Humanity and the Path to Perfection

Scottish Rite ritual teaches us that perfection can only occur once we have sought assistance from the Almighty and that such perfection will only occur upon death. [[1]](#footnote-1)This is provided one has lived their lives in the manner acceptable to the Divine. I have often pondered whether perfection of the soul commences at the time of death or whether such perfection is completed and death consummates that perfection and we ascend to Heaven. If this is the case, then one would argue that seeking perfection in life is a journey.

Pope Francis once stated that “Always remember this: life is a journey. It is a path, a journey to meet Jesus. At the end, and forever.[[2]](#footnote-2) Like every journey, there is a starting point (A) and a destination (B) and the journey is about how we get from A to B. The ultimate destination of humanity is the culmination of perfection where we hope to ascend to the Heavenly Realms to be with God for all time. The starting point for this journey is the hour of our birth.

As in our initiation into Freemasonry, we come into this world in a state of darkness, unknowing and totally dependent on others. Our journey from this point on is one of learning how to gain that light which illuminates our way. We rely on our parents to provide us with earthly wisdom. But eternal light can only come from The Father through the Holy Spirit. Pike stated that “everything that exists has emanated from a source of infinite light.[[3]](#footnote-3) Pike also added that “faith must flow from some source within us. [[4]](#footnote-4) If this is so, then part of the journey is to enter into communion with that source; and that source is God.

1John 4:8 describes God as “the sovereign ruler of all. He has always possessed righteous character and is full of mercy and grace. His existence is a living definition of perfect love.[[5]](#footnote-5) Genesis 1: 24 states “And God said, let the Earth bring forth the living creatures after his kind, the cattle, and creeping things and beasts of the earth after his kind; and it was so.”[[6]](#footnote-6) This passage indicates that all living creatures were created by God. Genesis 1: 27 states “So God created mankind in his own image,   in the image of God he created them;     male and female he created them”[[7]](#footnote-7) It can be argued, therefore, that as God is divine, and we are created from the divine, according to Genesis, then we too are divine, albeit in a state of darkness. In Acts 5: 3-4, the apostle Peter said to Ananias “how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit” and later “you have not lied to human beings but to God”[[8]](#footnote-8) From these readings we can discern that God and the Holy Spirit are one and, as we are created in God’s image, it is my contention that the Holy Spirit is within us from the hour of our birth and that we must seek the path to understanding and acceptance of God’s Will for us if we are to aspire to the perfection that is the Divine human.

In 1993, American sociologist James Renfield self-published a work titled ‘The Celestine Prophecy’. Renfield had studied many Eastern Philosophies including Taoism and Zen. The central theme of this book, albeit a work of fiction, is to discover and understand nine insights (later adding a tenth) that would lead to a spiritual connection with the divine. Those insights were:

1/ that there was an awakening of the spirit across the globe and that people were looking to a greater understanding of The Self;

2/ that we would develop a greater intuitive understanding of our purpose in life;

3/ that an energy underpins all that we do;

4/ through a greater understanding of The Self we can move forward towards that perfection we seek;

5/ connection with the Divine produces a greater sense of universal love;

6/ by understanding The Self, we develop a greater understanding of God’s purpose for us;

7/ we must listen to ‘the flow’ of our hearts as it is the power of the Holy Spirit guiding us;

8/ we must forego ego as it is not part of our divine purpose. Concentrate, rather on providing spiritual support to others; and

9/ deal with “the collective evolution’ of humanity towards a greater spiritual reality [[9]](#footnote-9).

Deepak Chopra,  an [Indian-American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian-American) author and [alternative medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alternative_medicine) advocate, identified several suggestions to help guide The Self along the path to perfection. Be humble and have compassion for all living things, listen to your inner voice, understand who you are, accept you as you are and look beyond the limitations one places on The Self. [[10]](#footnote-10)

From these readings, we can discern several points of convergence. Both Eastern and Western philosophies agree that:

1. To understand God, we must understand ourselves;
2. The holy spirit is the ‘inner voice’ we hear and relate to as ‘our conscience’; and
3. There is a ‘divine purpose’ for each of us and we must listen to our ‘inner voice’ to understand what that purpose is.

The term “know thyself” comes from a warning on the walls of the Temple of Apollo in Delphi [[11]](#footnote-11) Socrates argued that “everybody had the knowledge itself; just remember them. Knowledge is inherent in man, not outside.”[[12]](#footnote-12) The inference here is that, to know God, we must first know ourselves. Protestant reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564), argued that “one could not truly know God without knowing oneself and that one couldn't truly know oneself without knowing God. [[13]](#footnote-13)

The Bible speaks of perfection of the soul in a number of New and Old Testament texts. In Revelations, John questions who is “clothed in white robes” and is told that “the robes were washed in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 4: 13-14). Matthew argued that we must be perfect because God is perfect (Matt 5: 48). Paul also argued that “we receive Jesus own perfection” (2Cor 5: 21). James argued that we must be steadfast in our faith in God (James 1: 4). Psalms tells us we must obey God’s Laws (Psalm 19: 7) and that if we do, then God “will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put in you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a new heart of flesh” (Ezk 36: 26). In the parable of the rich man seeking the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus told him he must seek the kingdom of heaven above all else, including earthly possessions (Matt 19:22) [[14]](#footnote-14)

It is clear from the above that to reach that state of ultimate perfection we must believe in God and demonstrate this belief in everything we do. Marius Farkas, Grand Master of Romania once stated that to be free, “we must believe in God and in the immortality of the soul.” He went on to say that we should know ourselves, love our neighbor, help him and respect his dignity.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Freemasonry is a tool the tenets of which, when practiced, will assist us to develop a greater understanding of ourselves and God’s magnificent plan for each of us. Albert Pike argued that Masonry was to be worked. He further stated it “is the internal, oblique ritualistic work by which masons are made and educated for the exoteric work, which consists of activities for the welfare of mankind according to masonic principles”[[16]](#footnote-16) Lastly, Pike provides a guide to the path to enlightenment through masonry. He stated “Freemasonry is the subjugation of the human that is in man by the Divine; the conquest of the appetites and passions by the moral sense and the reason; a continual effort, struggle and warfare of the spiritual against the material and sensual. That victory, when it has been achieved and secured, and the conqueror may rest on his shield and wear the well-earned laurels, is the Holy Empire”. [[17]](#footnote-17)

My original contention was that the Holy Spirit resides within us all from the moment of birth but that we are blinded to communion with it. How did mankind become blinded to God’s plan? Let us not forget the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were the epitome of humanity and were given great leave to command all things provided they did not transgress God’s explicit instruction not to eat of the tree of knowledge. [[18]](#footnote-18) As they defied God’s law and partook of the forbidden fruit, God banished them from the Garden of Eden and put such great enmity between them that it flowed down through all their offspring. [[19]](#footnote-19) As a result of this, humanity was blinded by Adam and Eve’s transgression - “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned” [[20]](#footnote-20)

God did provide a hope that mankind would recover the ability to experience the power and majesty of the Holy Spirit through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is speculated that Christ died aged 32-33 and that his ministry only occurred over the final five years of his life. While we are much aware of his birth, it would appear that his ministry on Earth only commenced once he had been blessed at the hands of John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all describe the baptism which is followed by a voice saying “you are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased”. [[21]](#footnote-21) It was only after this time that Christ carried out the wonderous miracles and preaching that characterized his ministry. Could it be that the act of sanctification activated the dormant Holy Spirit in Christ? If so, given that both Christ and humanity are of The Father, then it could conceivably be possible to unlock the Holy Spirit in man in much the same manner.

Communion with the Holy Spirit will “give us grace with Jesus Christ, and the love of God” (2Cor 13: 14). [[22]](#footnote-22) Galatians 2: 9 defines “communion as a ‘partnership’ between humanity and The Divine.[[23]](#footnote-23) In Paul’s letter to the Romans he argues that  “For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13). Likewise, “For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set controlled by the Spirit finds life and peace” (Romans 8:60). Also, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).[[24]](#footnote-24)

Ifwe live our lives in the fullness of the Holy Spiritthen, according to scripture,we will go before the Almighty to be judged for the things we did during life 2Cor 5: 10). Our bodies will return to the dust of the earth and our immortal soul will return to God (Ecclesiastes 12:17) where we will reside in paradise (Luke 23:43). Paul’s letter to the Romans reminds us that “you, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ (Romans 8: 9).

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