



### Leaving the ox cart behind - four ways of thinking

To be truly alive I must be truly visionary. What occupies my thinking and determines my vision can range from the latest sitcom to the best way to get to the planet Mars. I can be so occupied with what is in front of me that I don't look beyond. Conversely, I can be "so heavenly minded I am no earthly good." Developing disciplined thinking is important to vision. Making time and opportunity for enlightened thought to develop within me is part of the maturing process.

Powerful forces are at work in the world fomenting change in the way we have thought for thousands of years. The right to think and explore the meaning of life has been gained by much sacrifice. The belief in absolute truth outside of the observable universe, the concept of eternity, the belief in the One God, and many other citadels of understanding have been bequeathed to us. We also need to recognize that some Eastern thinking has the goal of leaving thought (words) itself behind. In that sense Nirvana is the absence of thought. For this viewpoint true enlightenment can only come beyond words, as words themselves limit and codify thought. This contrasts

with the Judeo Christian viewpoint that God spoke the word and visible things appeared, and takes it a step further that God is the Word.

The scriptures tell us that man is more than an animal. Man can think; he has the gift of language. Words themselves have been given to us; we did not invent them. There is a destination for the soul. What is seen was made from what was unseen. All of this comes from understanding that is not entirely observable. We can trace the thought of the ancient Chaldeans, Babylonians, Hebrews, Greeks, the European thinkers of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Reformation, to the post modern thought of many today. Beneath our understanding and philosophies are the methods and forms of thinking that bring us to our conclusions. I want to consider four approaches to thought: Abstract, Concrete, Traditional and Intuitive and how they affect real life situations.

### Abstract vs. concrete thought

Greek thought views the world through the mind (abstract thought). Ancient Hebrew thought views the world through the senses (concrete thought).

Concrete thought is the expression of concepts and ideas in ways that can be seen, touched, smelled, tasted and/or heard. All five of the senses are used when speaking and hearing and writing and reading. .

Abstract thought is the expression of concepts and ideas in ways that cannot be seen, touched, smelled, tasted or heard. s

From the Ancient Hebrew Language and Aleph bet, “[http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/2\\_home.html](http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/2_home.html)” states that:

"The Hebrews always thought in Concrete thought. The word everlasting (the usual translation of the Hebrew word (*olam*) is an abstract word. The Hebrew meaning is something like "behind the horizon". It is something that is beyond what you can see

(or understand) at the moment but will be revealed as you travel closer (or at a later time). The Greek idea of "everlasting" would have been a foreign concept to the ancient Hebrews."

The Romans are described as "concrete thinkers with little use for abstract thought. Consequently, they thought of their state as a tangible possession, terming it the *res publica* (republic), literally "public thing" (property or affair), or *res populi*, "the property (or affair) of the people" (from a cached USNA web page quoting Neal Wood).

Interestingly, it has also been pointed out that this tendency of the Romans is also present in their art - the solid, real, warts-and-all portraits, in contrast to the perfect idealism of Greek sculpture.

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### Traditional and Intuitive thought

Traditional thought is closed. It only accepts that which has already been accepted. Some time ago I studied four types of people in a class. The *radicals* who want constant change. The *progressives* who want moderated change. The conservative who will allow for change if it is financially sound and the traditionalists who want everything to stay as it is or was. In this paradigm traditional thinking is the most inflexible. Obviously there are times to be inflexible but as in the case of the Scribes and the Pharisees inflexibility was their downfall.

Intuitive thought allows for knowledge and understanding to come not based necessarily on observation. It can come from an invisible source. Einstein would lock himself in a room for long periods of time using this method of thinking along with the concrete and abstract to arrive at his theory of relativity. Genius to some degree has to access this area and touch on the God given ability to come to understanding. As a Christian the Holy Spirit is deeply involved in supplying this kind of knowledge and

understanding. For those who yield themselves to demon spirits intuitive knowledge can come to them from the darkness.

### Holmes and Watson

I enjoy Sherlock Holmes. Holmes is an abstract thinker. His methods have to do with deducing, from concrete observation, a pattern that leads to the unraveling of a mystery. His method demands alertness in both realms of thinking. Holmes defends the traditional values of English society with some exceptions. He is also employing to some degree intuition, thoughts that are coming particularly to him because he is gifted in a particular way. This intuitive thinking has to do with the way the **fearfully and wonderfully made** soul of each individual man and woman receives spiritual understanding about specific situations.

Holmes works together with Watson who has, as a doctor, developed to some degree both concrete and abstract thinking. His traditional thinking is stronger than Holmes. Watson however is not gifted intuitively in the same way Holmes is. Often he has to fight through the concrete and traditional to arrive at the abstract. Holmes abstract thinking is constantly working. Suddenly, he will have inspiration. Intuitive thinking leads him to act in a way that baffles police and criminal. However, he does have a nemesis, Moriarty. Moriarty has mental powers like Holmes. His intuitive thinking however is corrupted by an evil source. This leads him to commit heinous crimes.

The response to this inner voice has everything to do with the way we perceive one another. If the abstract and intuitive is encouraged in a society you get great diversity and creativity. If as in a communist or fascist society, the intuitive is systematically destroyed the society becomes captive to sameness. *If the belief system in the name of fairness smothers the unique diversity of race and culture an emptiness of thought occurs and the mean and powerful, the self-centered dominate.* You may

recall the purges of Stalin or the killing fields of Cambodia as real life examples of this sad truth.

### Heroes of Old

Throughout human history the hunter-gatherer in the wild had to depend upon his senses. He had reason about what he sensed combined with his intuitive thinking to survive. The sea captain without instruments but the stars (and perhaps a compass) managed to navigate unknown waters and return home. *The Iliad and the Odyssey* by Homer depicts this ancient struggle. A mature woodsmen, warrior, or sea captain would be using all four types of thinking to solve the daily demands of life before him. Our hero did not depend on extensive empirical research by others to reach his conclusions. He did not consult the global positioning network to understand where he was on the earth. For thousands of years knowledge became available from those who preceded him (traditional), from the evidence of his senses (concrete), from reasoning (abstract) and intuitively as he, the individual received revelation previously unclear to him. There was no computer technology to supply it. That is not to say that technology isn't helpful. If you accept the existence of a living God, *the simple truth is that God knows more than man and man knows more intuitively than technology.* Technology cannot be intuitive because intuitive thinking is alive and present. Technology can be deductive and in fact, excels at it. Many sports fans in America have been amused and befuddled by the attempt of a computer to decide what is the best football team in the United States. Many of us are frustrated by phone calls to businesses that seem to go from one number punch to another without ever talking to a living person to resolve our problem. I suppose my thought here is that it takes a living being to best understand a living being. The world system has *put technology itself on the ox cart* and is dragging it slowly into the temple of commerce until all spiritual reasoning bows to its superior accuracy.

Today we often hear, "I can not decide about that until all the research is in." This could be about something as simple as whether a child should wear diapers or not. It could also be about moral values practiced for centuries that suddenly are no longer accepted because a survey has not yet validated that morality. For some, only empirically verifiable data is acceptable because they have rejected tradition and have *failed to humble themselves* to acknowledge the existence of intuitive thinking. In fact the structure of thought itself is brought into question as valid since it is based on language and language conveys meaning subject to space and time, culture and history. *Behind this is a lurking anarchy.* The thought is, "Let us throw away all vestiges of historical thinking in favor of the new understanding." Some have come to believe we have entered a new and darker age. Because we have *forgotten our origin*, like the men of Sodom we *grope for the door*.

"As a graduate student it became extremely apparent to me that the assumptions of the Enlightenment were no longer accepted by a large and growing section of academics across all disciplines. I still remember a moment in a seminar when the professor said: 'I don't know if you can handle this or are ready for it,' and then gently summarized much of what we had read in the course – essentially that the ideas of universal Truth and Knowledge are false. *Basically, there is no bedrock truth of knowledge- it is all socially constructed, it is all a manifestation of a power structure, and it all changes as society changes.*" (From Post-Modern Christianity by Fritz Berggren. PhD)

This *post-modern* thinking of today asserts that power, empowerment, is what matters. *Truth and knowledge are to be manipulated to gain power.* This of course is an old satanic argument. This kind of thinking puts man at the center. Freedom exists to allow self-empowerment to do virtually anything self-wants. Since there is no Supreme Being or body of truth to be accountable to, relative truth rules. One practicing post modernism finds, within any given culture, law based upon a body of

knowledge perceived as truth. This truth then limits what the self-explorer can do on his or her way to empowerment. The result of this is that the body of knowledge, the law, must be altered so that mankind is not restrained from self-expression that violates historical restraints on behavior. Sad to say many of us are sending our children to institutions that embrace and foster this kind of thinking.

In American culture, the body of law has its foundation in the Bible, and for the post-modern self-movement, the Bible must go. Someone once said that God did not give the Ten Suggestions. The Judeo-Christian concept of law is that there are absolutes. Truth is a person and He, God, has given absolute truth for us to follow. There is nothing new about this newness. Let's go back to the Garden of Eden. Picture yourself there with your ideal mate.

### Adam and Eve – Fellowship and Obedience

Every day we walk in the cool of the evening with our Creator. We have communion with nature in the deepest sense. Incredible peace surrounds us and we are paired with the perfect mate. Sound ideal? We are given freedom to explore everything in our environment except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One day the serpent poses a question. He is not testing whether all this beauty is true. He questions the need to obey the Creators voice. He challenges the Creator through Eve as to who is in charge. Empowerment is the issue knowledge is the way to get there. Eat of the tree and you will be in charge. No one will tell you what to do.

#### Genesis 3:1-5

*1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"*

*2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"*

4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

NIV

Eve needs to test things, she is curious; she inserts a deception and falls. The evidence of her senses (concrete thinking) has told her that all is well. The serpent comes and invites her to abstractly question the situation. Don't accept the Creator's word at face value. Understand that He may have other motives. She thinks to herself God has said, "Don't eat of the tree." He has not said you cannot touch the tree. She may have reasoned (abstractly) that if you touch the tree and nothing happens surely you can eat of the tree. One kind of knowledge the concrete empirical kind says all is well. Another kind of knowledge the abstract deduces that there are other possibilities, the traditional says be cautious, the intuitive, which is used to hearing the voice of God becomes curious. *The voice of the serpent penetrates.*

Genesis 3:5-8

5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

(Ah yes I will have power like God, she thought.)

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

(Adam stood idly by as many of us do today while our neighbors, children and fellow travelers eat of this tree and then decide to taste of it ourselves.)

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. NIV



When God comes to us in the cool of the evening we hide from him. We change the law to exclude him; we cast Him out of our churches and educational institutions. When we become a *friend of the world system (James4:4)* and the *new thinking*, we become enemies of God. When we are more enamored with self-empowerment and pride than with humility and worship, we become *enemies of God*.

What happened to Adam and Eve?

Genesis 3:14-23

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,  
"Cursed are you above all the livestock  
and all the wild animals!  
You will crawl on your belly  
and you will eat dust  
all the days of your life.

15 And I will put enmity  
between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;  
he will crush your head,  
and you will strike his heel."

16 To the woman he said,  
"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;  
with pain you will give birth to children.  
Your desire will be for your husband,  
and he will rule over you."

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'  
"Cursed is the ground because of you;  
through painful toil you will eat of it  
all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,  
and you will eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your brow  
you will eat your food  
until you return to the ground,  
since from it you were taken;  
for dust you are  
and to dust you will return."

20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

22 And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." 23 So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. NIV

Any society that rejects God receives *the removal of blessing* and like Adam and Eve *the inheritance of toil*. Think of how many more man-hours are being put in by American workers since WWII. Most homes no longer have parents to greet children coming home from school. Most young families have both parents working just to pay for their home. Many states find themselves bankrupt. Some have resorted to gambling and lotteries to pay the bills. The national debt of the United States is over 5 trillion dollars. In the 1950s Time Magazine asked, *Is God dead?* Since post-modern thinking has arisen to remove God from every aspect of public life could God have proclaimed *Ichabod* (the glory has departed) over many of our institutions?

Let's take another journey in time, not like Harrison Ford did in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Let's go back to the times between Samuel's death and David's rule as King of Israel.

## David and the Ark

### I Chronicles Chpts. 13&15

The Philistines have captured the Ark of the Covenant. It is wreaking havoc amongst them. People are dying. It is moved from city to city wherever it goes the curse follows. Even Dagon their God bows before the Ark. The idol's hands and feet are severed. The Philistines bring the ark back to Israel on an ox cart drawn by two milk cows that must leave their young behind. It is received with joy by the Israelites. It soon proves to be a curse to them as they open it and many die. Finally they move the ark to Kirjath Jearim where it stays twenty years until David decides to bring it up. He brings it back on the ox cart and, at a certain point, the oxen stumble. Uzzah reaches out his hand to steady the Ark and dies. David is very upset. The ark remains at the house of Obed Edom, and God blesses him. When David perceives this, he goes to the word and realizes he brought up the ark improperly. He now brings it up carried by the priests with much celebration and sacrifice fearing God, and God blesses him. Let's examine David's errors in this situation. Let's also remember that he corrected them.

- 1) Presumption – *Why use an ox cart?* It may have looked good. After all the Philistines had used it successfully. Somehow David must have presumed because of his familiarity with God he was not accountable to God's word. Instructions for the Ark were clearly revealed in the scriptures. His intuitive thinking felt he no longer needed to pay attention to the concrete and traditional aspects of thought. The spirit would just lead him. Years ago I heard a sermon by Bob Mumford. He said " You must take one step in the spirit and one step in the truth. If you do this you will walk in a balanced way." He pretended to stand in the middle of a highway walking the line as the police tested whether he was sober. David, believing he was waking in the spirit,

*erred in the truth.* The ox cart is the world's way the Word and the Spirit are the Lord's way. Answers must come from the Living Word of God.

- 2) Holiness – *What did David overlook?* David Forgot to Fear God. God's ways are not the ways of the Philistines. Furthermore, God is Holy. He is set apart. God is to be treated with the utmost respect. God says about himself, **I, THE LORD, AM HOLY**. The ox cart may have looked good but the only way to bring up the ark was on the shoulders of the priests, the appointed servants of God. It is the same with revival today. We must be concerned more for the *how of revival than the when. Can a Holy God travel with us and in us?*
- 3) Forgot the Word – *What had David neglected in his excitement?* David neglected the scriptures. He forgot that in some mysterious way the scriptures themselves have life. When we take in the word and practice it life is produced. There are real consequences to not learning to or refusing to *think from God's perspective*. If David had studied and believed the word of God Uzzah would not have perished. If David had stopped to use all the ways of thinking available to him he would have skipped the ox cart.

*We are tested by the way we think.* Let's look at some scriptures regarding these four ways of thinking.

### Ways of thinking

1. Abstract thought– *thought that is coherent and logical, deductive reasoning, analysis* – Prove then practice.
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:21
  - 21 Test everything. Hold on to the good. NIV
  - Acts 17:10-11
  - 10 As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now the Bereans were of

more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. NIV

Luke 12:54-56

54 He said to the crowd: "When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. 55 And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. 56 Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time? NIV

In other words you use concrete thought to reach abstract conclusions.

Why can't you apply this in the affairs of man and God?

2. Concrete thought – based on **the observation of the senses.**

John 20:24-25

24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

NIV

This scripture fulfills the old saying, "Seeing is believing."

The concept that data must be empirically verified by facts is a foundation stone of concrete thinking. Theories are developed from this concrete data.

3. Traditional thought – **the word and ways of man** - Only do what your have learned from those who have gone before you –

Mark 7:5

5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the *tradition of the elders* instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?" NIV

Mark 7:13- Giving money to the temple instead of your parents

13 Thus you nullify the word of God *by your tradition* that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." NIV

Colossians 2:8

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on *human tradition* and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. NIV

There is no better example of this than the false doctrine that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are no longer in operation. This teaching promotes the concept that all we need is the written word. In teaching this the scriptures are violated, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is made unavailable to the very people it is intended for. Perhaps the author of it saw the powerlessness in so many lives and concluded that the power is no longer available. In any case anyone who receives this false understanding is taken captive. Traditional thought conceived by men to control men, most often produces bondage. God validated thought, that has lasted the test of time, is part of our freedom and safety.

Acts 2:38-39

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for *all who are far off-for all whom the Lord our God will call.*" NIV

Read Luke. 13:10-17

Luke 13:15-17

15 The Lord then answered him and said, "*Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it?* 16 So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound — think of it — for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" 17 And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; NKJV

Traditional thought often is good, but it can limit what God wants to do now.

Luke 5:36-39

36 He told them this parable: "*No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.* 37 *And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.* 38 *No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.* 39 *And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'*" NIV

In this example we are exhorted to hang on to the sound words we have received. Some tradition is worthy of dying for. It is truth itself.

2 Tim 1:13-14

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. NKJV

Matt 13:52

52 He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." NIV

4. Intuitive thought – Spirit led – listening to wisdom and knowledge that becomes available because the Spirit gives it, as we need it.

A few days ago my phone stopped working. All the extensions also stopped working. There was the sense that the line was active but no connection could be made. We checked all the outlets, all of the individual phones. Every concrete possibility was explored, and the repairman was called. My wife and I reasoned together. Every known abstract means of fixing the problem was explored and eliminated except one. The last call placed on the phone was to the same party that had had one of his phone conversations come over our intercom years earlier. We had no traditional knowledge to apply, as there was no hard and fast practice to apply. My intuitive reasoning began to engage. We prayed. I heard a voice say, "Go over to that neighbors house and call home from his phone, and it will work." My concrete thinking said, "Don't do it; that is stupid." However, the sense that I should do it grew stronger. I finally did. Guess what; the phone worked. The phone repairman could give me no logical explanation as to why that should have happened.

Romans 8:14-16

14.. those *who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of son ship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children NIV



Luke 21:12-15

You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. 13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 for *I will give you a mouth and wisdom* which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. NKJV

1 Cor 12:4-11

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, *distributing to each one individually as He wills*. NKJV

Could you not tarry with me one hour?

Many nights Jesus would pray for hours. This would happen after a day of heavy involvement with crowds and his disciples. He must have been physically weary. Why would he take this time when many of us would be resting in order to pray?

His senses had been overwhelmed. Think of thousands of people reaching out to touch you, to talk to you, to get healing from you. Keeping track of all of this in and of itself would be exhausting. Deducing what was going on day after day, in every situation, would quickly bring even Sherlock Holmes to

the end of his rope. Dealing with the opposition of tradition as the religious leaders warred with him added to the intensity of the battle.

As you have probably thought, Jesus resorted to the intuitive relationship with his Father, with the Holy Spirit, to give him strength. His empowerment did not come from false self-oriented philosophy but from a vital relationship with a living God. The secret of sanity in the midst of stress is rest, not sleep, but rest. Rest comes from a relationship with God. Rest restores our spirit. Jesus depended on the intuitive side to be strengthened by the Spirit of God. None of us can do the mighty things Jesus did individually, but collectively, as a body across the earth, we can.

One of the things we can do to strengthen the intuitive is to journal. I began to do this many years ago. As I began to record what was happening in my life, what I was hearing spiritually, my inner life, the life of the spirit began to grow. I began to pursue intellectual and spiritual goals that otherwise would have been neglected or forgotten. In a sense the scriptures are a journal of what has happened in real peoples lives that have gone before us. As we read these intimate accounts of God's dealing with man we are stimulated to learn and follow.

*Revelation 1:19*

*19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. NIV*

### The Centurion

I was resting on my porch one evening. My water fountain was on. As I awakened, I thought it was raining. I had to open my eyes and look around to understand the water sound was coming from the fountain. I actually wanted it to be raining outside as we have had very dry weather. Involuntarily, I had

made the fountain into the rain. While I was lying there God spoke to me. "Consider the centurion," he said.

Luke 7:1-10

7:1 When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." 6 So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 *That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed.* 8 *For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."*

9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not *found such great faith* even in Israel." 10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well. NIV

Why could this centurion see these truths regarding Jesus when no one else could? What kind of thinking led him to these conclusions? He had learned from the observation of his senses how authority worked in the army. In the same way he had also learned humility; however not every soldier so readily accepted the lessons of authority and humility. Something inside this soldier was responding intuitively to the word of God, to the call to believe.

Rom 10:17

17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

NKJV

The Jews who were listening to Jesus were dealing with over a thousand years of thinking that seemed to be contrary to much of what Jesus was teaching. The centurion had no Jewish traditional thinking to deal with. He could hear the words of Jesus and see the miracles and healings without traditional thinking trying to explain it away. This is partially why Jesus could say, "I have not found such great faith, even in Israel."

The centurion could have taken advantage of the authority he had as a leader. He could have required Jesus to come to him. He could have lorded it over the Jewish elders. Instead he was humble and friendly to Israel and the God of Israel. He had learned to listen intuitively and respond to spiritual leading.

Today, where I live, we have a tendency to back off from any meaningful discussion of authority because our culture teaches us to be independent. We see bumper stickers that say, "Question authority". We easily tear down our leaders and speak ill of them. The centurion understood that a successful kingdom does not operate that way. He had deduced this from concrete observation. The traditions of the Roman Army had further established this in his thinking. *The light that was obvious to him had blinded the Jews.* Are we like that today? We wonder why God moves miraculously in other cultures but not so much where we live. Are we blind to the simple truths that produce dynamic faith because of our traditions and culture?

Plato

Those who commit themselves to follow the Lord with their whole man allowing all ways of thinking to be used by him will not only come to maturity but also suffer the price of all seekers. Before the birth of Christ, Plato wrote a book. In it he explored what possibilities could happen to the seeker of truth.

Here is an excerpt from Book VII of Plato's Republic that may help Explain:

"Next, then," I said. "Make an image of our nature in its education and want of education, likening it to a condition of the following kind. See human beings as though they were in an underground cave-like dwelling with its entrance, a long one, open to the light across the whole width of the cave. They are in it from childhood with their legs and necks in bonds so that they are fixed, seeing only in front of them, unable because of the bond to turn their heads all the way around. Their light is from a fire burning far above and behind them. Between the fire and the prisoners there is a road above, along which we see a wall, built like the partitions puppet-handlers set in front of the human beings and over which they show the puppets".

"I see," he said.

"Then also see along this wall human beings carrying all sorts of artifacts, which project above the wall, and statues of men and other animals wrought from stone, wood, and every kind of material; as is to be expected, some of the carriers utter sound while others are silent."

"It's a strange image," he said, "and strange prisoners you're telling of."

"They're like us," I said. "For in the first place, do you suppose such men would have seen anything of themselves and one another other than the shadows cast by the fire on the side of the cave facing them?"

"How could they," he said, "if they had been compelled to keep their heads motionless throughout life?"

"And what about the things that are carried by? Isn't it the same with them?"

"Of course."

"If they were able to discuss things with one another don't you believe they would hold that they are naming these things going by before them that they see?"

"Necessarily."

"And what if the prison also had an echo from the side facing them?"

Whenever one of the men passing by happens to utter a sound, do you suppose they would believe that anything other than the passing shadow was uttering the sound?"

"No, by Zeus," he said. "I don't."

"Then most certainly," I said, "Such men would hold that the truth is nothing other than the shadows of artificial things."

"Most necessarily," he said.

"Now consider," I said, "what their release and healing from bonds and folly would be like if something of this sort were by nature to happen to them. Take a man who is released and suddenly compelled to stand up, to turn his neck around, to walk and look up toward the light; and who, moreover, in doing all this is in pain and, because he is dazzled, is unable to make out those things whose shadows he was before. What do you suppose he'd say if someone were to tell him that before he saw silly nothings, while now, because he is somewhat nearer to what IS and more turned toward beings, he sees more correctly; and, in particular, showing him each of the things that pass by, were to compel the man to answer his questions about what they are? Don't you suppose he'd be at a loss and believe that what was seen before is truer than what is now shown?"

"Yes," he said, "by far."

"And if he compelled him to look at the light itself, would his eyes hurt and would he flee, turning away to those things that he is able to make out and hold them to be really clearer than what is being shown?"

"So he would," he said.

"And if," I said, "some one dragged him away from there by force along the rough, steep, upward way and didn't let him go before he had dragged him out into the light of the sun, wouldn't he be distressed and annoyed at being so dragged? And when he came to the light, wouldn't he have his eyes full of its beam and be unable to see even one of the things now said to be true?"

"No, he wouldn't," he said, "at least not right away."

"Then I supposed he'd have to get accustomed, if he were going to see what's up above. At first he'd most easily make out the shadows; and after that the phantoms of the human beings and the other things in water; and, later, the things themselves. And from there he could turn to beholding the things in heaven and heaven itself, more easily at night, looking at the light of the stars and the moon, than by day, looking at the sun and sunlight."

"Of course." ...

... "Now reflect on this too," I said. "If such a man were to come down again and sit in the same seat, on coming suddenly from the sun would his eyes get infected with darkness?"

"Very much so," he said.

"And if he once more had to compete with those perpetual prisoners in forming judgments about those shadows while his vision was still dim, before his eyes had recovered, and if the time needed for getting accustomed were not at all short, wouldn't he be the source of laughter, and wouldn't it be said of him that he went up and came back with his eyes corrupted, and that it's not even worth trying to go up? And if they were

somehow able to get their hands on and kill the man who attempts to release and lead up, wouldn't they kill him?"

From: "The Republic of Plato" translated with notes and an interpretive essay by Allan Bloom. Published by Basic Books Inc., New York, London in 1968.

Acts 26:24-29

24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

25 "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. 26 The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" 29 Paul replied, "Short time or long-I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." NIV

Jesus was crucified out of envy. His life style and teaching forced the leaders of the Jews to think beyond what they were comfortable with thinking. He walked in authority that was unavailable to them. There is a price to pay for seeking the light, for intuitive thinking. If one finds truth he will probably not be understood by the world system. Truth seeking leads to light. Those who are so enlightened look weird to those who are bound in darkness. Those in darkness must destroy the light bearer lest he bring them out of the dark cave.

Whether Socrates, Paul, Jeremiah, Jesus, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, or Watchmen Nee, truth seekers, those willing to be visionary and to think



creatively, will pay a price. However the reward is more than worthy of the risk.

Prov 3:5-6

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
6 in all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make your paths straight. NIV

Heb 11:1-3

11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.

3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

2 Corinthians 4:18

18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. NIV

Heb 11:6

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. NIV

“ You have placed me on the ox cart of tradition and asked me to follow you. Let go, turn around that my spirit may rest upon you. Follow me.” (from CES Journal)