



MACNEIL'S GUIDE FOR THE SPIRITUALLY PERPLEXED

How I unapologetically explained the Christian God to
thoughtful, foreign, Muslim and Hindu student
housemates when I was 21

Dedication: to Bhavna, Sabih, Hocine, Paula, Sausanne, Stadis and all other seekers whom showed me the beauty of other peoples and their convictions. Most of all, to Rachel for being my mother in the Lord, I look forward to seeing you again in heaven when we can talk again.

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Preface

This project grew out of a desire to be able to explain Christianity to a group of student housemates and friends that were foreign, thoughtful and from different cultures and religions in 1992. It took two years and evolved into a book and was promptly forgotten because of life's complications when my studies finished. A couple of years later I was searching my archives and found this book lurking on a computer disk. I spent a summer reviewing and updating it and unofficially "published" it on my personal webspace in 1996 to where it remained happily forgotten and untouched until Jan 2009 when the free webspace was withdrawn by the company that inherited it. I realised I needed to revisit it and add to it, there had been a lot of water under the bridge in nearly twenty years. However, life got in the way and nearly another 10 years passed before I remembered it once again. In the end, it now being 2018, I realised that the time for "revisiting and revising" beyond the removal of bad grammar and blatant falsehoods had passed with the following exceptions:

- a. Strengthening and expanding section 2.2 which deals with the relationship between science and religion; this content has proved of interest to many readers, has been presented in my academic lectures, generated a large amount of questions and criticism over the years and has formed an important part of my continuing academic research;
- b. Adding section 3.3.2, this is to clarify the difference in meaning for the term "the Law and the Prophets" between covenant theologians and Dispensationalists;
- c. Adding sections 5.4 and 5.5 for more detail on the most controversial subject of "Hell" in response to the increasing rejection of eternal punishment among Christians (including personal friends of mine);
- d. Adding some footnotes and an introductory annotation to section 6. This is a response to the increasing pluralism in our culture and

attempts to explain some statements that might otherwise seem overly dogmatic;

- e. Where appropriate, linking to my more recent academic work.

For the following positive reasons, it needed to be just what it was:

- a. It was a personal, raw, instinctive account of how I came to understand Christianity and to abuse a post-modern cliché, I just wanted to “tell the story”;
- b. It is loud, rude and uncompromising in places. I was 21 then, I am 50 now, life and experience have a way of changing your perspective, but I still admire my passion in stating it as I did.

So, rather than trying to revise and end up writing an entirely different book, I present it as it is and trust you will “eat the meat and spit out the bones” and forgive me where I seem rude. My original aim was to communicate my *experience* of God which helped me make sense of the world rather than to be politically correct and even in this imperfect form, I would rather remain true to the aim I prefaced the original draft with:

It is my heartfelt will that whether you consider yourself Christian, Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist or a member of the “new religions”, that you will find this personal account a help to you in your search for meaning and God.

Forewords

Trigger Warning

Some things I wrote will seem bigoted and uncompromising, they perhaps were. So, take this as a “trigger warning” that some of the content of the book might be offensive and the testimony (written before #MeToo) probably will be if sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll are not your thing - it might make you feel unsafe and cause you emotional distress. There is just no way of “softening up” its explicit nature.

Special note on gender terms and linguistic sexism

One of the largest changes that has occurred in society generally since the writing of this book has been the politicisation of gender and the attempt to minimise gender bias in language. This concern has found its way into academic theology and Bible translation. So, for example, instead of “Mankind” we now prefer “Humankind”; some would prefer to refer to God as a He/She rather than just He or even She; rather than Father we should perhaps prefer Other that we might not be guilty of perpetuating a patriarchal hegemony. There is also the concern that previous capitalisation conventions for generic abstract verbs such as Man should be dropped in favour of man and woman or something neutral.

As noted, this book is still 90% what it was in 1992 and is not primarily concerned with being acceptable to the theological academy or to be politically correct although I do hope it is politically *acceptable* in the sense of being argued without prejudice and will find an eagerly critical audience within the academy. Whilst I would now be far more careful to follow gender and political conventions in my academic writing, I feel it is contrived to do so with this text which basically refers to God using male pronouns (though this does not necessarily assert that I believe God is somehow male) and with a few exceptions (e.g. Mankind to Humankind) I have left things as they were. If you feel the language is too male orientated and linguistically prejudiced, please be forgiving of my 21-year-old self.

Bible quotations

Many of the quotations are from the King James Version (the “Authorised version”) which uses archaic English – apologies for that, it was the only electronic version I had at the time. Later iterations will incorporate whatever version was conveniently available and is noted where necessary. I have no particular personal preference (though I believe I have used the NIV, NASB, NRSV in places) but I would recommend the NET bible project (available online at <https://netbible.org>) which has the best textual explanatory notes I know of. Being now conversant with New Testament Greek, some of the translations or amplifications may be my own.

1 INTRODUCTION

People for many reasons search for meaning and end up at “destination God” at times during their life. Some, like me, may be depressed and disillusioned with what life offers them. Some, like me too, may be searching for a wider understanding of life and our relationship to the Universe. Some, not like me, may be religious but seek to know more about their religion. Still others, not like me either, may have grown up in a different culture and feel the need to learn about other religions. Some, like me in a previous life, may find the whole concept of “God” as ridiculous as Father Christmas and are only interested in why people would believe such stupid things. *Whatever your reason*, I have tried to prepare this book to cover several aspects of the Christian faith which I feel are fundamental to a relationship with the God of what I believe Christianity to be, having come suddenly to believe three years ago; the Appendix tells that particular, standalone story which I hope provides a context as to why I believe it is so important to encounter the divine and to discover your purpose.

The book begins with a look at the original purpose that God had for Humankind and our turning away from God (“the Fall”). I then look at the different covenants that God made with Humankind to rescue us from the curse, wrath and damnation of God *justly* required by our disobedience.

This leads into an examination of what God intended the normal Christian life to be. I examine the use and nature of spiritual gifts for the believer today as promised in the words of Jesus, His Early followers and the Old Testament. I show that God intended all Christians to be like Jesus on this Earth, to do the same things He did my means of His Holy Spirit and His spiritual gifts.

Then I look at the Christian teaching about life after death. Here I look at the Judgement scenario using the words of Jesus, the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation. I look at the concepts of Heaven and Hell as contained within the Bible.

This progresses naturally into the next chapter where I examine what I have called the *exclusivity* of the Christian religion: that Jesus claimed

He was the *only* path to the Father. In doing this I examine His warnings about false religions, false teachers, false prophets and the Antichrist. I then examine how the searcher, or the believer can distinguish between spirits of the antichrist and the Holy Spirit.

This leads into an examination of God as a triune (three part) being (much as we are body, soul and spirit) and here I show that scripture identifies Jesus Christ as divine and part of this same Godhead, that Jesus was God come in the flesh.

Finally, hoping that I have persuaded you and the Lord has drawn you to himself, I include a prayer for the non-believer which I believe will reconcile you to God.

2 Creation and the Fall of Man

2.1 A Biblical View on Creation

2.1.1 The Creation: What God intended for Humankind

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He then by the power of His Word filled the Earth with life. The pinnacle of His creation was Man (male and female) created to be God's under-ruler:

'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our own likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps over the Earth.'

Genesis 1,26

'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.'

Genesis 1,27

We were created in the image of God. We physically resemble the visible image of God. We were given the earth to develop and care for it according to the purposes of God. For this purpose, we were given the faith of God through His Spirit (His breath of life):

'And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being...Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.'

Genesis 2, v7,15

Man was made to walk and talk and walk in the Spirit of God. Man had complete security in the realm of God. He provided all His needs: physical, emotional, social and spiritual. Man was to be a creature of *faith*: he had total trust and confidence in God to provide all his needs. He did not even realise he was naked as he was so confident in God to clothe him.

Shame, such a powerful force in the world today, was alien in the garden. Man was in harmony with God:

"The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."

Genesis 2,25

The earth was filled with the spiritual harmony of the faith of God being operated by Man. The balance of life on earth was perfect. There was no death or fear, only love. The only prohibition God put on us was to remain ignorant of good and evil, that is a moral consciousness; the capacity to act against God's will, or to sin, was not possible for Man.

For Man to be God-centred and confident in God's ability to provide is what God intended. Man was to be a creature of faith and not fear. Confidence and not worry. To dwell in peace with the whole planet. To be God's under-ruler with complete authority over the whole planet, the whole Universe and even to the foot of God's throne:

"What is Man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings¹ and crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet..."

Psalms 8,4-6

This is still God's desire for Men and the essence of Christianity is the story of how God restores and increases Man's dominion.

2.1.2 The Fall

In Genesis 3 we see that Humankind *chose* to step outside the will of God and to receive a spirit and a consciousness in direct opposition to the will of God. He *chose* to adopt the values and lifestyle of the spiritual being named Satan who had set Himself up in direct opposition to God as the focus of worship in the heavens:

¹ This phrase can also be translated *than God*

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer², son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high.' Yet thou shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

Isaiah 14,12-15

Satan told Man that if He was disobedient to God then He could become His own God and would not need God anymore:

'Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And He said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree in the garden?' "And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God³, knowing good and evil." ' *Genesis 3,1-5*

By yielding to this temptation Humankind effectively changed Gods. He believed the words of Satan above the Word of God and at that instant received Satan as His de facto Lord. His spirit was perverted from one of faith and peace in the realm of God to fear and destruction in the realm of Satan. He received Satan as his Lord and became in bondage to that spirit of fear. His first reaction to God was to be afraid. Man lost His shamelessness and felt guilt before God. It was something new:

² This was Satan's title before he fell. This passage and others tell of his role as the archangel in charge of music and the worship of God in the heaven. It means "son of the morning".

³ The original King James translation is not 'You shall be like God' but 'ye shall be as gods'

"Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." '

Genesis 3,9-10

So, the instant result of Man's disobedience was a new spiritual force called fear to be released on the Earth. A new spirit was in charge of the Earth. Man handed His dominion and immense authority over the earth to Satan, the Destroyer, the Accuser⁴ with the result that violence, destruction, hatred, lies and sin came into the world. Man was removed from the immediate physical presence of God:

"Then 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." - therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.'

Genesis 3,22-23

The marvellous relationship of trust between Man and God had gone. God could not trust Man to obey Him. Satan worked His highest work: death on Humankind. God had intended to have Man to eat of the tree of life and to be an immortal eternal being in constant fellowship with Him.

Humankind, by its choice to follow Satan, had condemned itself to death. Satan had succeeded in usurping the Earth from God's control and in corrupting the pinnacle of God's creation. God was left outside authority on Earth: He had given the Earth to Man and Humankind had given it to Satan.

As a moral, just and righteous God He had to accept Man's choice even though it was outside His will. God remained a spectator of life on earth. There was no longer a legal basis for Him to rule over the Earth.

⁴ Satan means these things, cf. John 8,44 and 10,10.

Man used His authority on Earth to give the dominion which God had given Him to Satan.

He had rejected the authority He had over the planet through God and came under Satan's authority. It was only through the searching for God's heart by one man that saved the whole of Creation from obliteration. God as the sovereign (supreme) power of the Universe had decided to destroy all His creation when the wickedness of Man had come to full measure:

"Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." "

Genesis 6,5-8

However, because of the God-fearing nature of one man, Noah, God spared complete obliteration and promised to re-establish a relationship with Humankind:

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD⁵...And behold, I Myself am bringing the flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you..." "

Genesis 6,8,17-18

It is important to realise that up to God's promise to Noah that it was not possible for God to have any part in the affairs of Man on Earth. He could neither help nor hinder unless Man came to Him in repentance

⁵ The fact Noah found *grace* (undeserved favour) suggests that he was not sinless but nevertheless had a heart that wanted to know God.

for his sin. This was the attitude of Noah, He was a God-fearing Man who chose to walk in the ways of God:

'But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD...Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.'

Genesis 6,8-9

As a result of this one man yielding to God, it was possible for the LORD⁶ to begin the establishment of His plan of salvation for Humankind from death and eternal damnation. That He had a plan was evident right from the moment Man fell and brought God's curse on the Earth. Right in the midst of His anger there was mercy triumphing over righteous judgement. It was God's mercy and not Man's righteousness that saved Man:

'So the LORD God said to the serpent..."I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel."'

Genesis 3,14-15

Here God is saying that He was prepared to come to Earth in the form of a Man⁷ to redeem them and defeat the work of Satan. He was revealing that He had foreseen Man's Fall but loved Humankind so much that He had prepared a plan of redemption rather than not create Man with free will.

He had said it in such a way that Satan could not understand it and God could destroy Him while saving Man. This plan of redemption was

⁶ The use of the word LORD with relation to God follows a linguistic tradition that translates the original Hebrew consonants YHWH used to indicate God's personal name (sometimes transliterated as "Jehovah" or "Yahweh"). This is distinct from the biblical use of Lord (without the capitalisation) which means "ruler".

⁷ "The Seed" of the woman is explained in the New Testament to be Jesus: 'Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made...who is Christ.' (Galatians 3,16)

comprehensive, and he triumphed over all those whom had sided with Satan amongst the heavenly beings:

"He (Jesus) was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached⁸ to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah..."

1 Peter 3,19

The sacrifice was to be God Himself in the form of a Man. That Man was Jesus. This concept of Jesus as God features in later chapters at various points but the chapter on the triune nature of God examines a large chunk of the biblical evidence for this statement.

2.2 The Historical and Scientific Accuracy of the Creation Record

2.2.1 Evolutionism and Creation “Science”

Much effort is devoted by anti-Christian groups to discrediting the Creation record on the basis of scientific theories. Much contrary effort has been made by "Creation Scientists" to assert the historicity of the biblical record. In this section I examine what I believe to be the rather contrived debate and bigoted positions of both groups. I propose that even a minimal understanding of what the process of science *should* be as proposed by mainstream philosophers of science shows that factional positions are a hindrance to real scientific process.

The first point that I would like to make is that it is important to remember that the Creation as described in Genesis is a general historical outline and not a detailed scientific record:

⁸ “Preached” here does not mean preach as in preach the gospel of salvation but to announce a decree of victory forcefully and with passion.

'This is the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day⁹ that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens...'

Genesis 2,4

The basic error that these secular humanist¹⁰ thinkers and many religious people make is essentially a category one. They misinterpret what Genesis chapters 1-2 articulates. It is an understandable mistake in the sense that on merit of the grammatical structure alone linguists are fascinated with these two chapters of Genesis to the point of whole books have been devoted to its analysis. It is the only piece of literature that can be translated word for word into every language in the world.

Bad science attempts to rationalise creationist theologies or humanist philosophy aimed at removing God from any role in the life of the Universe and Man. All scientific objectivity or at least a willingness to assess and weigh the evidence, is jettisoned so often when scientists talk as evolutionists and creationists.

Numerous groups and scientists (including secular authorities) have pointed out that what the Bible *actually* says. The Bible talks about there being *generations* of Creation of the Earth before *any* life was on it at all (Genesis 2,4) and that it had an existence "void and formless"¹¹; what is often categorised as "creation" was actually a *re-creation* of life on Earth.

⁹ The Hebrew word "day" can mean "epoch", a time period where something particular happens, it is not just a 24-hour period.

¹⁰ "Secular" and "humanist" are not necessarily conjoined. Humanism, in its modern tradition, has little or no place for God but many early humanists considered themselves reforming Christians reacting against the moral bankruptcy of the papacy and the notion of Christian humanist is not completely absent even today. Secular thinkers on the other hand, exclude God or consider religion a purely private matter with no bearing on society. This position emerged from some of the philosophical traditions of the Enlightenment.

¹¹ This phrase is particularly significant as it implies it was void because of judgement. There is a pre-Adamic civilisation between Gen 1:1 and 1:2 of which oblique references are made in passages in the Hebrew scriptures.

God also commanded *the earth* to bring forth life. He did not manufacture *every* creature by a direct spiritual command as He did with light¹². To illustrate this point, consider the following two verses from Genesis:

"Then God said, "*Let there be light*"; and there was light.'

Genesis 1,3

"Then God said, "*Let the earth* bring forth the living creature according to its kind..."'

Genesis 1,24

Dogmatic assertions are seldom scientific even if scientists make them and particularly when theologians make them trying to sound scientific. This always needs to be borne in mind before we decide on the veracity of any proposition or “scientific” theory. I am myself a scientist: an electronic engineer. I have two electronic engineering degrees, I ran an Electronics business and trained to be a science teacher in senior schools. Having been a research scientist I understand that the boundaries of scientific knowledge are constantly increasing leading to a modification of theories and the abandonment of others. What is considered "fact" and "truth" is subject to change.

I am no biologist or anthropologist but I believe this is also true in the area of Evolutionary science. A significant number of top secular biologists have been publishing challenges to the Evolution paradigm as have some information scientists and logicians (who deal with probability of events). The major *scientific* problem with "evolution as fact" is the almost complete lack of positive evidence: the archaeological evidence actually suggests a cataclysm consistent with a major flood (as found in every

¹² In fact, according to Einstein's famous equation, $E=mc^2$, to create light would have been enough. Einstein with his General Relativity said that light was a form of energy that under certain conditions would change directly to mass or vice versa. Thus, the atomic bomb uses a small amount of mass and converts it to an astonishingly large amount of energy

creation mythology) and transitional fossils are almost completely absent¹³ as a category.

The *philosophical* problem is that evolution is a "theory" only in the sense that evolutionists refuse to accept any alternative as a presupposition (see below) and not because of empirical evidence. At best it is a qualitative hypothesis or a collection of alternative hypotheses. There are many "theories" of evolution. None have been experimentally verified and no evidence has been produced that has survived the scrutiny of fellow scientists who had not already made up their mind in advance or think they *have* to believe evolution because it is the best system we have, warts and all – this is the *naturalist* presupposition, the *de facto* paradigm of the modern academy.

This is despite that there have been many hoaxes and “missing links” found and the most astonishing extrapolations made that just do not stand up to scientific scrutiny¹⁴. The most famous "missing link" was *Pittdown Man* which was the subject of over five hundred doctorates. It was later proved to be a fraud probably propagated by an Oxford professor. It appears you need as much irrational "faith" to believe evolution is fact as to believe in a God! It has been said that you need as much faith to believe some of the “theories” (actually non-scientific imaginative speculations with no hope of verification) of physicists regarding the pre-Big Bang universe (or non-Universe) as you need to believe in God.

¹³ Famous palaeontologist and evolutionist George G. Simpson; wrote: "The regular lack of transitional fossils is not confined to primates alone but is an almost universal phenomenon." In a similar vein, "The lack of transitional series cannot be explained as being due to the scarcity of material. The deficiencies are real; they will never be filled" (Nilsson, N. Heribert) and "To the unprejudiced, the fossil record of plants is in favor of special creation" (Corner, E.J.H., Contemporary Botanical Thought).

¹⁴ One of the most famous missing links, "LUCY" has more plaster of paris than actual bone. Another was constructed from a tooth that was later found to belong to a wild pig. Many Victorian finds were lately found to be hoaxes with people making their living in leading people on expeditions that they had contrived.

It is important to realise Darwin never *proved* evolution, the most his work showed was that *adaptation* within a species was possible. This is borne out by studies since. Where Darwin made his error was/is a common problem among research scientists who looking for universal patterns use data for a particular observable phenomenon to *extrapolate* the unknown phenomena on the basis of induction or analogy.

In other words, you make the assumption, only valid for your data, that the same scientific laws and patterns hold for *all* data, overlooking critical variables that render it disanalogous. Darwinists, although not so much Darwin himself¹⁵, made the unjustifiable assumption that his data showed that one species could evolve into another.

It was right for Darwin to call his book *On the Origin of Species*. It is a *hypothesis* on the Origin of Species, implying it was a first step to understanding the physical phenomena. The briefest look at a Biology text book, however, shows how evolution is taken as *proven* when it is far from so.

Good researchers will always test their extrapolations with new experimental or research data and good science hesitates to call anything a "Law" these days. This has become the best scientific practice simply because philosophers of science, often researchers themselves, point to the fact most of what we call "Laws" are only true within certain predefined limits.

Thus, Newton's Laws are superseded by Einstein's theories of relativity even though some relativistic effects have been experimentally verified with far more rigour than Newton's Laws. They only explain reality within a fixed reference and it might be argued that Newtonian physics is a "limiting case" of relativity. The "Laws" Newton thought were universal are

¹⁵ Some species that he studied he concluded that natural selection was not viable. Bertrand Russel in his "History of Western Philosophy" makes the point that Darwin disliked the movement that claimed to be based upon his work.

in fact not universal. Darwin's frame of reference, his original data, only shows that species can adapt *not* evolve.

Few pupils of science before 'A' level even examine that science has not found all the answers but is still developing. The National Curriculum Science, in response to criticisms from educationalists and philosophers of Science have this "nature of science" included but the emphasis is still very much on children acquiring "facts" rather than seeing Science as a process.

It is perhaps not surprising then that if we educate scientists badly in relation to the processes and philosophy of science that we end up with violently religious evolutionists and creationists who publicly slander each other. It is surely fundamentally wrong for a scientist to start from the conclusion he wants and then work back to try and find evidence to support your prejudice. I was shocked as a scientist to see the standard of research in degree level projects in Psychology when I returned to study after a long break and shared a house with some undergraduate students. There was no examination of possible problems with data and collection methodologies or critical examination of the reliability of the data.

Good scientists, whether studying evolution, cosmology or whatever, should be understanding that we are on a journey *together* and not in opposition to each other. It is most objectionable to me that I should have to jump into the Creationist or Evolutionist camp before I begin research. It is just plain bad science.

I personally find it wonderful as an engineer to see how much of our engineering is moving towards resembling what we see in nature. That the structures and patterns and even the patterns in materials used to make us, e.g. composites¹⁶, are being duplicated by man to produce the most highly efficient technology.

Computer architecture is moving toward the area of "neural networks" that attempt to duplicate the pattern of the human brain i.e. these

¹⁶ Bone is a great example. If it was solid, it would be heavy and brittle. The flexible marrow gives it additional durability and flexibility. Alloying is another similar process found in nature.

machines learn in the sense we do. Many of the problems people have experienced in their design is that the simplest processes that we take for granted such as spatial recognition are incredibly difficult to duplicate to get a computer to do it.

People who attempt to use science to argue against the God of the Bible can never succeed because science can only ever tell you *how* a phenomena can be explained in relation to our understanding of the Universe. It can never tell you *why* the Universe is as it is. We do see the emergence of radical atheist scientists with a fundamentalist agenda¹⁷ who claim that only questions that science can answer are worth asking or are even valid to ask (the metaphysical “why” is thus dismissed before consideration), they have the designation “scientific”, effectively a humanist religion.

The most such people can do is tear to pieces people's religious prejudices based on misinterpretation of the Bible or of natural phenomena that was ascribed to some metaphysical source. I certainly believe myth-busting and unravelling superstitions is a valid application of science. There is nothing worse than people being held captive to their own fears or evil domination through ignorance or religious indoctrination. However, it is another thing all together to then make science or any other human discipline a vehicle for proving secular humanism or creationism. Human endeavour can never *prove* anything. It can only partially explain the physical and social principles that govern our existence.

¹⁷ Prof Richard Dawkins being the most famous has moved from academic respectability and careful argument into unsightly atheist fundamentalism, embarrassing many thinking atheists on the way. However, recently he lamented the decline of Christianity because the void left within society was being filled by radical Islam, “to my knowledge there are no Christian suicide bombers”.

2.2.2 A Biblical View of Science¹⁸

In summary, I would say that the process of science is a valuable aid to our understanding of the physical universe and a source of power for the human being to take control of the Universe as Genesis 1, 24-26 explicitly stated it was God's original purpose for Humankind¹⁹. It is not a vehicle for humanism or creationism, it is a vehicle for discovery. Good scientific method always draws conclusions within its frame of reference and cannot extrapolate to determine "universal truth".

It is important to realise that the Bible as a whole is primarily a historical, narrative record of the nation of Israel and not a scientific dissertation. The metaphysical aspects and the revelation of God and His Creation certainly *do* contain some scientific revelations²⁰ within the text but that is not the purpose of the Bible. The Bible is a revelation of the character and nature of God and His desire towards Men.

The Bible is useful to science in that it can provide a reference, when correctly used, to measure scientific progress by. God states in His Word that there *are* physical processes which govern our Universe. Science finds out what these are.

¹⁸ My undergraduate BD thesis completed in 2011 examines the relationship between Science and Religion and can be found here:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325807396_Are_Science_and_Theology_competing_views_of_reality. This relationship remains part of my current PhD studies.

¹⁹ This is sometimes referred to as the "cultural mandate" or the "dominion mandate". This was the subject of my Masters' thesis in 2016 and can be found here:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325807525_Dominion_Theology_-_Its_origin_development_and_place_in_Christian_thinking

²⁰ Certain scientific revelations only discovered over the last 200 years (the hydrological cycle, springs at the bottom of the sea, that pure gold is transparent, the nature of the moon) were all stated as historical facts of God's design in the Bible and have been validated by Man's investigation.

For example, Setterfield and Norman²¹ produced a cosmological study on the decay of the speed of light in 1987. It was published in association with the prestigious *Stanford Research Institute* that produces papers of the highest quality. Their work had the startling conclusion that the age of the Universe was only 10000 years old because scientists had always assumed the speed of light was a fundamental constant of the Universe. Their work had also apparently “solved” some of the anomalies that physicists had noted during this century. They produced a "doomsday" scenario for the Universe which gives slightly over 1000 years remaining. Other scientists have challenged their work on a scientific basis and a helpful dialogue was begun to move towards a fuller understanding. The authors were the first to admit that there remained further work to be done. However, others have just rubbished the work based on prejudice, which is no criticism at all – as a wise man said, “if what I am saying is a grotesque perversion, it should be easy to refute”. The fact that so many “scientists” refuse on principle to engage with evidence-based work such as this or with creationist objections to evolutionary theory (even if their alternative is weak) is *bad* science.

We can disagree in the name of scientific progress. For example, six-day creationism can be challenged constructively from an orthodox Christian perspective, Benny Hinn in his study of demonology, provides a view of the age of the earth that requires no compression of the timeline from millions to thousands of years as required notably by some “fundamentalist” 6-day creationists. The “gap” theory as it is known, of which I happen to support, suggests that there is an unspecified gap between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2 in which there was another human pre-Adamic civilisation. The “darkness on the face of the deep” seems

²¹ The paper evoked enormous controversy and SRI revoked its endorsement for a time even though the paper had been peer-reviewed, his website is here: <http://setterfield.org/GSRresearchpapers.html>

theologically inconsistent with a God in whom “there is no darkness at all” and the Hebrew implies the darkness resulted from a judgement²².

So, we can see that both Setterfield, Norman and Hinn’s *opposing* positions may both be considered *consistent* with the Bible pending further investigation and it would be a mistake to then stop the research or for people to hold it up a “scientific proof” that the Bible is true, false or contradictory which happens all too often. Paradoxical statements or opposing evidence does not necessarily falsify a hypothesis – our understanding of the process may be incomplete; additional data may help us unravel the paradox. One theologian with experience of working within science said the scientist must be free to follow the evidence no matter how heretical on first sight it might seem. However, honest science will eventually always testify for God rather than against God - Galileo once wrote that “God has written two bibles, one the Scriptures and the other the laws of nature”; what science properly done will show is that the physically observable phenomena in the Universe, as we at present understand them, has consistent parallels in the historical and prophetic Biblical scenarios.

2.2.3 Historical Perspectives

The anti-religious fervour of evolutionists is perhaps understandable in the historical context. The medieval papacy stood opposed on a dogmatic doctrinal basis to much that was emerging from within the scientific community even when the scientists were priests or were working closely with the patronage of the local Church. The pioneering work of Copernicus had already been accepted within the influential French Catholic scientific community under the oversight of Mersenne, the local priest (himself a scientist) and it was an acute embarrassment when after the trial of Galileo, a papal declaration labelled the view as heretical. Through the ages,

²² This interpretation was also supported by the respected Bible teacher, Derek Prince who also had the distinction of being one of the youngest men to be admitted to academia at Oxford as a philosopher before his conversion. He was a particularly rigorous and systematic teacher.

scientists (often called “natural philosophers” because they studied the natural world) were labelled as heretics, excommunicated or even burned at the stake for simply presenting an alternative view of reality.

There is seldom anything more likely to alienate open-minded scientists than religious bigotry on the part of the Church. What makes it all the more bigoted is that many of the greatest scientists, Newton, Maxwell, Faraday and Galileo were noted for their belief in the God of monotheism, sometimes explicitly Christian. Einstein reacted strongly to those who suggested that he was disproving the existence of God by showing a physical explanation for phenomena. Newton declared "I think God's thoughts after Him" and Einstein that "God does not play dice"²³. Einstein was said to sit with a Bible and meditate on what He would need to do to create if he was God. These two men shaped our understanding of the Universe. What they were really saying was that God knew what He was doing when He said, "Let there be....". He *is* the source of those mathematical equations that describe the Universe. He *designed* the Universe in line with the physical principles that we are discovering more and more deeply.

The greatest revolution in Physics that occurred on the back of Einstein's description of the photoelectric effect was Quantum physics which radically reshaped our understanding of the nature of reality. Quantum physics undoubtedly has metaphysical applications but here is not the place to go into an advanced discussion of this type but the reader is referred to the work of John Polkinghorne who as a quantum physicist and ordained minister has produced some of the best work on this subject,

²³ A recent biography (well, it was in 1993!) of Einstein's life (*Einstein: A Life in Science, White and Gribbin*) claims that Einstein was an atheist but, as in other biographies of theirs I have read, it seems a predisposition of their own to set in fundamental opposition science and religion. While not an evangelical Christian or practicing Jew, Einstein retained a place in his thinking for God as some of his own reflections reveal. He decided as a young man that he would seek to understand the Universe by physical laws rather than metaphysical assumptions. In this sense, some try to claim he was an atheist, but they miss the point, he was just being a good scientist!

critiquing very effectively those who assert that the quantum world is more akin to the far Eastern mystical thought of Hinduism and Buddhism²⁴.

2.2.4 Intelligent Design – is it scientific?

A phrase that has acquired a degree of notoriety in the tabloid debate between science and religion in the public domain (in 1992!) is that of “intelligent design”. Speaking as an engineer, I believe a powerful case can be made that the idea you can have a sophisticated device resulting from random events is intuitively ridiculous. Intelligence is always an input into any design as basic information theory tells us and if there is any analogy to be had that does not succumb to the fallacy of composition²⁵, we could intuitively assume the universe has a designer. So, analysis would seem to have us conclude that “Intelligent” design is a philosophical proposition rather than a scientific one. It is not “testable” as a hypothesis and so is not “scientific”. It is rather a proposition seeking to be axiomatic (“self-evident”). Thus, the real philosophical question that needs examination is that when is it reasonable to claim a proposition is self-evident?

The concept of self-evidency has a long and disputed history in the philosophy of knowledge (epistemology). The “self-evidency” test is one of

²⁴ This was popularised in the work of physicist Fritjof Capra in the 1970s in his book *The Tao of Physics*, his website is <http://www.fritjofcapra.net/about/>. Polkinghorne critiques his view of quantum physics effectively describing it based on “vague and eclectic linguistic parallels”.

²⁵ This is a logical fallacy argued to be present in the so-called cosmological argument for the existence of God of which “intelligent design” is often associated with. Bertrand Russell in his famous radio debate with F.C. Copleston (1948) accused Copleston of this fallacy – “it is not logically necessary for the human race to have a mother because individual human beings have mothers – it is a different logical sphere” (my paraphrase). Put another way, we can argue that individual events within the universe are all “caused” or contingent because our natural science can observe and predict these events as repeatable but that the Universe itself is logically necessary (“uncaused”) because those same events cannot occur in the absence of the universe. Whether or not this is conclusive, is, I believe, an open question because the validity of modal logic itself (the branch of logic that deals with necessity) was challenged and rejected by Quine. We also have an ontological problem in the fact we really are here. Quine I believe, would assert Russell is claiming too much for his argument without understanding its presuppositions and limitations, he has only tentatively “won”. The reader is referred to a degree in philosophy!

the principles of philosophical “foundationalism” which, is arguably still the *de facto* epistemological system of modern scientific philosophy. Although substantially modified from “classical” foundationalism, it is still employed by most scientific and philosophical systems but has been shown to be lacking in rigour as a system of knowledge. On a foundationalist basis, there is no more support for an atheistic view of the world than for a religious view, both will assert some propositions are self-evident from the viewpoint of the proposer, i.e. they require no validating evidence. It has been argued that “basic beliefs”²⁶ of a religious nature have no less support than “scientific” basic beliefs of a non-religious kind²⁷. In fact, as philosopher of science Karl Popper once observed, the epistemological pillars of science seem to be no stronger in any fundamental sense than metaphysical ones though Popper was an ardent proponent of the wider social implications of the scientific worldview, viewing dogma of any kind an enemy of freedom and the free society.

Thus, though I, as an engineer may find the idea of sophisticated order from a random system without intelligence as an input ridiculous, I still have to admit there is a philosophical vulnerability in my belief, I cannot “prove” it in an absolute sense but certainly have an epistemological liberty to assert it as incorrigible and having a quality of a basic, self-justifying belief and yet being open to the possibility that I may be in error. It seems that epistemological openness is required and humility on both sides.

It was because of bigotry on the humanist side that the father of modern genetics, Mendel, a contemporary of Darwin, who first challenged

²⁶ A “basic” belief is one which requires no evidence (or would be considered self-evidential, axiomatic) or one which requires no external reference.

²⁷ The assault on classical foundationalism was led by philosopher Alvin Plantinga and led to a movement that became known as “reformed epistemology”. The movement proved controversial but Plantinga continued to work defending the rationality of religious belief by developing with extreme rigour over the next 10 years the notion of “warrant” (the property that allows you to justifiably turn mere belief into knowledge) that began in his work on reformed epistemology. He is considered one of the finest philosophers of religion and logic of the 20th century, well respected within philosophy generally. He is one of two Christian (but very different) philosophers that are the focus of my PhD, the other being Cornelius Van Til.

the movement started by *Origin of Species* had his work suppressed. It was seen to add weight to the anti-evolution case. The humanistic and radical spirit of the times had gained strength from the fact that they saw the religious doctrines, often unbiblical and nothing more than fables, challenged and “disproved” by the scientific advances perceived in Darwinism. At last, the stranglehold of the Church on intellectual and social development that religious minds have so often stood against, was beginning to be loosed. Against this backdrop, Mendel's work had to wait several years for verification and the serious scientific deficiencies of Darwinism to be highlighted. This led to many alternative models of evolution and the debate remains to this day, despite the insistence of some epistemologists that “evolution is taken as read by biologists” who then tag on the end of the sentence “but not universally accepted”, then noting dissenting biologists (not just creationists).

Darwin's work *was* revolutionary, and it *was* valuable scientific progress, but it cannot be used to substantiate the claims of evolution as *fact*. Many seized on Darwin's work, or what they believed his work said, as *proof* that a non-religious worldview was the right one, and that Men were responsible for their own destiny and that the gods of religions, according to Karl Marx, were an invention to keep people in economic subjection or following Freud were reflections of our primal psychology. Following the paleo-positivists²⁸ like Comte that were inspired by Darwin, evolving men were responsible to clear the slums and build houses. Men were responsible to educate their children to better things. It was no longer the case to just

²⁸ To distinguish them from the “logical positivists” (that emerged almost a century later who were often just called “positivists”) that burst on to the philosophical scene during the 1930s and who reigned over most of the academy (both humanities and the sciences) for 25 years. Early logical positivists such as Adolf Carnap nodded his head to the first positivists and their social vision but it was the “logical” part of the term that formed the basis of the latter movement, Carnap considered there were certain basic logical relations in language, the totality of which describes the world it reflects (Carnap, rejecting centuries of philosophical orthodoxy, forcefully rejected Kant and Hume, who had argued that we perceive the effects of reality only and socially construct our understanding of ultimate reality, we can never really *know* that reality in itself). It is the obfuscation of “normal language” that science needs to overcome for science to reach its full salvific potential for human civilisation and to which Carnap considered the task of philosophy.

accept things as they are because the body claiming to be the representative of God says so.

The scientific approach of this period was perceived as having salvific qualities for humanity. This mythological approach to science found full expression in the “scientific socialist states” of 20th century Communism and the logical positivist movement who launched their manifesto “the scientific worldview” in the 1930s and who reigned over most of the academy (both humanities and the sciences) for 25 years. However, in contrast to the promised utopia, Marxism was particularly bloody in its legacy of revolution and logical positivism retreated as its dogmatism was exposed during the 1960s - it was paradoxically a metaphysical position that wanted to reject all *classical* metaphysics²⁹. However, the spirit of these two

²⁹ The philosopher of science and logic W.V. Quine’s essay *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* (1951) was generally considered to undermine the central theses of logical empiricism, the analytic-synthetic distinction (Quine asserted it was pragmatic rather than logical, a matter of degree). Additionally, it is worth noting that Wittgenstein, who’s verification principle was a founding principle of logical empiricism, also later opposed its dogmatic use declaring there was a whole class of epistemologically defensible propositions about which the natural world could tell us nothing. These criticisms eventually proved its unravelling as the dominant philosophical idea within analytic philosophy of the 20th century, though the movement continues to exert a strong influence on present day *naturalism* which asserts that any supernatural explanation of phenomena is excluded on principle as non-scientific. Quine was noted for applying naturalism to both epistemology and metaphysics with extreme rigour. Epistemology was no longer a branch of philosophy, but he considered it a subset of psychological science because all our knowledge must come to us through sensory stimulation. Similarly, for metaphysics, Quine takes seriously the idea that “it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy (including any religious

lives on in “critical theory” and “naturalism” that seeks to explain the world excluding on principle any supernatural element; it must be said that naturalism is the *de facto* paradigm of the modern academy much as Catholicism dominated the medieval academy.

There will always be those who are rigidly dogmatic (if you disagree) or “principled” (if you agree) on both sides of the argument but we need to inhabit the epistemological middle ground with openness and humility. The challenge for the Christian is not to dismiss those other Christians that believe in a form of evolution that is not Darwinian but is not creationist in the classical sense. There needs to be an honest dialogue and recognition that people can be believers but have doctrinal differences with certain issues. These may even be severe but if we believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and is now our risen Lord, we can co-exist. Rational objections need to be explored but should not overturn spiritual beliefs which have as much intellectual credibility as those based on natural science and empirical data.

view), that reality is to be identified and described” (1981, *Theories and Things*, 21). A consequence is that *our* best theory of the world tells us as much as we know about reality.

This “best theory of the world” is the Quinian analogue of metaphysics with Quine asserting it is composed of knowledge achieved through science itself. Quine was rejecting traditional metaphysics but was nevertheless still interested in providing some higher-level account of reality to show how the sciences communicate reality to us *as a whole*. He was prepared to accept the logical circularity implicit in this, seeing it as unavoidable. This is perhaps why Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga describes naturalism as “self-defeating” and his critique has found resonance within the wider philosophical community. This is a profoundly complex discussion about the status of knowledge and will be considered in my PhD thesis which will be book III in my trilogy!

2.2.5 Summary

What I have endeavoured to show is that:

1. There is not a fundamental contradiction between science and a biblical faith. There has always been a fundamental contradiction between religious bigotry and prejudice on either side with reasoned argument arising from valid scientific research. This is true of both creationists and evolutionists who have attempted to use incomplete work to prove they are right;
2. Science is dynamic. There is no such thing as permanent and absolute scientific truth. Good science is a process of discovery and is not based on unchangeable paradigms;
3. All science is valuable towards a better understanding of the world we live in and from a biblical perspective is a tool given by God to fulfil his original commissioning to Man;
4. The Bible is not a scientific textbook and should not be treated as such. However, it can be used as a reference to relate scientific truth to the historical and prophetic witness.

3 GOD and HIS COVENANTS with HUMANKIND

In this chapter I look at the way God negotiated Himself back in to the affairs of men and life on earth. To some readers this might seem a scandalous proposition that God had to *negotiate* – surely God as God owns it all and can do with it as He pleases? Now this is also true – God indeed owns it all, but He *chose* to engage with His creation rather than wipe it out and start again which from hints within the first two verses and elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures, had *already* happened with a previous pre-Adamic race. There is vast possibility for disagreement and argument here between believers and indeed there has been, because this necessarily has to be a theological inference rather than an explicit statement one way or the other in the scriptures. However, the basic outline³⁰ offered here is meant to demonstrate that this proposition that God negotiates and *progressively* brings His perfect will back into the Earth and re-establishes His government in the Earth is a legitimate one - by finding men that were willing to listen to God and to be obedient to Him, God was able to redeem Humankind from Satan and bring the Earth back into His dominion.

3.1 God's Covenant with Noah

God's covenant with Noah was a covenant where God gave Humankind some of the dominion over creation that Man had given to Satan. However, it was no longer a spiritually based relationship of love and co-operation where Man had an ability to communicate and order God's creation but had domination as its method.

Fear was the new spirit in charge of the earth and God gave Man some dominion with that spiritual power. He was given the ability to harness that spiritual power so that he could tame the rebellion that he had released into the Earth by giving his dominion to Satan:

³⁰ Many differing accounts of the progress of “redemption history” as this process is often called are possible – some far more granular and others coarser. Some deny separate covenants and prefer to assert there is just one with different expressions in history – one way or another; however we try and explain it, the simple point made here is that God knew what he/she was doing.

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear *of you* and the dread *of you* shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand they are delivered..." (emphases added)

Genesis 9,1-2

God also gave Man the right to eat the rest of creation for food. Before that, Man had been strictly fruitarian.³¹ The only prohibition now placed on Man was not to eat meat with the blood in it. God elevated the position of blood:³²

"But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely the blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man...Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man."

Genesis 9,4-6

The next things God said in this covenant were the most important. They were a promise on God's part that He would never again destroy Man off the face of the Earth by flooding it. This seen in conjunction with Noah's penitence, was God's guarantee that no matter how bad the situation on Earth became, He would always be seeking the salvation of Men:

"And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth."

Genesis 9,11

³¹ God gave them the fruit of the trees to eat, Genesis 1,29

³² God was probably making a prophetic statement here. It was the blood of Jesus that redeemed Mankind.

It was only because of Noah's spiritual righteousness that came through repentance that God could have intervened in the affairs of Men with this covenant. The rest of humanity perished because they gave themselves over to unrighteousness and so voluntarily became the property of Satan.

God was able, because of Noah's desire for God, even though Noah was also under the curse, to have mercy on him and establish a covenant of grace:

And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD said in his heart, "I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night will not cease." "

Genesis 8,20-22

Thus, God's covenant with Noah was reaffirming God's love for *all* Humankind and the establishment of a new order of authority on the Earth. Noah's obedience allowed God to put in motion the plan of salvation that would once again mean that He would have Men to share His glory with Him. God had a Father heart that longed to have children to share with. His covenant with Noah was the beginning of his adoption of the human-race once again.

3.2 God's Covenant with Abraham

As far as God's dealings with fallen man are concerned the role of Abraham was extremely important. It was because of Abraham's absolute obedience to God that God was irrevocably able to establish the legal basis for sending His Son into the world.

God's promises to Abraham meant that there was now a way for God to legitimately show mercy to men in their social and political setting

for the first time since God had cursed the Earth.³³ The land became fruitful under Abraham for Abraham was blessed in all that He did. He was politically, economically and socially prosperous. He was a well-known local figure who employed many people³⁴.

We see God's desire to remove Man from the severity of the original curse all the way back in what He said to the serpent after Man had fallen. By what He said to Abraham this was made possible. God promised that through him all nations would be blessed:

'Now the LORD had said to Abram..."I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." '

Genesis 12,2-3

"I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants³⁵ after you."

Genesis 17,6-7

The story of Abraham and his son Isaac parallels the crucifixion:

³³ "Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." ' (Genesis 3,17-19)

³⁴ Abraham had many herdsmen to care for his cattle. The number of cattle was an indication of how wealthy he was. He also fought with Kings (Genesis 14) and so must have had a very large political influence.

³⁵ The literal Hebrew is singular. Paul makes the point in Galatians 3,16 that God was in fact referring to the redemptive work of Christ. God is referring to the children of faith in both literal and spiritual Israel that would become his children.

'But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" and he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God Himself will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." And the two of them went together. Then they went to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. '

Genesis 22,8-10

Abraham gave his only son to God so God could give his only Son to Man. Compare the emphasis that God placed on Abraham's *only* son and the description that God gives:

But the Angel of the LORD called to him..."Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

Genesis 22,10-12

'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'

John 3,16

It was the power of the covenant that God made with Abraham that obligated God to send His Son.

His human instinct must have wanted to grab his son in his arms and run in the opposite direction. However, he had learnt his earlier lessons in the thirty years he had procrastinated and disobeyed God's call on him.³⁶

³⁶ The appearance of God to Abraham in Genesis 17 was a rebuke. God had at first spoken to him when he was 70. He waited five years until his father died before leaving Babylon. He did not leave all his brethren behind but took Lot. He had a child by Hagar and God did not speak to him for 15 years. It was only when he separated himself from Lot and Hagar left the household, that God blessed him with Isaac and showed him the land that was to be his.

He had learnt that by committing his way to God, he would be delivered from every situation. Now he trusted that what God had promised, He would perform.

Now look again at the similarities with the struggle Christ had with His will in Gethsemane:

'And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if it is your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood³⁷ falling down on the ground.'

Luke 22,41-44

His heart was literally wrenched as much as it could be, but He was obligated to go through with the crucifixion because Abraham on behalf of Humankind was prepared to sacrifice his only Son. Be of no mistake, Christ did not relish the prospect of the cross but was prepared to go through with it for the sake of the covenant between Abraham and God.

The *book of Hebrews* in the New Testament describes that Jesus was made perfect by adopting the same attitude of faith in God to deliver him from the suffering of Gethsemane:

"...he offered up loud prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him..."

Hebrews 5, 7-9

He knew His Father and how much love His Father had for humanity. It had been made a contract with Abraham. Jesus could see in

³⁷ Sweating blood is a medical condition experienced by soldiers in the trenches during the First World War caused by extreme stress and anguish causing a rupturing of blood vessels.

the future and He was prepared to endure the agony of the cross. He knew the time would come when He would have to honour that contract. He knew the time would come when he, like Abraham, would have to walk that supreme walk of faith. Jesus needed to have faith that God would deliver him from the power of death itself.

Abraham's obedience meant all the legal requirements were satisfied in the heavenly court for the work of Christ to completely redeem Man. God's promises to Abraham meant there was now a way for God to legitimately show mercy to men.

Just to reemphasise how important Abraham was to our salvation the New Testament teaches that we are considered as those descendants of Abraham spoken of above:

'Therefore know that those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.'

Galatians 3,7

It was as a prophet under the Abrahamic covenant that Jesus Christ came to redeem us. His ministry on earth was under the terms of this covenant. The covenant was completed when Christ died on the cross:

'So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!"
And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.'

John 19,30

However, the plan of redemption still had three more days to run. His Resurrection was the sign that the Abrahamic covenant was finished. Jesus by His Resurrection was announcing the new covenant which has better promises than those given to Abraham:

'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us that the blessing of Abraham may come upon the Gentiles [and] that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.'

Galatians 3,13-14

"But now hath he [Jesus] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."

Hebrews 8,6

The "law" referred to here is the Mosaic covenant which we look at next. It was the written form of the Abrahamic covenant.

3.3 The Mosaic Covenant

3.3.1 The Mosaic Covenant and Israel

The Mosaic covenant was the covenant God made to Moses based on what God had covenanted through Abraham. It was to preserve and extend the Abrahamic covenant. This is clear from how God revealed Himself to Moses:

"I am the God of your father-the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

Exodus 3,6

It was because of the Abrahamic covenant that God moved to call Moses:

"So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Exodus 2,24

God established the Hebrew nation as His people as promised in the Abrahamic covenant and then proceeded to reveal the principles and concepts of the covenant in written form. The Mosaic covenant can be considered an extending of the Abrahamic covenant to the whole nation of Israel:

"I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods but me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or earth beneath, or that is in the water under

the earth; you shall not bow down and serve them. For I the LORD your God am a jealous God...You shall not take the name of your God in vain...Observe the Sabbath Day...the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God...Honour your father and your mother...You shall not murder...You shall not commit adultery...You shall not steal...You shall not bear false witness...You shall not covet your neighbour's wife...house...field...or anything else that is your neighbour's."

Deuteronomy 5,6-21

The terms of this covenant were simple: obey and you will be blessed, and your nation would be secure and prosperous. Disobedience and rebellion would bring destruction and curses on the nation:

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:...But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:..."

Deuteronomy 28, vv1,15

3.3.2 The “Law and the Prophets” – undoing the confusion

Within scripture itself sometimes the phrase “the Law and the Prophets” always refers to the Mosaic covenant and its historical outworking in the centuries following and the attempts at reformation in the prophets as the nation decayed. Sometimes this is just shortened to “the Law”. However, sometimes the term the Law as used in the New Testament, particularly when the New Testament refers to “Christ as the End of the Law”, is only referring to one aspect of the Law rather than the Law in its entirety (cf. Matt 5,17-20). There are two main divisions in the law, but they are not

mutually exclusive, i.e. sometimes a passage may mix both types of law or the same law may encompass both categories:

- a. *Typological or ceremonial laws*: these were laws and rituals that prefigure the coming of Jesus as the saviour of mankind. These talk about salvation and are essentially theological in character. These are what the New Testament writers are referring to when they say the Law was made obsolete when Christ came, e.g. there is no need to sacrifice lambs anymore or for the Aaronic priesthood because Jesus was the Lamb of God and every believer is now a priest of God. This is the subject of the Book of Hebrews in the New Testament (e.g. Hebrew, 9);
- b. *Moral and case laws*: these are expositions and regulations that are used to explain the moral precepts present in the Ten Commandments, i.e. the explication of the commandment. For example, “Do Not Steal” – the commandment defines but does not explain its applications; its applications are explained in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Moral laws are eternal *unless* the New Testament *explicitly* negates them. The eternal beauty and justice of God’s Law is the theme of the great acrostic Psalm, psalm 119. Specifically, with regards to (b), this reflects a certain theological viewpoint known broadly as *covenant theology* associated most directly with the theology of the Reformation. Some theologians known as *Dispensationalists* (that emerged slowly as a radical variation of premillennialism from the 1830s onwards and then became the dominant theologians within the Fundamentalist movement) take a directly opposite view of the negation criteria, i.e. *unless* the New Testament explicitly endorses something from the Law, you assume it *has* passed away.

However, the logical implications of dispensationalism are obvious – all sorts of sins and instructions about how to build a nation present in the Law only would be considered “obsolete” meaning Christians have *less* ethical obligations under the new covenant than the old and Christians should only be concerned with salvation and the spiritual. For various other reasons,

dispensationalism has also been attacked and its influence, although still substantial, is reduced as most theologians recognise the need to engage with every sphere of society (it has a social dimension and responsibility), not just our personal relationship with God³⁸.

3.3.3 The Law as Practical Theology

The Law was not just a list of instructions about how to please God. It was meant to be a teacher so that the people would seek to know their God personally and intricately. Indeed, the LORD spoke to His people and told them that unless they received Him in faith, that is they found out what was in God's heart for the purpose of the Law, that they would fail in keeping His Law.

If they simply followed the letter of the Law, they would stumble and be condemned. If they sought to please God by their actions rather than the attitude of their hearts, they would fail:

"For this commandment which I command you today, it is not hidden from you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and *in your heart*, that you may do it." (emphasis added)

Deuteronomy 30,11-14

In the New Testament Paul teaches on salvation using this very passage as a basis. He explains that we can never be reconciled to God based on works, but it must be by faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Law in this sense was symbolic or typological, Christ was the antitype that embodied the fulfilled ceremonial aspects of the Law that

³⁸ I examine the subject of this section in great detail in chapter 2 of my Masters dissertation here: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325807525_Dominion_Theology_-_Its_origin_development_and_place_in_Christian_thinking

prefigured His coming. In themselves, the rituals had no salvific power, they only had power in that they pointed to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus:

'For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.'

Romans 10,2-10

So, with respect to the salvation of the nations and individuals, the purpose of the Law was to lead the Israelites to come to a knowledge of God. This is the end (or purpose) of the ceremonial or typological aspects of the Law, the Israelites could be saved by believing in a coming Messiah. This is again confirmed by the apostle Paul in the New Testament teaching:

'Therefore the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.'

Galatians 3,24

However, as mentioned above, the law was about *more* than just personal or national salvation in a spiritual sense for life after death or for the future reign of the Messiah on Earth, it was *also* about political ethics and how to establish a just society. In this sense, Israel was a model nation for the pagan nations around it and the witness of the Prophetic books demonstrated that God also sent prophets to non-Israelite nations and blessed those nations that endeavoured to understand and keep the principles of His Law. God announced the principles of His Law in what is called the “Ten commandments” and then gave extensive “case laws” so that it would demonstrate *exactly* what He meant by the Ten Commandments, e.g. “adultery” was not only sleeping with someone not your wife but also other relatives, animals and homosexuality. It is important to understand that this moral aspect of the Law was eternal

(Matthew 5, 17-20)³⁹; what passed away with the new covenant was the typological aspects of the Law that pointed to the coming of the Messiah and parts of the Law that were specific to theocratic Israel, e.g. the division of the land and the mandate of Holy War.

For the Israelites, the actual result of the Mosaic covenant was catastrophic. The children of Israel completely missed what God was saying both in a salvific and an ethical sense. They relied on the physical rituals and the prowess of their temple rather than on a heartfelt devotion to God and His Law as a blueprint for their culture.

A spiritual, moral and social decay began in the life of the nation until the curses of Deuteronomy 28 came to pass in their nation to the extent they were eventually scattered as refugees throughout the world. This is documented in detail in the books of the Bible that record this period in Israel's history⁴⁰.

3.3.4 The Mosaic Covenant and Humankind

This covenant is still in force today and it is the moral standards within the Law that judge all nations, God does not have two standards of morality for Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews). A religion of rituals with never save an individual or a nation. It is only through a knowledge of God personally that we receive salvation and it is only in understanding the ethical principles within His Law and applying them to our society that a just and godly culture is built.

The wider function of the Law was to bring all Humankind to account for their sinfulness, both personal and social. The Mosaic covenant is the "house" that Moses built on the foundation that Abraham laid.

³⁹ This is known as the "theonomic" position initially explicated by Rousas J. Rushdoony in his *Institutes of Biblical Law* (1972) and most thoroughly and famously (with much opposition) by Greg Bahnsen in multiple subsequent editions of his *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (1977-1995). It is also presented in a more moderate form in the extensive teaching of Landa Cope's *The Old Testament Template* (2012) and *God and Political Justice* (2016).

⁴⁰ 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Judges, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel

Humankind could no longer claim to be ignorant of their sin. We now bear the consequences of it in our eternal destiny:

"For until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no Law."

Romans 5,13

If we, like the Israelites, reject the faith concept through atheism⁴¹, agnosticism⁴² or religious asceticism⁴³ or legalism⁴⁴ we remain under the curse which God pronounced on the Earth and the curses of the Mosaic covenant. The curse can be viewed as God defining the limits of operation of Satan using the dominion that Man gave Him. I say this because Jesus spoke later that the Devil comes to kill, steal and destroy:

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

John 8,44

"The thief comes only to steal and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and life to the full."

John 10,10

⁴¹ Philosophy that holds that there is no objective or empirical evidence for the existence of God which necessarily means we should reject the concept of God as a matter of sound rationality.

⁴² Agnostics suspend judgement on the existence of God with the view that there is no evidence either way but perhaps there could be in the future. The Latin equivalent of this Greek word is "ignoramus", perhaps reflecting the fact that it is not as sophisticated a viewpoint as it makes itself out to be.

⁴³ The reliance on so-called 'spiritual disciplines' such as fasting, meditation and prayer to subject the body to the law of God and so enter into salvation. The position is rooted in a dualistic view of the human being. The body is seen as fallen and the spirit as the redeemed bit. Thus, salvation is obtained by subjecting the body to the spiritual.

⁴⁴ Rigid observance of a moral code, as the primary way of receiving salvation (as opposed to it being an outworking of salvation). When the religion of a people becomes nominal or a perceived obligation rather than a living experience, this is all that is left.

It is not God's desire or nature to kill, steal and destroy. Never in any of his covenant names that he gave to Israel did God say that He was a killer. Yet the judgement of God against men means that the Holy Spirit no longer restrains the Devil's enmity towards Man. Judgement and justice releases Humankind to Satan if men refuse to repent:

"For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. "

2 Thessalonians 2,7

"Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."

1 Corinthians 5,5

God through his covenants progressively gives back dominion to Man but this had to be on a legal basis to withstand Satan's rights to Humankind. Man must operate in faith in God to escape Satan's dominion and the operation of the curse.

The world is under this ethical covenant at the present time and the disease, sickness, hunger, mental disorders, famine, persecution and in fact all the greed and selfishness that pervades our world can increase because humanity has either abandoned God or has misconceptions about His nature. Man has chosen Satan and cursing is what Satan does. Man gets what His god possesses as his nature – to steal, kill and destroy.

God Himself gives a recipe for economic and social prosperity among the nations:

"When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7,14

Notice how God calls people to repent and then *He* will deal with the demonic forces that destroy the nation.

3.3.5 Jesus and the Mosaic Covenant

Jesus Christ was the only man who ever managed to live successfully under this covenant. He was the only man who could fully obey all God's commands and never fall into sin. God's law pronounces us guilty if we fall at just one point in the whole of our lives even if we are trying to live as best we can:

'For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble on one point, he is guilty of all.'

James 2,10

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil..For I say to you, that unless *your righteousness exceeds* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (emphasis added)

Matthew 5,18-20

Christ was able to keep the Law in a perfect ethical sense ("fulfil it" in the sense of confirm its true sense after removing the distortions and perversions of the scribes and pharisees) because He was not born in sin. He was of Holy Spirit conception and not conceived *of Adam* and so was not "infected" by the sin of Adam. Satan thus had no legal power over Him. Jesus explains this in the gospel of John where he talks about his own sinlessness:

"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?"

John 8,46

"I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. *He has no hold on me*⁴⁵, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me."

⁴⁵ That is, I have committed no sin.

John 14,30-31

He did not sin because he was not of natural conception but conceived by the Holy Spirit: but was nevertheless *human* because he was born of a woman:

"Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS...Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."

Luke 1,31-35

Jesus' sinlessness also meant that it was illegal according to the Law for Satan to kill Him and thus God was able to judge Satan without destroying Man and so remove his destructive influence from Creation forever. The Devil was fooled into thinking that Jesus had been defeated at the crucifixion:

"None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

1 Corinthians 2,8

"Rulers of this age" in this context is talking about the spiritual powers of darkness. Jesus was in a legal position that He could be a sacrifice under the Mosaic covenant that would not just *cover* the sins of the people but would *purge* them:

"The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ...cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death. so that we may serve the living God!"

Hebrews 9,13-14

The sacrifice of Jesus' body and the blood that was shed at the cross provides the basis of the "new covenant" which we look at next.

3.4 The New Covenant

3.4.1 Introduction

In the previous sections I examined the nature of the covenants God made with Humankind to redeem them and led up to saying that the coming of Jesus was the fulfilment of the Messianic promise in these covenants. He at once confirmed the ethical quality of the Law by demonstrating that Humankind stands continually condemned by it. We saw that the Law in itself was not the agent or means of salvation, but the Law contained promises about a saving Messiah. Although the previous sections examined a lot of scripture, they did not look specifically at how within the whole of the Word of God to his people that *Jesus* was this promised Messiah.

Thus, as a starting point I examine some of the key prophecy⁴⁶ to establish that Jesus really was the fulfilment of the promises made through the old covenant⁴⁷ and then go on to examine the major implications of the covenant that Jesus set in motion. As it is impossible to completely divide these two without the risk of incomprehensibility, I have included some amplification of the text where they interact.

3.4.2 Old Testament prophecy and the promised Christ

It is not immediately obvious by reading any one of the prophetic books what the final of God's salvation for His people would be. However, when viewed as a whole we get a clear picture of a *Messiah* or *Christ* figure. These

⁴⁶ There are literally hundreds of so-called Messianic prophecies and it would take a book to cover them. Thus, this is necessarily a shortened section.

⁴⁷ This is an accepted theological term for the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants

are equivalent Hebrew and Greek words⁴⁸ meaning the "Anointed" or "Sent" One. He was *anointed* to fulfil the Abrahamic covenant (of which the Mosaic was a written expression) and *sent* to establish the new covenant.

Let us start with two passages written by the prophet Isaiah who lived about 800 B.C.:

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His rule there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom."

Isiah 9,6-7

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Isiah 7,14

In these passages we see that the Messiah will be God in the human flesh. The first passages list attributes of God and in the second the name *Immanuel* literally means "God with us". Jesus' unprecedented spiritual potency bears witness to his divinity hinted at here.

Another prophecy in the book of Micah tells us where He will be born:

'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be

⁴⁸ *Messiah* is the Hebrew (the dominant language of the Old Testament otherwise known as the Hebrew scriptures, there are small amounts of Aramaic and occasional Greek words) and *Christ* is the Greek (the language of the New Testament or the Christian scriptures). By the time of Jesus, the region spoke Aramaic (sometimes described as a dialect of Hebrew but really a separate language derived from it, Hebrew was the more formal language of the synagogue), Latin (the Roman occupation) and Greek (after the conquests of Alexander the Great). Jesus would have spoken all three languages which is why some books, although they were written in Greek, e.g. Revelation, show a strong influence from the Semitic idiom.

ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.'

Micah 5,2

Here again we see the Messiah as God. "Everlasting" is a natural attribute of God: He must necessarily be self-existent otherwise nothing could have come into being. Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem.

Another prophecy tells us of the manner in which the Christ would enter Jerusalem:

'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

Zechariah 9,9

Here we also see that the Christ brings us "salvation". Jesus' name literally means "Saviour". It was the name the angel gave Mary to call him. Jesus entered Jerusalem on a colt and was welcomed as a prophet into Jerusalem by the people there. The enthusiasm and the welcome He got as the Messiah was considered blasphemous among the religious leaders who witnessed his arrival. Jesus replied:

'And he answered and said unto them, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

Luke 19,40

The most comprehensive prophecy is that which foretells the nature of salvation, the crucifixion and the resurrection of the Christ. Here are a few key verses but I recommend you read the whole of chapters 52 and 53 of the Book of Isaiah. First a verse telling us that we cannot purchase our salvation, it is a gift of God received by faith:

'For thus says the LORD: "You have sold yourselves [to sin] for nothing, And you shall be redeemed [from sin] without money."'

Isaiah 52,3

This is known as the 'salvation by grace' that I mentioned in an earlier chapter. It is emphasised in New Testament doctrine by the apostle Paul in the book of Romans. A correct understanding of the book of Romans⁴⁹ is foundational to understanding salvation by grace:

'For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God sent forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith'

Romans 3,23-25

'For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'

Ephesians 2,8

'For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.'

2 Corinthians 5,21

In passing, it is worth mentioning that although salvation is a gift to us that is not to say that it cost nothing or costs us nothing. It cost Jesus his innocent life and likewise, as we receive salvation, it costs us everything – we become His ambassadors to the world. Ambassadors do not exist to promote their own views but the views of their governments. As long as they represent accurately and faithfully their government positions, they enjoy diplomatic immunity, all their expenses are paid by their government and they enjoy a position of great privilege. Should they cease to be

⁴⁹ There are some very good (and some very bad) commentaries on Romans that help with the rather daunting task of understanding the masses of doctrine expounded by Paul who was, after all, a highly trained theologian. The most famous evangelical commentaries on Romans were by Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones, originally a Welsh Calvinist minister, he famously ministered at Westminster chapel for over 30 years as was known as the finest expository preacher of his generation, if not the century.

faithful diplomats, they are denied future postings and lose those privileges.

Returning to the same prophecy of Isiah we learn from these two chapters that the Christ would be tortured and beaten to an extreme degree. He would be so disfigured as to be unrecognisable. All the curses of the Law (Deuteronomy 28) were brought upon Him. He became the incarnation of sin on the cross and this added to his disfigurement:

'So His appearance was marred more than any man...He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, The chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed...He was oppressed and afflicted...He was taken from prison and from judgement...When you make his soul an offering for sin...He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.'

Isiah 52 v14b; 53, w3,5,7,8,10,12

The Christ would suffer physically, psychologically and spiritually like no one had suffered before. The Roman centurion who was guarding the cross was shocked by what He was witnessing. This is unusual as he probably had witnessed many crucifixions.

In other words, Jesus had experienced the whole spectrum of human suffering on the cross that came into the world because of human disobedience to God. He took it on Himself so that God could legitimately heal humanity from the disease of sin:

'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree") that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.'

Galatians 3,13-14

3.4.3 Jesus speaking about the New Covenant

Jesus spoke of the new covenant being signed in his blood and based upon the sacrifice of his body:

'And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new testament⁵⁰ in my blood, which is shed for you."

Luke 22,20

When Jesus began His ministry on Earth, He stated the gospel⁵¹ He would preach:

'And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah...and when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, **(1)** To preach deliverance to the captives **(2)** and recovery of sight to the blind, **(3)** to set at liberty those who are oppressed, **(4)** to preach the acceptable year of the LORD **(5)** ...Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

Luke 4,17-21

The consequences of Jesus' remarks for humanity are phenomenal. The new covenant is a gospel of prosperity in every aspect of human existence:

- a. The healing of the mind, memories and emotions. Most people involved in the healing ministry would call this *soul-healing* or *inner-healing*;

⁵⁰ Testament and covenant are different renderings of the same Greek word.

⁵¹ The word "gospel" is sometimes thought to mean simply "good news" but that is very simplistic. Only Caesars were permitted to proclaim a "gospel" and Jesus', then Paul's use of the term should be seen as emphasising the divine and political (governmental) nature of their words in establishing the new dispensation of God.

- b. The healing of the human spirit from spiritual possession, oppression and suppression. This is often known as *deliverance ministry*;
- c. The physical healing of the body. This is often what people, wrongly, understand to be the sole meaning of the word "healing";
- d. Political and social prosperity. By this I mean personal freedom and just government;
- e. Personal and collective material prosperity. The "acceptable year of the LORD" is otherwise known as the year of Jubilee⁵² when all personal financial bonds in land and money and debts were cancelled.

Jesus was stating that he actually *was* all these *incarnate*. His ministry for those three years after proved his words. They are recorded in the gospel records. Jesus promised that when the Holy Spirit came, He would teach the disciples about the new covenant:

"But the Comforter⁵³, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 14,26

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he shall show you things to come."

John 16,13

Thus, it is appropriate now to consider the consequences of the new covenant as revealed in the writings of the apostles.

⁵² Jubilee is strongly related to redemption. People had to restore at whatever price i.e. redeem land that was taken to pay a debt. Every 50 years was meant to be a major jubilee where all previously mortgaged land was returned to the original owners, debts were cancelled, and slaves were to go free. It was only practiced twice in the entire history of Israel, both during times of national reformation.

⁵³ The Greek word *parakletos* translated "Comforter" can also mean a judicial "advocate"; its root meaning is "one that comes alongside".

3.4.4 The consequences of the new covenant

There are three major features of this new covenant that distinguish it from the old one. Firstly, we are free from the curses of the Law simply because of faith in Jesus:

'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.'

Galatians 3,13-14

Simply because you are a Christian all the sicknesses, diseases, infirmities, mental problems; in fact, every affliction of body, soul and spirit no longer have any *right* to be in your body⁵⁴.

The curses also included poverty: God wants you to be rich. Not for riches sake itself (that is, covetousness) but so that you can meet the needs of those around you after the pattern recorded in the book of Acts. This point is reiterated throughout scripture:

'And God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance *for every good work*.' (emphasis added)

2 Corinthians 9,8

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."

3 John 1,2

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;"

1 Timothy 6,17

⁵⁴ Of course, having a right and appropriating it are two different things. The Christian life (see the next chapter) is all about learning how to appropriate your rights in the face of the opposition of the world.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Phillipians 4,19

Thus, the richness that God promises us is not just material wealth but extends to every aspect of our human existence. "The prosperity of Man was lost as a result of sin. God's curse on the land meant that Man had to toil and labour for virtually nothing.

God's covenant with Abraham meant was the first step in undoing this curse for the whole of Humankind. The new covenant extended these blessings of personal spiritual and physical prosperity made to Abraham to all Humankind. Consider the passage of scripture that records when God made His promise to Abraham:

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who curse you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 12,2-3

This promise applies to the Christian church today. Each Christian is part of a great nation. Each Christian church, family and individual has the potential to be a great blessing and to be prosperous in all things. There no longer remains that barrier of non-Jewishness for us to partake of the blessing of the Jews:

'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.'

Galatians 6,15-16

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles⁵⁵ in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the

⁵⁵ The Jewish designation for all non-Jews.

flesh by hands - that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us...the law of the commandments...so as to create in Himself one new man from the two...Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...in whom you are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.'

Galatians 2,11-22

The believers on the Name of Jesus Christ are the "Israel of God". His chosen people, His Holy nation of the new covenant just as earthly Israel⁵⁶ were a Holy Nation of the old covenant. We are a great nation.

Now if you look back to the quote from Galatians 3,13-14 we see that we receive the blessing of Abraham *and* the promise of the Spirit through faith. Let us examine what "the promise of the Spirit" means.

Jesus made this promise and it is recorded in every gospel. Let us consider some of the scripture concerning the promise and work of the Holy Spirit:

⁵⁶ I believe that God has placed a special blessing on natural as well as spiritual Jews. The modern nation of Israel today is *still* part of God's heart and a prophetic indicator of his purposes. *Salvation*, though, is by faith alone and Jews are only saved through believing the gospel. Some theologians deny natural Israel and the ethnic Jews have any continuing role in God's purposes and are known as replacement theologians because the "Church" has replaced Israel – all the promises of God made to Israel are fulfilled in the church. Even a cursory look at the miraculous 20th century history of natural Israel should indicate the error implicit in this perspective. Any nation that has stood against Israel has faced judgment, none more so than the British whose Empire (that "would endure one thousand years") dissolved after Britain betrayed the Balfour agreement to ensure a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Some assert that the subsequent greatness of America was because it has strongly supported the new Jewish nation (Genesis 12,1-2).

"Behold I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Luke 24,49

'And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, "which... you have heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 1,4-8

Jesus describes the Holy Spirit here as empowering the believers on the Name of Jesus to be witnesses for Him. The Holy Spirit is a distinct personality, a part of the Godhead, who is sent by the Father at the request of the Son:

"And I will pray the Father and He will give you another Helper [or Comforter], that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. [the baptism in the Holy Spirit]"

John 14,16-17

This promise also shows the most phenomenal part of the new covenant. Under the old covenant it was only the prophets of God who could speak directly with God. Now under the New Covenant God comes to dwell in us by His Spirit to be our source forever:

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare to you."

John 16,13-14

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son...I will pray the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever..."

John 14,12-16

So, the Holy Spirit is our power source to minister to those in need around us. He is the power source we work with to build His church. God's idea of the normal Christian life is for all Christians to be just like Jesus. Doing His works and His miracles:

"And these signs will follow those who believe: in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover."

Mark 16,15-18

We see the fulfilment of this in the Early Church. They moved with incredible power and spread the Gospel throughout the world. For the first 400 years⁵⁷ the Church moved in the supernatural power of God.

This is what God intended in the New Covenant and it is still available to us today. In less humanistic societies today (e.g. Africa, India and Korea) the Church does move in the miraculous. The Western Church has been choked by unbelief, materialism and humanistic thinking.

We have civilised ourselves out of spiritual things becoming preoccupied with the welfare of the body and the cultivation of the soul. Only recently has the word "holistic" come into our vocabulary again. For

⁵⁷ In retrospect, this is a broad generalisation – there always have been places where the church as groups of believers has continued to move in supernatural power down the centuries. However, as an *institution*, its spiritual and moral bankruptcy was evident for nearly 1000 years until the Reformation.

anyone who dares to believe the Word of God they will move in this power. I look at this aspect of the Christian faith in the next chapter.

We know we have received His Promise just as the original believers did as recorded in Acts:

'Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all in one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.'

Acts 2,1-4

We *do* "speak in tongues" as an initial sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit although the baptism of the Holy Spirit also enables us to live holy and consecrated lives, it enables the disparate believing to become one⁵⁸. We receive the Holy Spirit simply by asking once we have believed the gospel that Jesus died for our sins but rose again. The only things that prevents us from moving in power are not repenting, not believing and not asking:

'''If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!''' '

Luke 11,13

This pattern of repentance from sins, water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit is repeated time and time again in the Book of Acts. It is clearly the key to receiving the promises of the new covenant:

⁵⁸ The best exposition of the full baptism of the Holy Spirit I have heard is by John Kingsley Alley, <https://www.peace.org.au/node>. The best exposition of the gift of tongues and its many dimensions are in *Paul Fenwick, The Royal Gift of Tongues* published independently by Byker City Fellowship International. Requests for the book can be made via paulfenwick55@hotmail.co.uk or through the Facebook page for BCFi.

"Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. " "

Acts 2,38-39

'While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the word. And those of the Circumcision who believed were astonished...because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. FOR THEY HEARD THEM SPEAK WITH TONGUES AND MAGNIFY GOD...Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?'

Acts 10,44-47

'And it happened...that Paul...came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptised?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptised with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.'

Acts 19,1-6

This last passage is quite important as it shows that it is quite possible to be a believer in Jesus Christ and yet not receive the Holy Spirit. To try and live as a Christian without a relationship with the Holy Spirit means that a great many of the blessings that God promises are more difficult to receive. It is to the walk with the Holy Spirit we turn next.

4 THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

4.1 Introduction

I ended the last chapter with the statements of Jesus regarding the Holy Spirit being the power that enables us to be witnesses. In other words, we will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to live the full Christian life without being baptised in and walking with the Holy Spirit and by exercising the gift of tongues.

The Holy Spirit was with Jesus throughout His ministry. As soon as Jesus was baptised in water, he then received the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

"As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him."

Matthew 3,16

The same pattern was repeated before any of the early disciples became fruitful witnesses to the Lord Jesus:

"Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here-has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 9,17

The baptism in water and the baptism in the Holy Spirit are seen to be distinct experiences. The baptism in water is a baptism of repentance symbolising the turning away from sin whereby the believer transfers from the dominion of the Devil into the dominion of God:

"By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Romans 6,2-4

"In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"

1 Peter 3,20-21

Baptism is our response to God. It is the act of a human being identifying themselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus and thereby making peace with God. It is a symbol of the covenant that exists between them and God. God symbolises his commitment in the same covenant to us by giving us the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

"Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance."

Ephesians 1,13-14

'There [Paul] found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism,"⁵⁹ they replied. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.'

Acts 19,1-6

The Early disciples lacked confidence and the power of God until the Holy Spirit came upon them, even though Jesus appeared to them numerous times before the Holy Spirit came. They were terrified after Jesus' crucifixion and met behind closed doors despite having walked with him for three years and witnessed his absolute command of the physical and

⁵⁹ John the Baptist was a prophet operating under the old covenant, but his baptism was still symbolic of the individual reconciling themselves to God. See Luke 7,28. Jesus established the new covenant and baptism became repentance *and* deliverance from the kingdom of Satan.

spiritual world. Eventually they got to the point when they almost gave up their faith and began to return to their old way of life. Peter, the onetime leader of the disciples, announced to the remnant of the disciples, that he was going fishing (John 21,3).

This was Peter's symbolic admission of defeat. Jesus had called him from being a fisherman and promised (Luke 5,8-11) that he would only "catch men" from then on. Peter had given up the business he had part owned and went to follow Jesus. He had lived within the supernatural provision of Jesus for three years and never lacked. Jesus had even paid his taxes supernaturally:

"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee."

Matthew 17,27

Peter had been in the cloud at the Transfiguration of Jesus and even heard the voice of God in the cloud and seen Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus.⁶⁰ Jesus had appeared to them after he was dead and resurrected and told them to wait for the Coming of the Holy Spirit. Yet now, the disciples felt alone, were wanted by the authorities and probably broke. Jesus was nowhere to be seen and they certainly did not understand who this Holy Spirit was. There were certainly no vigils waiting for the Lord to send His Spirit as promised. This was the low point.

However, at that time, Jesus appeared to them again and interestingly, repeated the same miracle that had saved the fishermen in the beginning:

He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and

⁶⁰ Matthew 17,1-9

you will find some.".... Then, the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

John 21,5-7

He was reminding Peter, John and the rest of the disciples that there was no lack in his kingdom. He was reminding them of his original promise to them.

The point that I am making here is that Christianity cannot be purely intellectual. Strong Christians need to be in constant fellowship with God through His Holy Spirit. Peter was the most outspoken and zealous of the disciples before Jesus "left". Peter did not have the Holy Spirit and as soon as Jesus' personal anointing disappeared from him, he relapsed into fear and his old way of life.

4.2 The Ministry and Work of believers with the Holy Spirit

4.2.1 The Coming of the Holy Spirit

All this changed when the Holy Spirit came on the scene:

‘And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all of one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.’

Acts 2,1-5

Peter lost his timidity within seconds of baptism by the Holy Spirit and was transformed into a radical and uncompromising preacher:

‘But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, "Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known to you, and hearken to my words...this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days ...I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall

prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath...And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved..." Then Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be ye baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"⁶¹..."

Acts 2, vv17-21, 38

Peter preaching under the power of the Holy Spirit led three thousand people to salvation that *day*. Many of those were probably those who had been calling for Jesus to be crucified a few months earlier. It was the Holy Spirit that made all the difference.

His fellow disciples all began to move in the power of the supernatural and had a love for one another that meant they never wanted to be apart:

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things in common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily...'

Acts 2,44-47

The Holy Spirit brings to us the essential attribute of God: *his holiness*. Holiness is *all* the attributes of God: the natural ones *and* the spiritual ones. Holiness is the love and power of God that makes God

⁶¹ Ghost is the old-fashioned word for spirit and is used almost interchangeably in the old King James version. Newer translations will always use "spirit".

whom he is. It is the means by which we overcome the fear of men, of what other people think:

'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.'

1 Timothy 1,7

You can see how *joyful* life with the Holy Spirit was. How *powerful* and *fearless* the disciples became. Fear was the spirit that humanity had received in Eden. Jesus redeemed Man from slavery to that spirit.

The holiness of God resides in the believer's heart and leads to the righteousness of God being manifested by the acts of believers. Righteousness relates to the relationships we have with God and each other. God has imputed to us the righteousness of Christ:

"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

1 Corinthians 1,30

Righteousness⁶² here means to be able to stand before God without a sense of guilt or fear. Jesus is in a right relationship with the Father and we stand in his righteousness. As we develop in our relationship with the Holy Spirit then we begin to behave more and more like Jesus in our relationships and lifestyle as he did.

There was no longer and class or wealth divisions between disciples. It was a completely new society that the Holy Spirit began. It was based on equality and sharing.

⁶² Righteousness is a multifaceted word, as is holiness. Much confusion results from trying to apply a single definition for either word. Holiness and righteousness both relate to justice (the way life should be) and thus to personal and social ethics. There is some overlap in scripture in their use and they are often specified together – the most primitive meaning of holy is just “to be set apart” (in old English = sainted) and of righteousness is “to be just” (the way it ought to be) - these, on their own, do not have theological content and were often used in “secular” contexts.

Throughout the book of Acts, there is an overwhelming sense of the community of God's people. By this I do not necessarily mean they all lived with each other, although that was certainly part of the Jerusalem church's approach, but people were concerned for one another and would do anything to help each other.

Paul relates in his epistles how people were giving to each other to the point that they would go without:

"Moreover, brethren, we do you wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in great trial of affliction...and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality."

2 Corinthians 8,1-2

Churches in poorer parts of the world that were suffering from famine and oppression would be given people, supplies and money from the richer churches. There was a oneness of possessions and heart.

Apostles like Paul and Barnabas were constantly travelling to small churches for encouragement and teaching. Paul shows a fatherly concern throughout his letters for all the churches. The churches loved Paul though they had often been subject to severe rebuke from him:

'And when he [Paul] had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him.'

Acts 20,36-37

The quality of leadership under the blessing of the Holy Spirit was powerful and unified. People were encouraged to accept other ministries despite apparent doctrinal differences. They were to learn from other understandings of the message they were preaching rather than consider themselves to be right:

"For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not mere [worldly] men? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe-as the Lord

has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow...for we are God's fellow-workers..."

1 Corinthians 3,4-9

Peter on numerous occasions had to be reconciled with Paul's radically non-Jewish interpretations of the scriptures, his unique revelation of the spiritual depth of Christ's redemptive work on the cross:

"And account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation: even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles...in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

2 Peter 3,15-16

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew...fearing them of the circumcision⁶³...But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all..."

Galatians 2, vv11-14

Notice how Peter, although he himself was the leader appointed by Jesus of the church, was humble enough to accept Paul's rebuke and went so far as to say Paul's revelation of the gospel was *scripture*. Peter used his enormous influence amongst Jewish Christians to defend Paul from their attacks.

⁶³ According to Jewish tradition, it was unclean to eat with non-Jews. Peter's own vision in Acts 10 showed that God now considered both Jew and Gentile clean and there was to be no discrimination on the grounds of national and religious heritage

The Holy Spirit meant that leaders could entreaty one another without the risk of schism. People were always ready to learn and teach each other.

4.2.2 The Holy Spirit and the ministry of Women

The Holy Spirit emancipated women into the church. There was a strong patriarchal tradition⁶⁴ in Hebrew culture that was manifested in that all the disciples were male and the early leadership of the church was predominantly male. However, it does appear that within the scriptural concept of women being covered by a male spiritual authority, women were free to be leaders, deacons, preachers and teachers in the new church.

Paul, at the end of Romans, lists a long list of women that assisted him in his missionary work. I am sure they just did not cook and do his laundry. At the end of Philippians, he seems to command reluctant believers at Philippi to honour the women workers as much as they do the men.

Much is made of Paul's remarks in 1 Timothy 2 regarding the place of women in the church:

'Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer a woman not to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.'

1 Timothy 2,11-12

This is perhaps the best example of the dangers of a verse taken out of context and the inadequacies of the English translation of the original Greek. I shall be examining the overall scriptural position about the ministry of women and it is clearly incorrect to assume he was issuing a blanket ban on women participating in services or being in positions of

⁶⁴ This is not to say that there were never any women in positions of leadership or who moved in great faith. The most famous OT example was Deborah (a "judge" of Israel) and there were female "prophetesses" referred to in the OT. Paul in the NT was accompanied by women who worked with him for the gospel – not just doing his washing!

teaching and leadership, as some have interpreted it. Rather, it seems that Paul was dealing with a disciplinary problem that had arisen where some women had been interfering with male leadership incorrectly. The Greek even suggests sexual impropriety may have been involved.⁶⁵

A second point with this passage is that the Greek word translated in the English as "usurp", which is also lost in the newer translations, is an extremely strong word that suggests severe aggression. One commentator⁶⁶ has said it is used in other contexts as a word relating to murder.

It is interesting to note that revivalists saved under Charles Finney's ministry followed his example of integrating women into preaching and leadership. This century's revivals have also seen powerful, denominationally independent women ministers in the shape of Marie Woodworth Etter, Aimee McPherson and Kathryn Kuhlman.

There have also been and still are married couple teams moving in an immense anointing of the Holy Spirit where the woman, as much as the man, has been involved in the preaching and the teaching. Catherine Booth, to name one, was the fiercesome preacher-wife of General Booth. Their stories are told in Winkie Pratney's history of revivalists.⁶⁷

Contemporary ministries today are Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Creflo and Taffi Dollar, Jesse and Cathy Duplantis. The teachings of Gloria and Cathy are certainly just as effective and powerful as their men.

While the dominance of male leadership in scripture is undeniable, which I suggest is a function of culture more than God's instigation, there is a clear tradition of women being used mightily throughout the history of Israel and the history of the church.

⁶⁵ According to people who know about these things, it can be translated "to teach or to use sexual wiles".

⁶⁶ Roger Mitchell, ICTHUS fellowship, London. ICTHUS, controversially, have fully integrated leadership.

⁶⁷ "Revival: Principles to change the world", Winkie Pratney, Whitaker House, 1984.

Deborah, identified in scripture as a prophetess⁶⁸, was a judge of Israel – i.e. she had a socio-political role in addition to a religious one that was normally fulfilled by a man. She was a woman in a long series of men. Esther was raised up to a position where she could deliver her people.⁶⁹ Anna is listed a prophetess in the gospel of Luke.⁷⁰ The prophecy of Joel that Peter quoted on the day of Pentecost makes a point of making no distinction between men and women, young and old as ministers of the gospel.

Scripture *does* state that men should look after their women and cover them spiritually:

"For this reason, and because of the angels,⁷¹ the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head."

1 Corinthians 11,10

Paul makes this statement which is in line with the order of creation in the garden of Eden and the man being tasked with protecting his family. Peter and Paul only identify distinct male and female roles to ensure a healthy family culture. They are emphasising more than anything else, how women in the rather culturally oppressive role they found themselves in, could lead a more spiritually fulfilled life teaching their children and providing a spiritually warm home environment. Unlike in the traditional Jewish synagogue, women were permitted to be present and encouraged “to learn”⁷². Paul also spoke to slaves in a similar manner, encouraging them to be responsible and faithful but that did not mean that he endorsed slavery as an institution, arguing in the book of Philemon that Onesimus’ debt to

⁶⁸ Judges 4

⁶⁹ The *Book of Esther* tells her story

⁷⁰ Luke 2,36

⁷¹ Angels in this case seems to be referring to fallen angels.

⁷² See the NET bible notes for 1Tim 2, 11-12 (available online at <https://netbible.org>).

his owner (an enormous 10 years of wages)⁷³ should be cancelled in the name of Christian ethics.

In many cases where Peter and Paul deal with the roles of men and women they are talking in the context of the natural family and have just as much to say to the men about them fulfilling their roles as a parent:

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children: instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Ephesians 6,4

The underpinning spiritual principles, I believe, both apostles are underlining where they are talking about women and men is that whatever position they find themselves in, they can still find that life fulfilling by a right relationship to God and each other.

I do not believe that it is describing some "God-ordained" exclusion from leadership or authority within the church. Indeed, Paul talks about deacons *and* deaconesses in 1 Tim 3 and also refers to the traditional family. In one section he talks about men and women as leaders in the church, in the next he talks about their roles in the family:

"Now the overseer must be beyond reproach.... He must manage his own family well...Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect...In the same way, deaconesses are to be women worthy of respect."

1 Timothy 3, vv2,4,8,11

What I believe is being expounded here is that a man or a woman may have equal roles within the church as long as their marital or cultural situation will permit it. I believe this is in accordance with passages that speak of the spiritual equality of men and women:

⁷³ Onesimus had absconded and worked his way to a position in Rome. This would have taken him at least a decade.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Galatians 3,28

"In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also is man born of woman. But everything comes from God."

1 Corinthians 11,11-12

The natural family must be cared and loved by both parents as an act of obedience to God's command to bring up godly offspring. It is normally not right for a man or a woman when in a godly marriage to spend most of their time away from home "in their ministry". This is a recipe for hateful and resentful children who will probably rebel as they grow.

It is not right for a man or a woman to crave "excitement" and be looking always to expand beyond their family into ministry. If a man or a woman submit and honour their marriage covenant, God will raise them up together to minister. Marriages do not blossom with distance but with closeness. God calls married couples to bring up *godly offspring*:

"Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem....Yet ye say, "Whereof?" Because the LORD hath been a witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dwelt treacherously: yet she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did he not make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously."

Malachi 2, w11,14-17

This requires devoted and godly parenting by both the mother and the father. It stands to reason, that in order to parent, they need to be there. It is often ignored that Paul and Peter are often challenging men also to care for their wives both physically and spiritually and not to shrink back from being in a position of covering authority within the family. They suggest

that some men are hiding behind their wives and not appreciating the spiritual nature of their union:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present itself to him as a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:..."

Ephesians 5,25-29

"Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

2 Peter 3,7

In summary, I feel that there is a very clear case for women's ministry and that both men and women need to recognise that in a Christian marriage their first obligation is to each other and the raising of their children⁷⁴.

4.2.3 The Holy Spirit as a personal helper

It is in having a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit that makes the Christian life what it is:

'All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of mine and declare it to you.'

John 16,15

⁷⁴ An excellent exposition of Christian marriage is given by Selwyn Hughes in '*Marriage as God intended*'. Selwyn was a professional marriage counsellor and was famous for the 'Everyday with Jesus' devotional.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit means we are in constant fellowship with God. We begin to discern God's voice and His will for us. I know an amazing number of people who can testify to the amazing difference being filled with the Holy Spirit makes. My own testimony is that I began to understand what God wanted from me. I began to realise what aspects of my life needed to change and God's Word held the power to do it. So many people have said how much easier it is to witness after receiving the Holy Spirit. We might be able to tell people about the wonderful power of God and what He has done in Jesus Christ to save us.

The Holy Spirit is the one who interprets what the Bible means for us and what a sermon means. He is the one who leads us into a good relationship with the Father and our brethren. He leads us into all truth:

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you."

John 16,13-14

There are *gifts of the Holy Spirit* to help us in our witness and to build up our life as a people. This is the subject of 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14. His great treatise on "love" should really be interpreted in this context of spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit brings the spiritual reality of our humanity to us. He brings alive our spirits that we might be God's children. Spiritual gifts are examined more closely later in this chapter.

4.2.4 The Holy Spirit as captain of the Lord's host⁷⁵

In the wider sense we need to witness that our words and the words of the Bible are true by moving in the power of signs, wonders, miracles, healings, spiritual gifts and the communal lifestyle of brotherhood. We see a love and a unity between disciples and awesome power in the book of Acts and

⁷⁵ See Joshua 5,14. The point I am making is that we are an army and Jesus is the commanding us and equipping us through the Holy Spirit.

the letters of the New Testament. That is not to say there never were disputes and schisms⁷⁶ but people's dedication to the cause of Christ overcame them.

People will, quite rightly, require evidence from you that the gospel and transforming power of Christ are real. The best evidence you will be able to give them is by the change in your personal life and your devotion to your brothers and sisters in a church community.⁷⁷

We need to show that we have the authority in Jesus name over evil powers we encounter. Owing to occult influences in my family, I quickly had to learn the power of Jesus was there to deliver me. I learnt the absolute authority in Jesus' name.

When I talk to people, I testify about the things God has done for me personally. Normally you will know very quickly if someone is interested by their reaction to your testimony. It helps to get people's attention and provides opportunity to get the Word of God to work in people's lives. It sows seeds and has real spiritual power. Paul would often use his personal testimony tailored for the particular audience.⁷⁸

The book of Revelation tells us of the value of testifying to the works of God in our lives, telling others His Word is true:

'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death'

Revelation 12,11

No matter how ordinary or unspectacular your testimony is it is valuable. Not everybody will respond to "I used to be messed up on drugs"

⁷⁶ Paul and Barnabas split up in Acts 15,37 after the Holy Ghost had brought them together over Paul's treatment of John Mark. Barnabas was later proved "right" regarding John Mark's potential as Paul in later years worked closely with John Mark. We never hear of Barnabas again after their separation.

⁷⁷ By this I mean a brotherhood of Christians, not a building

⁷⁸ See Acts 13,16-24, Acts 22,11-21, Acts 23, Acts 26.

and drink but now..." because it is not relevant to them. Some would much rather hear, "I went to church all my life, but I didn't know Jesus..." and others, "One day I just met someone and asked Jesus into my life."

You are still testifying to the Truth of God's Word. To the power of Christ's blood to those who believe. You are pulling down the strongholds of the Devil over people's lives: you are saying, God *does* care about you personally, He wants to heal you, He wants to take you out of poverty, He wants to heal your marriage.

You are challenging the fatalism of worldly thinking: all these things that the Devil has got Humankind to accept as "Oh well, that's life!". You are refuting and destroying his strongholds over people's minds because of your testimony that Jesus Christ is indeed risen.

As a Christian, which literally means "little Christ", you should witness to this resurrection by developing and growing your 'born-again' spirit. Your primary food source as a Christian is the revealed counsel of God, the *word of God* for which the Greek word is *logos*:

'Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever...as new-born babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby...'

1 Peter 1, 22-23

'For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern both good and evil.'

Hebrews 5,12-14

This last passage shows that the Word is our primary source of nourishment throughout our Christian life. We never grow out of it, but God successively reveals the depth of His Word as we seek and find Him.

At different times He will take the written word, the entire counsel of God (the *logos*) and make it real for us in our lives now. This is what 'receiving a word from God' is. It is when a special anointing comes on the *logos* to turn it into a *rhema*⁷⁹ word.

Clearly, if we do not spend time educating our spirits with the *logos* we are going to have difficulty in recognising the *rhema*. It is God's desire that we grow to maturity in Christ and that we fully accomplish everything He intended for us.

He wants each of us to realise in our physical existence the freedom from all the power of the Devil that Christ accomplished for us. Be it physical, financial, social, spiritual or whatever. The Name of Jesus is above every name; we do have the victory *now* in His Name:

'Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness...by which we have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

1 Peter 1,2-8

⁷⁹ Paul Yonghi Cho the pastor of the largest church on earth, South Korea, in his book *the Fourth Dimension* explains the significance of these Greek words.

We must not be like little orphan children crying to a far-off God about why is the world in such a mess and why has Mr and Mrs Sinner got a Mercedes and gets drunk every weekend while I'm skint and have a crapped out Robin Reliant but rather a bold, powerful and victorious people.

God has prepared for us power and prosperity in this life; we lay hold of eternal life now by using the faith that God gave us when we were born-again. We have access to all that God has for us now, we do not have to wait until we get to heaven. God wants us to refute the lies of the Devil by living victoriously and having an abundance of all things in this life:

'You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD To the end of my days.'

Psalm 23,5-6

'And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work.'

2 Corinthians 9,8

The world seems an exciting and stimulating place for people today. We need to show the mass of people who are trundling along with life and reasonably satisfied with things why they must reconcile themselves to God and become a Christian. We need to show them that the Christian life is the most exciting and satisfying existence. As we draw close to the end of the Age and Christ's return we need to be burning as bright lights in a dark world.

We need to begin to move in the miraculous and the supernatural and not be cowed by naturalistic humanism. We need to begin to discern what God wants to say to a person you are witnessing to rather than piling in with both feet with some tract of theological discourse. One anointed word from God is better than a thousand from the spirit of a man.

The "Great Commission" as recorded in the gospel of Mark emphasises this power aspect of the gospel that Jesus expected His believers to move in:

'And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In my Name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly they will not be harmed; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.'"

Mark 16,15-18

We are living in the Age of the "latter rains" of the "Last Days" as spoken of by the prophet Joel and quoted by the apostle Peter explaining to the people what was happening at the Day of Pentecost:

' "And it shall come to pass in the Last Days," says God, "that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams, and on my menservants and on my maidservants I will pour out my Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapour of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the Coming of the great and notable Day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.' "

Acts 2,17-21

The "latter-rains" referred to the actual climatic pattern of Israel and they were *heavier* than the spring rains. Thus, the anointing and the power we should be moving in, is *greater* than that of the original church.

We are living in this age. Over the last 200 years human civilisation has changed almost beyond recognition. God has poured out His Spirit and

His return is imminent⁸⁰. God expects His church to be moving in power like the earth has never seen before:

"Most assuredly 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. And whatever you ask in My Name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." '

John 14,12-13

We bring glory to the Father's name on earth by doing the works and the greater works of the Son. God's name has been reduced to a term of derision in the world because of the general unbelief in His church that God wants to heal and wants to deliver and wants to work signs and wonders anymore in His church today. Church has been reduced to people in fancy dress with pointed hats and vicars with funny accents.

Consider in another place when Jesus gives us a vision of what we can expect as disciples:

"Have the faith of God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and cast into the sea' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that those things that he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says."

Mark 11,23

Jesus did not say, "Only the Apostles" or "Only the great preachers" or "Only the 144 000" but *whoever*, i.e. every believer. Furthermore, we have another two whole chapters in the first epistle to the Corinthian church explaining the use and context of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14). The next section looks at their application a bit more closely.

⁸⁰ It must be said though that His return has been imminent since the Ascension. Paul and Peter clearly expected His return during their lifetime. We cannot use this as an excuse to not take our broader social responsibility to our culture. This is one of the themes of my Master's dissertation found here: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325807525_Dominion_Theology_-_Its_origin_development_and_place_in_Christian_thinking

4.2.5 Spiritual Gifts

About the gift of tongues, he explains:

'For He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God for no one understands him; however in the spirit he speaks mysteries...He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...'

1 Corinthians 14, vv2,5

To edify means to build up. God gave the gift of tongues, so we could strengthen ourselves and build ourselves up. Just as He gave the gifts of prophesying and prophecy to build up the church:

'But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men...he who prophesies edifies the church.'

1 Corinthians 14,3-5

Now, it is completely logical to assume that if we do *not* operate these gifts that we will *not* be built up or strengthened either as a church or individuals. We will end up with all the form of our religion and yet no power. This is exactly what *has* happened in large sections of the institutional church and is foretold as another sign of the coming of Christ:

'But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, *having a form of godliness but denying its power*. And from such people turn away.'

2 Timothy 3,1-5

It is interesting that the religious person who will have nothing to do with spiritual power is grouped with the worst excesses of sinful man. We need to wake up and step into the realm of spirit children of God. Renewed in His image and filled with His power:

'For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another tongues, to another interpretation of tongues.'

1 Corinthians 12,8-11

'But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.'...And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the stature of the fullness of Christ...'

Ephesians 5,7-13

Notice that there is just *one* measure of God's Spirit. There may be many different ministries, but we all receive the same power in the Spirit of God. It is up to each individual how much of God they want to experience.

God expects us to operate in these gifts that we come into the fullness of Christ, i.e. the church is full of little Jesus' doing those things that Jesus did! What sort of God would He be that He would not meet people's immediate physical and spiritual needs? And yet commands them to surrender themselves to Him?

To tell the sick person, 'Sorry God won't heal you anymore.' Or to the drug addict, 'Sorry God won't help you come off, you'll just have to suffer.' Or to the conscientious, 'Sorry all the suffering in the world is God's doing therefore you can't do anything about it.'

Such a God is one in the image of Satan, not of Jesus. Blind devotion isn't what God wants. He wants thinking and intelligent children walking in wisdom to those needs around us. Spiritual gifts and spiritual wisdom are essential for us.

He wants us willingly to offer up ourselves as living sacrifices to Him. To be in love with Him. To be crying "Abba, Father"⁸¹ as His children. Jesus expected us to be in a position to meet not just the spiritual needs of people but the physical ones as well. Ephesians 5 above describes us as "ministers for Christ"; what are we ministering but the gospel that Jesus summarises in Luke 5, a gospel of total physical and spiritual prosperity.

The apostle James also emphasises this providing role of the believer:

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also, faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead."

James 2,14-17

If we are going to be providers, we are going to have to be rich in all things! The only way we are going to get riches that remain is by God prospering us and the only way that happens is by us getting into the Word of God and living it. As our soul prospers, then so do we:

'Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.'

3 John 1,2

To refuse to address these issues and to remain in a powerless form of our faith is to be the wicked servant, the five foolish virgins or the one who buried his talent in the parables told by Jesus. Christ said there was a

⁸¹ *Abba* is the Aramaic word for "father" which is sometimes considered to be a term of special affection, rather like our "daddy". However, such an assertion seems to lack linguistic evidence. In the Greek New Testament, we have this Aramaic word for father followed by the Greek word for father – this seems rather to suggest the universal fatherhood of God for the whole of humanity.

place prepared for those believers who refused to move on in the things of Him:

"For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 25,29-30

"But if that evil servant says in His heart, 'My master is delaying his coming'...the master of that servant will...appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 24,48-51

The lazy believer is called "evil". The place for evil is in everlasting torment. A place called Hell. We need to be judged diligent in whatever God has called us to do, whether this is a dustman, a social-worker, a research scientist, an evangelist or a parent.

4.2.6 Summary

In this chapter we examined the Christian life and how the Holy Spirit brings us freedom from bondage to this worlds spiritual and natural laws. It showed how the Holy Spirit empowers us to do for this generation what Jesus did for his. We examined how the curse placed on women in the garden of Eden has been removed in Christ and she stands as the spiritual equal of the man.

Lastly, we saw the challenge of the parables of Jesus for us to be spiritual men and women pushing back the frontiers of darkness. We hinted at the consequences of disobedience and apathy. The next chapter looks at this concept of judgement and some of the Christian concepts associated with it.

5 THE JUDGEMENT OF MAN AND THE NATURE OF DEATH

5.1 The Central Place of Judgement

Another doctrine central to the Christian faith is that of Judgement. God, as well as being merciful, is also *just*. This means that each individual is held accountable for their own wrong doings (sin) against God by God both in His activity through the circumstances of our earthly life and at the End of the Ages at a day the Bible calls Judgement Day. Our decision about what we decide to do with Jesus Christ determines what happens to us in eternity. This chapter looks at how judgement is described in both testaments and explains some of the concepts surrounding it.

5.2 Judgement in the Bible

Let us begin by examining the words of Jesus concerning the time of judgement:

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd divides His sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...' He will also say to those on the left hand 'Depart from me you cursed into the EVERLASTING fire prepared for the Devil and his angels' ...these will go away into EVERLASTING punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Matthew 25, vv31-34,41,46

So straight away we see Jesus placing Himself as God the Judge of all Humankind on a specific day. We also see that though our physical bodies die (the *first death*⁸²) our spirits are eternal.

If we are accounted amongst the righteous then we will go to eternal life with Jesus. If we have rejected His words, then we will go to a place of eternal punishment that was prepared for the Devil and His angels. Jesus describes this place of punishment on other occasions too:

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 24, v51 & 25,30

"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practise lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 13,41-42

"And if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire."

Matthew 18,8

"And if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."

Matthew 5,29

So, Jesus refers to this place of everlasting torment as "Hell". This is what faith in His name saves us from:

"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Romans 10,9

⁸²The bible also talks about the *Second Death*. See later in this chapter.

Judgement is not just a New Testament doctrine, but we see it throughout the Old Testament as well:

"And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men that have trespassed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

Isaiah 66,24

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Daniel 12,2

The last passage is interesting because it shows that we will be resurrected to face judgement with a new eternal body. This is confirmed by examining the apostle Paul's teaching:

"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

1 Corinthians 15,44

Jesus after He was resurrected from the dead had His new spiritual body. It was in the same appearance as the physical one and indeed was a transformed version of the old one for they had found an empty tomb. However, he still had flesh and bone. He ate with his disciples to prove he was not a ghost:

'Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

Luke 24, 36-39

This body was different though in the sense that He could walk through walls and move from one place to another outside the normal physical laws:

'And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace be with you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it to My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20,26-28

So, we can have no doubt whatsoever that there is a resurrection of the physical body into the spiritual one. The *first death* is when our body we have now ceases to function. Our spirit leaves the body and passes into the spiritual dimension and the place of waiting until the judgement. We receive our new spiritual body at the great Judgement where our old bodies are resurrected and changed:

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed...the mortal will be [clothed] with the immortal..."

1 Corinthians 15,51-54

When the physical body dies, we pass from the dominion of physical law into the dominion of spiritual law. We then become subject to the law of who we chose as our God.⁸³ This is either under the lordship of Jesus or Satan. Heaven or Hell. Jesus describes the judgement to everlasting torment as the *second death* for those people who reject Him in their mortality and spend their immortality separate from Him and in torment:

"And the Devil who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they shall

⁸³ This does not mean we can say we are an atheist or an agnostic and hope to escape judgement. Very few people consciously choose to be Satan worshippers but our very act of refusing to accept the revelation of Jesus Christ means we are in rebellion to God. and so, have aligned us with the original rebellion of Satan. We are worshipping him whether we are conscious of it or not when we rebel.

be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Revelation 20,10-15

5.3 Explanation of Death, Hades, Paradise and Heaven as terms used in the Bible pertaining to the After-Life

There is a difference between what happened when people died before Christ came, that is, in the Old Testament times and after. In pre-Christian times, when people died, they were automatically captives of Hades.

This is because when Humankind allowed itself to be tempted by Satan, they surrendered up their dominion to Him and came under His authority. Even the god-fearing and righteous still needed the redemption of their sin to enter into God's presence but their faith was accepted by God as faith that cleansed them when the future messiah was manifest. Hades thus had two different parts to it as places of waiting, *Paradise* and *Sheol*⁸⁴. This was revealed by Jesus in the recollection of a past event:⁸⁵

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named

⁸⁴ *Torments in Hades* is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word *Sheol* that appears in the Hebrew scriptures referring to the place of the wicked after death.

⁸⁵ Although this passage is in the midst of many parables, it is not started like a parable but with the words "There *was*" and so it assumed that Jesus was describing an actual event that He had been shown by His Father.

Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate...So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades..."

Luke 16,19-23

"Abraham's bosom" was the part of Hades which was also known as Paradise. It was a place of waiting for those who had died God-fearing or in ignorance of sin. What is referred to here as "torments in Hades" (*Sheol* in Hebrew) was where those who paid nothing but lip service to God or who were actively wicked went. When Christ was resurrected from the dead, He took these God-fearing people in Abraham's bosom with Him to Heaven. They came into the immediate presence of God:

'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.'

Ephesians 5,8

It was not possible for people to go to heaven before Christ was resurrected because their sin had only been *covered over* by the animal sacrifices of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. It was only when Christ's blood was shed that their sins were *forgiven*, and they became the righteousness of God which allowed them to come into God's presence, to enter Heaven, His dwelling place:

'For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins...But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come...not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption...By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ...'

Hebrews 10, v4; 9,11

In those three days when Christ died to His resurrection Christ descended into Hades and paid the final price for our forgiveness. This is confirmed by the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost:

"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave⁸⁶, nor will you let your Holy One see decay..."

Acts 2,26-27

We can also gain more insight into his suffering in the pit of Hades by considering the prophetic psalm written by David:

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? ... Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me...I am laid in the dust of death."

Psalm 22, vv1,12-13,15

The "bulls" and "dogs" are words describing the evil spirits that were tormenting Jesus in the pit of death. He took everything God would have otherwise laid on the human race. As He was not born of Adam there was no obligation to do this, he did it for the sake of all humanity. He was not under the authority of Death (Satan). Jesus made this quite clear to His disciples:

"I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world⁸⁷ is coming, and he has nothing in Me.⁸⁸ But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do."

John 14,30-31

But he answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

⁸⁶ Peter is quoting Psalm 16,8-11 where the Hebrew word used is *Sheol* referring to the place of damnation. This was a prophecy referring to Christ's suffering.

⁸⁷ Satan, the spiritual father of the wicked, cf. John 8,44.

⁸⁸ That is, no authority over Me.

Matthew 12,39-40

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

Luke 22,19-20

It was His voluntary subjection to Death which allowed God to forgive Humankind and then raise Him again. Christ took away Satan's authority over Humankind. It is now each Man's choice whether he spends his life now and in eternity in bondage with Satan or in freedom with God:

'And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting or requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed (spiritual) principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.'

Colossians 2,13-15

5.4 Gehenna and Tartarus

There are two other words sometimes used by Jesus and the apostles which are related to eternal judgment: Gehenna and Tartarus.

5.4.1 Gehenna

"Gehenna" was a ravine just south of Jerusalem. Historically, it was a place of sacrifice to the god Moloch and was known for the cries of the children as they rolled into the arms of the outstretched god and the flames⁸⁹. The place was considered so defiled by the Jews because of this practice that it became the place of burning rubbish and diseased animals, the fires were

⁸⁹ For a scholarly account of the origins and usage, see Thayer's Greek Lexicon, word 1145.

kept burning continually to prevent the smell of putrefaction. Thus, it is easy to see how it was adopted figuratively in the parables of Jesus to illustrate the continual burning, cries and torment of the wicked in their place of punishment. Owing to this Jewish context, you never find the word used outside of the gospels.

5.4.2 Tartarus

Greeks would use the word *tartarus* to describe the equivalent place as the Gehenna of the Jews within their mythology for the punishment of the wicked dead. However, it only appears once in the New Testament writers (2 Pe 2:4) and is used with the sense of a prison for the fallen angels that are spoken of in Gen 6:2, that were said to have left their place of lawful authority to side with Satan's rebellion. It is considered the place of deepest darkness and the most profound punishment.

5.5 The Offence of Hell

There is no more offensive concept to the non-believing world and a good part of the believing world than the concept of eternal punishment of the wicked. The liberal accuses God of being the "Eternal Torturer" and many modern evangelicals, following the example of John Stott, prefer annihilation of the sinner to the "eternal conscious torment" claiming that it would be unjust for God to punish outside of time (for eternity) those sins that were committed in time⁹⁰.

However, this seems an extraordinarily weak argument – the effects of sin *are* eternal only muted by the eternal effects of receiving salvation. The very fact that Jesus came *into* time implies that the effects of sin were experienced *outside* of time, indeed in heaven itself, as witnessed in Heb 9:23. Put another way, the annihilationist argument is asserting that simply by stepping outside of time Adam's sin would be commuted – but why indeed

⁹⁰ John Stott's first expression of annihilationism is found in Edwards, D & Stott J., *Essentials: A liberal-evangelical dialogue* (Hodder & Stoughton, London: 1988), pp. 312-329. Many evangelicals followed this example which is why the "Alpha Course" programme does not engage with this issue.

then would Christ need to come at all, coming from *outside* time *into* time to bring redemption? It would otherwise be more efficient and fairer, to incarcerate in time for a specified period only, that would commute the sentence to permit the offender to then proceed to heaven outside of time.

A second problem would be that it seems to logically entail *universalism* – the idea that all humanity will eventually be saved, for surely if the *justice* of the law is time constrained and commensurate with the crime, it can be “spent” after that suitable period of incarceration. This is contra Stott’s stated rejection of *universalism* but, logically, it freely adds weight to those who will argue for it using the very scriptures he asserts have universalistic overtones.

I do not wish to comment in detail on his exegesis or argumentation (the debate about annihilation is well rehearsed within the academy and seminary for those interested) because, as he freely admits, his *real* problem is primarily not even a theological problem, it is rather a psychological one, more specifically, an *emotional* one⁹¹. For even though he tries to provide a biblical justification as a good evangelical should, he is arguing in favour of his predisposition on the basis of his stated emotions about the matter, perhaps even begging the question, exegeting the texts after the fact.

In terms of the objective rationality that eludes Stott in his emotional pain and subjectivity, the basic logical premise must be that to offend the holiness of God is an immutable sin unless the redemption offered by the blood of Christ has been appropriated. The passing of time in no way undoes what has been done in the act of rebellion as the argument regarding the situatedness within time was shown to be fallacious for its effects were experienced beyond time (understood by modern Physics as a property of our universe (space-time) only), in heaven itself.

Whatever punishment God deems appropriate, no matter how offensive to our sensitivities – to use Stott’s own examples, the tears of Jeremiah over the Jews or the tears of Paul over the Jews were of no

⁹¹ Ibid. pp312-313

objective weight before the throne of God's justice and remedied nothing in both cases – we must accept as warranted and perfectly just; it is indeed, as Hebrews 10:31 reminds us, “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”. If God is to be moved by emotions and feelings rather than what justice requires and contrary to what He has written, there is no gospel necessary, for who wants a single person to perish in fire and endure their screams of torment; salvation can be offered on an unconditional, plenary basis that our feelings might not be hurt. Our logical choices come down to either all are saved by the passing out of time in death, rendering it unnecessary for Christ to have come at all, or to receive a saviour in time for eternity. As Christ did come, we need to receive a saviour to enjoy eternity.

5.6 Summary

As a concise summary, consider the words of the apostle Paul describing our choice with respect to what happens to us at that Day of Judgement:

'And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.'

Hebrews 9,27-28

A judge above all else passes a *just* sentence: vindicating the innocent and condemning the guilty. Though God is gracious and desires all men and women to be saved, He is also just and specifies how and when we can be saved; He also states in advance the consequences of rejecting that salvation; the passing out of time does not save us.

In some of these passages Jesus spoke of *himself* as the judge. This has the implication that he and he *alone* is the way to God. In fact, the book of Revelation says that it is *God* who sits on the throne of judgement. Thus, Jesus is claiming the title of God for himself. The next two chapters examine the claim that Jesus is the Son of God incarnate, the Word of God from eternity and that He alone can save us.

6 THE EXCLUSIVITY OF CHRISTIANITY

Some of the content in this chapter may seem slightly dated as it was written in the early 1990s - emphases have changed in eschatological thinking (and my own thinking has evolved substantially), the New Age movement is not front and centre in alternative culture as it was then, but it is still a salient piece of writing. Similarly, the tone of this chapter may seem intolerant and offensive in our modern pluralist or relativist idiom – I am not trying to deny there is not truth or value found outside of Christianity or that God can speak through other religions or none at all but I still assert that the salvation of Man is found in Jesus alone, though perhaps we might not even know his name. Again, I would say, be forgiving of my youthful self, eat the meat and spit out the bones.

6.1 Introduction

We are living in an age where over the last 100 years we have seen an explosion of religious groupings and cults. We have seen the formation of new denominations within the Christian church. There are many so-called "charismatic" churches teeming to the brim with young people excited about Jesus.

Likewise, there has been a phenomenal increase in the size of the Islamic community. There has been the public emergence since 1975 of the "New Age" Movement which has permeated throughout our society and the established religions. There is a great move towards "Inter-faith" services where people accept that we are all worshipping the same God really.

Others, fuelled by the interest in the future of the planet, have deified and spiritualised "Mother Earth" (Gaia) asserting that we should become one with the Cosmos and so become "God" which is everything and all around us. "God" is no longer a distinct being, but we are all have the potential to reach the status of "God". By anybody's measure we are living in an age of intense spiritual activity.

We are coming to the End of an Age and everyone studying life on earth knows it. Scientists are seeing the run down and collapse of the ecosystem. Many species are vanishing with the removal of essential habitats. Biologists are seeing the degradation of species. Pollution is reaching catastrophic proportions.

Politicians are fighting over how there can be food shortage in the midst of plenty which seems to get worse rather than better. Economic

chaos is threatening the world system. Traditional spheres of influence are breaking down. Many religious groupings say that according to its holy book we are approaching the 'end of all things'.

There has been a spiritual awakening of Humankind this century and especially over the last 15 years. We are beginning to realise we have neglected the human spirit: we treat and develop the body and soul, but the "spirit" has been shrouded in mystery.

People are reaching out for spiritual things and the values and thinking of the "New Age" movement has come to a fore very recently. There is not an area of our life that has not been alerted to this "Green consciousness" in recent times.

A great emphasis of the spirit of the age has been on individualism and the abandonment of moral absolutes. Everyone is encouraged to accept everyone else's views and opinions. In the religious realm this has meant a watering down and sometimes abandonment of any concept of distinctiveness between the major religions. Liberal theologians of each religion have seen each other as "different paths to God."

This chapter looks at how the Bible views other religions and how the words of Jesus especially can give a radical perspective on the syncretism⁹² of today's religious culture. The challenge of Jesus' words is to recognise that there is a spiritual battle being waged for the lives and souls of human beings through counterfeit religious ideas.

I extend from the general examination of Jesus' words to look at a particular feature of our religious culture today, the New Age movement. I hypothesise that the theology of New Age is in line with what the bible calls the 'Antichrist' doctrines and is a sign for Christians of the closeness of Jesus' coming.

⁹² Syncretism is the philosophical system that attempts to reconcile irreconcilable belief systems as in fact expressions of a single belief system. The dialectical tension between two opposites is said to render a new system closer to the truth.

6.2 Syncretism from Jesus' Perspective

Counterfeits of true religion are explicitly mentioned by Jesus in his discourse on His Second Coming and the End-Times and makes some emphatic claims about himself in the process. He had just unnerved his closest disciples by prophesying the destruction of the most sacred of their religious symbols and national unity, their Temple:

'Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said, "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in my Name, saying, 'I am the Christ', and will deceive many...Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many...Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ! or 'There!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be..."

Matthew 24, v3-5,11,23-27

Jesus is exclusive here about there being no other way to God except Himself. He is warning against false prophets and teachers and the cults that lock people away in remote locations and persuade people that they and only they, have the true revelation.

He is warning about the elaborate religious systems that have great "prophets" and demean His standing from being God. He is warning against believing in people or religions because of manifestations of spiritual power and supernatural signs. He is warning against a watering down of His

Words into some liberal or purely social and moral Christianity or an interpretation that removes inappropriately its literal nature⁹³.

In speaking of *false prophets*, He is stating that the other religions do not *necessarily* (in the logical sense) have a common root with Christianity as syncretists believe, but have untruth (lies, misrepresentations, deceptions), and so satanic⁹⁴ thought, at their root to a greater or lesser degree⁹⁵. Jesus is even more explicit in another place about Him being the only way to get to the Father:

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except by Me."

John 14,6

Satan can only copy what God has done, miracles and signs do operate in the Satanic but only a perversion of what God has done before. You can see this in the story of Moses before Pharaoh in Exodus 7-11. The sorcerers and magicians could only do what Moses did, they could not pre-empt him.

The major world religions were only formalised according to the patterns God revealed through the ages to the people He called in the Bible. There was nothing like the Bible before the Bible. The Bible is unique in

⁹³ There is a place for textual and theological investigation of deeper meanings within text gained from cultural and historical knowledge. However, a biblical theology will always start from the assumption that the bible *is* correct and not by trying to find reasons why it is not.

⁹⁴ To use the adjective "satanic" might seem extreme. However, the essence of Satan's proposition to Eve (whether or not we accept the historicity of the text) was to establish our autonomy and independence from God's thought as normative for us; in the descriptive sense then "satanic" simply means any thought that seeks to establish our autonomy apart from God's law rather than any commitment to the religions of Satanism.

⁹⁵ Of course, this does not exclude Maimonides axiom that we should celebrate truth wherever we may find it. To the degree that one practices life in harmony with God's law even when one is not aware of it (as Paul establishes in Romans 1-3) or to the degree that one practices spiritual principles that are godly (one thinks of motivational speakers many of whom freely admit their principles are found in Proverbs 23:7 (NASB), "as a man thinks within himself, so he is"), we shall see success and blessing in our life. However, the full salvation of the human is found in and through Jesus alone.

that its chronology extends from 1600B.C. to around AD100 and is written by a large collection of authors over this time. This allows the bible to be cross-referenced against itself and prophecy to be objectively assessed. The biblical claims can also be verified against archaeology and secular history. There is an entire science of textual criticism that has evolved in assessing the manuscript data, tracing changes and reconstructing where required the original text. It is the best validated piece of religious literature that there is.

The holy books of other religions are copies of the pattern of having a written basis of your faith rather than just ritual and word of mouth. Having ideas written down allows the human intellect to be convinced and this has an enormous power in keeping people in a religion.

6.3 The New Age Movement

6.3.1 Introduction

The term “New Age Movement” is really a misnomer. The New Age Movement has no common creed or unifying principles. It is much more a very loose coalition of religious groupings that have rejected mainstream religious ideas based on a text or a creed and have moved into experiential religion and then worked out the theology afterwards.

Thus, there have arisen many and often very bizarre theologies but there does seem to be two major streams of New Age thinking:

- The first denies the existence of "God" as a distinct being at all but considers us each to be like an atom of God. It is the universal life-flow or collective conscience or "energy" of all humanity that describes God. This is clearly linked to some Eastern religious ideas;

- The second is rather more sophisticated and does have a definite dualistic⁹⁶ concept within it. It is rooted in the theosophy of the late 19th century and the mystical works of people like Alice Bailey and Alistair Crowley.

Many of the "ancient" religions such as paganism and druidism have found a home within the New-Age umbrella. In response to this, many liberal theologians, have been at pains to reconcile themselves to this new religious experience and move into "real" spiritual experiences from their dead and rationalistic theologies of Christianity.

6.3.2 “New Age” as an extension of 19th Century Theosophy

The foundational beliefs are those of the theosophists like Alice Bailey and the occultist Alistair Crowley. They established a "Plan" for the last 120 years for the close of this Age. According to the revelation given to Alice Bailey by the familiar spirit she knew as "The Tibetan" and her other spiritual guides there would be a revelation of the "New Age Christ" who would abolish all the forms of religion and establish a new one.

In their view, the great religious leaders of history be they Jesus, Buddha, Confucius or Mohammed are all claimed to have had "Christ consciousness" but are not *the* Christ. They are simply disciples of the true “New Age” Christ, the Maitereya⁹⁷.

He would embrace all religions but those who insisted in remaining “fundamentalist” (i.e. refusing to adopt this new religion) would be "removed to a different plane of existence" (i.e. killed). She was given a detailed plan for the structure and development of the New Age movement which her "disciples" and fellow travellers have rigidly adhered to.

⁹⁶ Dualism holds that there is a physical realm and a spiritual realm that are distinct from each other. In most forms of dualism, matter is considered inert and inferior to the spiritual world which is often conceived as hampered by the physical. True liberation is to escape the bondage of flesh.

⁹⁷ This perspective on the New Age movement is discussed by Constance Cumbey in her book, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow*.

This plan instructed the Movement to go public in the mid-1970s which it did do. Since then it really has spread worldwide. Groups like Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Amnesty International, "Aid" groups and countless other establishments and organisations might be said to have "New Age" thinking at the centre of their constitutions⁹⁸.

They all look forward to this "New World Order" of "peace". New Age elements are now found in the training programmes of BT, IBM, ICI and countless other businesses. New Age churches are just beginning to appear in this country.

One of the unifying beliefs among all the major religions which have helped them to accommodate this kind of "New Age" theology is the appearance at the End of The Age of an incarnation of God. To the Moslems it is the Iman Mahdi, to the Hindus it is Krishna, to the Buddhists it is the 6th incarnation of Buddha, to the Jews it is the Messiah, to the Christian it is the Second Coming of Jesus.

Liberal theologians have disputed the textual and historical accuracy of the Bible and so have removed the boundaries of what constitutes Christianity and what does not. Islam and the other major religions all have a mystical tradition whose meditation practices and experiences are very similar to the New Age ones. There has also been the nominal element that have been pleased to embrace this "new" experience.

All these elements have allowed New Age ideas to make large inroads into traditional religion. There have been new "services" held in the cathedrals up and down Britain where any reference that imply a strictly Christian religious bias are removed and the word "God" or "Heavenly spirit" is used instead.

⁹⁸ It is important to realise that not everybody involved in these movements supports the New Age concepts.

6.3.3 “New Age” as an extension of Eastern Mysticism

The lack of a common theology, at least for the novice New-Ager looking for spiritual experience, has led to a description of the groups as “networked”. This means they are informally linked but distinct enough so that when any scandal occurs (often sexual and involving the typically male leader of the cult impregnating his female devotees)⁹⁹, the rest can dissociate themselves.

New Age thinking of this sort shares that emphasis on "goodness" to one another and the planet. The emphasis of "finding your true self" is very strong. The thinking embraces everything from Environmentalism, "alternative" medicine, vegetarianism and veganism, reflexology, chiropody, transcendental meditation, spiritualism and yoga as the means of spiritual improvement.¹⁰⁰

The experiential emphasis of this type of New Age has meant that there have been supernatural manifestations such as healings, miracles, tongues, visions, prophecy, astral travel, global "link-ups", and a heightened moral sense of our common humanity. There has been a rejection of scientific rationalism and a return to spiritual intuition most explicitly seen in the emphasis on "alternative" medicines¹⁰¹.

For these reasons, the freshness and warmth of many such New Age groups and a progressive lifestyle has brought in many searchers and seekers and those bored with dead, ritualistic mainstream religious ideas. Natural friends to New Age are meditative and mystical streams in Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism; derivative practices such as

⁹⁹ One leader of a New Age foundation where I lived in 1992 claimed the children born to women of the foundation were “immaculate conceptions” despite the fact they looked like him when one became a “whistle-blower”. Remarkably, even to this day (2019), the organisation survives.

¹⁰⁰ That is not to say that everyone in these movements is a New Ager or perhaps these individual practices are of themselves spiritually dangerous, though some are based on an explicit spiritual basis that is hostile and sometimes antithetical to Christian thinking.

¹⁰¹ Medical and analytical tests on some homeopathic remedies concluded that it was not the medicine that cures people. In fact, some remedies have proved extremely dangerous.

Yoga¹⁰² and meditation that have emphasised self-improvement and harmonisation with the natural rhythms of the universe as part of their creeds.

It is an open question for some Christians as to whether yoga and the similar spiritual practices or psychological techniques can be “redeemed”, that is, practiced for their physical or mental benefits and combined with Christian mindfulness or meditation. Some fundamentalists would consider Christian yoga, meditation, mindfulness, alternative medicine etc as oxymorons¹⁰³.

6.3.4 “New Age” and the Bible

It would seem logically necessary that bible believing born-again Christians should assert that the New Age movement is a conspiracy of Satan to procure His ultimate desire for the worship of Humankind. They would point to the words of Jesus and other prophetic words. The apostle John explaining to confused believers about the "End Times" clearly states this type of doctrine as Antichrist:

'Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour...Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.'

1 John 2,18-22

The apostle Paul writes concerning the Antichrist also. He shows all the elements of theosophical New Age thinking where a man will emerge to establish a new world religion:

'Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the

¹⁰² Yoga derives from a Hindu ritual that prepares someone for death (they “empty” themselves). Each position is a worship position to a particular deity.

¹⁰³ Being now married to a person that extensively uses such techniques to “minister” professionally to people (i.e. treat), I believe they can be successfully redeemed for the Master’s use.

son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.'

2 Thessalonians 2,3-4

Jesus revealed to the apostle John in His Revelation a "false Christ" who would establish a new world political, economic and religious system requiring universal observance:

"Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb¹⁰⁴ and spoke like a dragon¹⁰⁵. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those to dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed¹⁰⁶....And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy and sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.'

Revelation 13, vv11-12,16-17

Within the New Age Movement, we also see a high degree of spiritual potency with counterfeit healings and miracles, signs and wonders. All manner of spiritual manifestation from astral projection and mind transfer to speaking in tongues is seen. Again, the apostle Paul identifies this with the Antichrist and it is mentioned to John by Jesus in His Revelation:

"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.'

¹⁰⁴ That is, he appeared to be Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The Greek preposition "anti" has two senses – one meaning in opposition to and one meaning as a replacement for. Both senses are used by the biblical writers.

¹⁰⁵ Satan's servant; Satan himself is often portrayed as a dragon in scripture.

¹⁰⁶ Christ crushed the head of the serpent on the cross, see Genesis 3,15

2 Thessalonians 9-10

'He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.'

Revelation 13,13

The version of New Age that likes to see itself as "God" or God being within us is perhaps very close to the original lie of the Devil:

'And the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God¹⁰⁷, knowing good and evil.'

Genesis 3,4-5

6.4 Christianity and the nature of salvation

What makes Christianity fundamentally different from any other religious system is that it does not rely on self-improvement to make you acceptable to God. We are saved *for* good works, not *by* good works – it reverses the order. It does not rely on the following of a strict moral code or some divine commandments *in order to be* saved. It does not rely on an inward seeking after truth through mystical experiences or an isolation from the world in some retreat. Intimate, mystical experience *follows* salvation as a rule becoming part of a lifestyle of communion with God¹⁰⁸.

It relies on the acceptance by the individual of the work of Jesus alone on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice for their imperfection. Jesus paid the price for their sin and that it was the price of his body and his blood that releases the individual to have fellowship with God:

¹⁰⁷ The original Hebrew can be translated, 'you will be as gods' or your *own* God.

¹⁰⁸ This is not to say that people cannot experience God through dreams or visions, trances and the like before their salvation. However, this is different to *ascetism* that proposes objectively that these practices lead one to God.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

Ephesians 2,8

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men...that blessed hope...our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem¹⁰⁹ us from all iniquity..."

Titus 2,11-13

"Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world..."

Galatians 1,3-4

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart one believeth unto righteousness: and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."

Romans 10,8-10

The key to salvation in Christianity is *faith* in the Lord Jesus. Good works and spiritual searching follow in Christianity because of the experience of God's Spirit coming to dwell in us and giving us a completely new nature:

Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3,3

"...the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man: which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and that you put on

¹⁰⁹ The word 'redeem' means to buy back that which was ransomed or pawned. It would have been understood in terms of money and slavery in the times when it was written.

the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Ephesians 4,21-24

Good works aside from faith in God are worthless:

"What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For, if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what sayeth the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness...to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Romans 4,1-5

Have no illusions about what the Bible says about other religions. They are counterfeits and deception to a greater or lesser degree designed or infiltrated by Satan to keep people from the simple truths of the gospel. This is **not** to say that they have no value as far as human beings are concerned or are **completely** devoid of truth. Very few people will believe a blatant lie, but many people *will* believe a lie garnished with truth. The truthful aspect is what pulls you in to believe the lie. Religion can often make people more moral and concerned about others. But then, as humanists and rationalists of the 20th century have argued, why bother to put God in at all, just isolate the moral and social teaching and build a society on those secular precepts. It is notable that Karl Marx did just this as a section of his doctoral dissertation does just this.

Once you are concerned about God, then you need to understand how different religions perceive God. Christianity is the *only* concept of God that has God himself as a Saviour. Jesus is the *only* person who has ever claimed to be *the truth* and not just a *messenger* or a prophet of God.

Jesus came and claimed to be the Son of God and the only Way to the Father. He performed signs and wonders, miracles and healings and had a spiritual solution to every conceivable problem, be it physical, human or spiritual, that had never before been seen on earth. His words remain a challenge to all those people who would be truly spiritual:

'let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazereth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole...Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'

Acts 4,10-12

7 THE TRIUNE NATURE OF GOD

7.1 Introduction

The Christian concept of God is unique in that it asserts that God is a being of three persons. This has always been a controversial doctrine and is one of the concepts that strongly divides Christianity from Islam¹¹⁰ and modern Judaism. Certain "Protestant" groupings have also seen this as a "Catholic" doctrine and the various quasi-Christian groups such as the Christadelphians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Church of the Latter-Day Saints¹¹¹, Armstrongism¹¹², Seventh-Day Adventist, Church of Christ-Scientist to name a few, have all rejected this doctrine.

However, the doctrine of the Trinity is important because it validates what Jesus claims about himself, particularly developed in the gospel of John¹¹³, that he is the *Son* of God and that he self-identifies with the Word of God which would have been familiar to his Jewish audience because of the use of the metaphor of wisdom in Proverbs. It is important because the unspotted divinity of the Lamb of God is the concept on which redemption is ultimately founded. The doctrine of the Trinity also has enormous practical philosophical significance because it demonstrates that *community* is a foundational value that God has placed in the world.

I believe it is possible to show that this is the universal teaching of the Bible from even the first verse and some theologians consider the

¹¹⁰ It is one of the most serious sins in Islam for "Christ, the Son of Mary" to be called Allah (an Arab name for God).

¹¹¹ Commonly called the Mormon church. However, sexual immorality and polygamy, which has been a historical feature of the church with its founder, Josef Smith being shot by a jealous husband, and financial scandals prompted the changing of the name.

¹¹² Publishers of the "Plain Truth" magazine.

¹¹³ Indeed, theocentric theologians such as John Hick (as opposed to Christocentric ones) reject the canonicity of the gospel of John. It is *the* major obstacle to any kind of reconciliation with other monotheistic religions.

acceptance of the Trinity doctrine by a group or church¹¹⁴ as one of the signs of genuine Biblical Christianity. The Trinity as a conceptualisation *is* a novel development of the Judaism that Christianity emerged as an innovation from, but it is found throughout the Hebrew scriptures also. It is a theological inference – you will not find the word “Trinity” in the scriptures, but it is an inference based on very strong evidence. The aim of this chapter is to show in as simplest a way as possible, a case for the Trinity or “Godhead”¹¹⁵.

You may find the threads of argument rather abstract and difficult to follow in the first section that traces the Trinity in the Old Testament. This is necessarily so as references to the Trinity are veiled in these early writings of Moses and need to be carefully drawn out. They are not explicit for very good reasons which I can briefly say here were to do with the spiritual culture at the time. I devote a section to this cultural aspect at the end of the chapter. As the spiritual culture of the Hebrews and then Israel develops, we see more and more explicit mention of all members of the Trinity.

Thus, in the following two sections which look at how the Trinity in the words of the Apostles of Jesus and of Jesus Himself it becomes explicitly part of their doctrine. Perhaps the most exciting account of the Trinity is Jesus' own account where He not only expounds the Trinity but then claims to be a member of it.

¹¹⁴ In the history of every church there comes a point where a "Statement of Faith and Practice" will be made and certain basic “creeds” will be formalised. Theological questions such as the Trinity may not be fully understood by everyone but is accepted as so because of the trust put in the mature leadership. The inability of an individual member to give a discourse on the Trinity is not evidence to say they are a counterfeit Christian. It can only be used in this way by considering their life and practice as a whole.

¹¹⁵ Neither the term Trinity or Godhead is used in the Old Testament. The term ‘Godhead’ is found in the New Testament which also cross-references itself with the Old Testament in establishing the doctrine.

7.2 The Trinity in the Old Testament

7.2.1 The Trinity in Creation

The first three verses of the Bible are as follows:

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the SPIRIT of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then GOD SAID "Let there be..."'

Genesis 1,1-3

There are three distinct references to the being "God" here. First in verse 1 we see "God". In the original Hebrew this is the *plural* word *Elohim*, a collective and general term describing that the being called "God" was the creating source of the Universe. Elohim can be equated with some of the uses of the term *Father* in the New Testament.

In verse 2 we see an unveiling of this being "God". He has a *spiritual* presence, a personality, hovering and brooding¹¹⁶ over the formless, judged planet¹¹⁷. In verse 3 God *spoke*. Form was not given to the world until the *Word of God* was involved. In the new covenant we would normally say *the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*.

It was the "Word of God" that gave the creative will of Elohim its physical existence and then its life. The *Spirit of God* was the *means* through which the power contained in the *Word of God* by the will of *Elohim* brought the Universe into existence. Thus, during the actual creation of life in Genesis 1 the phrase "let us" is continually repeated:

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..."

¹¹⁶ Although not explicit in the English translation, 'brooding' is implied in the original Hebrew.

¹¹⁷ I follow the "gap theory" that between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 there is implied a pre-Adamic race. My principle reason for this is theological – in God there is no darkness but we see darkness on the face of the deep enveloping the planet. I believe there are oblique references throughout scripture to this period.

Note that the text refers to God in the plural, "Us". Thus, God is repeatedly referring to Himself not in the *singular* but in the *plural*. The immediate suggestion is that God, although a single entity, is not just one person but a combination of persons.

These are quite obscure references to the Trinity and I am not attempting to prove the notion on this basis alone. The important point I am making is that God wants Himself to be understood by spiritual Men, from the very beginning of the Bible, to be a triune being.

Further evidence is provided by chapter two of Genesis. Consider the passage below:

"Then God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. This is the history¹¹⁸ of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens...!"

Genesis 2, 3-4

Both the collective term "God" and "LORD God" (Jehovah¹¹⁹ Elohim) are used. Here the "Word of God" of verse one, the actual creating personality, is revealed to be Jehovah Elohim. However, the fact that the creation is attributed also to Jehovah Elohim suggests that each member of the Trinity is as much "God" in all his fulness as any individual.

This is again confirmed by the fact that it was also Jehovah Elohim that walked in the garden with Man. Jehovah Elohim *spoke* to Man in the garden and so we can conclude that the *Word of God* appears to have a body.

¹¹⁸ This can also be translated as "generations".

¹¹⁹ The word "Jehovah" is known as a transliteration. The original Hebrew text has the unpronounceable letters YHWH. Vowels were added to give "Yahweh" or "Jehovah" as there is no "J" in the Greek alphabet. Most English translations follow the convention of using the word "LORD" in capital letters to denote this name. The Hebrew word *Adonai* is translated into Greek as "kurios" which has the meaning of preeminent, supreme, chief and so is often translated "Lord". It is not unusual to see Lord LORD in passages that are emphasising the sovereignty of God.

It is the *image* or *likeness* of Jehovah Elohim, how God chooses to reveal Himself to us:

'And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.'

Genesis 2,8

7.2.2 The Trinity in the early history of Man

Chapter four of Genesis sees the first use of the single term "LORD". The fact here that the LORD *spoke* to Cain again suggests that the *Word of God* is present. However, there is no mention that God *appeared* to Cain. The Word of God was brought to Him by the *Spirit of God*.

This bringing of the Word of God by the Spirit of God is exactly what Jesus spoke about the future role of the Spirit of God and is useful confirmation of the coherence of the concept through the ages. The oneness of God is again underlined by the fact both the Spirit and the Word are ascribed the name Jehovah.

If we move on to chapter 11 then we see another revelation of the Trinity. The "LORD" came from heaven to earth and spoke to the rest of God in heaven (also referred to as the LORD) to decide a course of action:

'But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built...The LORD said, "Come let Us go down and there confuse their language that they may not understand one another's speech." '

Genesis 11, 6-7

A pattern begins to emerge through Genesis in God's dealings with early Man after the Fall and it involves all the Trinity. Normally the will of God (Jehovah Elohim, "God", *the Father*) was first spoken (the Word of God, *the Son*) through the Spirit (the *Holy Spirit*) to a person God was dealing

with. Once this person had decided to yoke or *covenant* themselves to God, God would *then* appear and speak to them face to face.¹²⁰

7.2.3 The Trinity in the history of Israel

Once God had established the covenant with Abraham there is a sequence of events tracing the development of the Hebrew ethnic group. They were Abraham's descendants. Israel really became a nation when Moses led them out of Egypt.

The book of Exodus makes particularly interesting reading with regards to the activity of the Trinity. A very interesting passage is given below:

"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush...And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush...."

Exodus 3,2-4

God and LORD are clearly interchanged here. It is interesting that it was *the LORD* who saw and *God* who called. The former, I would hypothesise refers to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Elohim) but the second, by definition, must be the *Word* of God. This reinforces the idea of the oneness of God and that one member of the Trinity has a body and so speaks in a way that we can hear with our physical senses. This *Word of God* speaks the will of Jehovah Elohim and yet is still called God in his fulness¹²¹.

The battle that Moses has with Pharaoh's sorcerers and magicians illustrates the activity of the *Spirit* of God. He is clearly omnipresent as the whole region of Egypt was affected. It is interesting to note that, just as in

¹²⁰ I mentioned in the chapter dealing with God's covenants with Man that God needed Man's permission to operate in the environment of the Earth.

¹²¹ Compare this with the New Testament scripture, Colossians 2,9.

creation, the power of the Spirit of God was released by words being spoken.

There is the same pattern of God's will being performed by the Spirit who is released by words. Another passage shows this power carrying aspect of the Spirit and how the Spirit is also everything that God is:

"And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying...I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship..."

Exodus 31,1-3

Notice how the Spirit and the LORD are distinct personalities but both ascribed to God? The Spirit has all God's wisdom and ability and here He gives it to men. The Spirit of God is omnipresent whereas God who spoke to Moses face to face had a body. He was a different personality but still God:

"And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend."

Exodus 33,11

A most powerful example of the distinctness of the personalities within the Trinity is seen further on in Israel's history when they had just crossed the river Jordan and were to go and conquer the land that God had given them. We see the physical manifestation of God's person again:

‘And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn...And he said...as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to...worship...And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, ". Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place where on thou standest is holy.." ’

Joshua 5,13-15

This captain of the host was in fact the LORD God. No other being apart from God may be worshipped¹²². It is interesting to notice that Joshua was asked to do the same as Moses was when God appeared to Him in the burning bush.

I sense in some of the passages the intimate relationship that the Godhead has with each other. The Father, Spirit and Word talk about each other and their work. The next passages are God reflecting on the work of the LORD in earlier generations of Israel:

"And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice...I prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD..."

Judges 2,20-22

"And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice."

1 Kings 11,9

"And the LORD said unto Satan, "the LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem...." "

Zechariah 3,2

Notice how the LORD talks about the LORD. It is impossible to ascribe the personalities from just this passage which again underlines that any part of the Trinity is God in His completeness and has full rights to be called the name of God, the LORD. The Trinity do not work independent from each other but together:

"And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer...And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him."

¹²² This is supported by the first commandment (Deuteronomy 5,9) and the attitude of angels when men tried to worship them (Revelation 19,10)

Judges 3,9-10

Their wills are in complete harmony. The Spirit spoke the words of God and the Word Himself would often appear to those whom the Spirit spoke:

"Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth...And the LORD came and stood, and called as at other times. Then Samuel answered, Speak..."

1 Samuel 3,9-10

Notice how Samuel could not see the LORD. Thus, the Spirit was there. However, notice also how the LORD *stood* there and called. The Word of God must also have been there.

All the prophets of God had powerful revelations of God. Ezekiel experienced the Trinity in a very unique way. The Father, Word and Spirit were all involved in a revelation of the future. The Word was guiding and talking to Ezekiel while the Spirit moved him and the Father's glory was seen:

"So the spirit took me up, and brought me to into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever...."

Ezekiel 43,5

Ezekiel had the most remarkable encounter with the Trinity. The chapters 40 onwards in his book show how the Father, Word and Spirit are all of one God and yet all distinct. The "man" in the above who talks to Ezekiel about *his* throne must be God. Yet this same man continually talks about what the Lord GOD is saying:

`And he said unto me, "Son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD..."`

The reversal of the capitalisation is significant here. "Lord" is a term referring to the *office* of God. It means supreme, sovereign, King of kings. GOD is an alternative transliteration of the Hebrew text normally transliterated as LORD. This term is the *name*¹²³ of God, *who* He is:

'Then brought he me the way....and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD....and the LORD said unto me.'

Ezekiel 44, 4-5

The use by God when talking to Ezekiel of both "LORD" and Lord is to describe Himself and His purposes to Ezekiel: what He is, who He is and why He does. It reveals the natural attributes of Trinity, omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. It also reveals the wisdom and benevolence of God.

It really was an astonishing revelation that the prophet received although he never made any attempt to explain it. I believe that it is only with the knowledge of the nature and structure of the New Testament church that you could go any way to understanding this revelation. Thus, it is an appropriate place to move on to the Trinity in the New Testament.

7.3 The Trinity explained by Jesus

Jesus referred to Himself in a very unusual way. He constantly used the titles 'Son of Man' and 'Son of God':

'Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am: and you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." '

Mark 14,61-62

To the religious authorities of his day, these were considered blasphemous titles because Jesus was claiming the divinity and position of

¹²³Ancient peoples believed the name of someone contained their nature., it reflected their character.

God for himself. He eventually offended the religious conscience of the religious and political leaders so much that it led to his crucifixion:

Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, "What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye?" And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.'

Mark 14,63-64

Jesus expresses this fact that He had come to Earth as God emptied of the power of God that He might appear as any other man¹²⁴ in His final prayer to the Father. He refers to Himself as a "Name" by which God reveals Himself to Man:

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You...glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your Name to the men you have given Me out of the world."

John 17,1-6

This is reaffirmed by Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah that Jesus is "God with Us" in the flesh:

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."¹²⁵

Isaiah 7,14

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...!"

Isiah 9,6

¹²⁴ In theology this is known as "kenosis" from the Greek word for "emptying" (as used in the great hymn of Philippians 2).

¹²⁵ The name Immanuel literally means "God with us"

There were also times during Jesus' ministry on Earth when He took the covenant names of God revealed to the ancient Israelites for himself. That is, the names that God revealed Himself to Moses:

"Then Moses said to God, "Indeed when I come to the children of Israel...and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM..thus shall you say to the children of Israel, I AM¹²⁶ has sent me to you." "

Exodus 3,13-14

"Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." "

John 8,57-58

"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins."

John 8,24

"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins...when you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM and that I can do nothing of Myself but as my Father taught Me, I speak these things."

John 8,28

It is interesting to note that at the end of this exposition of his divinity the religious Jews, who were prepared to consider him a teacher and perhaps even the Messiah, took up rocks to stone him because they believed he was speaking blasphemy in calling himself God. On another occasion, even his hitherto loyal followers that had witnessed his miracles and been taught by him were shocked by these claims:

¹²⁶ This refers to the Hebrew words *El Shaddai* that is translated in English as "the Almighty". It actually means much more, literally "the many breasted one": the Father, the Mother, the bread-provider, the one who fulfils all needs.

"Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God."

John 6,45-46

Notice how Jesus talks about how *he* has seen the Father and yet he still calls himself a *man* and God. He continues in this same discourse:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven...As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

John 6, vv51,57

At this point his disciples took offence and could not believe Jesus was claiming to be of the Father, in other words, to be God. Jesus then replied in even stronger terms and laid out the challenge that he reiterated later, that you *must* believe that he is God to ever know God:

"he said unto them, "Doth this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before...Therefore said I that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.""

John 6, vv62,65

At this point many of his disciples left following Jesus and he, sensing that even his closest doubted, challenged them:

"From that time many of his disciples went back...Then Jesus said unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?". Then Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

John 6,66-68

Even today, the divinity of Christ is the point at which many shrink back from Christianity. Few people fail to realise the enormous potency of Jesus' moral and social teaching, but few will go on to accept his spiritual

teaching that he is the creative power of the Universe. Even amongst those that do, there are many who rank Jesus as inferior to the Father in the God-head.

Jesus is not in any way inferior, he was, as the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah say, God *in the flesh*. He was the nature and attributes of God in a human body. I spoke in the section in the Old Testament about part of the Trinity appearing in human form from time to time.

I called this the *Word* of God as it was always with words that God would address humans. I also hypothesised that the other members of the Trinity were the *Spirit* and the *Father* and that each could be viewed as *all* God as well as their individual personalities. It was the will of the Father released by His Word and empowered by His Spirit that brought creation into being. This is explicitly stated in the New Testament:

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Lord was God.... All things were made by him..!'

John 1, vv1,3

Further evidence of the divinity of Christ is seen in that Jesus requires worship in order for God to be worshipped. Unless the Name of Jesus is exalted, God the Father is not being exalted:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son does in like manner...For the Father judges no one but has committed all judgement to the Son, that all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him."

John 5,19-23

Here we see that Jesus identifies Himself as the "Son" of God and refers to another part of God as the "Father". The "Son" of God is the part of God that is the physical presence of God and so we can conclude that He is the Word of God, the LORD God described in Genesis as the Creator and the LORD who walked in the garden with Adam and Eve.

Jesus also reveals much more than anywhere else in scripture about the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives us an in depth look into His person and nature in John 14-16.

Jesus tells it is by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us that we will get to know God in this age. He is the Helper and the Teacher. The One who brings the words of Jesus to us in this age. The One who will forewarn us of impending events and remind us of Jesus' words:

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth...for He dwells with you and will be in you...the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you...He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is mine and declare it to you."

John 14, vv16,17,26 & 16,13,14

This is perhaps the most explicit statement of the reality of the Trinity. Jesus talks about *asking* the Father to send the *Holy Spirit* who will remain with *all* believers and tell them *his* words. Jesus is clearly identifying his own words as the Father's words. He is clearly identifying the *Holy Spirit* as God's presence amongst his people which is the fulfilment of what the prophet of Ezekiel saw and what God spoke to him:

"At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

John 14,20

"And the glory that thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be made one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me..."

John 17,22-23

After his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit:

Then said Jesus to them again, "Peace be unto you: as [my]¹²⁷ Father hath sent me, even so send I you." And... he breathed on them and saith unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit..."

John 21,21-22

Jesus was *still* a man. His disciples thought He was a spirit appearing as a man but Jesus made it clear He was a man:

And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, "Peace..." But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, "Why are ye troubled....Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have"...And he took, and did eat before them.'

Luke 24, v36-39,43

Jesus also spoke of a *baptism* in the Holy Spirit that his disciples would receive. The Holy Spirit is confirmed as being the carrier of spiritual and creative power as I hypothesised in the first section:

And he said unto them...."ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Acts 1,7-8

Up to this point in history, the Jewish disciples of Jesus still did not have any real concept of the Trinity. It was only expounded and became part of Christian doctrine when an early convert, Saul of Tarsus, later the apostle Paul, experienced a supernatural revelation of the divinity of Christ. Thus, it is now appropriate that we go on and examine this revelation and others that came to the church in the immediate period that marked the spread of Christianity from Israel.

¹²⁷ The word "my" does not appear in the original text and it is emphasising the Father is father of us all.

7.4 The Trinity in the Epistles and the Book of Revelation

7.4.1 The Pauline Revelation

Paul had much to say on the subject of the divinity of Christ and thus the Trinity. The book of Hebrews¹²⁸ identifies Jesus, the Son of God, as the creative power of the Universe:

'But to the Son He says: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands...'

Hebrews 1, vv8,10

Paul does the same in the book of Colossians:

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible...For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fulness should dwell...'

Colossians 1, vv15,16,19

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Colossians 2,9

We see Jesus, the "image" of God described also as the "fulness" of God. Jesus is both our "Lord God" and "Father God". This confirms my hypothesis in earlier sections that each member of the Godhead is on an

¹²⁸ There is some debate over whether Paul wrote this book but much of the theology within it is accepted as being "Pauline". The comments of Peter on Paul's theology (2 Peter 3,15-16) certainly suggest that whether Paul wrote the book or not, the ideas about the divinity of Christ probably came from him. Some have suggested that he deliberately did not identify himself in the book because he had caused offence to the Jewish leaders in the early church that saw him as undermining the special status of the Jewish law and the Jewish nation. He clearly had a very tense relationship at times with the Judeocentric apostle James and those associated with him. In some interpretations, the book of James is seen as refuting each one of Paul's core doctrines such that Luther described the book of James as the "book of straw" seeing it as teaching salvation by works, not faith. Those that wish to harmonise James with Paul's teaching emphasise that James describes how faith should be worked out practically to be real (there should be evidence of conversion in a man's works), Paul is dealing rather with the abstract theological foundation.

equal footing. It is by the Spirit of God that God dwells within and amongst His people:

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Ephesians 2,21-22

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Ephesians 4,5-6

This is why so many greetings and blessings in the epistles are in the Name of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has both the nature of the resurrected born-again Man which is the same as the nature of God. This is of course what God intended when he created Man in *his* image.

He is both the fulness of Man and the fulness of God. When we look at Jesus we are looking to God. This is what Jesus said when He was questioned by puzzled disciples wrestling with this concept:

'Philip said to Him, "Lord show us the Father and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

John 14,9

Paul, by the power of revelation, describes Jesus as "man" in 1 Tim 2,5 and as the Creator God in Hebrews 1. Jesus referred to himself as both the Son of God *and* the Son of Man throughout the gospels. He is the firstborn of both God *and* Man according to Colossians 1.

It was and is *always* through *His Word* that God reveals His will. It is an accepted principle of Bible interpretation that the Old Testament contains many *types* of the New Testament church practice and structure. A physical pattern in the Old Covenant represents the spiritual relationship in the New Covenant.

Again, in another of Paul's teachings we see the description of Jesus as the Son of God who emptied Himself and came to earth as a man to be a perfect sacrifice for the sin of all Humankind. This sacrifice would reconcile all Humankind to God:

'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, coming in the likeness of men...He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Philippians 2,5-11

Paul also talks about the ministry of the Holy Spirit and identifies a personality:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us that the blessing of Abraham may come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of *the* Spirit through faith...."

Galatians 3,13-14

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God...."

Ephesians 4,30

"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to everyman severally as he will..."

1 Corinthians 12,11

Paul's letters and the other letters of the new testament by Peter, John and Jude are particularly noted for their apparently exclusive use of the terms "Lord", God, Spirit and Father rather than the old Jewish covenant name of God. Whenever the apostles talk about Jesus, they emphasise his office as sovereign of the universe by giving him the title

Lord. This is what the prophet of Ezekiel wrote in his revelation of the temple.

7.4.2 The Trinity in the book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is another powerful source of information regarding the Trinity. It also helps to tie together some of the cosmic statements Jesus made about Himself regarding judgement that again show him to be the sovereign of the Universe.

We can start at the first chapter of Revelation and immediately we see Jesus taking the title of supreme ruler of the Universe for Himself:

‘And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me,
"Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen; and have the keys of hell and death."

Revelation 1,17-18

The first and the last implies that He is the origin of space and time. There is no being or existence beyond Him. Another very revealing phrase of Jesus is repeated in each of his exhortations to the young churches:

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Revelation 2, vv7,17,29 & 3, vv6,13,22

In each of these cases it is the Spirit of God speaking through the Word of God to the Father's people. The Spirit is directly quoted in another place:

‘And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: ", "Yea", saith the Spirit, "That they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Revelation 14,13

In these later chapters we see the revelation of the Son as the Lamb of God that confirms that Jesus on earth was indeed God from heaven. Chapter 19 shows an awesome picture of His glory and how he conquered the powers of evil by the shedding of his blood on the cross and how he now holds the power of judgement over the entire Universe:

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. ...And he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies of heaven followed him...and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

Revelation 19,13-16

This confirms Jesus' identity as the Word of God and his office as supreme ruler of the Universe. The book of Revelation also shows the Judgement-Day scenario where each human that has lived stands before God:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away....And I saw the dead, small and great stand before God....and were judged every man according to their works...And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Revelation 20,11-15

This provides confirmation of Jesus' own words with regard to Judgement Day:

"When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him will be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another...[some] to everlasting punishment; but the righteous to life eternal."

Matthew 25, w31-32,46

Thus, we see that Jesus is identifying himself as the God who judges the whole of humanity. The last two chapters of the Bible complete this revelation of Jesus as God and we hear the Spirit also speak:

‘And he said unto me, "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."’

Revelation 21,6-7

‘And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come"’

Revelation 22,17

Thus, by the end of the bible, we see the Trinity as explicit. Why did God keep this veiled at the beginning of the bible? This is the subject of the next section.

7.5 The Trinity and the spiritual culture of Israel

The aim of this section is to advance the argument that God veiled the Trinity when he revealed himself to the Israelites because of their inability at that time to understand the concept. God always relates to human beings on a level that they can understand. The imagery and appearance God uses is always appropriate to the culture and understanding of a nation or of an individual.

For example, he appeared to Adam and Eve as a man. He appeared to Moses and the elders of Israel as the Lawgiver. He appeared to Pharaoh's sorcerers and magicians as the supreme sorcerer. He appeared to Joshua, the soldier and commander of Israel's forces, as the Captain of the Lord's Armies. He appeared to Elisha's servant who feared because of the battle as armies of flaming chariots upon the surrounding mountains.

The Hebrew spiritual culture in Israel would have been affected by the Egyptian polytheism. There would appear to be many "gods" that were the "gods of Egypt". At that time, each nation would have its gods in which it trusted and built temples to and held festivals in honour of.

God revealed Himself in line with this concept of a national "god". He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The fathers of the Hebrew ethnic group. One of their first acts to honour Him would be to have a feast for Him. This was within their concept.

He even spoke to Pharaoh as if he was the god he claimed to be. When the Egyptians resisted his will, He revealed Himself to the slaves in Egypt as the mightiest of all gods by judging the gods of Egypt one at a time and delivering them from bondage. They would have seen their God as a fighter which was needed in their concept so that they could believe they would be free.

Very early on, God was concerned to establish His Lordship and an end to worshipping of other deities. He proved to Israel that He was *El Shaddai*, which is translated in our bibles as *the Almighty*. That is how Israel knew their god until the covenant with Moses was made.

He then gave himself a name, although it was unpronounceable, it was symbolic. He became the "God of Israel." In conversations with the most spiritual men at the time, he started revealing that it was His Spirit that came upon them and that dwelt in the tabernacle he instructed them to build.

As God dealt with his people, he started giving compound names for himself that identified aspects of his character. The Israelites, in common with other peoples, believed that a person's nature was contained in their name. Thus, the names of a nation's gods would tell you something about their nature. Often a nation would have different gods that they called on for their needs.

As the name God gave himself was unpronounceable, the Hebrews knew little of their God apart from what they had seen. God began, through circumstances the nation found themselves in, to reveal more and more what kind of a God he was. He was showing them they no longer needed any of those other gods, for He was sufficient for all their needs.

He eventually gave them these covenant names that have been transliterated as:

- *Jehovah-Raphab*: the Lord the physician;
- *Jehovah-Jireh*: the Lord the provider;
- *Jehovah-Nissi*: the Lord our banner (of war);
- *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*: the Lord our righteousness;
- *Jehovah-Shalom*: the Lord our peace;
- *Jehovah-Shammah*: the Lord is there.

This would have been in a manner familiar to the Hebrews but distinct enough for God to establish His uniqueness and supremacy over all the other gods of the surrounding nations. It was only after all this revelation to the nation that God revealed Himself as triune, and he had to be there to do it.

The problem that would have arisen in the minds of the Israelites if God had revealed himself as a triune being was simple. They would have thought He was three gods and not one God. This is an objection that orthodox Jews still make of the Messianic Jews. God made it very clear to the Hebrews that he was *one* God and not many:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

Deuteronomy 6,4

The apostle (probably Paul) made this absolutely clear when they were writing to the Hebrew church. They probably the same great difficulty in accepting that Jesus the Christ was in fact part of a three-part God. That He was actually part of Jehovah who was their God:

'GOD (Jehovah), who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...to the Son (Jesus) He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and forever...You, LORD, (Jehovah) in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of your hands..." '

Hebrews 1,1-10

This is a challenging passage to the Jewish believers as it makes the Jesus they knew of in the flesh as interchangeable with "Jehovah" (YHWH). Even Peter had difficulty with accepting this and it took a divine revelation to Paul, who had not seen the ministry of Jesus in the same way but had had a post-resurrection experience of Jesus in his glory, to establish this doctrine. It was certainly a unique concept at the time. There were other "three-god" figureheads but they were distinct entities, not a single entity.

It often proves a stumbling block to many, but it is absolutely essential that we understand God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that there is no rank of authority or greatness among them. *All* are God in his fulness, but it is through giving honour to the Son through the Holy Spirit in us, that we give honour to the Father (a royal protocol, if you like):

Jesus saith unto her..."the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

John 4,23

Jesus saith unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "

John 14,6

It is by having Jesus in his rightful place that we give honour and worship to God. Now that we have this revelation of God, we must align ourselves with it. God exercises forbearance with new converts in their ignorance, but he wants all to experience his fulness and to enter his presence through Jesus being exalted.

7.6 Summary

In this lengthy chapter on the Trinity I have attempted to show the following aspects of the revelation of God to us in the bible:

- a. We see that the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are three distinct personalities but one God. I compared this to us being body, soul and spirit. We all operate in agreement just as God does;
- b. The Father is the part of God that was the origin of the all things and "thinks" through according to His absolute wisdom and purpose every event that takes place in the Universe. He is the directing, providential will of the Universe. In all benevolence, He works all things to His purpose: '...in whom also we have an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...' ¹²⁹;
- c. The Son of God was the part of God that came in the flesh and became a sacrifice of atonement to redeem us and to give us the power to become God's children: 'He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.' ¹³⁰;
- d. The Holy Spirit is the part of God that dwells in us and among us to reveal the plan and purposes God has for our lives: 'But God has revealed to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.' ¹³¹
- e. To give honour to god we must accept that there is no rank within the Trinity. Each member is all of God but has a unique personality.

¹²⁹ Ephesians 1,11

¹³⁰ Colossians 1,13-15

¹³¹ 1 Corinthians 2,10-11

We give honour to the Father by worshipping the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit.

8 CONCLUSION

I hope you have enjoyed reading this and it has gone some way to answering the questions “what does it mean to be a Christian” for the non-believer and “how then, should the Christian live” for the believer. The Christian faith is both at once very simple and very deep¹³². This book has dealt primarily with the very simple and I would like to finish by leaving you with a reminder of its simplicity:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3,16

'...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.'

Romans 10,8

If you feel now that you want to be reconciled to God, then say something like the following prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I realise now I have fallen short of your ethical standards in my life. I want to turn around and begin to follow you. Thank you that your blood was shed for the forgiveness of those failings. I accept you as my Lord. Please come into my heart and transform me into the person you want me to be. Amen.

¹³² My Master of Philosophy thesis, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325807525_Dominion_Theology_-_Its_origin_development_and_place_in_Christian_thinking demonstrates some of the depth. I hope to convert this into a second book.

Appendix A: Testimony

Trigger warning: the language and tone of this "testimony" may be offensive to some readers. I repeat again, please be forgiving of my 21-year old self!

In May 1989 at about 11pm I was sitting in the Living Room at 4, Eldon Terrace, Bangor. I had just finished A book entitled, "Life Means What" sent to me by a woman called "M" whom I thought was the most wonderful woman in the world and would do anything to impress. Suddenly Jesus Christ had become real to me and I had committed my life to Him.

This is the background story.

There was a party going on in the house at that time - indeed, life in the 'Boss House' as it was known then was one big party. The living room was a shrine to beer with beer mats of every beer from Essex to Liverpool on the wall; beer-towels from every pub in Bangor (there are about 56) and along what would have been called the 'picture rail' there were rows of beer cans. What in most houses would have been called the 'cupboard under the stairs' was the 'Brew Room'.

The house would always have some 50-pint home-brew kits on the go for four of us in the house. Pole and Neil had modified the brewing process into two separate stages. After the recommended brewing time we would "bottle up" and add sugar to the bottles. This made a nicer and a stronger drink which was "christened" secondary fermentation: after all we *were* scientists. From the frequent visits from the drinking community of Bangor we had received accreditation for it as "better than most home-brew".

The front bay windows of the house had for the last eight months proudly displayed about 50 demijohns of home-brew wine which had been fermenting so long it was like spirit. All sorts of things had been used to make beer and wine with: ribena, oranges, soda-pops. It was quite a remarkable house with a remarkable amount of brewing equipment. From about April onwards we would all be seen on the front lawn - the best sun trap in Bangor - skinning up and getting completely faceless.

We had a barbecue one night and some local Welshies turned up at about midnight. This was a bit unusual and we were worried as Nick our next-door neighbour had just been in hospital with a depressed fractured skull after being beat up by the infamous "Bangor Warfare Squad". They were a group of locals who just went around beating up students. There was a particular amount of tension between the Welsh and the English at that time. However, we gave them some punch which they thought was so good that they stayed and joined in and left incredibly wasted with a story to tell about the English Boss House students. That day we had the living room on the front lawn, and we stayed up to watch the sunrise.

The party was much like any other Boss House do - communal beer: if you brought a bottle you could help yourself to the home-brew. Club together to buy a quarter or share whatever personal stash you had, and the evening began. The most incredibly "wasted" people would stagger in at all hours to finish themselves off. The whole scene of which the Boss House was part was just like an extended family. Everyone liked getting pissed and stoned.

The music was typically a mixture of punk/oi (me and Pole), poncy heavy hair-metal (Neil), Bruce Springsteen (Gareth), The Macc Lads (Russel) and various 'hippie-shit-meditation-music' from all the rest.

But this particular night I had to read this book because Mary was coming up and she was a Christian. That was the only thing wrong with her - else she was my dream woman. She was just so nice looking that I had her on a pedestal. She was so clean and so pure. I felt that I would just about do anything to go out with her.

When she took my hand in the car when we were going to rescue Gwyn from an abortive suicide attempt (while extremely drunk) I thought to myself "this is too good to be true!" The only time I had told Mary that I "fancied her" was when Josephine ("Jo") was in the room and I was extremely merry. Being intoxicated was the only time I ever really revealed my feelings to anyone. She had replied "But we hardly know each other". There were a few months of water under the bridge before we got together.

At that point I did not really care too much about knowing somebody first before going out with them. It would have been the ideal situation but normally I did not get too many chances to go out with women, so I suppose you thought you went out with one another to get to know one another. Sex always seemed to come first and if you were lucky, emotions got mixed together and a relationship happened.

As far as I was concerned, infatuation overcame any incompatibility of personalities and having sex with somebody meant you were committing yourself to someone. Sex to me was the natural progression from kissing someone. I thought if you "turned someone on" then sexual intercourse was inevitable.

Sexual fantasy and masturbation was almost a full-time job to me: I could not walk down the street without my mind filling with filth about "what I would do to so and so" and undressing women as I went along. I desperately wanted to be loved but sex had always been mixed up with it.

I had romantic delusions about walking along beaches with the particular woman who was the subject of my fantasy at the time. Or making "slow and gentle" love to her; or "wild and passionate" love, knocking over the lamps etc. I think I had formed my ideas of love and sex from videos and James Herbert novels.

I seemed to have so much love I wanted to give but nobody I went out with could I really love the way I wanted to. Things always got too complicated and I'd end up hurting someone which was the last thing I wanted to do.

However, that was the nice side of me: the other side was the manipulative lustful person who knew just what to say to persuade hesitant girlfriends or ex-girlfriends to go beyond the limits they had set for themselves.

I had been after Mary for years - we had met through a previous girlfriend and I can still remember the instant attraction we had for each other even when we were both going out with someone else. However, this

was dampened when Naomi¹³³ had told me she was a Christian *and* a virgin *and* didn't believe in sex before marriage. Myself and Naomi had an active sexual relationship and a solid emotional one as well for a time. So, going out with Mary was a dream and she was going out with someone else anyway.

Naomi was the first person I had ever given myself to: I lost my virginity with her [at last! I had really been trying since I was eleven!] and we began to get on really well together. We nearly moved in together, but I flipped out and thought "oh no, I'm only 19 and I'm getting tied down" so I chucked Naomi.

Our relationship struggled on for about 6 months afterward, but Naomi could never fully trust me again. By the time it came for me to leave Leicester to go and study in Bangor, North Wales we had agreed a purely physical, mutual satisfaction relationship. We were both going out with other people but still felt close enough to have sex.

It was about three years later before Mary took my hand in the car. I had been floundering "in a cess-pit of my own immorality" since I left home on extremely bad terms when I was 17 and had gone to live in Park Lodge hostel after spending two weeks roughing it in one of the coldest winters ever. It was so cold that my piss would freeze on the wall before I had finished.

Steve gave me a key to the Venture Scout cellar beneath a church and I could sleep there but had to be out most of the day. Eventually I went to the Samaritans and they put me in touch with Christine Knight, the Deputy Warden of Park Lodge. They were in the middle of doing the place up and nobody was supposed to be moving in. However, I was allowed to stay in during the day and help with cleaning the place up.

It was paradise simply because it was warm and beat sitting in a shelter in the ice and snow all day. After only a couple of days I was allowed

¹³³ The name of this person has been changed at a friend's suggestion

to move in as Chris contacted the warden and explained I literally had nowhere to stay. There was only Kiran living there at the time and he worked nights. I had no or even a blanket the first night but man it felt good to have a room I could call my own. I really could now do what the hell I wanted. I was free.

After about 6 months the place was full: it was a crazy place for a middle-class precocious anarchist to end up in and it revolutionised my lifestyle. I started living what I believed which basically meant having spiky hair, bondage trousers, fags, beer and drugs.

Virtually all of us in the house were punks, bikers or rockers and even if we weren't we liked getting pissed and stoned and (trying to) get(ting) laid. One memorable night was Julie's 21st when she climbed in through my window at 3 o'clock in the morning completely pissed and got into bed with me. I was astonished that I did not take advantage of the situation, but a calm came over me and I just laid there. I think I knew she and I would have been very embarrassed the next morning. Thus, thankfully, Karen then came and knocked at the door and she came in.

Then Simon came in at 4 o'clock speeding and pissed, turned my stereo on full blast and blew one of the speakers. By this time, I was regretting not taking advantage of Julie, so I followed her up to Simon's room. There were also various nights where there would be solvent abuse sessions, smoking sessions, speed and whatever else different people were into.

The warden had the attitude "if I trust them not to abuse my liberal attitude they won't" but more often than not Darren¹³⁴ was taken for a ride. I liked him though because he was a seemingly endless supply of roll-ups when you ran out.

At one particular time we had all just finished work, training scheme or whatever and people had split up with girlfriends or boyfriends and so

¹³⁴ This name has also been changed. Darren is no longer a hostel warden.

we just had about two months of just getting pissed all the time by clubbing all our money together. We would even con sympathetic neighbours to give us more money when we completely ran out.

I used to do the garden and had got to know a charming Christian couple who helped with the garden. They said if ever I needed money or food to come around so when we had all run after this particular session, I did. I lied (very plausibly because I was always sincere and almost believed myself) to them and they gave me £20 and a bag of food. Man, I didn't half feel guilty as I walked back with a couple of bagfuls of cans and bottles that I bought with the money. However, soon I was too gone to care.

Nick used to read tarot cards and was into *Ouija* boards as well. One-night Theresa, me and Nick had a sitting. Something just kept telling me it was wrong and man, there was something bad in our floor of the hostel after that. I kept my mouth shut all evening and even went out and bought a cross the next day

I was also loosely associated with the various animal rights organisations and going to all the alternative gigs in the alternative pubs. I also became involved with various leftie groups although I myself proclaimed to be an anarchist. We even organised with the help of the Warden a sponsored pedal car race where we got the rich locals to sponsor us for a trip to Amsterdam. They did not read the sponsor form properly and were trying to outdo each other about how much they do for the poor deprived young people. What a fuss it caused when we came to collect £70 and £80 off people. Then they realised it was Amsterdam we were going to with the sole purpose of getting wasted and all hell broke loose. The place nearly got shut down.

I loved horror books and films: sometimes all-night horrors would be on at the cinema. One night had *The Entity*, *The Fly*, *Aliens I & II* in the same night. The mixture of sex and violence generally stimulated and titillated me although I found *The Entity* really perverse even then. Spirits bonking women and attacking everyone seemed just to be someone's perverse fantasy although it was supposed to be a true story.

Of course, there was also the obligatory exodus to see "The Wall", *Pink Floyd's* "epic". One night I went and could not afford any draw but still came out stoned because the air was so thick with ganga fumes. Me and Theresa went to the Phoenix one night for an all-night film session which was very good with The Ramones' *Rock and Roll High School* the main attraction. The Phoenix was supposed to be the alternative theatre company. However, I was completely unprepared for Theresa ripping down the publicity posters from the foyer. We scarpered along the main street into a car park at 7 o'clock in the morning. I was on a buzz from loads of coke and fags. If you like it was a punk lifestyle.

In the midst of all this I finished my 'A' levels. I had left home at the end of the first term of my second year and arranged it with the Sixth form college to go back and redo my second year. Then I planned to go to University but my Dad had not taken the hint to fill in the forms and I was too proud to ask directly so I had to wait until I qualified for "Independent Status" which basically meant you had to be self-supporting for three years and you would qualify for a full grant with no parental contribution.

I was really upset and disappointed, but I consoled myself by reasoning that it was really an un-anarchist thing to do as it's an education at the expense of someone else in an intolerably elitist system. And I was supposed to be an anarchist going to change the world.

So, I got a council flat in Leicester as I qualified for one having lived in a hostel. It was basically get a job and make a life. My neighbour was Wayne, a dealer come musician just out of nick, and we would skin up and jam all day. But the time came for that scourge of the dole queue - the *Restart* interview - and I ended up on a community program and Wayne on a NACRO scheme or working in the black economy with his Dad.

It was only part time, very enjoyable and the money came in handy in supporting a beer-ganga based life style. I wasn't an acid man myself as the only trip I ever had was the "really absolutely no control of what was going on" experience. The sky was falling in, cars became little black dots and I could n't stand up for ages. Theresa grabbed me by my "Revolution"

armband when we came to the main road: I couldn't really see the road and would have just walked into the cars.

So, it was amusing and sometimes frustrating when people would come around in the early hours of the morning tripping out of their skulls and thinking they were steam trains. One night I was in a really bad mood but Wayne and John¹³⁵ came up with John on his first trip and Wayne was doing his best to make it a good one. They were so funny I ended up laughing.

My flat became a focus for all sorts of things. I knew a lot of people slightly younger than me because of my phantom year at sixth form. I became a bit of a social worker come doss-place for lots of people. Keith and Becky would also use it for bonking sessions. My 20th birthday party was a riot with sex, violence, drugs and rock 'n' roll all having a great time. It seemed half the *De Montfort* pub turned up (the local punk/rocker place).

John turned up early one morning thinking He had AIDS because his "a bit more than a one-night stand" was gay and had some sexual disease; he sat and smoked a half ounce of baccy while he poured his heart out. Being "gay" was just beginning to become fashionable but it was still a major thing to find out someone you knew was "gay".

People also had a habit of turning up just after me and Naomi had got into bed. It was a stop-off place for people to get changed for the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* when their folks wouldn't let them change in the house. They probably came back and changed so when they got home, they looked normal again.

My bands first *Razor John* and then *Vaguely Plausible* (great name!) would practice (thrash) upstairs and we would annoy the neighbours. It was all really anarchistic until the council slapped a noise notice on the flat - so all the activity transferred to Wayne's or Archways Rehearsal studio.

¹³⁵ This name has been changed.

Man, they were wild times. But money was still tight so I worked for a few hours in Leicester University Mandela bar (every Student's Union has one!) at which point I started to live something else I believed: total hatred of students: the Angelic Upstart's lyrics from their song ' Student Power 'up how I felt nicely, " f***ing students, f*** off! " and off course the classic' Peter and the Test-Tube Babies 'Student Wankers', "see the student w***** in the student bar complaining to each other that their grants don't go far...".

They were the most affected, poncy, rich(!), condescending and immature bunch of cretins I'd ever met. I just couldn't believe the way they behaved. They lived in a different world full up of lectures, discos, demonstrations, Royalists, Conservatives and sex.

But Mrs Thatcher was being even nicer than that by threatening to half the under 26s benefits and after the Community Programme finished, I suddenly found I needed something that paid a bit more than the dole and the bit of gardening or painting on the side.

I can remember sitting in the worst DHSS ever, Norton Street in Leicester, (which was the emergency one then, so it was really bad: now they've seemed to have stopped the entitlement of most of these people) waiting for a payment when I was called into the interview booth to be interviewed by the Fraud Squad.

I think it was because I had been claiming for a few years and only ever declared a fraction of the work I did. So, there I was, sitting with my paint stained jumper, denying that I did any paid work. I got off with it (and it was actually my neighbour who had stolen the dole cheque) but I think something happened: I was always poor, but it was getting to the point I was getting fed up of just not having anything. At times I just did not have enough to buy a loaf of bread. Often, I would rip the sofa apart or turn the room upside down looking for a couple of fag butts to roll up in a Rizla.

I reasoned I needed a change anyway, Leicester was getting me down : the Drug Squad kept raiding the *De Mont*, the *King's Head* was being policed by the local "angels" which basically meant you couldn't get to the

bar for a drink and Wayne and Bene kept nicking my effect pedals so I couldn't even thrash my guitar unless he was in.

My childhood friend, Clive¹³⁶, I also learnt had committed suicide: he was my inspiration of what Anarchy was all aboutfreedom to develop as you are; break the mould, kill power not people....so what if Jesus died on the cross, what about the fucker I don't give a toss...So off came the bondage trousers, the spikes got flattened and the hair got cut, the beard got shaved and on went the interview clothes.

After zero success from about thirty applications and a few promising interviews I went disillusioned to visit my Gran who lived in Colchester where I had grown up (though I had been born in Newcastle), applied for one job there and got it! Little did I know it was because no one in the know would work there!

So, I moved back to Colchester to start it which at the time felt great. I had a lot of Southern pride and thought for some reason I would make it in my home town from six months old. But sure enough, like a fly to excrement it was soon spiritism, drugs and beer again and man, working from 8 to 4.30 for a small company whose managers made Mrs. Thatcher look decidedly left-wing, getting up at 5.45am and commuting in on the London line was too much a sacrifice of anarchist principles and I had to get out after 3 months.

I also felt responsible for my Gran who was beginning to go senile and really needed full time help. All in all, it was too much pressure and I thought, 'How on earth do I get out of this?'. Then in desperation, 'Be a student'. A couple of months earlier as a failure mode/worst case scenario I had reapplied for Uni as an Independent Student. I half wanted to go but if the job worked out I would not.

After three rejections and a reminder from UCCA that I needed to make a decision (Ulster didn't answer until the day after I accepted Bangor)

¹³⁶ This name has been changed.

I had to choose Bangor. I never even bothered to go to the Open day as I was so sure I'd get offers from everywhere else.

So, October came, and I arrived in Bangor. I had lost my job, my flat in Leicester because of a bureaucratic muck-up which led to the eviction of my brother and sister and me losing all my possessions. Just to prove the council were wrong I got the keys back but had an empty flat and with my kind of mates it quickly became a doss place for anyone, so I gave my keys back to the council.

It felt like a new start and I was determined to make something of myself. I still had the most important things: my records, tapes and a stereo that I had taken to Colchester with me. That was about it.

As you may well realise, I had at a bit of an ethical impasse being in Bangor - I hated students yet was a student in one of the most student-dominated towns. It freaked me out being in a hall of residence with a bunch of "arseholes" that seemed to love throwing up in the kitchen after drinking ten pints of beer to have a good time and attempt to copulate with an equally inebriated rich slag (again I apologise for the language but it's how I would express what I felt).

It didn't seem to matter that I was doing exactly the same thing with the addition of visiting *The Menai Vaults* and the local squats for some 'real' people. You see I was an inverted snob: if you drank in "Jocks" (then the "Jazz Bar"), wore boots, stripey jumpers, ripped jeans and T-shirts which had big holes in you were OK.

Else you were a "rich bastard" or "straight" and deserved at the very least a good slagging and preferably a good kicking. "Bash a yuppie" was the *Class War* (the anarchist group I was loosely associated with) slogan at the time. Ours was the sound, if you like, righteous lifestyle. If you ate meat you were a "cannibal" and unless you were an anarchist, you were a "social fascist". Students were the antithesis of this.

However, Alan lived on my corridor who was also rather more mature and had brought a sack of 'home-grown' with him: this made life bearable. Then Pole turned up - an alcoholic mate and fellow anarchist I

had met in Leicester - and invited me to live in his house with the *Boss Lads*: he promised a wild time and every type of excess, so I jumped at it. It was just as well as Alan got busted and had to move.

But life as a student was not a complete doss and I was finding it really hard to make my drug-drink souped brain function. It was four years since I'd integrated a function with respect to anything. And I hated students. And I never heard a Welsh voice in the Students' Union. And I split up with my girlfriend. So the third term came and I dropped out and went to stay in Leicester.

I needed to revise but they were going to run lectures almost up to exams. I didn't know a thing. It was just as well I did go there and revise because the house had just bought the largest lump of dope (housebrick size) I have ever seen to this day. When I got back everyone was ill because they had smoked so much even though/because they were doing finals!

So, I arrived in Leicester, too embarrassed to tell my family, and needed somewhere to stay. Shortly before I had seeked out Mary because a weird thing had happened. I just woke up one morning depressed and despondent about my course and life in general. It seemed I had managed to fail at everything I did. I was always trying to impress people by being the hard man, the druggie, the squatter, the punk, the anarchist, the dole queue veteran...yet I would always blow it. In the end it was me who had the shit life and I was beginning to feel desperate.

I woke up that morning and she just came to mind. I knew I had to see her. I always used to love talking to her when I would visit Naomi; there was something beautiful about her. A love, a presence always went with her; it intrigued me to the point I would lie to her about spiritual experiences I had. Perhaps I was groping for God and not really knowing it; perhaps He was telling me she could lead me to the answer.

However, there was also a much more basic reason: sex makes the world go around and this was my chosen woman...she might have been a Christian but after a few bebies, a few spliffs and whatever lies I could make up, I bet she would forget all about this Jesus bloke.

She went to church and I tagged along just to please her and so I could persuade her to let me sleep in her room (I had the sofa) ...bed...sex and so on. But I began to really sense something funny in the house where she lived - there was a lot of talking about God and Jesus and I met a lot of Christians and had some rather animated arguments with them. They usually centred about how they could eat meat if they were God's creatures too.

It amazed me that they didn't want to get pissed and smoke loads of draw every day but instead would sometimes go to bible studies and have evenings where they would sing songs about this dude Jesus who as far as I know died an unfortunate death because He thought He was God. Sometimes I would even play guitar for them. What was more none of them believed in sex before marriage and they said God spoke to them. I couldn't believe they preferred listening to a church service than being down the pub on a Sunday night.

So, my interest was stirred, and it was more than just the thought of getting inside Mary that I came to read this book she sent me after I had returned to Bangor. This book was about Jesus - what He said He was, how He lived His life and what the purpose of His death was.

The read was quite uneventful until the last twenty pages - these took me a long time to read and it was about the trial and crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 26,55 - 27,55; Mark 14-16; Luke 22,47 - 23,48 and John 18 - 19,29) and suddenly the noise of the party shrank away, the whole world disappeared and I went with Jesus through His trial and walked every step of the way to the cross with Him. For just a moment I literally saw the reality of it. I had a vision of him falling beneath the weight of the cross and I could see the crowds shouting on either side. I just knew he had done it for me. I prayed and asked forgiveness and for Jesus to enter my life.

This picture of Him dying for me and that I needed to ask for forgiveness was all that I knew: and my life went on exactly as it had done before. In fact, things actually got *more* depraved. For the first time in my

life I seemed to have mega-sex appeal. I had three women on the go at the same time, it truly was heaven on earth!

The only thing that changed was that I began to read my Bible as much as I possibly could. I would sit in the bay window of the house with my gear, fags and beer and read my Bible until I was too pissed/stoned to carry on.

Later that summer I went to stay with Mary and started to take an interest in church. Eventually I admitted to Jo when she asked me that I had asked Jesus into my heart. Mary suggested we go to Dave's church which was a Pentecostal charismatic church. So, we went along - me standing outside finishing off my spliff just to reduce the nicotine craving which became a problem after 20 or so minutes let alone after an hour and a half.

But what happened that day freaked me out - people were dancing, clapping, crying - there was a drum kit in the church- and people kept saying "...the Lord Jesus is saying..." and then they started speaking in really funny languages and singing in it as well-it sounded absolutely beautiful. The pastor said it was called 'tongues' and was a gift of the Holy Spirit as manifested on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

That summer I took my first tentative steps with God but basically, I was the same old "Herman" (my nickname) with sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. If anything, I was dragging Mary down rather than she me up. I would ply her with drink so that she would become more sexually responsive (normally she was very self-controlled!) and introduced her to getting stoned. But I *was* reading my Bible loads.

What really brought me to Jesus' feet was what happened at the end of that summer. I was a pretty bad bronchitic since having pneumonia when I was a baby. It had laid me up in bed during the winter and because I had been working in a cold dark factory over the summer my chest was bad. Of course, draw, fags and unhealthy eating all combined for a prolonged period of illness.

One Saturday morning in mid-October I woke up and thought the persistent pain in my chest had gone and when one of my friends came around, we arranged to go out that night. While I was out, I suddenly got so phlegmy that I could not taste the Old Holborn and started to feel really ill. For one of the very few occasions I was glad to be out of a pub and home.

Lewis dropped me off at the converted farmhouse where I was living. Sue (woman no.2, apprentice white-witch and housemate) was away so I was there on my own. Suddenly I got dizzy and had to lie down. I tried to have a fag, but I just felt worse. Then I began to get pain down my spine and across my shoulder blades. I started to curl up in agony and the pain just kept getting worse and worse. Then I realised I was going to die, and I got really scared.

I started saying things like, "LORD, if I live through tonight then I'll promise I'd go to church the next morning" (I hadn't bothered going since I'd been back in Bangor a month and a half earlier) and "You'll have to rest me tonight because I can't stand this pain for eight hours. I'll promise I'll go to church tomorrow. Look, I know one Christian song that I really like I'll sing it to you."

I can remember croaking the song once, maybe twice and I was in agony. But the next thing I can remember was waking up the next morning with just enough time to get to church. I can tell you, I was glad to be alive.

I got to church by bike which was a miracle in my condition (Roy told me months after I looked really bad that morning) and I went in and sat down. Then something happened: I began to cry and then weep. It was the first time since I was 14 when I had tried to commit suicide four times that I can remember crying. I just kept crying.

Pauline was preaching that day on healing and I thought "That is for me" and went up to her and told her what had happened the night before. She just said to me, "Do you believe God wants to heal you then?" and for some reason I just said "Yes." She showed me a bit in the Bible about getting the elders of the church to lay hands on the sick to heal them

(James 5,17) and I thought "fine" so she put her hand on my head and started to pray.

What happened next, I was not expecting: there was like an electrical shock in my lungs and I stood there thinking, "Oh....God is really real. I've got to do something." Mary had told me about being baptised in the Holy Spirit and I had heard this speaking in tongues, and I said, "Can I be baptised in the Holy Spirit?"

She smiled and got Donald to pray with me (nothing seemed to happen) but when I got home, I lifted my hand in the air and started to speak in tongues over where I lived. Two weeks later I was baptised in the sea. I have never really looked back seriously for more than three days since.

I really just met God. He has healed me and keeps healing me physically, emotionally, spiritually and in every other way. It just goes on and on. The closer I get to Jesus the more I want of Him. He has become my Father: this was the biggest hurdle for me to accept someone wanted the best for me and loved me for just who I am.

I loved my Mum and Dad¹³⁷ but to me they never loved me as I could see other Mums and Dads loving their kids. They were always arguing and fighting. My first memory was my Mum walking out with my baby sister leaving my Dad to look after my brother and me. He was changing our nappies because Mum was gone. That was what I would remember about our family life. Hate, bitterness, jealousy, violence and pain always seemed so common to my young eyes.

Sometimes Dad came home drunk and that would frighten me. Once he crashed the car into the freezer in the garage. Once I was made to stand in the middle of the bedroom because I was coughing in my sleep: he came and yanked me out of bed, and I stood absolutely terrified in the middle of the room for what seemed hours.

¹³⁷ These days though, I can appreciate just how good my upbringing was and get on better with my folks than ever before. After all, they are just human too, with all the problems common to man.

Life had got me down so much by the time I was 14 that I tried suicide a few times. I had a year of manic depression; it affected the way I ate and thought. One minute I'd be on a super high, the next a super low. Perhaps the healing of these emotional and spiritual scars which moulded my personality is the greatest miracle God is doing.

I cannot force you to be a Christian and would not want to. But I just want to say that Jesus Christ is real, and He loves you and died for you. He will change your life if you let Him and turn you into the very image of Himself. He will heal your broken hearts. He will set you free from every financial, social, emotional, physical and spiritual bondage if you whole heartedly follow Him.

As you have seen, I looked and searched in all sorts of things from spiritualism and New-Age to tarot. Whatever. But my belief systems didn't help me as I was dying. However, when I started to believe in Jesus and realised he would do the same for me as he did for those people in Israel and Palestine, I began to be free. God gave me a completely new motivation to live.

I began to understand the immense power in the name of Jesus. I have had many experiences both before and since I have been a Christian of evil presences attacking me, of poltergeists in houses (can you believe it, I was living with a witch in a haunted house when I got baptised in the Holy Spirit!) and being attacked with nightmares, erotic dreams, perversity.

But at the name of Jesus I have seen these things go from my life. I have dealt with them just like Jesus did. Each Christian has the potential to be like Jesus. If you are prepared to surrender yourself and allow Him to work in you, you will be.

This does not mean you must instantly become perfect and start doing nothing wrong but that you have a willingness to change. Jesus said His Holy Spirit will convict you at the appropriate time about an area of your life that needs to change. It really is a day at a time with Jesus. He is after your heart, not your head.

If you happen to sin 500 times a day and yet come back to God crying to Him for forgiveness and with a willingness to change, He will always forgive you. As soon as your underlying motives turn towards God Jesus will help you work out and change whatever is the underlying reason for you sinning.

Often, I would fall into sin at the most traumatic times in my life whether it was a family problem or hassle with a girlfriend. Suddenly I was helpless and just needed to get obliterated. Sometimes when you are a Christian you come up against the same problems and God has to deal with the underlying problem of why you respond by getting obliterated. It means pain and tears at times.

Part of being a Christian is to share in the sufferings of Christ. God does not always take away your problems but shows you that in Christ you can overcome them. I take immense comfort in knowing that no matter what I am tempted to do Jesus was tempted to the same degree and yet did not give in. Therefore, I don't have to anymore.

Somehow, I know Jesus has got the final answer and I can get rid of the fear and insecurity, habits I cannot break, everything that stops me from being me, once and for all. Many times I've said "Lord, I can't cope" and gone out to get some beer and fags, or for sex but it was just temporary relief and before the evening was through I would be on my knees crying to God and receiving His forgiveness and getting strength from Him to overcome what I was struggling with or healing from some incident or relationship that rooted itself in my subconscious.

What I am trying to say is that being a Christian is about having a personal relationship with God. You walk and talk with God through prayer, other Christians and His Word. You grow and develop. It is not just an intellectual experience but a tangible, exciting one. It is not inhibitive, but it releases you.

The new "born again" ¹³⁸ person, empowered by the Holy Spirit begins to take control over you and you become less and less like your old self and more and more like Jesus. This is in direct conflict to all other religious teaching that says we need to change ourselves and then God will accept us. Jesus says, "Just accept what I did, and God will receive you. We shall come into your life and change you from the inside out. I'll change your heart's desires so that what you'll want to do is what I want you to do. I am God and I took your place. Lay down your life and follow me."

The rest of this book was really filling in what I have learnt as I have been walking with Jesus and been taught by the Holy Spirit. I truly do love God. We have a relationship that spans eternity and it is getting better all the time, even though I sometimes fall out with Him. I want to share that with you.

¹³⁸ See John 3 for Jesus' explanation of this term

About the Author

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