



POIÊMA
GOD'S
WORKMANSHIP

EXPLORING
THE FAITH, HOPE & LOVE
OF GOD'S MASTERPIECE

SAMUEL TAI

POIÊMA GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

A MASTERPIECE DISPLAYS THE MASTERY OF THE MASTER

What do you define to be a masterpiece? Is it the statue of David sculpted by *Michelangelo*? Or Mona Lisa painted by *Leonardo da Vinci*? Or Canon in D Major composed by *Johann Pachelbel*? Or Sagrada Familia designed by *Antoni Gaudi*? Or yourself being crafted by **GOD** in the image and likeness of **Jesus Christ**?

"He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."
(Philippians 1:6)

In 'Poiêma, God's Workmanship', we will see what **GOD** sees as His perfect masterpiece according to His eternal purpose in **Christ Jesus**. We will discover the workmanship of the Master on vessels of honour whom He has foreordained for every good work. We will explore **God's** signature on the living stones of His spiritual house; His image on the bride of **Christ**; His imprint on the Kingdom of His Son; and His crowning glory on His masterpieces in the nations of the world.

'Poiêma, God's Workmanship' will inspire us to reach for higher heights and deeper depths in **Christ**, and become the masterpiece of **GOD**.



SAMUEL TAI is a strategic thought leader and master builder by the grace of **GOD**. Throughout thirty years of ministry, his passion is to preach the unfathomable riches of **Christ**, build the body of **Christ**, and prepare a Kingdom-administration suitable for the consummation of all things in **Christ**.

Samuel is the founder of Ekklesia Renaissance Consulting, Com, a social entrepreneurship and community outreach ministry, whose mission is to provide strategic leadership, holistic consultancy, and institutional expertise to champion

socioeconomic change, thereby enabling the societies to have the organic regenerative capacity to endure for the common good.

Samuel is the founder of Finishing School for **SAINTS**, a school of ministry dedicated to teaching the gospel of the Kingdom and equipping saints for Kingdom-transformation of nations. He is the author of *Renaissance NOW! A Thought Leadership on Championing Socio-Economic Change* (**Masterbuilder**, 2011)



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ABOUT THE COVER DESIGN

Proverbs 27:19

As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects man.

Through the workmanship of God in Christ, we have been, and are being, transformed from death to life; darkness to light; earthly to heavenly; dead works to righteousness of faith; depravity to sanctification; corruption to perfection; dishonour to glory; and the image of the devil to the image of Christ.

The face on the cover is like the image of our face reflecting in the mirror of the Word of God; it is a reflection of our progressive sanctification and transfiguration into the very image of Christ in the light of the Word, which is the glory of God in the face of Christ, the perfect masterpiece of God.

May the face on the cover inspire us to behold in the mirror of the Word our transformation from glory to glory; for when our image conforms to the image of Christ in the fullness of His glory, we will be the poiēma of God. †



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Poiēma, God's Workmanship

First Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

PARABLE OF THE ADOPTED SON

An orphan, abused and abandoned at a young age, had been living large on the streets and hardened by the environment. Together with his friends, he grew up an anti-social juvenile delinquent with frequent run-ins with law enforcement authorities. One day, while breaking into the home of a family of noble standing in the city, he came face to face with the couple who had adopted a fellow street-orphan he once knew. The couple had compassion on him and adopted him as well. He was grateful for the shelter, security, new identity, unconditional love, and wealthy lifestyle provided by the adoptive parents. He knew he could become a whole new man with a noble identity and a bright future under the wings of his new parents.

However, instead of making an effort to transform himself, licentiousness and hedonistic indulgence were his fill. He would go out every day and live large as usual, carousing and indulging in carnal pleasures, without realising that he was breaking the hearts of his parents, and bringing disrepute to the family's noble identity. He indulged his newfound wealth and power in vainglory and futile pursuits rather than living honourably and benevolently according to the wise counsel of

his parents. Despite his lifestyle, they graciously forgave him and showered him with much loving-kindness. With much patience, they sat him down to instil proper value system and attitudes in him, but he brushed them off as “being detached from reality”. He sneered whenever the parents explained to him the family’s heritage over the last 500 years, and implored him to continue building on their legacy; he despised their discipline; he retorted that unconditional love meant unconditional freedom and unmerited favour for him to pursue his own dreams, free from the burdensome yoke of do's and don'ts. Even when his fellow adopted sibling tried to explain to him the benevolence and kind intentions of their parents, and how worthy they were of their trust and obedience, he dismissed it as brainwashing. Eventually, everyone agreed to live and let live in order to preserve the harmony of the family.

One night, when he came home after carousing, he found the parents at the door saying to him, “Depart from us, for we do not know you, and neither do you know us. You have been enlightened; you have tasted the heavenly gift and the good word we have for you; and you have partaken of the inheritance and its power. You have been adopted, yet we have treated you as a son. We have given you everything in liberality, yet you have fallen away from us. We would have entrusted true riches into your hands had you been faithful and honourable to us, but you insisted on living by your own perversity. Do not trample on our good work in the city and put us to open shame again and again. Go and live as you please. Do not return; for we have erased you from all of our official documents.”

Matthew 7:21-23

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART

FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

What can we learn from this Parable of the Adopted Son?

While we can list a number of principles from the parable, one observation is that the adopted son could have been a great “workmanship” of the parents had he set himself apart from the perverseness of his generation, and chose instead to construct his life around the will and good pleasure of his parents, and submitted wholeheartedly to their wise counsel.

POIÊMA, GOD’S WORKMANSHIP

A masterpiece displays the mastery of the Master.

What do you define to be a masterpiece? Is it the statue of David sculpted by Michelangelo? Or Mona Lisa painted by Leonardo da Vinci? Or Canon in D Major composed by Johann Pachelbel? Or Sagrada Familia designed by Antoni Gaudi? Or yourself crafted by God in the image and likeness of His perfect Son?

Philippians 2:13

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Every masterpiece is created by a master or maestro, whether a sculpture, a painting, or a piece of classical music. The masterpiece is the definitive expression of the master; it is created at the good pleasure, and for the good pleasure, of the master; it is the glory and honour of the master. When the world sees or hears the masterpiece, the world will recognise the master who created it, feel his heartbeat throughout his creative process, and honour him for his master craftsmanship.

Consider clay in the potter's hands. Clay is fashioned within the potter's hands, and is shaped according to the vision of his mind, the rhythm of his emotion, the good pleasure of his heart, and the mastery of his processes, until the clay becomes a masterpiece in the eyes of the world.

Genesis 22:1-5

*Now it came about after these things, that **God tested Abraham**, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "**Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.**" So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose **and went to the place of which God had told him.** On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and **we will worship and return to you.**"*

Just as clay yields to the fingers of the potter, the workmanship of God yields to the Spirit of God in worship. Abraham was God's workmanship in his journey of faith and obedience which, in essence, was a journey of worship. When God directed and shaped Abraham by His hands, Abraham yielded to God in worship. When he passed the workmanship quality test, he received the salvation of the Lord.

Workmanship and worship work hand in hand. This is an important partnership because, when there is no yielding to the hands of God in worship, there is no yielding to the workmanship of God in the journey of faith and obedience; and when there is no yielding to the workmanship of God, there is no divine favour to receive the salvation of the Lord; for without faith and obedience of faith in worship, it is impossible to

please God (Hebrews 11:6; James 2:20-26)

Genesis 4:2-7

Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Hebrews 11:4

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Worship goes beyond singing songs of praise unto God. Worship is giving unto God what is due to Him, and what He is worthy to receive, from His creatures. Worship is summed up in the following verse.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

*Now, Israel, **what does the LORD your God require from you**, but to **fear the LORD** your God, to **walk in all His ways** and **love Him**, and to **serve the LORD** your God **with all your heart** and **with all your soul**, and to **keep the LORD's commandments and His statutes** which I am commanding you today for your good?*

Thus, worship is centred on the love, reverential fear, and obedient service of the nature, character, desires, ways, holy

requirements, and commandments of the Lord our God. Hence, worship must be informed by God; that is, God must give us knowledge of His virtues and desires so we can respond to Him in love, reverence, and worship. All our offerings unto God must be measured by what pleases Him, not what is pleasing or convenient to us.

Let us now look at how Cain and Abel approached God in worship. Because God is holy and righteous, when sinful men approached God in worship, God required the shedding of blood and the aroma of their burnt offerings as atonement for their sins so that they could be reckoned as righteous by God to stand in worship before Him. This was the foreshadow of the redemption of sin through the blood sacrifice of His Son.

Abel was a keeper of flocks (shepherd) and Cain was a tiller of the ground (crop farmer) when both of them approached God in worship. Being a shepherd notwithstanding, Abel offered to God “a better sacrifice” because his offering was born out of faith, “through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous”. On the other hand, Cain's offering was born out of personal convenience and ignorance, not of faith. God has no regard for such offerings.

However, if Cain had inquired of the Lord concerning what offerings would please Him, and had made the effort to exchange crops for sheep, his offering would have been born out of faith towards God; God would have regard for his offering, and would have given him “the testimony that he was righteous”.

Therefore, worship is offering to Him what pleases Him to receive, not what pleases us to offer. In other words, true worship is informed worship; and it is out of informed worship that the righteous blood of Abel still testifies today (Hebrews 12:24).

All worship must be born out of faith; and true faith is centred on God and obedience to His “good and acceptable and perfect” will (Romans 12:1-2). Without true faith, it is impossible to please God; for it is the faith that testifies to the righteousness of the worshipper, and it is such worshipper whom the Father seeks (John 4:23). Without the true knowledge of God, there will not be true faith for obedient worship that will bear the testimony of righteousness, whether as individuals or church.

1 John 5:20

*And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may **know Him who is true**; and we are **in Him who is true**, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is **the true God and eternal life**.*

In fact, if there is true faith, there is also faith that is amiss.

If there is true knowledge of God, there is also false knowledge of God.

If there is informed worship, there is also misinformed worship.

If we are not worshipping the true God, we are worshipping a false god.

If we can dwell in a God who is true, we can also dwell in another god who is false.

If there is a true hope in the true Christ to attain to eternal life, there is also a false hope in the false christ to attain to eternal damnation.

2 Chronicles 15:3

*For many days **Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law**.*

Because Jeroboam appointed false priests over the house of

Israel, Israel was without true priests who could teach the people knowledge and laws of the true God, thus causing the nation to worship a false god. In other words, Israel was without the true God even though they thought that they were worshipping the true God.

Similarly, without true teachers and ministers who can teach the people true knowledge and laws of the true God, the church will be without the true God; for if our knowledge is amiss, we will worship amiss, that is, we will worship a false god by the spirit of error.

Therefore, if there is no true knowledge of God, there will not be true faith and true worship that are pleasing and acceptable to the true God; for everything that we do will be founded on false knowledge rather than truth, and on the spirit of error rather than the Spirit of truth. For example, how shall we imitate Christ, grow from glory to glory in Him, and conform to the same image and likeness of the Father, when we do not know the true image of the Son and the likeness of His character to the Father? How can we build the church accurately when we do not know the true nature of the Cornerstone and foundation Rock on whom the church is built upon, and the true purpose for which His body was raised by the Spirit of God?

1 Corinthians 15:34

*Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for **some have no knowledge of God.** I speak this to your shame.*

Let us consider this with intellectual honesty and sober-mindedness: How many of us can say that we have the true knowledge of the true God, and of the true Christ? As neither erroneous knowledge of the true God nor true knowledge of the false christ will do to secure our salvation, we must endeavour

to know the true God of our salvation.

Many of us know the salvation of the Lord but do not know the Lord of the salvation. Yet, it is the latter that defines the faith and power, and determines the security, of the former.

Therefore, this book is written to enable us to know the God of our salvation, so that we may know and effectually partake of the salvific work of Christ, the workmanship of Father, and the eternal purpose of God. This invariably means understanding theology and doctrines that are fundamental to the creative work and redemptive plan of God.

Christians who say that the understanding of sound theology is not essential to salvation, is akin to saying that understanding your spouse is not essential to a marriage. Both are erroneous, unless you are interested only in doing the minimal to stay saved or married. If we cannot love and serve our spouses well without knowing them accurately, then it will be even more so when it comes to loving and worshipping our God and Lord.

Hosea 4:6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

Hear the castigation for the lack of knowledge. Not only will we tread down the path of destruction if we reject the true knowledge of God, God will also reject us as His royal priesthood. If we do not have true knowledge of the God of our salvation, we may not walk in a manner that will lead us into the salvation of our God.

Micah 3:11-12

Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, her priests instruct for a price and her prophets divine for money. Yet

they lean on the LORD saying, "Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us." Therefore, on account of you, Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest.

In addition, we are destroyed for the lack of knowledge because we cannot identify and differentiate the true God from the false god. Not only will we be taken in by ministers and leaders who "twist everything that is straight" (Micah 3:9) according to their flesh, we will not be able to discern the absence of God or the presence of a counterfeit god; for the mind will always rationalise the presence of a god of their own knowledge. In other words, we can worship and experience a god of the figment of our minds, and still feel assured that we are worshipping the true God. Remember what Peter Pan said: "You just think lovely wonderful thoughts... and they lift you up in the air." (J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*) Therefore, we must not lean on our own judgments outside the true knowledge of God that is grounded on His Word, or else we will be destroyed by our own ignorance.

As we can see, knowing God accurately through the Word of God is crucial to our faith, worship, workmanship, and ultimately, salvation in God.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

It is the God of the Word who divides, clarifies, and tunes the soul and spirit of man, not the soul and spirit of man dividing and delimiting the God of the Word. It is the absolute Word of God that brings definition to the thoughts and experiences of man, not the subjective thoughts and experiences of man

qualifying the Word of God. It is the Word of God that judges a man before God, not the precepts of man validating man before God.

In all the above statements, the former informs from God's eternal view, while the latter informs from man's worldviews. The former sanctifies and unifies, while the latter adulterates and disperses. The former brings forth the laws that are spiritual, holy and good, while the latter wrought "golden calves" that are idolatrous and abominable. The former builds on a rock with living stones, while the latter gathers loose sand to build on more loose sand (Matthew 7:24-27).

Matthew 16:13-17

*Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "**Who do people say that the Son of Man is?**" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "**But who do you say that I am?**" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because **flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.***

Loose sands are characterised by different opinions of man concerning who Jesus is; while living stones are characterised by heavenly revelations of the true nature of Christ, the Son, the Living, and the God. Loose sands are characterised by conjectures of Christ derived from human understanding; while living stones are characterised by true knowledge of the Rock revealed by the Father. As such, loose sands will be incapable of joining together in "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:13), while living stones will attain to perfect unity and oneness with the body of the Rock.

Many churches today are built on loose sands coming together with different opinions about the faith and doctrines of Christ.

We agree to disagree with one another in order to preserve relationships; we preach seeker-friendly messages that will not divide the soul and spirit in order to preserve social harmony. But is this the kind of unity and oneness that Jesus was praying for His disciples before He went to the Cross?

John 17:11, 21, 22-23

that they may be one even as We are... that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us... that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity...

Jesus prayed three times for the disciples - which include you and me – to be “one”, just as the Father and the Son are one. In other words, we are to be perfected in unity, just as the Father and the Son are perfect in unity.

I believe that, firstly, the prayer of Jesus will surely come to pass; and that, secondly, the unity and oneness between the Father and the Son are so perfect that there is no position of ‘agreeing to disagree’ between them. Therefore, we must know the Father as the Son knows Him, and we must know the Son as the Father knows Him, so that we can become one with the Father and one with the Son.

1 John 1:1-3

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus

Christ.

We can become one in fellowship – without agreeing to disagree – with the Father, with the Son, and with one another when we have complete fellowship with the one Word of Life; for the Word of Life is the true image and substance of fellowship. John revealed this methodology to us so that we can partake of the prayer of Jesus. Indeed, the prayer of Jesus will surely come to pass in these last days.

It is now time to come together in complete agreement with one another, and be perfected in the unity and oneness of the Father and Son. This is what ‘Poiēma, God's Workmanship’ aspires to achieve – to ignite the fire and spread the flame of unity in the true knowledge of God.

Let us consider another perspective of this unity and oneness.

Ezekiel 40:2-6, 43:10-12

*In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, and on it to the south there was a structure like a city. So He brought me there; and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze, with a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway. The man said to me, “**Son of man, see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that I am going to show you; for you have been brought here in order to show it to you. Declare to the house of Israel all that you see.**” And behold, there was a wall on the outside of the temple all around, and in the man's hand was a **measuring rod** of six cubits, each of which was a cubit and a handbreadth. So he measured the thickness of the wall, one rod; and the height, one rod. Then he went to the gate which faced east, went up its steps and measured the threshold of the gate, one rod in width; and the other threshold was one rod in width... **As for you, son of man, describe the temple to***

the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the plan. If they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the house, its structure, its exits, its entrances, all its designs, all its statutes, and all its laws. And write it in their sight, so that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes and do them. This is the law of the house: its entire area on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.

Hebrews 8:4-5

*Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; **who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things**, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, **“SEE,” He says, “THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.”***

Contrary to what we think, when it comes to His house, God has very specific instructions on how He wants things done.

If God is the architect and builder of “the city which has foundations” (Hebrews 11:10), every church and township will have master plans and construction blueprints from heaven for execution on earth. We must ensure that we observe and “make all things according to the patterns” which are shown to us in the master plans and blueprints; we must unite what we see with faith and obedience; we must muster every resource necessary for fulfilment; we must mobilise every person to bring it to pass; we must measure every work of the hands with the yardstick of God.

If we do not see as God sees, we cannot build as God builds; hence we labour in vain (Psalms 127:1). So, what do you see? Do

you see well (Jeremiah 1:11-12)?

Scriptures have revealed to us the master plans and blueprints of heaven; the Holy Spirit has given us insights to interpret these plans and blueprints; the master-builder grace of the fivefold ministry has enabled us to translate these insights into nuanced execution in every city and nation. This is the master workmanship of God that this book seeks to reveal. This is what we, the church, must revolve around, so that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. His Kingdom will surely come when His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:9-13

*Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. **Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.** Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]'*

Many of us pray "The Lord's Prayer" as a liturgy without realising or understanding how the will of God can be done on earth as it is in heaven through our lives. "The Lord's Prayer" is not a liturgy or sacrament, but a pattern for prayer, and a method of putting feet to our prayers.

This is the essence of "The Lord's Prayer": Get into the heavenly dimensions by the Spirit, "see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that God is going to show you", and "observe its whole design and all its statutes and do them", with the providence and grace of God, in total obedience.

When we pray and act in this way, God's design and measurement will become the master blueprint and constitution of our churches and personal lives; and His divine providence for us to fulfil His purpose will be our portion.

When we measure by God's measurements, we will build accurately by God's design; and God's dwelling amongst us will be most holy; for His is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Philippians 1:6

*For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it** until the day of Christ Jesus.*

God has indeed begun a good work in us through Christ. Yet, I know that “the end of a matter is better than its beginning” (Ecclesiastes 7:8). So, how much better will this ‘good work’ be? The answer is perfection; for the Master is looking for perfect masterpieces.

Like Paul, I am confident that God will, and is able to bring the good work that He has begun in us unto perfection, even up till the last minute before Christ returns.

Let us welcome the workmanship of God.

POIËMA, GOD'S WORKMANSHIP: THE BOOK

With this in view, ‘Poiēma, God's Workmanship’ is written to:

- ✧ Explore the crowning glory of true faith in God, hope in Christ, and love in the Spirit according to God's eternal purpose and workmanship which He has revealed through His Word;
- ✧ Provide a starter resource on the elementary principles of the oracles of God for making disciples of Christ and maturing sons of God;

- ✧ Improve the theological literacy of saints and deepen the roots of their faith, so that they will not be tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming in the last days;
- ✧ Help churches attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ;
- ✧ Bring to light the administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

In order for us to understand what it takes to be the masterpiece of God, we must first understand God, the Master, and see what He sees as His perfect masterpiece that will bring Him great pleasure.

In ‘Poiēma, God's Workmanship’, we will explore the eternal purpose and master blueprint of God by painting a theological vision that God has revealed through His Word.

We will explore the nature of His workmanship on living stones, on the temple of Christ's body, on the city of the living God, and on the kingdom of God in the nations.

We will explore the dimensions of the good works which God has prepared beforehand for us to walk, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Christ; to the end that we who put our hope in Christ will be to the praise of the glory of His grace.

Developing a robust theological vision will enable us to bring the gospel and workmanship of God to bear on our lives, our church, and our ministry expressions in our cities and nations,

so that we can consummate all things according to the eternal purpose which God carried out in Christ Jesus.

Through the guidance of a robust theological vision, we will not be tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; rather, we will grow up in all aspects into all that God is, all that God has, and all that God wills in Christ (Ephesians 4:14-15).

To this end, the following scriptures will aptly frame the focus and structure of this book.

Ephesians 2:10, 14-16, 19-22

*For we are **His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand** so that we would **walk in them...** For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by **abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances**, so that in Himself He might make the two into **one new man**, thus establishing peace, and might **reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross**, by it having put to death the enmity... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens** with the **saints**, and are of **God's household**, having been **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone**, in whom the **whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord**, in whom **you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit**.*

Ephesians 3:8-12

*To me, the very least of all saints, this **grace was given**, to preach to the Gentiles the **unfathomable riches of Christ**, and to bring to light what is **the administration of the mystery** which for ages has been hidden in God who created*

all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

Ephesians 1:9-10

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

The structure and contents of this book are designed to bring to light the essential truths concerning the God of the handiwork, and the handiwork of God, in the following broad categories:

- ☆ God and the Spirit of God
- ☆ Christ Jesus
- ☆ The Word of God and the Spirit of truth
- ☆ Good works which God prepared beforehand
- ☆ Elementary principles of the oracles of God
- ☆ Consummation of all things in Christ
- ☆ The Israel of God and the covenants of God
- ☆ The church of the firstborn and the Kingdom of God
- ☆ The church in the nations and marketplace

☆ The glory of God's workmanship

To help us understand God and His workmanship, I have written this book through the principal perspective of the written Word of God; that is, I have written this book in the light of God's revelations of Himself and of His works through the entire Bible; which is what systematic theology is all about. It is not written from the "pastoral" perspective that tends to over-temper the exacting and difficult statements of the word of God (John 6:60-61). This book calls out "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3) rather than "love, love, love" or "grace, grace, grace"; this book sees love and grace through the transcendent holiness of God, rather than inferring holiness through conjectures of love and grace. Because this book is written from the perspective of the written Word of God, it contains copious number of scripture references, allowing scriptures to explain scriptures, thus giving light and understanding to the simple.

Psalms 119:130

The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Allowing scripture to explain scripture is to allow the Spirit of truth to explain Himself, as all scriptures are breathed by the Spirit of truth. This principle allows me to present biblical exegesis that is in complete harmony and consistency with the fullness of the one God revealed by the one Spirit through the one written Word, from Genesis to Revelations.

Because scripture explains scripture, scriptures will be part of the narrative, and the narrative will be presented in tandem with scriptures to form a flow of concepts. Like walking, the "left leg" of narrative supports and brings forward the "right leg" of scripture, which in turn supports and brings forward another step of the "left leg" of narrative. Hence the flow is, line upon line, and precept upon precept. Every step will propel the

next step until we reach the mountain top where we will see the panoramic picture of ‘Poiēma, God's Workmanship’. As such, the read will be very different from other books that tend to stand at the place of one topical silo and narrate the nuances of relatively contained views from that position.

As with all writings pertaining to theology, doctrines, and heavenly concepts, it is very difficult to write in a highly conversational or story-like manner. Yet, by the grace of God, I believe that I have made it accessible to all believers who are keen to study and handle the Word accurately (2 Timothy 2:15), whether individually or in guided group discussions. So, I encourage you to press on and go with the flow to the end, even re-reading to draw out treasures, both new and old.

Proverbs 20:27

The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the innermost parts of his being.

This book invites you to think deeper from your innermost being, that is, from your spirit man. Find time to “stand and stare” along the journey; let deep calls to the deep at the sound of His waters, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God; that we may know the things freely given to us by God (1 Corinthians 2:10-16). It invites you to put on the “mind of Christ” so that you may appraise and understand the “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

Acts 17:10-12

The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

The goal of this book is to cover a wide array of essential knowledge for the last days rather than address the depth of specific topics. As such, this book will not address every truth of the Spirit, false teachings, or doubts of the mind; for it would be too voluminous and polemic to do so. My intention is to present elementary principles from my insights in a concise format, and invite you to examine them comprehensively with a noble mind in the "Berean" prayer closet. Therefore, do not read this book from a defensive position; read it with an unencumbered, inquisitive mind. Let the Spirit of truth energise your spirit, so that He can freely attest Himself to you through His written Word, and enlighten your heart and mind in the Spirit.

Ephesians 1:18-21

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

I pray that the unfolding of His Word in your spirit and your mind will flood your innermost being with the light of the Lord, so that your body will be full of light, and darkness will have no portion in you.

I pray that you will walk in the perfect workmanship of God in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Shalom. †

ONE

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

THE LANGUAGE OF GOD

Have you ever wondered: What language does God speak? What language does Jesus speak? Do they speak Hebrew to one another? Do they speak in “tongues” to one another?

Let us first look at the nature of the Word of God. Every Word that proceeds from God is the very essence of God; that is, when God speaks, God speaks of Himself; He speaks of the essence of His being. In other words, when God speaks, He takes of His very being, encapsulates it in Words, and speaks it by His mouth (c.f. John 8:44). Therefore, the Word of God is the very essence of His nature; the Word of God is God.

So, when God speaks, God speaks ‘God’; that is, the language of the Father is ‘God’, and the language of the Son is ‘God’. Since all creatures are created by His spoken Word, the language of God transcends human languages and the material world; it is eternal - pre-eminent, timeless, and universal. Therefore, when the spirit of a man communicates with God in the language of God in the Spirit, there is no linguistic, cultural, or contextual limitation to understanding the Word of God (1 Corinthians

2:10-13; c.f. John 8:56-59; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 4:13).

Thus, when God speaks, the same Word can be understood in the Spirit by every tribe in every cultural context through every generation in every nation, even though one tongue may not understand another (Genesis 11:1-9; Daniel 5:5-28). When God speaks, our spirit will see, hear, and behold God; and our mind will be informed by what our spirit sees, hears, and behold. If we desire to speak or write what God has spoken, our mind will encapsulate the Word into words, and then speak them with our mouth or write them with our hand. So the same Word can be understood and translated by different tongues and tribes under different cultural settings through different ages.

Hebrews 11:3

*By faith we understand that **the worlds were prepared by the word of God**, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.*

Because God is before all things, the Word is before all things, and the Word is the beginning of all things. Indeed, the whole world was spoken into being by the Word of God. As such, if we do not receive the Word as God intended, we will not receive the substance of the Word (Isaiah 55:10-11).

2 Timothy 2:14-15

Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

Because the Word is God, when the Word comes to us, both God and His Son will come to us through the Word. When we receive the Word, we receive God and His Son; when we reject the Word, we reject God and His Son (John 1:9-13). As such, we must avoid petty controversy over words, and be diligent to

appraise, understand, and receive the Word fully and accurately in the Spirit.

Therefore, in order to know God, we must begin with the Word; we must accurately handle the Word; we must interact with the Word; and we must experience the Word.

To know God, we must have the following attitudes in our hearts and minds:

1. When we seek to know and understand God, we must recognise that He is transcendent and divine in His nature, attributes, character, sovereignty, wisdom, reason, intentions, volition, and interactions.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."

We must acknowledge that God's ways are different from our ways, and His thoughts are different from our thoughts; for He transcends the created order. He exceeds all cumulative human ideologies, knowledge, reason, logic, instincts, comprehension, experiences, and counsel; He is blameless and irreproachable in His ways. No one can bring a charge against Him, for the potter has an inalienable right over the clay. His Word is inerrant and infallible, worthy of all acceptance.

2. We must recognise that God is knowable and He is desirous of revealing Himself to us.

Ephesians 1:8-9

*In all wisdom and insight **He made known to us the***

mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

Ephesians 3:1-5

*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, **when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;***

While God's ways and thoughts are transcendent, and He spoke through prophets of old in dark speeches and shadows, God had already made known the mystery of Christ to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. Knowledge pertaining to Jesus Christ is no longer 'classified information' in the Spirit; for God is desirous that we know Him and His Son intimately. He has revealed everything in the Spirit, so that those who earnestly seek Him will know Him. In fact, God is so eager for us to seek out all that He has revealed in the Spirit, that He grants kingly honour to those who passionately search Him out by the Spirit, for "it is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2).

3. We must recognise that God is transcendentally holy, and all that He has revealed of Himself and of His Son are transcendentally holy. Hence, we must approach God and His Word with reverent fear; for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

Proverbs 1:7 (AMP)

The reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord is the beginning and the principal and choice part of knowledge [its starting point and its essence]; but fools despise skillful and godly Wisdom, instruction, and discipline.

Psalms 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.

Proverbs 1:22, 28-29

“How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge? ...they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD.

The naive loves simplistic conjectures of God; a scoffer mocks the laws of God; and a fool hates the knowledge of God; for they choose not to fear the Lord or respect His Word.

Without the fear of the Lord in our hearts, we will not treat the Word of God as pre-eminent in our lives; hence we will not be able to attain to the true knowledge and skilful wisdom of God for godly living. Therefore, the reverent and worshipful fear of the Lord, and hence of His Word, is the starting point for knowing God fully and accurately.

4. Because God is transcendent, we must recognise that the Word of God is the standard to which we must measure, judge, and align ourselves before Him.

Hebrews 4:12

*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the **division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.***

Because His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways, we must be ready to renew our thoughts with His thoughts, and replace our ways with His ways. We must be willing to challenge and cut away false teachings, inaccurate knowledge, entrenched belief systems, cultural prejudices, and humanistic rationalisations so that we can agree and assimilate with the Word of truth. Otherwise, we will invalidate the power of God represented by His Word (Mark 7:13).

5. We must recognise that God's revelation of Himself demands our faith and obedience in response.

Hebrews 4:2

*For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but **the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.***

James 2:20-22

*But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that **faith without works is useless?** Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that **faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;***

If we do not approach the Word of God with proactive faith and explicit obedience, the Word of God will not profit us, thus leading us to accumulate dead facts

rather than living knowledge. Dead facts puff up and make arrogant, but living knowledge builds up (1 Corinthians 8:1-3).

In summary, the Word is God; the Word is the language of God; the Word is transcendentally holy; the Word reveals God; the Word is the Spirit of truth; the Word is to be revered; the Word demands faith; the Word demands walking in the truth of the Word.

Once we are ready to say, “Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name” (Psalms 86:11), we are ready to move forward.

DECEPTION OF THE SERPENT

Because the Word of God encapsulates God, the unfolding of the Word will reveal the essence of God encapsulated in that Word (Psalms 119:130). Therefore, when God sends of Himself through His Word, His Word will not return to Him empty without accomplishing what He desires, and without succeeding in the matter for which He sends it (Isaiah 55:10-11). For this reason, the devil will always seek to disrupt the communication process, cast doubt on the validity, and corrupt the understanding, of the Word.

Luke 8:11-15, 18 (LEB)

Now the parable means this: the seed is the word of God, and those beside the path are the ones who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved. And those on the rock are those who receive the word with joy when they hear it, and these do not have enough root, who believe for a time and in a time of testing fall away. And the seed that fell into the thorn plants—these are the ones who hear and as they go along are

*choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life, and they do not bear fruit to maturity. But the seed on the good soil —these are the ones who, after hearing the word, hold fast to it with a noble and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance... **Therefore consider how you listen, for whoever has, to him more will be given, and whoever does not have, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away from him.***

As you can see, the devil, who is the god of this world and the serpent of old (Revelation 12:9; 20:2), will always seek to steal, corrupt, and invalidate the Word that God sent into our hearts. Not only will the Word be rendered powerless and unfruitful, the material substance and workmanship of God encapsulated in that Word will not be unfolded in our lives as well. Therefore, we must be careful how we listen and receive the Word of God.

1 Timothy 4:1

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

Let me ask a few questions that you may already have the answers at the tip of your fingers: How strong was Eve's faith in God? How did Eve lose her faith in God in the Garden of God? How did Eve fall into sin?

Genesis 2:15-17

*Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. **The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."***

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field

*which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, **“Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”** The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, **“You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”** When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*

Without getting into deep exegesis here, the “star of the morning, son of the dawn” (Isaiah 14:12; also known as “Lucifer” in KJV) was an angelic being who “had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (Ezekiel 28:12-14; Exodus 24:10). He was “the anointed cherub who covers” Eden, the Garden of God. He was placed “on the holy mountain of God” in Eden as the guardian of Eden, and as a ministration angel before the throne of God in Eden. He walked in the midst of the Garden; he spoke with Adam and Eve; and he hovered whenever God was “walking in the garden in the cool of the day”.

Lucifer was blameless until unrighteousness was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15-18; Isaiah 14:13-15). Broadly inferring Adam’s age at the time of Cain’s birth (Genesis 4:1) from Seth’s (Genesis 5:3), I believe that Adam and Eve were about 50 to 80 years old when they were banished from the Garden. Hence, I believe that Lucifer sinned against God approximately 50 years after the creation of Adam and Eve (somewhere in between Genesis 2:25 and Genesis 3:1). He was then cast out “as profane from the mountain of God”, and was “thrust down to Sheol, to

the recesses of the pit”.

Whether you believe that it was Adam who was at fault for not communicating God's commandment concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil accurately to Eve or not, I believe that Eve had about 50 years of opportunity to get to know God for herself. In that period, she could have known the heart, mind, and will of God intimately during their fellowship; yet, somehow, she did not. She had experienced all the love, grace, providence, and blessings of God in the Garden, yet her faith in God was lacking.

I also believe that Eve was very familiar with the voice of Lucifer whenever he ministered to the Lord in the Garden or whenever they interacted with each other. However, after Lucifer sinned (now known as Satan) and was cast out of Eden, Eve could not discern the spirit of deception behind Satan's familiar voice when he spoke through the proxy of the serpent. This was the first scenario of a familiar spirit at work.

The serpent tapped into her ignorance of God –

- ✧ “Did God really say that? Makes no sense that God is withholding His grace from His beloved, right?”
- ✧ “Did God really mean that? You must have taken His commandment out of its context.”
- ✧ “Why not? You can partake of God's wisdom after that.”
- ✧ “Don't worry; you will not die even if you disobey, for God is love, and His mercy triumphs over judgment.”
- ✧ “Don't be legalistic or be blinded by religion! It is your relationship with God that matters.”

The serpent sowed seeds of doubt on whatever little that she

knew about God, and her faith simply broke.

The serpent also exploited and appealed to her humanistic desires – the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life (1 John 2:16-17). Just as the serpent “walks” on the belly and eats of the dust of the earth all the days of its life (Genesis 3:14-15), it will always cause man to walk by the good pleasures of his belly and live by the lusts of his flesh, so that he will live in enmity with God all the days of his life.

In the deceptive repertoire of the serpent, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will always be more ‘good’, less ‘evil’, more loving, more gracious, more acceptable, more relevant than the fruit of the tree of life. In fact, a man who lives by the lusts of his flesh and the glittery dust of the earth will surely be the epicurean bite of the serpent.

This is the strategy that the serpent is still using today. Just look at how the truth of the gospel has changed in today’s context; how, for instance, the scripture “it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13) has become “it is God who is at work *for* you, both to will and to work for *your* good pleasure” (*Humanist* 6:6) [*Author’s paraphrase*]. The serpent will always seek to elevate creatures’ pleasures over Creator’s counsel; reverse the relationship order from man-unto-God to God-unto-man; and use human experiences to corrupt divine patterns. So now, instead of the potter being pre-eminent, the clay becomes the axis around which God’s hands are to revolve to satisfy the fleshly desires of the clay.

2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15

*But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, **your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.** For if one comes and preaches **another Jesus** whom we have not preached, or you receive a **different spirit** which you have*

*not received, or a **different gospel** which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully... For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.*

If Eve had known the Creator and the heartbeat of His words unequivocally, accurately, and with reverential fear, the chances of being led astray by the serpent will be significantly lower, if not zero.

In the last days, Satan will even disguise himself as an angel of light working through false apostles and deceived ministers to lead saints astray with “another Jesus”, “a different spirit”, and “a different gospel”.

1 John 4:5-6

*They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. **By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.***

Therefore, knowing God accurately through sound theology and doctrines is very important to insure against falling away so easily by every wind of doctrines. It is equally important to know the voice and operational dynamics of the Holy Spirit intimately. For by these “we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error”.

Hebrews 13:8-9 (AMP)

Jesus Christ (the Messiah) is [always] the same, yesterday, today, [yes] and forever (to the ages). Do not be carried about by different and varied and alien teachings...

Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

If Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever; then He is the same in the Garden, at Mount Sinai, on the Cross, in the days of Acts, and even today; if Jesus Christ is the eternal Word, then sound theology and doctrines that are firmly grounded on the Word will not change on account of changes in social ideologies, philosophical reasoning, cultural persuasions, and human experiences through the ages. In other words, there is no such thing as 'Old Testament' theology, 'New Testament' theology, 'conservative' theology, 'progressive' theology, or 'liberal' theology. There may be progressive unfolding and restoration of truths (to be discussed later), and sound theology must take these into consideration; but there is no progressive alteration of the eternal Word.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINES

Psalm 138:2 (NKJV)

*I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for **You have magnified Your word above all Your name.***

Psalm 138:2 (AMP)

*I will worship toward Your holy temple and praise Your name for Your loving-kindness and for Your truth and faithfulness; for **You have exalted above all else Your name and Your word and You have magnified Your word above***

all Your name!

Let us consider what David said in his Psalm concerning the Word of God: God has exalted His name and His Word above all else in the heavens and on the earth; yet, notwithstanding this, He has magnified His Word above all His name.

Indeed, blessed is he who calls upon and boasts in the name of the Lord (Psalm 116; Psalm 20:7; Psalm 118:26). Yet, there is a greater promise to him who watches over His Word and performs it; for God will magnify him together with His Word above all His name.

Therefore, a church that magnifies the complete counsel of the Word of God above all else – above all else that seek to place His Word in lesser standing, even all His name – will be magnified by God.

Romans 9:28

FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.”

As such, we must speak and execute His Word thoroughly and without delay on earth, for He will be watching over His Word to perform it in us and through us (Jeremiah 1:12).

Is there anything that we value and magnify – in our lives and in our church – more than His Word?

Let us look at a ‘church’ in Capernaum, where the ‘pastor’ or ‘teacher’ is Jesus.

John 6:54-61, 66-70

“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living

*Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.” These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, **“This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?”** But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, **“Does this cause you to stumble?”**.. As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, **“You do not want to go away also, do you?”** Simon Peter answered Him, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”** Jesus answered them, **“Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve...?”***

Can you visualise a church where, when the pastor teaches the truths of God, members grumble or leave because the “flesh” and the “blood” are too difficult to swallow? Some leave because the theology is not in agreement with their opinions of what God is supposed to be like; some walk away in search of a ‘humane’ God, rather than stay with a ‘barbaric’ one; some grumble because the messages are not seasoned with grace; some murmur because their views are not accommodated or affirmed; some withdraw because they value relationship and harmony over truths that divide; and some argue for teachings to be less judgmental and more socially inclusive.

Yet, the response of Peter was instructive as to what is the principal ingredient that will truly unite a church and bind relationships together – the words of eternal life and knowledge of the Holy One of God. Paraphrasing it, Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Where else can we be? We can go back to our families and our vocations; we can visit another synagogue where the messages are more mainstream; but only You have

the words of eternal life that can sustain our lives and all that we can ever be in this world. What is family life without Your words of life? What is wealth without the providence of Your presence? What is temple fellowship without the fellowship of Your truth? We definitely cannot live by bread alone without the words that come from Your mouth. So, even though Your teachings may be difficult to accept, we are not going away like them; we are going where You go, and sticking with You wherever You are; for we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

This was one of the reasons why Jesus chose them as His disciples; for He was not concerned about those who left, but those who stayed on account of their unwavering faith and total dependence on His truth.

To prevent ourselves from making the same “mistakes” that Jesus made in the church in Capernaum, we try to build our church and foster unity by accommodating the diverse conjectures about God and the subjective opinions of men in the church. However, there is nothing else we can use to truly unite a church or bind a fellowship together apart from “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:13); that is, unity of the theology of God, doctrines of Christ, and truths of the Spirit.

1 John 1:1-4

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

So, not only are sound theology and doctrines important to discern between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error, they also enable true expressions of the worship of God, and foster true oneness of fellowship amongst believers with God and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

True fellowship with the Father and His Son, and with one another, is in the Word of Life. Everything that was written and proclaimed to us from the scriptures by apostles and prophets – “what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life” – is the sole basis for our fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ; it is the sole basis for our fellowship and unity with one another, and indeed also with the apostles and prophets who had seen, heard, touched, and proclaimed the Word of Life to us. For when we see Him, we see our beginnings in Him; when we hear Him, we hear our eternal destiny in Him; when we touch Him, we touch the transcendent holiness of our invisible God in Him; for He is our beginning, He is our end, and He is our all pertaining to life and godliness in between.

Without the true Word of Life, we cannot live the true life of Christ; without the complete Word of Life, we cannot walk in the fullness of His light; without unity with the Word of Life, we cannot have true fellowship with Christ and with one another.

1 John 1:5-7

*This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but **if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another**, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

There is no true fellowship and unity apart from the light of the

Word of God, for fellowship and unity are not social-centric. Fellowship and unity are Word-centric. The church has for many years prioritised social cohesion, relational harmony, and seeker-friendliness by 'agreeing to disagree' on crucial theology and doctrines of Christ. It is time for the church to recognise that unless there is true unity and oneness of fellowship on the basis of the Word, there will be no true unity and oneness amongst believers, and between believers and their God. There will also be no true life in the church.

2 John 9

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

It is by abiding accurately in the teaching of Christ that we will have both the Father and the Son; and it is by going too far from the teaching of Christ that we will not have God. In fact, if we go too far from the true teachings ("didachē" or doctrines) of Christ, being "carried away by varied and strange teachings" (Hebrews 13:9), we may even be abiding by "deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). Surely, God will not be present in our midst when this happens. Therefore, accurate knowledge of, and close abidance to, the words of Christ are of utmost importance for fulfilling our destiny in Christ.

Without the fullness of the Father and oneness with the Son, we cannot do the works that Jesus did in bodily flesh.

THE NEW BODY

John 14:12

*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, **the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than***

these he will do; because I go to the Father.

Jesus promised us that, in His bodily absence, we will not only do the same works that He did by the same power that worked mightily in His body; but we will also do greater works than those that He did.

This promise of Jesus will surely come to pass, but the caveat is that we must believe and abide in Him and His words, and stand in His stead in true unity with Him, oneness with the Father and fellowship with the Spirit.

Can you imagine the church doing greater works than what Jesus did in the four gospels? He overcame Satan and demoniacs; He performed all manner of miracles like raising the dead, turning water into wine, multiplying food, walking on water, rebuking the storm, healing the sick, etc.; He overcame sin, the sting of death, and death itself. Imagine the church doing greater works than these.

John 14:18-20

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

Hebrews 10:19-20

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

When Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, He did not leave us as “orphans”, for He has inaugurated a new body (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27) for us to live “by a new and living way” in and through Him (Ephesians 4:15-16); that is, while the disciples were with Him, we are now in Him. In addition, He

did not leave the earth without a house for the Father's dwelling (Colossians 1:19; 2:9), for His new body is the house of God (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). He also did not leave the earth without His continual presence and ministry, for His new body is standing in His stead and continuing the Father's Kingdom-mandate on the earth (Ephesians 1:20-23). This new body is the church, whose head is Christ (Colossians 1:18, 24). This church will not only continue seamlessly from where Jesus left off, it will continue to be the "incarnate" body of Jesus Christ on earth to do the works, even greater works, of Jesus Christ until all things are summed up in Him (Ephesians 1:10).

John 17:18

As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

1 Peter 2:21

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

The same Father who worked in, with, and through Jesus, and the same Spirit who worked in, with, and through Jesus, will be working in, with, and, through the church. The way that the Father sent His Son into the world will be the same way the Father will send His sons into the world. The role of the church and of every member is to "follow in His steps" in the complete image and likeness of Jesus Christ when He was walking in the likeness of man on earth. However, the performance level has been raised, because Jesus was only one, while the church is "one in many, and many in one".

Yet it is the issue of the true unity of the "one in many, and many in one" that is holding up the actualisation of power, authority, dominion, and glory of the church in the image and

footsteps of Jesus Christ.

DISSONANCE OF THE BODY

1 Corinthians 1:11 (AMP)

*For it has been made clear to me, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that **there are contentions and wrangling and factions among you.***

We have one Bible but never really one in understanding; we are together but never really in it together; we are united but never really in unity; we are one but never really in oneness.

In the natural human body, when an organ is transplanted from a donor into a new host body, the host body may suffer transplant rejection whereby the host's immune system recognises the transplanted tissue as a foreign object that has invaded the host's body, and proceeds to destroy the transplanted tissue. This is because the host's immune system detects that the antigens on the cells of the organ are different from, or does not match, the host's. Transplant rejection can be eliminated by determining the tissue similitude between the host and the organ. Tissue typing ensures that the organ or tissue is as similar as possible to the tissues of the host. Doctors can also use medicines to suppress the host's immune system to prevent the immune system from attacking the new organ when it is not closely matched, otherwise the body will almost always launch an immune response and destroy the foreign tissue. When this happens, the body will be sick and unwell; and a sick and unwell body is compromised, weak, and ineffective.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

What partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?... Or what agreement

has the temple of God with idols?

There is a 'tissue mismatch' between God and idolatries of the world; between the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error; between righteousness and lawlessness; between light and darkness; and between spirituality and carnality. The former will always reject and destroy the latter, for God will cut off "the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands" in His presence (1 Samuel 5:2-4).

Tissue mismatch leads to transplant rejection, which leads to dissonance in the body. There are so many dissonances in the body of Christ for so long that God has been using the 'suppressants' of mercy, lovingkindness, longsuffering, and patience to prevent 'organ rejection' of the 'mismatched' members of the body by the head and by the 'immune system' of the Spirit of truth. However, in these last days, "it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God" (1 Peter 4:17); for the Father loves the body of His Son too much to let His body continue to be compromised, weak, and ineffective; and the Father loves the bride of His Son too much to let her remain sick, wrinkled, and blemished. Furthermore, how can a sick body heal a dying world?

John 14:30 (AMP)

*I will not talk with you much more, for **the prince (evil genius, ruler) of the world is coming. And he has no claim on Me. [He has nothing in common with Me; there is nothing in Me that belongs to him, and he has no power over Me.]***

God is determined to perform 'tissue typing', or sanctification, on every member of the body of His Son so that there is complete similitude and unity between the head and the members of the body. God is determined to purify every member of the body so that He can purge every single iota of that which is common with the dark prince of this world from

the glorious body of His Son; for the devil will always lay legal claim on any common property, thereby de-legitimising the authority and power of His Son through the body.

Are there 'tissues' of darkness and 'organs' of disobedience in the body of Christ today?

PERFECT UNITY AND ONENESS

John 17:11, 17-23

*I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that **they may be one even as We are... Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.** As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, **that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.** I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that **they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us,** so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that **they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity,** so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.*

The desire of Jesus is for His disciples (believers) to be one, perfect in unity, just as the Father and the Son are one.

Let us consider this 'oneness' (c.f. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27). Is there cognitive dissonance within the Son Himself? Does the Son disagree with the Father? Does the Son agree to disagree with the Father in order to preserve unity between them? What is the essence and quality of this oneness between the Father

and the Son? Does Jesus really believe in His own prayer that believers can be one, just as the Father and Himself are one? Do we have the faith to believe that we can attain to this perfect unity and oneness amongst us? Can the “so that” which follows this oneness – “so that the world may believe that You sent Me” and “so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me” – be attained without perfect unity and oneness with the Father and Son?

Let us consider two levels of unity and oneness: The unity within Jesus Himself, and the oneness between the Father and the Son. Firstly, concerning the unity within the body of Jesus Himself, there is a complete absence of dissonance; that is, there is complete agreement, unity, and harmony between and within His Spirit-being, moral character, attitudes of the heart, thought patterns of the mind, disposition of the emotion, responses of the will, and behaviour of the body. Secondly, concerning the oneness between the Father and the Son, there is a complete absence of dissonance between Them, that is, there is complete agreement, oneness, and harmony between the Father and the Son at all levels – nature, character, heart, mind, emotion, will, and actions. There is no compromise or agreement to disagree between Them on any matter.

If there is complete unity within Jesus Himself, it follows that there should be complete unity of Christ within His body, the church; and if there is complete oneness between the Father and the Son, it follows that there should be complete oneness between the Father and the body of the Son, the church.

Friends, in case you think that this perfect unity and oneness can only be attained after Jesus Christ has returned, think again. Jesus' prayer was for the present age when He is no longer in the world; that is, when He is seated at the right hand of God as the head of His body on earth. In the same way that the Father had sent the Incarnate-body of Christ into the world to represent the Father, Jesus has sent His new body, the

church, into the world to represent Him and the Father. So, Jesus' prayer was for us to be like Him, and fulfil the Father's assignment like Him, so that the world may know that the Father has also sent us and loved us.

Colossians 3:9-11

*Do not lie to one another, since you **laid aside the old self** with its evil practices, and have **put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— a renewal in which** there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but **Christ is all, and in all.***

Paul said that, if we lay aside our old self and our practices of the flesh, our new self will be progressively renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created us; until the image of Christ is all that is in us, and Christ is the only one in us. When Christ is all and in all within the church, we will attain to the unity of Christ and oneness with the Father. This is the eternal purpose and centrality of the gospel which the Father carried out in Christ Jesus.

This unity of Christ and oneness with the Father can only be achieved through renewal and sanctification by the Word of truth – the true knowledge according to the image and likeness of the Father and the Son – “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”. It was by the Word of truth that Jesus sanctified Himself unto perfection, and it will be by the same Word of truth that we will be sanctified unto perfection.

Ephesians 4:10-16

*(...He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that **He might fill all things.**) And **He gave** some as **apostles, and some as prophets, and***

some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

“Unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” is also translated as “oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God”. Therefore, this unity is a theological unity.

Ephesians 4:13 (AMP)

[That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him.

This theological unity is the spiritual foundation on which saints mature, and the body of Christ is built, to “the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”. It is through theological unity that we have the same faith as Jesus, the Son of Man, towards the Father; the same knowledge as the Father

concerning Jesus, the Son of God; and the same intense passion, mature manhood, and perfect stature as Jesus, the Incarnate Christ.

Anything less than “the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection” is not sufficient to attain the complete unity of Christ and oneness with the Father; anything less than the unity of Christ is a dissonance within the one body of Christ; anything less than the complete image and likeness of Christ will not endue us with the power to do “greater works” than Jesus did.

Psalms 110:1-2

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of Your enemies.”

We have a body of Jesus Christ, whose head is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God, and whose the body is walking on the earth; whose rule is in the sceptre of its hand, and whose enemies are under its feet. This is the prophetic vision that King David saw and heard in heaven.

Consider the church today. The head is in perfect oneness and unison with the Father and His redemptive plan. The body, however, has a right arm of Presbyterian inspiration, left arm of Messianic Jewish conviction, right foot of Cessationist persuasion, left foot of Latter Rain movement, and a neck of antinomianism. With such a dissonant body, can the church have the full power, authority, dominion, and glory of the Kingdom of Christ?

1 Corinthians 1:12-13

*Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.” **Has***

***Christ been divided?** Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

Think about it within a local church, where believers of dissonant convictions and expectations are sitting in the congregation judging a sermon based on their diverse denominational or humanistic persuasions.

Think about it within a small cell group. Very often, members agree to disagree over Bible discussions in order to maintain social harmony. If some members do not believe in speaking in tongues, the leader of the group will avoid it so that those who do not believe in it will feel included and comfortable. So, the group will find the lowest common factor for relational cohesion within the group.

Just look at the power of “one mind” and awe of oneness in the church of Acts:

Acts 2:42-47

*They were **continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe;** and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had **all things in common;** and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. **Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house,** they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Acts 4:32-35

*And **the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul;** and not one of them claimed that*

*anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. And **with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.** For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.*

So how do we bring the body into perfect unity with the head and true oneness with the Father?

The biblical New Testament church (in Acts and Epistles) is the starting point of this rebuilding work. In fact, Christ had already given us the grace and strategies to do it (see scriptures from Ephesians 4:10-16 above):

1. *"...He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers"*

The fivefold ministry offices are Christ's ascension gifts to the church for equipping the saints and building up of His body in His bodily absence. These five offices represent the complete ministry grace of the headship of Jesus Christ on earth while He is seated in heaven; for not only is He the head of His body, He is also the Head Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher of His church (c.f. Hebrew 3:1). So, while the fivefold ministry grace was embodied in Him when He walked on earth, this grace is now embodied by five ministry offices in the church, so that the church can build up the saints and make perfect the body just like He did. Until Jesus returns, He will appoint fivefold ministry offices to represent Him fully in the church.

Just as the hand requires all five fingers to function

perfectly, the church requires all five graces of the fivefold ministry to function perfectly; so that saints can be equipped and the church can be built up for Christ's continuing work on earth. We must accept and embrace the entire spectrum of the fivefold ministry in the church, for all the five offices are as relevant today as they were in the days of Acts. Just as the ministries of the evangelists, pastors, and teachers have not ceased or been revoked in the church, so the ministries of the apostles and prophets have not ceased or been revoked either. To say that apostles and prophets have ceased from operation in the church is to say that the offices of Jesus Christ as Head Apostle and Head Prophet are no longer relevant to equipping the saints and building up the body of Christ in the last days; and that the ascension gifts or graces of Christ are revocable (Romans 11:29). Much of the weakness of the church today owes to the incomplete operational dynamics of the fivefold ministry within the church.

1 Corinthians 12:28

*And **God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.***

When God established the church through the body of His Son (John 2:21), He began His foundational work through the appointment and ministry of apostles. Then, after the Pentecost, we see prophets being appointed and established by God as the second foundational ministry of the church. By the time we see the church in Antioch, we see that teachers were already being established and sent out together with apostles and prophets into the nations to equip and strengthen the churches as pillars of truth in their cities. By the time Paul was in Corinth and Ephesus, we see that gifts

of miracles, healings, and helps were made manifest through saints; and elders were appointed to administer the work of God in the nations through the churches in their cities. This is the divine providence of God in and through the church that has continued to this day.

Ephesians 2:19-22

*...you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone**, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

As such, we must not throw out the baby together with the bath water. The existence of false shepherds who are hirelings does not mean that we should throw out true pastors from our churches (c.f. Ezekiel 34:1-23; Jeremiah 23:1-4). Similarly, the existence of false apostles and prophets does not mean that we should preclude the foundational ministries of true apostles and prophets from our churches (c.f. Ezekiel 13:1-23; 1 Kings 18:17-46; 1 Kings 22:1-38). In fact, it is all the more critical that the church seeks out true apostolic and prophetic ministries, and harkens to their voice, in the midst of falsehood; for only then will the church be led by the Spirit of truth, prevail over the wiles of the enemies, and be built on the true foundation that cannot be shaken (c.f. 2 Corinthians 11:12-15; 2 Chronicles 20:20).

1 Corinthians 3:9-13

*For **we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building**. According to the grace of God which was given to me, **like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it.***

But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

As wise master builders of God, true apostolic ministries are particularly important to the laying of the proper foundation of Christ and to the building up of the church in the last days. As the spirit of error, doctrines of demons, and false teachings increase in the last days, apostolic and prophetic ministries will become all the more critical to the laying of the foundation that is anchored on the true doctrines of Christ, and to the building up of the church with 'gold, silver, and precious stones' according to the blueprint of the chief architect and builder, God.

Hence, as stewards of the body of Christ, leaders of the church must seek to clarify, understand, and accept the important roles and graces of the entire fivefold ministry in the life of the church.

2. *"...For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ"*

The role of the fivefold ministry is also to enable the saints to function; for the body will be invalid without the proper functioning of its body members. Every member of the body must be taught, made a disciple, trained, equipped, and fathered for the work of service according to their gifts and calling in Christ, so that the body of Christ can be built up.

In an army unit, the soldiers are trained to be strong and effective in their diverse functions, and they are trained to operate as a formidable unit without breaking ranks from each other. In a business corporation, leaders and professionals are trained to perform effectively, productively, and accountably according to their roles and KPIs (key performance indicators); and business units are organised to operate synergistically to fulfil the corporate mission and values in the nations.

1 Peter 2:4-6

*And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, **you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** For this is contained in Scripture: “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”*

If organisations of the world train and equip their people to build their organisations, the church must be even more excellent in “equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ”; so that ‘living stones’ are built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

3. *“...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”*

The process of equipping saints and building up the body of Christ must end in the church attaining to the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. However,

the first milestone of this process journey is “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God”. As this unity is founded on unity in the Word, achieving it involves teaching and learning “elementary” principles like theology and doctrines (Hebrews 5:12-6:3), so that we can unify the hearts and minds of every member of the church according to the knowledge of the faith and of the Son of God.

The “unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” is the firm foundation on which the temple of Christ’s body is built (John 2:21). Every ‘living stone’ of this temple must be built upon this firm foundation, with doctrines of the Christ being the ‘corner stone’ of this foundation.

4. *“...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love”*

How can we “grow up in all aspects into Him” when we are still untaught in “the beginning elements of the oracles of God”? How can we attain to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ when we are still unaccustomed to the word of righteousness, and untrained to discern good and evil?

Hebrews 5:12-14 (LEB)

For indeed, although you ought to be teachers by this time, you have need of someone to teach you again the beginning elements of the oracles of God, and you have need of milk, not solid food. For everyone who partakes of milk is unacquainted with the message of righteousness, because he is

*an infant. But **solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have trained their faculties for the distinguishing of both good and evil.***

With all the milk, solid food, providence, grace, power, and authority of Jesus Christ at the disposal of the church, we can educate and nurture a spiritual newborn babe to become a mature son in the house of God, and an effectual working member of the church in the prime of his battle strength. When sons mature, the church will have the intrinsic life, innate potential, and continuous supply to grow and build up itself in love and function.

Psalms 133

*Behold, **how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!** It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever.*

Matthew 18:18-20

*Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For **where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.***

“How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity” – not ‘compromised’ unity; not ‘agree-to-disagree’ unity; not ‘live-and-let-live’ unity; not pseudo-unity, but true unity in perfect oneness; for the fullness of God is only present in our midst when we congregate in the true oneness of His Name and all that His Name represents. There is great grace

and glorious power in true corporate unity.

There are certain blessings that God will only command upon the church when members are joined and functioning together in true unity; there are certain battles that only total agreement in prayer can wrought victory. There are demonic hosts that only two brothers in unity can put ten thousands to flight (Deuteronomy 32:30); there are certain princes and principalities of darkness ruling over cities and marketplaces that only churches functioning together in unity, without breaking ranks with God and with one another, can break with “a rod of iron” and extend the rule of Christ into these domains.

We must distinguish between the true manifest presence of God in our midst from imaginations and rationalisations of His presence (1 Samuel 4:3-5:12). We must understand the true blessedness of unity or, conversely, the true dysfunction of pseudo-unity. We must be cognizant of the fact that the works that Jesus did on earth, and greater works than those He did, can only be performed by the church when every member of the body of Christ relates and functions in perfect unity with Christ. We must keep in view of the fact that the authority of the government of Christ (Isaiah 9:6-7) and the power of His Kingdom reign in the marketplace can be exercised only by a people who are operating in unity as a body, and in oneness with the Father and the Son. Anything less will be a dysfunction of the body that will lead to defeats against the enemies of our souls and of Christ.

Most of us are familiar with story of how one man, Achan, broke ranks with the rest of Israel and sinned against the Lord, and how he caused Israel to be defeated before the enemies at Ai. Let the “Joshua” – the leaders – of the church hear what the Spirit says.

Joshua 7:1, 5, 19-21

But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things

under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the LORD burned against the sons of Israel... The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men, and pursued them from the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them down on the descent, so the hearts of the people melted and became as water... Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me." So Achan answered Joshua and said, "Truly, I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it."

Just the sin of one man who breaks ranks with God amongst the people will hinder the church in its quest for fulfilment of covenant destiny, not to mention the lives that may be lost as a consequence.

Judges 7:2, 4

The LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'"... Then the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go."

The church does not need a multitude of many; the church needs a company of one in The One. Do not boast in the multitude of many, but boast in the oneness with The One, for

there the Lord will command the fullness and glory of His blessings.

A note from the author:

Thank you for reading this preview copy of 'Poiēma, God's Workmanship'. I hope you have found it worthy of your time.

In the words of Jodocus van Lodenstein, "ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbi Dei", that is, the church is reformed and always [in need of] being reformed according to the Word of God. Thus, this preview is just the beginning of the journey of the continuous reformation of the church according to the Word of God, which is a journey of the continuous renewal of the wineskins of the church for the outpouring of the new wine of the Spirit in the last days.

As new wineskins and new wine are both orthodoxy (correct doctrine) and orthopraxy (correct practice) in nature, and orthodoxy comes before orthopraxy, this book invites us to enter into conversations with God and with one another concerning "the elementary teaching about the Christ", which is the foundation of our salvation and of the church.

As it is my desire to be part of your conversations in this journey of "semper reformanda secundum verbi Dei", I hope that you will get a copy of 'Poiēma, God's Workmanship', and take this conversation with God and with one another to a deeper level.

Do write to me via email poiema@ekklesia.com.sg, as I would love to hear your thoughts, comments, and queries after reading this preview.

Thank you, and shalom.

Sincerely yours,
Samuel Tai