

AN ESSAY ON
THE Z-THEORY
A THEOLOGICAL PROLEGOMENON FOR ANYONE

by
David Hayward
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Introduction:

On May 9, 2009, I had a powerful dream in between being asleep and awake. I say powerful because it caused my mind that had been plagued by theological anguish for years to suddenly be at peace. The dream was just an image, but this is what I saw:

There is a huge waterfall. I am looking up at the oceans of water cascading over the edge of the rim. The water flows down freely. It explodes at the bottom, the impact of which creates all kinds of noise, mist, and turbulence. The water spreads over the landscape and completely covers everything.

The purpose of this essay is to unpack what this dream means to me.

I call it the Z-Theory because of the shape of the waterfall and because, as a theological prolegomenon, it articulates the omega, the end, of my theological torment.

THE Z-THEORY:

The historicity of Jesus is debated.

Some believe all the stories as historical fact while others question all of it and still others are somewhere in between. Then there are those who don't know and therefore suggest that the truth is above the argument.

The gist of the story suggests that there was an itinerant preacher who became a hero of the common people.

He was the focus of all their hopes.

The Jewish writings, including the Torah and apocryphal books, the regional expectations, the local prophecies, hopes, dreams, warnings, oral traditions and rumors of the common people, were all projected onto this man.

The virgin birth, his messianic name, the miracles, the resurrection, the second coming, devils and angels, etcetera, are all typical mythological items and themes from that time and region, the essence of which were shared across many cultures and religions.

Because this man was considered a hero, and because he crystallized the expectations of the people, all of these fantastic themes were projected onto him and his ministry during his life and after.

He challenged the status quo as well as the religious and political authorities that dominated the people. For this he was executed.

Following his death, those who placed their hopes in him as the Messiah were forced to reconsider how this could possibly be.

Hence, we have the necessary and urgent development and collection of the oral tradition of Jesus, the gospel stories, Paul's theology for the Gentiles, the Jesus community and then the Church, and Christianity with its ever-unfolding theology, including the Messianic expectations, the prophecies, the miracles, the resurrection, heaven and hell, and the second coming.

This character and all that was inspired was not crafted as a grand conspiracy to control the populace, but as a genuine

attempt to understand and articulate the meaning of a profound event that was experienced and witnessed.

The New Testament is the deposit of this as the writers attempted to apprehend and articulate the extraordinary ideas that came to light, were embellished, and rapidly spread among the people during this time.

As a preemptive defense, the accusation that this theory smacks of Gnosticism, that theology has been detached from matter, that Christianity has been severed from the Christ, is superficial. Rather, this theory is attached to a more probable history of perhaps a person but certainly a people who lived and died, and to a movement, inspired by events, that was birthed and continues to develop. Even if there wasn't one man upon whom all the expectations were projected, this still fails to negate the powerful genesis of ideas it inspired and continues to inspire today.

Christian theology may still exist as a legitimate prophetic as well as a personal and social transformative power.

The development of theology is cyclical and continual. First, there are the hopes, then the perceived embodiment of these hopes in a person, people, or events that in turn are apprehended to nourish the primal hopes as they incrementally embellish with more theological developments.

This man now called Jesus was believed in his time to perfectly demonstrate what it meant to be fully human and fully divine, the ideal fulcrum of both God and humanity. Therefore, he is called the perfect human, but also the Incarnation, the Revelation, and the Manifestation of God.

Very God; very Man.

The history of theology did not commence with the Jesus event. Rather, theology predated it, was projected onto this event, then the event fulfilled and elaborated this theology, and this theology continues to be elaborated upon, nourished by the Jesus event and consequent theological interpretations and developments throughout history.

The events of the Jesus story are both infused with and inspire theological importance. The man fulfilled all their hopes, in turn igniting them into a long theological and communal legacy.

The mixture of the historical and mythological elements of the Jesus story inspires, embodies, and expresses Christian theology.

The entire theological enterprise is valid in and of itself notwithstanding the supposed events upon which it believes it is founded.

The meaning of the Jesus event, rather than furthering a development of redemption, reveals what always was, is, and shall be. It isn't the evolution of reality, but the evolution, revelation, and the apprehension of it.

Therefore, the goal of Christian theology, centered upon the Christ symbol, and that presents itself as developing, is instead the revelation that all is one, always has been, and always shall be.

God does not exist as existence is perceived.

God has never been seen and cannot be proven. There are only testimonies submitted as evidence.

Like the source of water over the rim of the waterfalls, the source cannot be seen but only speculated upon.

It can be guessed from the cascade of water tumbling over the rim that it is an infinite and immeasurable source.

It is also surmised that the content of the falls resembles its source. The falling water suggests that the source is water, but that it is far greater than can be imagined and more infinite than can be conceived.

Therefore, there is the Source, and there is the Unfolding of that Source.

Then, there is the Dispensation of the Source.

The Source empties itself in the unfolding without losing itself because this emptying is perpetual. Ultimately, all things from the Source unfold, dispense, and return to the Source.

Like the tide, the source never loses itself as it empties itself in its flow and gathers itself in its ebb.

The Spirit is that which is called invisible and only discernible in action. The Spirit is the activation, application, and assimilation of the Source and is actualized in the union of matter, that is, relationship.

Just like water from the falls spreads indiscriminately over the land, so the dispensation is the ultimate expression of the source that manifests itself in limitless generosity, universal inclusion, radical service, compassionate justice, and revolutionary equality for all people.

All live in the same one reality.

Apprehending reality comes through preconceived notions shaped by conditioned paradigmatic worldviews, and with language and words attempts are made to articulate what is thought to be understood.

All is perception.

Since this theory is triadic in structure, a Christian might perceive this model as the Trinity... Father, the Word (Jesus as testified to in the Bible), and the Spirit in the community. Historically, this is the Old Testament, the Epiphany and Ministry of Jesus, and Pentecost... the dispensation of the Spirit in the world, specifically the Church, the believing collective. The Church is the symbolic microcosm of what the world may be. The Trinity is not above these processes, but is actually in these processes and ultimately materially is these processes. All of creation is the emanation of the Source. But, the Source, being perpetual, empties itself out in creation without losing itself. So creation is of the source, is the source, while at the same time the source is over and above the creation as its source. It is what is called God, as it is simultaneously of, from, and to God.

A Buddhist might perceive this model as Nirvana, the Buddha the Sutras testify to, and the Buddha nature practiced and achieved in the Sangha, the community of disciples.

A Jewish person might perceive this model as Yahweh, the Torah of Moses, and the Chosen People of God gathered in the synagogue and Temple and dispersed throughout the world.

A Muslim might perceive this model as Allah, the Prophet with the Quran, and the people of Islam.

An atheist might perceive this model as the undiscovered, the discovered with their scientific publications, and the application of the discovered by the scientific community for the benefit of the human race and the earth.

This triadic model provides a way to contemplate the structure, dynamic, and movement of reality itself. How it is apprehended and articulated does not alter its essential structure, but only the apprehension and articulation of it.

The most primitive of people contemplated the nature of reality and were overwhelmed by the mystery of the unknown. When this unknown suddenly or gradually revealed itself or was discovered, it would have been understood as an unfolding of the unknown for the punishment or benefit of humanity.

For example, fire may have originally been perceived as an overwhelming power able to cause death and destruction. Therefore, it is assigned divinity. One person throws a flint stone at a rock and witnesses the miracle of a spark landing in the dry grass and igniting a small fire. So he performs the same miracle over again intentionally, striking the flint against a stone above dry grass, creating fire. The small fire is not the same as the larger, overpowering God of Fire, but a small representation of it. The divine god Fire miraculously condescended to reveal itself to man in such a way that it will benefit the human race from then on.

Reality is one.

One reality emanates from one source. Only apprehensions, articulations, and applications are many.

Perceptions of reality are many.

Words articulating perceptions are even more numerous.

Revelations are new. Truth is timeless and unchanging. Reality remains one as the infinite source unfolds out as the universe and everything in it, dispensing its plenitude upon all things.

Since reality is one, it is only languages that are many. What seems to separate is language, not reality itself. Words, expressing beliefs as well as other attempts to apprehend and articulate, appear different and separate. But this is all they are: words... different fragmentary descriptors of the one thing.

Therefore, the diversity of world-views and words as legitimate attempts to understand and articulate reality is acknowledged and respected.

All religions, theologies, and philosophies, both personal and corporate, casual and organized, have the right to exist.

Therefore, the value of language is not dismissed. Every attempt to understand reality and every attempt to articulate it has value.

Their level of value depends on how language and actions collaborate with the unfolding nature of reality, that is the unfolding, subsummation, and reconciliation of all things.

They possess lesser value when language and actions

mean to violate this process and the essential unity of all that is.

They possess greater value when language and actions mean to manifest unity and cooperate with and encourage harmony.

Perception shapes personal reality as it is perceived.

When thoughts are believed, then thoughts validate the beliefs, making the beliefs self-confirming.

This is the beginning of division and therefore suffering.

The power of paradigms and language shapes personal realities. Thoughts about reality in turn collect corroborations to confirm what is already believed to be true.

For one belief system or school of thought to claim exclusivity neglects the inherent partiality of perception and therefore undermines the diverse unfolding of the source.

Some consider the components of this flowing structure as personal and interested, while others consider it impersonal and disinterested.

The quantum physicist David Bohm relays an interesting experiment:

“The device consists of two concentric glass cylinders, with a highly viscous fluid such as glycerin between them, which is arranged in such a way that the outer cylinder can be turned very slowly, so that there is negligible diffusion of the viscous fluid. A droplet of insoluble ink is placed in the fluid, and the outer cylinder is then turned, with the result that the droplet

is drawn out into a fine thread-like form that eventually becomes invisible. When the cylinder is turned in the opposite direction the thread-form draws back and suddenly becomes visible as a droplet, essentially the same as the one that was there originally.”

This represents, in scientific terms, the unfolding and enfolding universe, and in theological terms, God emptying himself and reconciling to himself all things.

Hegel, thinking and writing in a day when theology and philosophy were one and the same, reflects on the emptying of the ground of being without losing itself. It progresses and develops out from itself in a continual unfolding while subsuming or sublating all that is gone before, and it will return and enfold to itself while preserving everything fully and completely.

Spirituality means the inner, personal life of the individual in progression to become a fully individuated, free, and ethical person.

Just as reality unfolds in its development to integrate everything that lies ahead, sublating all that has gone before, then enfolding to reconcile unto itself everything that has been, so the individual integrates life and reconciles it all to complete the process of personal individuation.

Freedom has a social dimension. Just as the source unfolds all things and enfolds unto itself all things indiscriminately, so true freedom collaborates with this generous process of the unity, inclusion, and reconciliation of all things.

Time is a product of unfolding.

Heaven means the present fullness of this eternal moment, aware of the integral unity of all things.

Hell means the mortal defiance and rejection of unification and reconciliation.

Death is the complete and infinite absorption into the enfolding that is outside of time.

Prayer is the effort to align with reality and is answered in the union with reality. It is agreement with what is and the attainment of harmony even through struggle. Prayer believes that the generous and just unfolding and enfolding manifests itself in justice and equality for all, and compassionately works to this end. Prayer is the non-discursive language of unconditioned being. Words are not necessary.

The church is the collective of those who engage in the unfolding of all things and enfolding of all things of, from, and to the source.

CONCLUSION:

The dream changed my life because of the tranquility and peace of mind it gave me. It's like I had been living with a one thousand-piece puzzle with one piece missing for decades and finally it appeared and made sense of the whole picture.

The idea that there is one reality with many apprehensions and articulations makes me appreciate unity in diversity.

All belong for all is one.