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Plant Kingdom

Dr. Aloumedjo Zam Thierry Farrel

Department of Business Administration, Swiss School of Business Administration, Switzerland

* Corresponding Author: **Dr. Aloumedjo Zam Thierry Farrel**

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Abstract

The aim of our study is to explore the realm of the plant world. To achieve that goal, the methodology used is based on critical literature review, phenomenology and Biblical methodology which is a method that seeks to shed light upon the historical processes which give rise to the biblical texts. It proceeds from textual criticism to redaction criticism, operating with the help of scientific criteria. The objective of our study is to answer a number of questions useful to shed more light on the influence of the plant kingdom on the physical, psychological and spiritual lives of people and ultimately to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. The interest of this work is spiritual, philosophical and social. The results of our analysis show that Trees and plants represent the structure of the universe and the spiritual and metaphysical path connecting heavens, earth and the underworld. There is a strong interconnection in between life and the need to preserve the natural world. « Plants are not only essential for the sustenance of life but also serve as a reminder of God's provision and care ».

Keywords: Yahweh; plant; natural world; life; gospel

1. Introduction

« The Plant Kingdom includes all the plants, trees, flowers and seeds we see around us »¹. The root of the word « plant » comes from "planater" meaning "fix in place" or motionless. Plant kingdom exists alongside others such as animal, human, spiritual ones.

From the Holy scriptures, it could be easily understood that an environment was made by God to accomodate Man. The said environment was constituted of flowers, shrubs, vegetables, fruits, herbs that were to be cultivated. This could also be interpreted as the place where the house of our forefathers was built, a piece of ground or other space, with ornamental, recreational and useful plants, trees, etc.

The purpose of God was then to accomodate, feed, heal and make his life pleasant. In fact, after creating man, the Bible tells us in Genesis 2 that God planted a garden in the east, in Eden, and put the man (Adam) drawn from the nature himself and in harmony with it only into the garden God planted for his sake.

Concerning specifically plants, it is revealed that on the third day of creation, God gathered the dry ground to form land. He commanded the earth to bring forth plant life with seed in itself to reproduce after its kind.

Something mysterious which deserve to draw attention is that among all the trees in the Garden of Eden, God identified two special trees which are the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God allowed Adam to eat from all the trees except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning him that death would result.

This mystery shows how deep is the mystery of vegetation to the extend of determining the life and death of human kind and by such forcing respect of all other created things and beings. This leads to a number of questionning such as

1. What is the plant kingdom ?
2. How was plant created ?
3. How is man dominating the plant kingdom ?
4. What is the physical and metaphysical meaning of the tree of good and evil ?

- 1) What is the physical and metaphysical meaning of the tree of life ?
- 2) What is the importance of plant for human life ?
- 3) What is the link between tree and spirituality ?

2. What is the Plant Kingdom?

In biology, the plant kingdom refers to a basic group of natural objects that includes all living and extinct plants compared to animal kingdom or mineral kingdom. It can be classified into different divisions. If majority of plants are sexually reproduced, it should be noted that there are also diverse methods of asexual reproduction. Plants do not have a final body form as they continue growing until they die. Land plants are classified into two major groups according to the absence or presence of vascular tissue. Most plants come from seeds but not all as seedless plants represent a small fraction of the plants in our environment.

Plant kingdom is an important topic in the Bible. *According to Holy Scripture, the earthly vegetation was created on the third day of creation (except for the thorns, which appeared later, as a reminder of man about the Fall)*².

There are over 375,000 known species of plants. Plants have been grouped together as sub-kingdoms based on their unique adaptations i.e characteristic that help an organism survive or reproduce.

Based on the previous source, it appears that the Bible mentions more than one hundred and forty different representatives of the plant world such as trees, shrubs, herbs suitable for eating, making clothes, production of incense and medicinal drugs. Plants hold a science, still unknown to us, that could reverse all human diseases.

Plant kingdom precedes human kind, they are the expression of God's beauty, life giving and generosity. It is in the same way like God requesting for Man's attention as a sign of gratitude. « Plant Kingdom is the expression of giving, elevation and beauty on Earth »³. Our Lord God asserted that the trees are witnesses of what is occurring upon the planet. Despite human's cruelty, the plant kingdom continues to testify love full of beauty, harmony, abundance, diversity, colors and aromas to harbour humanity.

3. How was Plant Created?

The Bible reveals to us that plants were created on the third day of creation, God gathered the dry ground to form land. He commanded the earth to bring forth plant life with seed in itself to reproduce after its kind.

According to scientists, land plants evolved from a group of fresh water green algae. The ancestors of land plants evolved in water. Plant propagation is the process of creating new plants. There are two types of propagation: sexual and asexual. Sexual propagation involves the union of the pollen (male) with the egg (female) to produce a seed.

Asexual propagation involves taking a part of one parent plant and causing it to regenerate itself into a new plant. The resulting new plant is genetically identical to its parent. Asexual propagation involves the vegetative parts of a plant: stems, roots, or leaves.

In the creation story, plants hold a special place as they were created on the third day. According to Genesis 1:11-13, God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. This verse brings out the importance of plants in the world, as they were among the first living things to be created. The variety and complexity

of plants reflect the creativity of the Creator, and their life cycles represent the ongoing nature of God's creation.

4. How is Man Dominating the Plant Kingdom?

Without plants as a direct or indirect source of food, medicine, oxygen, animal life in general and human especially would be not possible. Man and all other animals are in reality guests of plants on this earth. Plants are indefinitely conditioning human lives as they provide us with a variety of indispensable resources for our survival such as food, air, wood, medicine, shelter. In a nutshell, plants are the primary producers, and all other living organisms on this planet depend on plants.

Domination of plants by Man as decided by Yahweh implied that humans have a crucial role to play in the preservation of plant biodiversity and crop genetic diversity. He had to collect, store, and protect seeds and other plant materials for future use, ensuring the survival of plant species that might otherwise become extinct. This is relevant in the sense that conserving plant habitats is essential for maintaining biodiversity and ensuring ecosystem balance. It involves protecting and managing natural environment.

Unfortunately contrary to God's will of prosperity and happiness, humans out of greed and wickedness have selfishly destroyed nature. According to France's National Biodiversity Agency, the following factors have greatly contributed in Man's action in the destruction of the plant biodiversity. These include: changes in how we use natural environment, pollution, over-exploitation of natural resources, climate change and invasive exotic species. So our relationship with nature is no more a love one but is instead based on exploitation. This is contrary to Leviticus 25:43 where God wants us to apply dominion with gentleness not with brutality.

Man's dominion over plants implied indeed responsible care and management to ensure their sustainability for future generations. Therefore humans are expected by their creator to involve into planting trees, protecting endangered species, and restoring damaged ecosystems. As such, and in gratitude for God's creation we are called upon to preserve the natural world as a reflection of our love for the Creator.

5. What is the Physical and Metaphysical Meaning of the Tree of Good and Evil ?

As revealed in Genesis 2:9, it is stated that out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The said tree is symbolic of both the physical and metaphysical importance of plant kingdom.

The symbolism here lies in the fact that plants in general and tree in particular entertain a spiritual and divine connection with Yahweh and by such with His creation as shown in Deuteronomy 20:19 where the Lord recommends never to destroy trees when besieging an enemy's city.

Therefore plants provide spiritual healing and consciousness that can be turned positive or negative depending on humans' will, creating the link in between the natural and spiritual. The tree of good and evil or of free will implied the lost innocence, the entry into the realm of occultism. Plants have supernatural powers of divination. According to the US government service:

« Using psychoactive plants, shamans had the power to enter trances, combat evil spirits and disease, communicate with ancestors, prevent famine, and control weather (rain dances). Within the plant-induced visions and trances, the shaman was able to comprehend the

spirit world and the real world and maintain balance between the two. Prayers were offered to the spirits to whom these holy plants belonged. Indeed, for some, the plant itself was god or provided a way to god. ».

6. What is the Physical and Metaphysical Meaning of the Tree of Life ?

In Genesis 3:22-24, the LORD God said:

"Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever".

It appears from this verse that 02 things differentiate God and man namely first consciousness of good and evil or free will and the capacity to cause both or either at the physical and metaphysical realms. Secondly, eternal life i.e the ability to enjoy an existence that is lasting or existing forever; without end. When the Bible speaks of eternal life, it refers to a gift of God that comes only "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The trees are said to be a symbol of life itself, representing the totality of a universe in which everything is imbued with spirit. Biblical trees symbolize life, growth, and fertility, reflecting the abundant blessings that God bestows upon creation.

The tree of life is rich in symbolism as such it can refer to enlightenment, wisdom, resilience, longevity, spiritual growth, and connectivity. It represents the source of life, a force that connects all lives. The tree of life commonly symbolizes a connection to the afterlife, ancestral roots and divinity. The tree of life represents the fullness of eternal life that God wishes to lavish on humanity. It is said to represent balance and harmony in all worlds, connecting heaven, earth and the underworld. The Tree of Life is a fundamental concept and symbol that represents the structure of the universe and the spiritual and metaphysical path.

7. What is the Importance of Plant for Human Life ?

The Holy Bible stresses out the importance of plants in the ecosystem. In Deuteronomy 20:19, it is written: do not destroy the trees when laying siege to a city, for "man is the tree of the field." This command reflects an understanding of the interconnectedness of life and the need to preserve the natural world. The importance of plants for human life is obvious and multiform such as:

- Human feeding;
- Supplying food to not only humans but also nearly all terrestrial organisms;
- Breathing air;
- Providing many products for human use, such as fibers, dyes, pesticides, oils, and rubber;
- Clothing;
- Fire wood for cooking;
- Medicine for health treatment;
- Fuelling for engine energy;
- Maintaining the soil quality as when they die and decompose;
- Enabling the ecosystem and other plants to grow and thrive;
- Keeping the soil together preventing erosion;
- Providing oxygen for us and all the other animals;
- Providing us with furnitures;
- Maintaining the atmosphere;
- Fighting climate change;
- Recycling matters in the environment in biogeochemical cycles;

- Reducing carbon dioxide levels;
- Establishing the foundation of most food chains;
- Contributing to the water cycle through transpiration;
- Moderating climate by providing shade and reducing the heat island effect in urban areas;
- Plants were created for humans to study and understand nature and the wonders of God;
- Plants are used for decoration;
- Plants help to reduce air pollution and increase the temperature of the environment;
- Plants also play a role in cultural practices and traditions, with many species having symbolic meanings in different societies.

8. What is the Link Between Tree and Spirituality ?

According to Nalini Nadkarni⁴ « If we take spirituality as a sense of meaningful connection to something other than ourselves, I think that's the definition of walking through a forest, actually. » For the passionate and specialist of tree and spirituality, Trees are real connectors between Earth and sky, between the mundane and the spiritual, in many ways. In other words, « Plants are not only essential for the sustenance of life but also serve as a reminder of God's provision and care. They are a testament to the intricate design and balance within creation, providing food, shelter, and beauty ».

8.1. Biblical Approach about Trees

According to the Bible plants are a divine means to teach spiritual truths and hold powerful spiritual significance as well. We can take for this the examples of the tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden.

In addition and as we can analyse in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus usually referred to plants in his parables. Those metaphors were used in order to illustrate moral and spiritual lessons such as the parables of the fig tree, the sower, etc. The symbolism of plants is linked with prosperity, wealth and growth. Good believers are compared to trees producing good fruits with the corresponding spiritual impacts and meanings.

8.2. Trees as a bridge between heaven and earth

From day one to three, light was created first as God is the first of everything. The third day trees were created in the image of the Holy Ghost, it makes the link in between light and transformation of energy useful for feeding, strength and sustenance of the world. « *Photosynthesis and respiration in plants is a reflection of the balance and harmony within God's creation. It is a system that sustains life on Earth, providing food and oxygen for all living creatures* ».⁵

Man as steward of the Earth has the power to protect and preserve God's creation for future generations. In that sense we can refer to the parables of Jesus which often involve farming and gardening, illustrating spiritual truths concerning the relationship in between Man and plants. For instance, if physically, the balm of Gilead was used in first aid salves, to help with coughs and other respiratory ailments, and to treat small knicks, burns, and scrapes. Spiritually this medicine is said to be able to heal Israel (and sinners in general). Whereby the link established by trees in between earth and heaven or the physical and the spiritual.

9. Plants, Proverbs and Miracles

There are significant numbers of miracles and parables involving plants namely:

- The story of Aaron's rod that budded, blossomed, and produced almonds overnight, as recorded in Numbers

- 17. This miracle was a sign of God's choice of Aaron and his descendants for the priesthood.
- The miraculous feeding of the multitude, where Jesus gives thanks and breaks five loaves of barley bread to feed thousands, with leftovers collected afterward. This miracle illustrates God's ability to multiply resources and provide for His people abundantly.
- The Parable of the mustard Seed, for instance, compares the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed, which, though small, grows into a large tree. This parable teaches about the potential for growth and impact from small beginnings.
- The Parable of the Sower explains how the word of God can be received in different ways, likened to seeds falling on various types of soil. This parable encourages self-examination and the cultivation of a receptive heart for God's word to take root and flourish.

10. Who is the King of the Plant Kingdom

The identity of the king of the plant kingdom is an enigmatic problematic. Even the Bible offers few tips on the issue. However we can read in Judges 9: 8-15, it is said that the trees looking for a king went to the olive tree. This is a venerable and fruitful tree, whose oil is used for anointing leaders both spiritually and physically. With its silvery leaves and its grey cloud-like appearance at a distance, and its peculiar value and fruitfulness, would naturally make it fit to reign over other trees. But the olive tree rejected the offer. It appears to my humble understanding that true leaders like the olive tree or in its image are against pursuing leadership for selfish reasons and highlights the value of humility and generosity. We learn from it that the olive then the vine are not ambitious, are most worthy of honour and that the ambitious such as the bramble abuse their honour both to their own destruction and others. The importance of olive and wine are obvious, spiritually the olive is as a profound symbol of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, spiritual growth, call for unity and God's glory. Also olive is the symbol of peace, prosperity, beauty and the relationship between God and His people just as a good king. Olives are also an important part of the diet of God's people (II Chron. 2:10). The olive trees supply the oil that fuels the lamps. The two olive trees represent Zerubbabel and Joshua, the governor and high priest. The olive tree represents Jesus and the cross. The olive tree is one of the plants most frequently mentioned in the Bible. The olive tree represents each of us and God wants us to remember always that we are created by God with this purpose. Olive tree promotes optimal cardiovascular health through various mechanisms by reducing high cholesterol and regulating blood pressure.

As far as the vine tree is concerned, it is used to symbolise spiritual good. In John 15:5, Jesus said "I am the vine, you are the branches." The fig tree is therefore used to refer to natural and physical good. It is all about God's immeasurable love and care as well as our spiritual journey and faith in Christ. Vine is used as a symbol of transforming lives from worst to better whatever the circumstances as long as the marriage between Christ and His church or followers is maintained. Wine is also viewed as a symbol of blood, with its red color. From water to wine represent the baptism of water, of the Holy spirit and salvation through repentance. It is also the resurrection of Christ as 'dead' grapes do not decay, but instead ferment and are filled with a new 'spirit' that helps them live again. It also represents the good and bad times to be faced together.

In the dream Nebuchadnezzar had, he saw a tree that covered the whole earth. But a watcher appeared and said: "Now cut

down the tree and cut off its branches tied it until the seven sevens should end, then at that time he will be a beast". Buy what does the tree symbolizes here and what should we imply?

The tree here symbolises Nebuchadnezzar's vast empire. In the text it is stated that his power would be severed from him (Daniel 4:25). As the tree was cut down so his vast empire and his power degenerated and it emerged in the tribulation period. Hence tree could symbolise human authority, usefulness and integrity in the face of God.

11. Summary: Recap, Review and Perspective Reflection

This paper examined the nature and realities of plant kingdom as well as it explored the miracle of plants from a biblical perspective. The Plant Kingdom entails all types of plants such as trees, flowers and seeds around us. Plant kingdom exists alongside others such as mineral, animal, human and spiritual reigns. There are over 375,000 known species of plants. In the Plant kingdom, there are sub-kingdoms whose specialization is based on their unique adaptations i.e characteristic that help an organism survive or reproduce. The variety and complexity of plants reflect the creativity of the Creator, and their life cycles represent the ongoing nature of God's creation.

Plants holds a special importance in God's eyes as they were created the third day of universe creation. Life on earth is conditioned by the existence of plants that makes the world active and livable. In fact, Without plants as a source of food, medicine, oxygen, animal life in general and human would be impossible. Plants actually provide spiritual healing and consciousness and are creating the link in between the natural and spiritual. Trees represents the structure of the universe and the spiritual and metaphysical path connecting heavens, earth and the underworld. There is a strong interconnection in between life and the need to preserve the natural world. *«Plants are not only essential for the sustenance of life but also serve as a reminder of God's provision and care»*. According to the Bible, plants are a divine means to instill in us the spiritual truths and Godly powerful spiritual life impact.

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