollary to this change in attitude is the need for personal sacrifice in some areas of our lives or perhaps even all of it. We should not forget that "thinking differently" also implies living differently from the rest. Peter has this to say in 1 Peter

4:3-4, "For you (referring to the saints of his time and to us also) have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you." Those of us who are truly converted, today, have experienced to a certain degree what this verse just said. We used to go along with the crowd. We used to eat what was included in the list of unclean meats or fish in Leviticus 11. We used to hang out with friends on a Friday night. We used to render overtime work on a Saturday. We used to celebrate Easter, Christmas, Lent and Valentines with the rest of our family and friends. Some of us even had to kneel and kiss idols. But all of these things changed when we chose to "think differently". And all of these things required a very great personal sacrifice from us. We were through with them. We were convinced these were all wrong and contrary to the ways of the Kingdom of God. And yet because we chose the way to the Kingdom, we experienced personal difficulties with our own families, friends and colleagues. To them, we have begun acting weird and foolish. Some of us may have even branded as belonging to a cult. And it is difficult really if we face this kind of personal affront. We

get insulted for the things we believe in. We get laughed at because we no longer do what the rest of the world does. We get mocked for not eating certain things. And all of these things are too personal for us so that we feel pain, we feel some kind of humiliation, we feel uncomfortable. But these things are expected and we should not be surprised if we do experience them. It is a personal price we have to pay for believing the message behind the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

3. A change in composition is forthcoming.

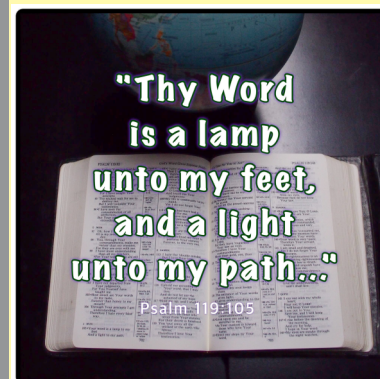
The beautiful thing about the gospel is that there is an attached promise of eternity to those who are willing to repent, to be brave enough to go against the tide and remain steadfast in the Lord until the end. There will be a change in composition to those who belong to Christ. In other words, they will not remain mortals. Paul has this to say in 1 Corinthians 15:50, "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." When Paul said this he was talking to the Corinthian saints (he calls them brothers in this verse), those whom God called and believed the gospel. Let's briefly take a look at his salutation in 1 Corinthians 1:2 to get some more information on what kind of people Paul calls his brothers:

1 Corinthians 1:2, "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be [take note of this] holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:" In this salutation, let us take note of a few things: those whom Paul call brothers are those who were sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, that is, those who have separated themselves from the world. In other words, this was addressed to those who have "repented", to those who have adopted a different mindset – that of a Godly mindset. Now, if we remain sanctified for our Lord Jesus Christ, we can expect a change in composition. Let's continue reading: 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, "Listen, I tell you [remember that this pertains to the saints] a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality." That's a beautiful promise attached to those who will believe the gospel and live a holy life accordingly. We will become immortals! Now, isn't that something very personal? We will be changed! This mortal body will not be ours for long. We can expect something that is absolutely glorious and incomparable. Think of the implications these passages have for us personally. Death has, first of all, no more domain to those

born into the Kingdom of God. We will live forever, having a glorious, spiritual body! Pain will no longer be felt as we do now. Sickness will no longer make us wary and anxious. We will always feel energetic and alive, no longer feeling sloppy or tired. These things and more are part and parcel of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. And we should realize the wonder of it all because we are going to experience this.

Conclusion

Once we realize the full implications of the gospel for us personally, then we should be able to rearrange our lives accordingly. Entry to the Kingdom of God constitutes achievement of true, real, lasting, personal success. This is real success for each and every one of us waiting to happen, if we continue in growing and maturing as Christians and remain faithful to God. It may be tough and rough along the way, but that is par for the course. The important thing is we make it to the kingdom of God. We have to believe God on His promises and believe the gospel without reservation. We should not just believe the gospel as a matter of doctrine. It should be more than that. We should realize that it is a personal message from God to us—a good news about the coming Kingdom of God, the very Divine, ruling family of God and us being born into it, becoming a member of it and enjoying all that the Father has in store for us in it, for all eternity. **AG**



Take time to study God's Word; attend the Bible Study sponsored by The Church of God International in the Philippines held every **FIRST SATURDAY** of the **MONTH** at the following locations:

EDSA Shangri-La Hotel
EDSA, Mandaluyong City
Time: 2-5pm

New Crown Hotel
Naga City, CamSur
Time: 10am-12nn

Elegant Circle Hotel
Cebu City
Time: 1-4pm

Iloilo Midtown Hotel
Iloilo City
Time: 2-5pm

for more info call 995-0294
or text 0917-8116365



***Text for your one-year
FREE subscription!***

Just send your name and complete address to:

0917-8116365



Join us in our weekly worship services

The Church of God International
Meeting Places

Manila

6th Floor, Peaksun Bldg.
Princeton St.,
Mandaluyong City
Saturdays, 10 a.m.

Naga

New Crown Hotel
Elias Angeles cor.
P. Burgos St.,
2nd-5th Saturdays
10 a.m.

Alabang

Crimson Hotel,
Entrata Urban Complex,
Filinvest City, 2609 Civic Dr.,
Muntinlupa City,
Saturdays, 2 p.m.

Iloilo City

Iloilo Midtown Hotel
Yulo St.
Saturdays, 2 p.m.

Malolos

Hiyas ng Bulacan
Convention Center
Malolos City
Saturdays, 2 p.m.

Cebu

Elegant Circle Inn
Fuente Osmeña Circle
Cebu City
1st Saturday of the Month
1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Mindanao

Alzon's Palace, Maranding
Lala, Lanao del Norte
Saturdays 10 a.m.

Brgy. Kiara, Don Carlos, Bukidnon
1st & 3rd Saturday of the Month
10 a.m.