

Reflections in Old Age

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Education

Most governments around the world make “education” compulsory for their children. Forced state education is a dreadful thing. Prizing children from their parents against their will and forcing them to sit for years in classes with children their own age, only engenders bullying, peer pressure and gang culture. But because this is both compulsory and free, most parents go along with it as the easiest option. Yet it’s always the children that suffer in the end.

In the West, typically, governments would pay for their children to have a minimum of eleven years of education, between the ages of 5 and 16. And that doesn’t include any pre-school nursery education or any education received as they start to specialise in subjects for whatever profession they choose to follow afterwards. That’s an awful lot of time in education. Maybe even up to a quarter of an average lifespan. Only half of an average lifespan is spent actually working, and the other quarter in retirement. So we are faced with several fundamental questions:

Do we really need to be educated for such a long period of time?

What are they teaching us?

How much of what we are taught is propaganda, the government telling us what to think?

And, of all the subjects we learn at school, of all the facts we learn and have stored in our minds, how much of it do we really *need* to know?

Only reading, writing, and arithmetic are useful in this life. These basics can be taught in, maybe, three years maximum. Why do we need any more formal education than that?

On top of those subjects, only what we need for our profession is actually necessary, which we can learn on the job, rather than needing fancy educational establishments to do it for us. University professors: get a proper job.

The following subjects, amongst many others, are utterly, totally and completely useless:

Dance, Sport, Drama, Music, Art, Literature, Politics, Astrophysics.

Why study any of them? Why? Answer me. There's no point in any of them.

Other subjects can be very useful, but specialised, and only needful to be studied by those going in to such professions, for example:

Medicine, geography, engineering, technology, metalwork, carpentry, economics, science*.

[*By "science," we mean science doing something useful, such as developing medicines, or diagnostics (e.g. medical tests, forensic science etc.). Many stupid, ignorant people go into science thinking they can work out the origin of the universe, find out the age of the earth, find life on other planets, discover how the dinosaurs lived, or some other great thing. But such like investigations are totally useless, because there is NO POINT WHATSOEVER in any of them. Let's suppose for a moment that scientists can come up with definitive answers to all these things. So what? How is it going to affect our everyday lives in any way? It isn't. Such "knowledge" is a waste of time and effort. The use of "science" in pursuing such things is a completely wrong use of an otherwise useful subject.]

Millions are in the education system, as pupils or teachers, and most of it is pointless. And we wonder why youths end up hanging around street corners with nothing to do. They are cleverer than we think, because they've obviously realised already that most of what little education they have been given has been a waste of time. Thousands more are in our universities learning what? Most people fit into the system and think that what they are studying is important. But only a small minority of subjects have any real use. We are all expected to fit in to a certain way of doing things, and it's the easiest thing in the world just to follow along, only to find out in the end that it has all been completely pointless.

Why do we do the things we do? Why? Why? What's the point in most of it?

We MUST answer this question. Otherwise, what's the point with our lives? We learn useless things, we are only here for such a short space of time, then we die and are completely forgotten about. Who are we? What's the point in any of it? Why don't we just despair and blow our heads off?

We don't despair exactly because we **know** that this is the absolute truth. We **know for sure** that this is the situation. If we don't come to realise that nearly everything we have done and learned has been pointless, and we are still trying to fill our lives with things of absolutely no consequence, scared stiff of realising the truth, then these are the poor people with the real problem. Because they are living a lie.

So, if life is pointless, then why continue with it? But it is not **life** itself that we are saying is pointless, rather it is most of what we have learned and done that has been pointless.

And the finger needs to be pointed squarely at our educators. The whole system is wrong. Everywhere we look we are taught to live for self. Self-worth, self-acceptance, self-esteem. These are the buzz words with our educators. Me, me, me all the time.

But it's not all about me. If our lives were all about me, then indeed we could legitimately ask the question: What's the point? If life was all about me, then there really is no point in living, because, who am I? I'll be dead and forgotten about soon enough.

So, what is life all about, if it's not about me? Is it about others? Should I help others more? Well, yes, that would be useful. That would be an improvement, if we could have the opportunity to help others. But what are they seeking after? Are not they living for themselves as well? In which case helping them would be pointless too.

Should we serve a greater "good," like our country? Join the armed forces? Be loyal to the king? Something far greater than ourselves and our immediate surroundings? Well, no. Why should they be right? We could end up finding ourselves on the "wrong" side in a war. Except that we will have been whipped up to believe that our side is always right, and foreigners are always wrong. How stupid is that?

So we need to look for an even greater good than a country. Far above ourselves. How about humanity in general? How can we help humanity? But why should we help humanity? They are all self-centred, self-indulgent creature just like ourselves. Why should we help them? What "good" could that ever do? It couldn't.

So we are left with only one answer. We need to serve a greater "good" than even humanity. The greatest possible "good" is the One true living God, Lord of heaven and earth, who created us, and upholds all things in His providence. He is the only One worthy of worship, of service, and of living our lives for, because none of us are worth anything.

"But I don't believe in God," we may say. What do we believe in then? What our educators have taught us? That's not the answer. What our religious leaders are teaching us? No. How do they know anything? How do they know what life is like beyond this world? They don't. They're making it up.

"But they'll teach me about God, won't they?" Well, not necessarily. Most religious leaders just want to be looked up to. They want to be seen to be so important. Spiritual leaders over the weaker members of the community. We shouldn't give them the satisfaction of letting them think we need them. That's exactly what they want.

God can only be found out about in the Bible. "So I should go to Bible college, then?" No! For the same reason as above. People love being called "Professor" and "Doctor of Divinity".

The only way to find out about God for ourselves is to ask Him directly. If we are genuine with God, He will answer. And we can have a real, living relationship with the One true God. Forget men. Forget our "educators." Without God they know nothing. With God teaching us directly, we can know everything we need to know to live a fulfilled, satisfied life. And not just in this world, but He will lead us beyond death to an eternity with Him. Who would not want this? Only those who think far too much of themselves. And I'm truly sorry if that is you.

Jeremiah 29:13

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Matthew 7:7,8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Religion

We can't say that all religions are true, because they aren't. We need to stop pretending that all religions lead to God because they don't. All religions are different from one another. They all teach completely different things. There can be only one "true religion" or philosophy of life. That "true religion" must be the one that can both recognise the fundamental problem with this world, and have the correct solution.

This "true religion" is what we ought to understand as truth. All other religions and philosophies of life must be **rejected** because they either don't recognise the problem, or, if they do, they don't have the correct solution. In other words, they are **wrong**. Yes, the religion or philosophy of life that we hold, or were born into and brought up with, may be **wrong**. Have we ever thought about that? Believing a religion that is **wrong** is believing a lie.

(1.) Recognising the problem

If we don't think there is a fundamental problem with the world at all, then we need our heads examining. It is obvious that there is a problem in the world. A big problem.

What is it? Evil. The world is full of evil.

We can straight away **reject** any religion or philosophy of life that cannot see this. Consequently:

- (a.) We need to define "evil" correctly.
- (b.) We need to find out where "evil" comes from.

(a.) Defining "evil."

An atheist cannot define "evil" nor say where it comes from. It is a total mystery to him. In fact nothing is "evil" to him. Everything is the way it is just because it is the way it is.

- Therefore atheism has no morality.
- Therefore atheism is meaningless.

Atheism cannot even recognise that there is a problem, let alone tell us what that problem is. Therefore atheism must be **rejected**.

Neither a Buddhist nor an Hindu can define "evil" nor say where it comes from.

- Therefore neither Buddhism nor Hinduism has any morality.
- Therefore Buddhism and Hinduism are also meaningless.

Both these religions believe in reincarnation. Endless cycles of life. In these religions, “I” don’t really exist as myself, rather “I” am just an incarnation that will disappear again shortly and become somebody else. Therefore:

- (a.) Nobody has any responsibility for anything they do.
- (b.) There is no incentive to say sorry to anybody for anything.
- (c.) There is no incentive to help anyone in need.
- (d.) If we don’t know what we’ve done wrong in a “previous life,” how can we ever improve? We are bound to make the same mistakes over and over again.

One look inside any Hindu or Buddhist temple and we will find statues of many “gods.” But none of them can be a real “god” at all because none of them can be all-powerful. Just a bit bigger than us, that’s all. And, in any case, any religion that has “gods” with elephant heads, blue faces, or any other frightening appearance, are figments of drug-induced imaginations and cannot possibly be real.

Neither Buddhism nor Hinduism can define nor even recognise the problem of “evil.” And both are filled with so many other ridiculous ideas, therefore these religions must be **rejected**.

There can only be one God who is all-powerful. “Evil” can only be defined by reference to that One God. “Evil” is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of that God.

- If there is no God, “evil” cannot be defined, because there are no laws.
- If there is more than one “god,” which one are we following? What defines “evil” would differ in each case.
- If we say that the law is defined by “the will of the people,” then different people groups have different ideas. Cannibals think it’s perfectly all right to eat people. And in any case, “the will of the people” always changes over time.

Therefore only monotheists can define “evil” correctly. So, “true religion” can only be found in a monotheistic religion. Every other religion or philosophy of life must be **rejected**.

(b.) Where does “evil” come from?

- “Evil” could come from a demonic spiritual world completely separate from ourselves. But we can’t change a demonic spiritual world. And we can’t know anything about such things anyway. So we must **reject** trying to solve the problem of “evil” by attempting to “exorcise” it. We don’t know what we’re doing.
- “Evil” is out there in the world, we read about it in the news every day. But we can’t change the world out there. So we must **reject** trying to solve the problems of the world in political movements. If we form a political movement, we are adding to the world’s problems, not solving them. Politics cannot change the human heart.

– “Evil” is far more local than that. It’s in our town, in our street. We know of child abusers and sexual predators living near us. But we can’t change our neighbour. We can advise him that what he is doing is not right, we can get him sent to jail, but we can’t change his heart. We can’t actually stop him doing what he does. So we must **reject** all forms of counselling, because outward help can only advise, not change anyone.

So, where does “evil” come from? From within ourselves. From the human heart. All we can do is deal with the problem of evil within ourselves as individuals. We can’t deal with it in anybody else. Only people individually being changed from within can solve the problem of “evil.”

(2.) Finding the Solution

So far, we have found out that the “true religion” must be a monotheistic religion that believes in each individual human being needing to be changed from within. Everything else must be **rejected**.

There are two popular ideas we now need to examine:

- (a.) Many believe they have the one “true religion” by birth.
- (b.) Many believe that “true religion” is living a “good” life.

(a.) Religion by birth

Millions believe they have been born into the one true religion, so they don’t need to think any more about it. After all, their family has been in that religion for generations, so surely they must be right. And some are prepared to fight to the death if necessary to defend this idea. This is madness. It just isn’t logical. Maybe we and our family have been wrong for generations.

And nobody can go back all that far into their family history anyway. For example, no Jew today can prove he is directly descended from Abraham.

Even if we have been born into the one true religion, surely we shouldn’t just blindly accept that. We should always try to think things through for ourselves, and then believe what religion we conclude to be the truth. And we should all have every right to change our religion whenever we come to new conclusions. But many religions hate this idea and would throw us out of family privileges if ever we decided to leave the “family” religion. Some would even try to kill us if we left. How dreadful is that.

If we think that the one “true religion” is automatically the one we are born into, without any thought, then we are **wrong**. And if our religion seriously teaches that, then it should be **rejected**.

(b.) Living a “good” life

First of all we must **define** “good.”

“Good” in any religion is all about keeping the laws of God, as defined in the religion’s “holy book”.

– Islam has the wrong “holy book.” Its followers are told, amongst other things, “*annihilate the infidel*” and “*kill them wherever you may find them.*” So “good” is defined completely wrongly. Therefore Islam is to be **rejected**.

– Judaism and Christianity have the correct “holy book.” The difference being that Christianity claims to have extra revelation in the New Testament, which Jews reject. But, at least, in both Judaism and Christianity, “good” is defined correctly. Both have the moral law of God, summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

So we are only going to find the truth from somewhere within these two religions.

Secondly, we must ask **how** “evil” has come to be in the human heart? There are three possibilities:

– (a.) We are all born “good,” and become “evil” simply by our own bad choices in life. This is so obviously wrong. We don’t have to teach a child to be naughty, or selfish. He naturally is from birth. We need to teach him to be “good,” because he naturally doesn’t know how to be.

Muslims believe that we are all born “good.” But we are not, and so Islam must be **rejected**.

– (b.) We are all born “neutral,” and become “good” or “evil” depending on the environment we grow up in. This is wrong too, because poor and privileged alike are “evil.” There is no distinction. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Jews believe that we are all born “neutral.” But we are not, and so Judaism must be **rejected**.

Eastern Orthodox “Christians” of all persuasions (Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, etc.) also believe that we are all effectively born “neutral,” albeit with a predisposition to sin. But we are not like this, and so we must also **reject** huge swathes of “Christendom” too.

– (c.) We are all born “evil.” This is the only explanation for the world.

And, if we are all born “evil,” it must follow that we cannot keep the law of God within ourselves, no matter how hard we try.

Many people think that true religion is about keeping the law of God by trying hard enough. But if we are born “evil” to start with, we can never do this. So any religion which seriously teaches that we actually have the ability to keep God’s law and that all we must do is try hard enough, must be **rejected**.

The “true religion” must believe that we cannot keep the law of God no matter how hard we try, and therefore we need a Saviour to save us from this situation.

We are left with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. These two branches of Christianity have the problem correct. Every other religion on the face of the earth has the problem wrong, so we shouldn’t even be going there. None of them know the first thing about human nature, so everything else they teach will never fit into place. **Reject** them.

So, truth can only be found somewhere within these two branches of Christianity. Let us examine them.

Roman Catholicism

Roman Catholics believe we are all born “evil,” so they understand the problem correctly. But this problem is solved, in their eyes, by a priest simply splashing water in baptism. Easy.

After baptism, so Roman Catholics believe, we are no longer “evil.” This is why they think it so important to rush a priest to a dying baby so it can be splashed in time. With regards sins after baptism, if we keep coming to mass and confession all our lives then all these sins can be removed by the priest pronouncing them removed as and when they occur. In other words we are under the church’s control all our lives.

But, this means that, those who have been baptised are effectively the same as those who are supposedly born “good” or “neutral.” But people are no different whether before or after their baptism. Splashing water by a priest, or anyone else, does not remove “evil.” A priest is a mere man. Therefore Roman Catholicism must be **rejected**. They had the correct problem originally, but have the wrong solution.

On top of this, Roman Catholicism is far too similar to Buddhism in many respects:

- Roman Catholic “meditation” is very similar to Buddhism – a withdrawing in of oneself away from the world, emptying the mind.
- Both Roman Catholic and Buddhist monks and nuns hide away in single sex monasteries.
- Both religions are full of superstitious practices, e.g. Roman Catholics genuflect and cross themselves. Buddhists always have to walk around a stupa clockwise (never anti-clockwise) etc. etc.
- Both religions engage in money-generating scams that play on our emotions for dead relatives. Roman Catholicism believes that after death they all go to a place called “purgatory,” and time for dead relatives there can supposedly be shortened by paying money to the church. We can also pay the church to buy “leftover” good works from great “saints” of the past to help them along too. Buddhists worship their ancestors. People pay money to a “living buddha” to give them “advice.” People pay money for rituals for dead relatives. All such practices are pure evil, squeezing money out of poor people by telling them things about their dead relatives in the afterlife that nobody can possibly know.

Roman Catholicism has the original problem correct, but they solve it wrongly. It is also filled with so many other ridiculous things, therefore it must be **rejected**.

None of these religions we have come across so far can help anyone solve the fundamental problem of our being born “evil.” So the rest of what any of them has to say is not going to help anybody in any way. All must be **rejected**.

So we are left with Protestantism.

Protestantism

They have the correct problem. We are all born evil.

They have the correct solution. We are saved by grace through faith in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to save us from our sins, something we can never do for ourselves.

This is indeed the “true religion.”

But, have we ever been to a Protestant church? Dear me! They are some of the worst places we could ever go to. What's wrong with them? Well, for example:

- Very, very light view of sin. "If Christ has saved me from my sins, I don't need to think about sin any more."
- Loud preachers exalting themselves.
- Men convinced they are right, yet all differ from one another.
- Thousands of tinpot little denominations going it alone.
- Aggressive evangelism.
- No seriousness. Too much frivolity, laughing and joking.
- No humility.

And the list goes on. How can anyone take Protestants seriously? Nobody can possibly condone any of these practices. They have "true religion," but completely wreck it. Why is this?

For the very same reason all the other churches wreck it. Because "church" is led by men, who, as we have shown, are born "evil" and cannot do "good" no matter how hard they try.

"Church" is not the answer at all. We should never trust in any "church." We trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Just read Scripture for ourselves. Read what the Lord Jesus Christ said and did. Ask the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal the truth to us. This will confirm the "true religion" in our hearts and help us grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, exactly as we are supposed to do.

"True religion" is a heart thing, not a "church" thing. And Jesus Christ alone is the answer. Never men.

The Necessity of Self-Loathing

Try this: Go to any crowded place, and take a good look at everybody's faces. They are all busy, busy, busy with their own little affairs, so confident in what they are doing and saying. Many of them are indeed positively taught to be that way. Americans in particular, and other nations who copy them, are taught from an early age to have such cocky confidence in themselves. How few in the world see that such a "me-first" educational philosophy is so foolish. And if we come to realise this truth and start mentioning it to anyone, it is we who will soon be regarded as having a mental problem. But in fact we are the only ones who are sane. It is the cocky, confident majority who are empty and deluded.

Or try this: Look around at everybody passing by, and try to spot one truly humble person. There aren't any. They are all full of themselves, busying themselves about all sorts of things of no consequence. Me, me, me all the time. Nobody, nobody, nobody

humbles themselves to the dust. Yet that is the only way of being honest with ourselves. We are nothing. When we die, no one will remember us. So we need to stop thinking that it's all about "me," because it isn't.

Or try this: Look out from a high viewpoint. From such a height the tiny people on the ground look just like maggots crawling around. How small and insignificant they are! But at ground level, approach any of them, and they think that they, their opinions and their relationships with each other are so important. But they are maggots. They are nothing. The Bible teaches us how utterly insignificant we all are:

Psalm 8:4

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

Psalm 9:20

Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

Psalm 39:5

Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

Psalm 39:11

When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.

Psalm 62:9

Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.

Psalm 146:3,4

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Isaiah 2:22

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?

Isaiah 40:15

Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

Jeremiah 17:5,6

Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

All of us are really NOTHING! We must begin there. If we don't believe that, it is for no other reason than because we don't want to.

But that is not all. Not only are we so small and insignificant, we are also such vile creatures. Indeed, that's what living for self all the time inevitably makes us. We are no good to anybody in that state. The Bible teaches us about our utter vileness too:

Genesis 6:5

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 8:21

....the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth....

Job 40:4

Behold, I am vile....

Job 42:6

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Psalms 5:9

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Ecclesiastes 7:29

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Matthew 15:19

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies

Mark 7:21-23

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Romans 3:10-18 (quoting from various Psalms)

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

This is the absolute truth about every one of us. We are all so small, and we are all so vile. Forget self-worth, self-esteem, self-acceptance. All these are modern false humanistic philosophies of no consequence. Every philosophy men invent is a lie. They all exalt man far too highly. Look at the truth. After all, we can't get away from it, no matter how hard we try. The truth is that we are so small and so bad. Start there. Admit this, then we can start looking for a solution.

The solution to a world full of such small, vile, self-centred people like this, can be found nowhere else but in the Bible. No other religion teaches this or even believes anything like this about human nature. Not even churches believe it. Jesus Christ is the only one who has confronted this situation head on. And we can read about Him only in the Bible. The Bible alone is our manual of living in this corrupt, evil world.

Other religions may speak of how we need to do things to placate whatever god or gods they espouse. Priests or pastors in churches may speak about how “precious” we all are and how God loves us all just the way we are, regardless of our utter, wretched self-centredness. The Bible, on the other hand, speaks of our **inability** to placate God and our **need** of a Saviour.

Galatians 6:3

*For if a man think himself to be something, when he is **nothing**, he deceiveth himself.*

Surely King Solomon was right when he said:

Ecclesiastes 2:17

Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

But we think ourselves so wonderful:

Revelation 3:17

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked

In our being so overly confident in ourselves, we can't see how stupid we really are. And as a consequence, we don't see the depth of how bad, and how selfish, we actually are at heart. That's why most people don't have time for religion. Because they don't want to come to any such conclusion about themselves. Most would admit to making a few mistakes in life, but they can't see, and don't want to see, how absolutely vile and self-centred their lives really are. We need to realise AND admit that we are all this bad. The more we look at ourselves, look back at our lives, and have a truly honest opinion about ourselves, surely, the more we will find the truth about how stupid we have been and how absolutely wretched we really are.

We must come to the point where we **loathe** ourselves, because we **are** like this, it's the truth, and we can't do anything to change that fact. We must be honest with ourselves about this. More to the point, we must be honest with God about it too. Then, and only then, can we truly cry out to Him. And He **will** hear us, because He is a merciful God.

Isaiah 55:6,7

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Jeremiah 29:13

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

A Message from that Kid You Bullied at School

Do you remember that weaker kid you bullied at school? That's actually a silly question. **OF COURSE YOU DO.** You continually bullied him and went off laughing with your mates every time. It was "fun" to you. And now you've grown up and are living a fairly clean, responsible adult life, that kid has been almost forgotten about. After all, we all did it, it was "harmless" fun, just a normal part of growing up. Really?

Actually, it wasn't harmless at all. You probably affected that kid for the rest of his life. Have you done anything about it since? Have you at least apologised? Maybe you've not had the opportunity, you've both gone your own separate ways. But whether you had the opportunity or not, have you ever thought for one moment about him since you left school?

Your actions changed a person for ever. He's not going to be the same as he could have been otherwise. He's not going to be like you, have the opportunities you had, do the things you do. He's scarred mentally for the rest of his life. Are you happy about that? You've not bothered doing anything about it since, so you must be.

Why are you happy having hurt someone so much? Is that a good thing? Of course it isn't. Think about him. Every day, think about what you did to him, constantly, maybe for several years. What a disgusting creature you really are.

"But that's his problem," you may say. But it's **YOU** with the real problem. Just because you and your classmates were in the majority, doesn't make it right. Do you understand that?

"But I'd never do that today, I've grown up," you may say. But you still step on people's toes when you can. It's still "me first" in your decision making in your life. You may not make fun of people in the same way you did when you were at school, but in adult life you simply find more subtle ways of getting your own way. Your life is still me, me, me all the time. Which affects others. They can't necessarily do what they wanted to do because you got in the way. This is the same thing now, as bullying was then.

What is your life?

Do you really think you're just going to get away with your actions, the "harmless" fun you had at school bullying the weaker kids? The selfish decisions you make about your life even now?

Today, we have the streets full of knife crime, gang culture, hard drugs and sexual predators. Where do these all stem from? The human heart. That's also where bullying at school comes from. And bullying becomes a catalyst for all these other problems later on.

IS THIS YOU? “Of course not, I wouldn’t do anything like that,” you may say. To which I say, “Nonsense!” You’ll at least watch porn, drink a little too much, especially with friends, and may even dabble in “recreational” drug use on occasions. So, that’s all right is it?

Now, you may not go further than this because, after all, you want a stable society. And you want to avoid the possible consequences of being caught doing anything illegal. But if there were no consequences, as seems more and more to be the case in our country today, would you? When law and order breaks down in a nation, what happens? Looting, raping, pillaging and all kinds of other filthy practices. Because there’s nobody to stop them any more.

This is what we’re like by nature. And then people say they don’t believe in hell. Of course there must be such a place. Eternal conscious torment in body and soul in hell fire forever is exactly what every one of us deserves for our disgusting behaviour on this earth. Right from when we were a child, bullying that weaker kid in our class. You remember him, don’t you? Of course you do. Stop pretending you don’t deserve to go to hell for ever, because you do. We all do.

So, how do we get out of this situation? We can’t, unless we come to a Saviour. Only Jesus Christ can save us from our sins. And we don’t just come to Him, saying, “Yes, yes, I believe.” Words mean nothing. Lots of people do that and it makes no difference in their lives. We have to genuinely mean it and **want** to repent and change our ways. But people are quite happy not changing their ways, so any words will make no difference at all. Words are meaningless. Only a real heart desire to change is the answer. And rapists, murderers and sexual predators don’t want that. So they’ll stay the same and go to hell in the end. And that’s YOU.

Acts 3:19

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord

Luke 13:3

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

The City of our Solemnities

Isaiah 33:20

Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

The biggest problem a Christian can ever have is their church. Of course, there is no such thing as a perfect church, simply because churches are made of people. But today we have a big dilemma to deal with.

On the one hand we have churches which take the worship of God deadly seriously. And that's a good thing, we certainly should take the worship of God deadly seriously. We are worshipping a holy God, and the things of God are the most serious things we can ever deal with in life. But such churches tend to be those that emphasise tradition over and above the truths of the Bible.

On the other hand, we have churches which may have fairly good Biblical teaching, but they so emphasise "fellowship" with one another, that it is at the expense of no real seriousness in the worship of God. Yes, we should have good, genuine Christian "fellowship" with all our fellow believers in Christ whenever we can find it. But, such friendly "fellowship" should not be carried over into the worship of God, who should not be treated simply as our "best pal," but treated deadly seriously. After all, He is our Father in heaven.

The churches with the most serious worship tend to be the traditionalist ones, such as all under the umbrella of Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and high Anglicanism. They are ritualistic, which we may or may not like, but at least they have seriousness about their worship. A few years ago, I visited Notre Dame cathedral in Paris and a service was going on. There were plenty of visitors walking around, with about twenty actual participants seated in the service. The priest was speaking in French, so I couldn't understand what was being said, but the thing that really stood out for me was the seriousness of the whole occasion. Deadly seriousness is missing from most churches today. And this is what is desperately required.

We love the solemnity of Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic church services. Even though their teaching is altogether wrong.

But, you may say, every Protestant church has something wrong with their teaching too. And that's true. There is no church on earth with perfect teaching. We all should know that.

But there is one doctrine that is so fundamental to the Christian faith that, without it, everything else we are taught with regards our relationship with God will always be wrong.

The traditionalist churches would argue that it is whether we believe in the Trinity or not that counts, or whether we believe in the two natures in one Person of Christ or not that counts. And they would throw people out of their communion if anyone disagreed with the church on these things. I believe both these doctrines, but these issues are not the point. They are not essential to faith.

The real point is that we need to have a correct understanding of human nature. With a wrong understanding of this to begin with, then every other doctrine will be based on a lie about ourselves. Any "church" that teaches such a lie will be propagating an altogether different religion which has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Try telling that to your nearest Orthodox or Roman Catholic priest!

The correct understanding of human nature is that we are all born in sin:

Genesis 6:5

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Psalm 58:3

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Matthew 15:19

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies

Eastern Orthodox churches of all persuasions don't believe this. They believe that we are all born "neutral" and by "free will" choose good or evil freely for ourselves.

Roman Catholic and "High" Anglican churches do believe, correctly, that we are all born in sin, but their solution is baptism in water. A simple splash by a priest removes "original sin" and renders the recipient "neutral." But a man splashing water does not and cannot remove sin.

So it is only the other Protestant churches who, in theory, hold to the true teaching about human nature. Subsequently it is from amongst these churches that we must find our place, a place where where we should be able to worship God "*in spirit and in truth,*" serving God "*acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*"

John 4:23

But 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.

Hebrews 12:28

....serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear

A true understanding of human nature particularly affects our understanding of salvation. Because we are all born in sin, we therefore cannot save ourselves, so we need a work of God in our hearts to do it for us:

John 3:3

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.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Galatians 6:15

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Romans 8:7-10

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man

have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

How do we receive this work of God in our hearts? Simply by asking Him, but it has to be genuine. We have to genuinely come to an end of ourselves and genuinely cry out to Him:

Jeremiah 29:13

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Matthew 7:7,8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

This is the true religion. So every “church” that does not have a correct understanding of human nature will not believe in the necessity of the “new birth” either.

It is possible to be in a church that teaches something other than the truth and still be saved to eternal life. It is God changing the heart that counts, not what we are taught. But if we are in a church that doesn’t teach the truth about human nature, then everything else we are taught in that “church” is never going to be of any help to us, because it will not deal with our true human condition.

I have been saying that Protestant churches are the only ones who **“in theory”** teach this fundamental truth, because in practice, we find that most of them don’t actually do so. Most of them simply don’t want to believe that they are born in sin, so they change everything to suit their own purposes. So even if we are in a Protestant church, we can find plenty of false teaching based on a false understanding of human nature and consequently a false understanding of salvation.

So, what are we to do? The answer I tentatively give is to join that branch of Protestantism known as “Evangelical.” “Evangelical” is usually used to mean those who teach the Bible, which would, in theory, include this correct understanding of human nature. But even here we still have a large spectrum of churches to choose from, some with better teaching than others. Nevertheless, in general, “Evangelical” churches would have the far better teaching than anywhere else, because it would be based on Scripture and not on any wrong, albeit ancient, “church” tradition.

Because this “new birth” is absolutely necessary for salvation, then “Evangelical” churches who truly believe this will also be very missionary minded. They must evangelise the world. They must tell everyone they need to be saved from their sins and come to Jesus Christ for salvation. Hence “evangelism” tends to be a big thing in such churches.

But there is still a problem with nearly all of these “Evangelical” churches, and that is the original problem I mentioned at the beginning, of not taking the things of God seriously enough. This is the dilemma we have today. They may have good teaching, but the worship is not as serious as it ought to be.

The services are mostly modern music. The preacher is often “chatty.” God is spoken to, or about, as though He were just another member of the fellowship to chat with. I remember a few years ago, the liberal churches in Wales had a nickname for

“Evangelicals.” They were called “*Pobl y paned*,” which loosely translated means “people of the tea break,” because they were always having “fellowship teas.”

Now, we really need to get to know, as real, genuine Christian friends, our fellow believers in Christ. We need Christian “fellowship.” But in “Evangelical” churches, this becomes the main item on the agenda, at the expense of seriousness in worship. “Christian fellowship” and evangelism become the two fundamental reasons for the church’s existence, rather than any serious worship, or even teaching, about the things of God.

We evangelise to bring people into the church. Then we immediately teach these newcomers how they in turn should be evangelising to bring more people into the church, so our “fellowship teas” can grow ever bigger. From the outside, all the church appears to be is an ever increasing social club (except that it doesn’t increase because other people, for whatever reason, leave). We should rather be evangelising to bring people into the church so that they can get to know the Lord better for themselves, through serious worship and good Bible teaching. The fundamental purpose of the church should be that we all:

2 Peter 3:18

....grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Sadly, in many “Evangelical” churches, although the “service” may last an hour or so, the “fellowship” afterwards often lasts longer than the service. This really should not be. If this is happening in our church, alarm bells should start ringing in our minds. We go to church to worship God, not have a natter. There is plenty of time for a good natter the rest of the week.

A lot of people don’t actually like huge social groups such as “fellowship teas” anyway, and they tend to sneak off before any “fellowship tea” starts. Sadly, the “Evangelical” churches seem to have nothing much to help such people. They simply cannot understand anyone who doesn’t like social occasions, and think such people can’t possibly be a proper Christian.

The ideal church ought to have good “fellowship” (although endless “fellowship teas” might not be the best way to go about this), but it ought also, more importantly, to have a time of serious worship.

Nehemiah gives us a good template for serious worship:

Nehemiah 9:1-3

*Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month **the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.** And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and **stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.** And **they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.***

We have here a few optional, voluntary things before the service starts:

– Fasting beforehand (probably from the night before)

– Wearing sackcloth

And then the service itself:

- Standing (at least for confession of sins and the reading)
- Bible reading for a fourth part of the day
- Confessing and worshipping for another fourth of the day.

In other words, the whole service takes half a day, (e.g. a Sunday morning)

Nehemiah 12:46

*For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and **songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.***

We have here:

- Songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.

Nehemiah 8:8

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

We have here:

- Preaching from the Scriptures alone.

What is wrong with this template for worship? Traditionalist and liberal churches need to get their theology right by coming to the Bible and embracing the truth, especially the truth about human nature. That's where they go fundamentally wrong. On the other hand, "Evangelical" churches need to learn from the traditionalist churches with regards, not their theology (God forbid!), but their **solemnity**. This is what is missing in today's church. Good Bible teaching **and** solemnity. Now, where can we find that?

Christianity versus the Church

Christianity

I am not from a church-going family. I am just like everybody else. One day, I picked up a Bible and started reading Matthew's gospel. It was wonderful. I couldn't put it down. It was so refreshing, describing a completely different way of life from everything I had ever known. So I did something I had never done before. I prayed to God, saying, "If this is real, let me know." That's the prayer we all need to offer. A cry for mercy to, at this point, an unknown God.

From that moment onwards I was changed completely. I stopped biting my nails. I stopped drinking alcohol. I started reading the Bible every day. I wanted more than anything else to live this new life. I couldn't explain what had happened to me, but knew that it hadn't come from within me. I couldn't have changed myself like that. It must have come from God Himself. And that, dear friend, is Christianity. Nothing more. A complete, internal change of life, which can only come from God. This change can happen to any of

us, simply by reaching out to Him. The only thing we have to do on our part is to be absolutely genuine with Him.

I now had that most precious of things – a real relationship with the One True Living God, Lord of Heaven and Earth, who created us and upholds all things in His providence. I can communicate directly with Him. Tell Him everything. And the most wonderful thing is that God keeps and looks after His people. What a privilege! The world knows nothing of this. We should never take such a privilege lightly, but always take Him deadly seriously.

As I grew in this new faith, I began to learn more about God, and more about myself. Like most people, I knew I wasn't perfect, but I thought I wasn't too bad. But as I grew in the faith, the Lord slowly revealed to me how selfish and self-centred a person I really was. He shewed me that, underneath everything, I am a vile, stinking cesspit of iniquity deserving of hell-fire forever. And I can't get out of this mess. Everything I do is wrong. I don't want to be like this, but I am. I quite rightly hate this situation. And I suggest most strongly that, although few of us will ever admit it, we are all in this very same condition. This is the fundamental problem with human nature. The more I understood this, the more I realised that if any good did come out of me, it would have to come directly from God, through the new life He had given to me. I couldn't possibly produce it myself.

There is only one place where we can find teaching and help to understand ourselves properly in this way, and that is in the Bible. Here is what it says about human nature:

Genesis 6:5

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 8:21

....the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth....

Job 40:4

Behold, I am vile....

Job 42:6

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Psalms 5:9

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Ecclesiastes 7:29

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Matthew 15:19

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies

Mark 7:21-23

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Romans 3:10-18 (quoting from various Psalms)

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

What a breath of fresh air! A historical collection of documents telling the truth about human nature! I'm not going mad after all! Not only does our experience shew our own vileness, but the Bible confirms it to us.

The more we realise this about ourselves, the more we realise our desperate need of a Saviour. A Saviour who doesn't just lightly forgive sin and then forget about it. So many religions have that idea. A forgiveness of sin that is so easy. Sin is far, far more serious than that. It needs atoning for. We need One to die in our place, as the only way to placate the wrath of God. That is exactly what Jesus Christ came into the world to do. And not only that, but He comes into the hearts of His people and changes them permanently from the inside. Not that we become any better in ourselves, but rather we see more and more the truth about ourselves, and more and more our need of Him to do any good at all:

Matthew 1:21

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

This is Christianity.

The Church

With this in mind, we ought to think that there will be some help in the church for wretched sinners such as ourselves. But we would be wrong.

The Bible is full of the subject of sin. The Old Testament is mainly the history of men rebelling against God time and time again. And the New Testament teaches us how God deals with sin and reconciles such rebels to Himself in Jesus Christ.

But, what have we throughout “church history”? Shockingly, to start with, many churches don’t even believe that human nature is inherently sinful at all. All of the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Churches of the East simply don’t believe any of this. They believe we are all born neutral. So huge swathes of Christendom have absolutely no idea about our fundamental problem, and so their solution will not be of any help to anyone.

Theologians prefer to invent many lighter “theories of the atonement” rather than accepting the plain teaching of the Bible. And it is obvious why this is. They don’t **want** to accept the depth of how sinful they really are.

“Church history” has changed the real fundamental understanding of human nature to make it appear far more palatable. Sin needs to be dealt with, but then the excuses would come to lighten the problem:

- We can get rid of “original sin” simply by a priest splashing water in baptism.
- We don’t have to think about sin any more because Jesus Christ has taken it all away.
- We don’t deserve hell-fire forever, just a limited time in purgatory.
- Unbelievers are just annihilated after death.
- God will save everybody in the end.

And so on. Anything and everything except acknowledging how vile and deserving of hell-fire forever we really are.

Church leaders throughout history thought it far more important to be able to formulate fine descriptions of God in human language. So, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity is regarded as far, far more important than any doctrine about sin. So important in fact, that people were cast out of the church as heretics if they didn’t believe it.

The only two well-known names in “church history” who understood this truth about human nature were Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century, and John Calvin of Geneva in the sixteenth. There were others, but any who really saw the truth about human nature are nearly all unknown to us. Simply because the “great” theologians of history didn’t **want** to think about how bad they really are.

How can we trust the church, if it doesn’t even **want** to believe the most important things about life, such as the true depth of depravity of the human soul?

Churches instead have developed for themselves whole new systems, with whole new vocabularies, which not only have absolutely nothing to do with Scripture, but are very confusing to anyone from outside. Here are some random words from various different traditions:

Eucharist
Scapular
Trinity
Archimandrite
Holy Orders

Evangelical
Antidisestablishmentarianism
Hypostatic Union
Parish
Lent
Iconostasis
Vespers

Do we know what any of these words mean? Anyone who has not been born and brought up in an environment where words such as these are regularly used, cannot possibly know what is going on. The churches are essentially speaking a foreign language to outsiders. But those entrenched in such organisations are quite happy there, knowing the vocabulary, and going along with it all.

So much of what passes as Christianity today is nothing like what Jesus Christ came to give the world. It is what men have developed over the centuries as to what they **want** Christianity to be like.

And many people born and brought up in one of these churches, would never go anywhere else, assuming without thinking that “their” church, the one to which their family belongs, must be the one true church, and that simply by being associated with it, they must be true Christians. But it doesn’t make sense to think like that. We should think through everything we are taught and compare it with Scripture, before embracing it, not blindly follow anything or anybody.

None of this is **real** Christianity. Jesus Christ came to give us something altogether different. And the only way we can find out what Jesus was really like and what He taught, is not to listen to men who have never met or experienced Him, but to read our Bibles. The Bible only. No extra misinformation about Him, just the Bible.

This dreadful situation in the churches can be reduced down to the one major problem of not having a correct understanding of human nature. Nobody wanting to see the depth of their own sin. We exalt ourselves far too highly. We don’t see our desperate need of Jesus Christ, but rather, we worship men. We think the “church fathers” and great “saints” of the past were so holy. We think our church leaders are such godly men. We follow our minister, priest, pastor, or whatever we call him, because, after all, he’s been to theology college and we haven’t. He must know what’s right. But he doesn’t. All theology colleges have an agenda, and only teach what their associated church believes. We should rather listen to Jesus Christ as He speaks to each of us through the Scriptures.

Look in people’s faces. And our own in a mirror. What do we see? So proud. So smug. So arrogant. People’s faces say to us: “I’ve got all the right answers, listen to me.” Cocky. Confident. That’s what we’re all like by nature. We think we’re God’s gift to the world. Then we look at photographs of church leaders on the back of their best-selling books or see their faces in their YouTube videos, and they all look so smug too. No humility on any of their faces. For a start, a truly humble person would never want a photograph or video to be taken of them at all. They would rather want to hide away from people.

“But we’re made in the image of God,” we may say. Yes, but we’ve fallen from that position. We’ve lost it. We’re only evil continually now. We are vile. We always will be vile. We can never be anything else. But we can be saved from our sins if we embrace Jesus

Christ. Then, when we die, we will be given new bodies which will be sinless. That's the blessed hope of the Christian.

We need to pray to Jesus Christ. speak to Him. Ask His forgiveness for our many sins. Daily. And, if we are genuine, He will respond. We don't need to go to church to receive His forgiveness. "Church" is, in fact, irrelevant. It teaches all sorts of irrelevant nonsense. However, once we have become a Christian, it is always good to meet with other real Christians, who will be mainly found scattered in one or other of the churches. So it's not wrong to go to church, it's good to meet these people. Rather we should never put our whole hope and trust in a church, any church, and especially in those who run them. We must put our trust only ever in Jesus Christ alone.

What is Truth?

Sin

We all have a major problem. We are selfish. Self-centred. Living for me, me, me, my pleasures, my desires. As if I was the centre of the universe. Not just that, but we are so proud, thinking we are so much better than others. How arrogant! In fact, if the real truth be known, we are vile, stinking cesspits of iniquity deserving of eternal conscious torment in hell-fire forever.

Nobody is going to ever admit that, or even see themselves as being anything like that. By nature, we are far too proud to accept such a description of ourselves. Indeed, our modern world keeps on telling us that we must never think like that. We must have a sense of self-worth, self-acceptance and self-esteem. Otherwise, so they tell us, we will end up with some kind of mental problem.

But that's not true. Rather, it is those who at first agree with the world's assessment of themselves, and who then later realise that it is all wrong, who are more likely to end up with a mental problem, because they were originally taught a lie by their educators, people who they once trusted, only to find that they have been deceived.

The sooner we accept the truth about ourselves, the sooner we can get the help we need.

But we're not going to get help from men. They are too full of themselves, thinking how wonderful they are. They are the ones peddling this modern psychology in the first place. We need help from a far higher source, namely God. This is where the Bible comes in.

The Bible is the only book which acknowledges the truth about human nature:

Genesis 6:5

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 8:21

....the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth....

Job 40:4

Behold, I am vile....

Job 42:6

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Psalms 5:9

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

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Matthew 15:19

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Romans 3:10-18 (quoting from various Psalms)

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Salvation

And the Bible also tells us that there is an answer. God has provided a way out of this mess. That's the most wonderful thing in the world. There is no need to despair! How do we avail ourselves of this way out? The way is very simple. Ask God.

Matthew 7:7,8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

We don't need to do anything. As if we could impress God! We just need to simply ask. But we must be absolutely genuine in our seeking of Him, and **want** with all our heart to be changed:

Jeremiah 29:13

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

When we do ask God for help in all sincerity, He will change us from the inside. This is what all of us most desperately need:

John 3:3

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.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

We then have that most precious of things — a real relationship with the One True Living God, Lord of Heaven and Earth, who created us and upholds all things in His providence. We can communicate directly with Him. Tell Him everything. And the most wonderful thing is that God keeps and looks after His people. What a privilege! The world knows nothing of this. We should never take such a privilege lightly, but always take Him deadly seriously.

Sanctification

Once we have been changed by God, we grow in this new faith:

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

But what is this growth exactly? Many Christians think that, with the Lord's help, they are slowly getting better and better all the time. But this is a great mistake. And this has created much wrong thinking throughout church history.

Even so, we have still most definitely changed. We are far, far better people after having been changed by God than before. All thanks to the Lord at work within us. But we, in and of ourselves, never actually get better and better. Christians look for a far greater hope. A new body which cannot sin. But this is promised to us after we die, not here in this world, but in the next:

1 John 3:2

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

As long as we have these bodies, we are still the same vile sinners as ever we were:

Romans 7:25

So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

So, if we're not getting better and better, how do we become different? In many ways:

- We began to learn more about God, and more about ourselves.
- We now want to live for God, not for ourselves any more.
- We are kept from the grosser sins that we used to have no qualms about, thanks to God giving us a far more sensitive conscience.
- We now love the law of God, no longer hate it and want to keep it, although we still fall so far short of this in ourselves.
- We now hate our own selfishness. Another incentive not to pander to it.
- We now grow in grace and knowledge
- We become more and more set apart from the world and it's ways:

John 17:17

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

All of these changes should engender humility and stop us ever boasting again about ourselves, because, all the time these things are happening to us, underneath everything, we're still no better than anyone else:

Romans 3:27

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

It is very easy to see selfishness in others. We see plenty of it in others every day, even without the need of an experience of God changing our heart. But it's only after God has really changed us from the inside that we begin to see it in ourselves. This is what we essentially have to deal with in this life. Ourselves. We can't change others. We can't even change ourselves. But if God is living within us, we can now hate our selfish nature and want to be changed by God from within, even though we all too often still fail by letting self get in the way.

This is the real, authentic, true Christian life. It is exactly how the apostle Paul describes it as he said about himself:

Romans 7:14-26

I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this

death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

This is not a description of a person before God changed him, because there was no battle going on at all in his soul, then. Neither can we say it was something else not relevant to the Christian today, such as Paul, a Jew, telling us of his experience in relation to the Jewish law. No. It's a description of the true Christian whom God has truly changed, with the spiritual battle against the flesh continually going on within him until he dies.

The more we realise the truth about the depth of our sinful nature, the more we realise our desperate need of a Saviour. A Saviour who doesn't just lightly forgive sin and then forget about it. So many religions have that idea. A forgiveness of sin that is so easy. Sin is far, far more serious than that. It needs atoning for. We need One to die in our place, as the only way to placate the wrath of God. That is exactly what Jesus Christ came into the world to do. And not only that, but He comes into the hearts of His people and changes them permanently from the inside. Not that we become better, but rather we see more and more the truth about ourselves, and more and more our need of Him if we are to do any good at all:

Matthew 1:21

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

This is the fundamental message of Christianity.

So, to conclude: True Christianity is all about three simple truths regarding ourselves:

(1.) — We are all born with selfish natures. We live for self. We are self-centred. We cannot get out of this condition by ourselves. We have no desire to. If this is not dealt with, we will get what we deserve, which is eternal conscious torment in body and soul in hell-fire forever.

(2.) — To know God for ourselves, and to escape the wrath to come, we must be “born again” by the Spirit of God. This is an internal experience which could only possibly come from God. We can't whip it up for ourselves. All we can do is cry to God for mercy, and He chooses whom He chooses:

Romans 9:15,16

*For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then **it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.***

(3.) — Once we have been “born again” in this way, we are fundamentally changed from the inside. God comes to dwell within us. We are saved to eternal life. We grow in grace and knowledge. We become more and more set apart from the world as we learn more and more of the truth, which only the Lord can reveal to us through His Word.

The Truth and the “Church”

When people think of Christianity, they think of a “church” or “churches” that they know of, and base all their opinions about Christianity on that. And this is perfectly natural. We automatically assume that “church” is “Christianity” and that “Christianity” is “church.” But this is not necessarily true.

Firstly, we see so many different “churches” around us, all proclaiming to be the one true “church,” the one true expression of Christianity. They may accept other “churches” as valid, but not as the **true** “church,” the “church” as they think it ought to be. And all these “churches” differ from one another quite markedly. They can’t all represent Christianity. The best we can say about them is that each may hold **some** truth about Christianity, and that some will have more truth than others.

But how can we discern what Christianity is really all about, if every “church” is a mixture of this kind? How can we differentiate between the real truths of Christianity and the man-made teachings that have crept into all of these “churches”?

Well, the first thing we can do is to not just blindly believe any “church” without thinking. So many people just decide to follow the “church” they are most familiar with, usually the one their family “belongs” to. But a blind faith like that is not helpful at all. Your “church” will be wrong in many aspects.

None of us are going to get very far if we blindly trust in a “church” to tell us what is right, because every “church,” indeed every person, is going to have something wrong in what they believe somewhere. Nobody, and therefore no “church,” is perfect.

Secondly, God has shown us exactly what the truth is, by giving us the Scriptures. So here we have our God-given answer. Scripture alone shews us all the truth we need to know. But every “church” would immediately respond by saying that they are the one true “church” because they are the only “church” that interprets the Scriptures correctly. Yet they all interpret the Scriptures differently. So we are no further on in our quest for the truth.

We need to discern what differences there are between each individual body that calls itself a “church,” and what the Scriptures actually teach. Then we can be able to tell how

much truth each of the “churches” around us actually has. Which will invariably be a lot less than each “church” actually claims.

Just to confuse matters, some “churches” have more books in what they call their “Scriptures” than others. So at least some “churches” are going to be wrong on this issue alone. Here, we will only quote from the Protestant canon of Scripture, because, out of all of them, this has the least number of books (66), all of which are agreed upon by all of the other “churches.” So nobody can complain.

The Truth

Authentic, real Christianity, as taught in the Bible, is as follows:

— All men are born totally depraved in sin. We are all vile. We are all selfish and self-centred by nature. Stop pretending it’s any other way:

Genesis 6:5

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Mark 7:21-23

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

— True Christianity is all about salvation from this wretched condition:

Psalms 85:4

Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

Isaiah 45:22

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

— This salvation is available freely from God for the asking, but we must be genuine with Him, asking Him in prayer to change us. And He will:

Proverbs 8:17

I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

Jeremiah 29:13

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Matthew 7:7-8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

— This change is a real, complete change in the heart, only possible by God's working in us. We can't work it up from within ourselves. We are powerless to change ourselves in any way:

Psalms 80:3

Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Lamentations 5:21

Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.

John 10:26-27

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me

— Once this happens, we become completely different. Before the change, we loved sin and self. After the change, we now hate sin and self:

Job 40:4, 42:6

Behold, I am vile.... Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Romans 8:6

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Psalms 119:97

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

— Knowing doctrine is not necessary for this change to occur. Knowledge of doctrine is only of use after we have been changed, in order for us to be able to perform the good

works God has prepared for us to do. Doctrine is not there as just another interesting subject to study. Neither is it there for us to try to win arguments:

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Colossians 1:9-10

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God

Titus 3:8-9

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

The most important point in the whole of Christianity is this heart change. We **must**, as individuals, be changed from the natural self-centred condition we are born into. We **must** be “born again” into a new God-given life:

John 3:3

*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 3:7

*Marvel not that I said unto thee, **Ye must be born again.***

In other words, we must be made “new creatures” in Christ:

2 Corinthians 5:17

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, **all things are become new.***

Galatians 6:15

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creature.***

No “church” teaches this truth about being “born again” properly.

Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and similar “churches” would tell us that a person is “born again” simply by undergoing water baptism, a ceremony using water, officiated by a priest, and usually done on infants. But this does not involve any heart change whatsoever. So Baptists and Evangelicals dismiss that as being mere superstition.

Baptists and Evangelicals, on the other hand, would tell us that being “born again” is our having had a “conversion” experience in our hearts. But a feeling in our hearts is not necessarily a genuine change. So Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox dismiss this whole idea as simply being emotionalism.

Both of these are wrong ideas about the meaning of the phrase “born again”.

Being “born again” is having a heart **genuinely** changed by God. Without this genuine, God-given change, we are all destined for hell fire, which is where every one of us deserves to go if left to our vile, sinful, self-centred nature that we are born with. In our natural state, we cannot possibly be a “Christian,” whether we have been baptised in water by a priest or had an emotional experience or not. We **must** truly be “born again” by the Spirit of God and really and completely changed from within.

And once we have been truly “born again” in this way, the Holy Spirit will come to dwell within us as individuals, guiding us to the correct Scriptures and helping us to interpret them correctly, so we may understand the truth.

In our natural state, we love sin and love ourselves. With a genuinely changed heart, we now hate sin but still do it. Therefore we must hate ourselves:

Romans 7:22-25

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

In our natural state, we either hate or are at least ambivalent towards Christ. With a genuinely changed heart, we now love Christ more than our own family, and indeed more than our own selves:

Luke 14:26

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

This is authentic, real Christianity.

But it's not in any of the “churches.”

The “Church”

Let us contrast these truths with what the “churches” around us teach.

All “churches,” whether they be Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant or any other, exist separately for only one reason: their own glory.

All would say they believe Scripture (although what they define as “Scripture” may differ). And indeed, wherever the truths of the true Scriptures are preached and advanced in any of them, God can and does use it. But all “churches” have also developed so many wrong extra man-made doctrines, which have taken them over. Where these are preached and advanced in the “church,” God will not work through them at all.

Christ warned us about following the doctrines of men:

Isaiah 29:13

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men

Matthew 15:9

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Mark 7:7

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Colossians 2:20-22

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

Titus 1:14

Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

Such man-made doctrines hide the Scriptural truth from many people.

Many people think they are a “Christian” because they believe one or more of these man-made doctrines. But they are not, because none of them have been truly “born again” in the heart.

Many people think they are a “Christian” simply because they believe the orthodox Creeds. But the devils believe all the orthodox Creeds:

James 2:19

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Many people born and brought up in a “church” think that theirs is the one true “church” no matter what, and they will never leave or go anywhere else, thinking every aspect of its teaching is correct. But it’s not.

And even many who have truly been “born again” in the heart, can be taken in by such man-made doctrines from the “church” they attend, and they can be carried along with these false doctrines for many years. So the teachings of a “church” can be very confusing for many true believers.

All “churches” have something wrong with them somewhere. If we blindly follow a “church” or believe one “church” has everything right, no matter how big that “church” is, then we are a cult worshipper, worshipping the great god “church” rather than Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.

Now let's come to a few particular examples of wrong, unbiblical, man-made beliefs in some of the "churches" we have around us:

Eastern Orthodox "Churches":

- They deny the original sinful nature of man. They've got the problem with the human condition totally wrong to start with, so they can never have the correct solution. Which means that they don't believe that Christianity is "salvation" from anything.
- They believe we can all naturally become "gods" (Theosis).
- They believe that everybody is going to heaven thanks to Christ "harrowing" hell.
- Infants are given the bread and wine in the communion service.
- They believe marriage is eternal, and continues after death.
- They believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary.
- They don't believe that the Bible is the "Word of God." Rather, Christ is.
- They believe that the priests have the awesome power to change the bread and the wine into the actual body and blood of Christ.
- They believe that priests also have the awesome power to forgive sins on behalf of God Himself.

Roman Catholicism:

- They believe in "baptismal regeneration": That is, they believe, correctly, that we are all born in sin, but they then go on to believe that this "original sin" is taken away simply by a priest splashing water on someone (usually as an infant). This is spoken of as being "born again." The Holy Spirit is subsequently regarded as then being "in" the person baptised. But there's no heart change. cf. Simon Magus in Acts 8:13-24.
- They believe in "Purgatory": That is, they believe that, at death, unbaptised people go straight to hell; *some* baptised members of the "church" who are particularly "holy" go straight to heaven; and all the rest of the baptised members of the "church" (i.e. most of them) go to a place called "Purgatory," a place of punishment where they need to go to have their sins burned off. All of these baptised individuals will eventually be saved in the end. The "church" sells "indulgences," paid for by the people (keeping them poor), which are declarations that can help to shorten this period of torment for either themselves or their dead relatives.
- They believe in the immaculate conception and perpetual virginity of Mary.
- They believe Mary gave us the rosary, a superstitious form of reciting prayers.
- They believe that the priests have the awesome power to change the bread and the wine into the actual body and blood of Christ.
- They believe that the members of the "church" have the duty to confess their sins to a priest, and that the priests have the awesome power to forgive sins on behalf of God Himself. [Consequently, this leads to the ridiculous conclusion that, if a priest has been consecrated wrongly or in error, all "power" he supposedly had to do these things never existed in him. So people treated by such men would have to go through the rituals, e.g. take confession, get married etc. etc., all over again, because the first time was not valid].
- They believe in salvation by faith and works.
- They believe that suffering, in and of itself, is a virtue, a "good work".
- They believe that the pope of Rome is the "vicar of Christ," and is infallible in his official teachings.

Protestantism

Evangelical:

- Being “born again” is often thought of purely as an emotional experience. In reality this may or may not be a genuine heart change.
- Their religion is too relaxed. The things of God are not taken anywhere near as seriously as they should be. There is too much frivolity, laughing and joking in their “churches.”
- They have a very, very light view of sin. “If Christ has saved me from my sins, I don’t need to think about sin any more.”
- Many Protestant “churches” have overbearing, charismatic preachers in charge exalting themselves.
- Many people in Protestant “churches” are convinced that they are interpreting the Bible correctly, yet all differ from one another. This results in thousands of tinpot little denominations going it alone.
- They aggressively evangelise. Many of these “churches” only exist to get others in to their cosy little denomination. There is little or no teaching in their “churches.” They make people feel guilty if they are not going out and evangelising, “winning souls” for Christ.
- There is often no humility.
- They believe in progressive sanctification. Some Protestant “churches” believe that we can actually become perfect in this life. Most of them, though, rightly distance themselves from such an idea, but still believe that every day in every way Christians are getting better and better. But we’re not. We grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), but not in being more and more Christlike. We want to be, but we aren’t.

Other Protestant:

- There are many other types of Protestant “church” which would not believe Scriptures at all. They believe all kinds of worldly liberal views imaginable. There is no difference from the world in any of these.

“Churches” Are Not Necessary

Salvation is God changing hearts in individuals.

Truly “born again” Christians would very much like to be in contact with each other. After all, these are our fellow believers. So most true Christians go to “churches” for that purpose. And that’s fine, as long as we don’t think everybody who professes to be a Christian in the “church” is one in reality. Any “church” will always be a mixture of sheep and goats, wheat and tares.

Other than of use for Christian fellowship in this way, “churches” are not absolutely necessary at all.

We read of “churches” around the world being persecuted. All that tends to mean is that they, as institutions, are forbidden to do certain things (such as meeting) by various governments throughout the world.

But the world will always be against Christians. Even in a “safe,” so-called “free” country, we may be able to freely set up organisations which we can call “churches,” but there are still always going to be restrictions, wherever we live. For example:

- there are always fire and building regulations.
- We can’t just build and set up a “church” anywhere. We need planning consent.
- We can’t forbid homosexuals from holding office.
- Christians can’t set up radio or television channels without a licence.

Wherever we live, the “church” will be “persecuted” in some way or other.

But we praise the Lord that true religion is inward, based on the changed hearts of individuals. “Churches” may be persecuted and disappear, but nobody can touch our inner selves:

Matthew 10:28

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

We don’t need “churches” other than as places to meet other Christians.

Filthy Rags

Isaiah 64:6

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Everybody who professes to be a Christian ought to be living a life of good works.

We are called to keep God’s Law:

John 14:15

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 15:10

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

James 2:17

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

We are called to live a life worthy of our calling in Christ Jesus:

Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called

Colossians 1:10

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God

1 Thessalonians 2:12

That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

We will be judged according to our works:

Psalms 62:12

Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Proverbs 24:12

If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?

Ecclesiastes 12:14

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Jeremiah 17:10

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Jeremiah 32:19

Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Matthew 16:27

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

John 5:28,29

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Romans 2:6

Who will render to every man according to his deeds.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

1 Peter 1:17

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

Revelation 2:3

And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Revelation 20:12,13

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Revelation 22:12

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

So, it is particularly important for every one who professes to be a Christian to do good works, works pleasing to the Lord.

But none of us can do this by nature:

Romans 3:10-12

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Romans 8:8

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please him....

So, what can we do about this?

The answer to that question is nothing. All mankind is in a fallen state. We are all born with a sinful nature. In order even to begin to do good works, works pleasing to God, we must be changed from within. And we need God to do this for us, because we can't do it ourselves.

We must be "born again" of the Spirit of God, and become a "new creature" in Christ to be able to even begin such a life:

John 3:3

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 3:7

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Galatians 6:15

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

The only way for this to happen, is for us, as individuals, to come to an end of ourselves and call upon God to change us and forgive our many sins through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:

Jeremiah 29:13

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Matthew 7:7-8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

if we are genuine with God, He will answer our prayers.

We are saved purely by the grace of God, through faith, not **of** any good works of our own because we don't have any, but **unto** good works, i.e. in order that we may begin to do good works, which we couldn't do otherwise:

Ephesians 2:8-10

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto** good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

This is reality. This is the true Christian faith.

But we see all sorts of problems throughout Christendom with this.

Protestants emphasise the fact that salvation is by grace alone through faith. They understand, quite rightly, that we can't help or save ourselves, so we must be saved by the sheer grace of the Lord. They understand, quite rightly, that no amount of good works can save our souls, because we are by nature sinful creatures, and none of us can be

good enough for God. We must be changed by Him in order to begin to do any good works at all.

However, it is also true, sadly, that most Protestants so emphasise salvation by grace alone, that they tend to neglect good works altogether.

And this is the caricature all other churches in Christendom have of the Protestants. The other churches all emphasise the necessity of good works so much, that they dismiss Protestants altogether as not being Christian, because they don't. They argue that, if Protestants believe that they are saved by grace alone, then they can do what they like and still get to heaven. So there's no need to bother doing good works. They're not necessary. And they see Protestants not doing many good works but simply emphasising grace, and that just confirms them in this erroneous belief.

But the truth is not like this at all. Most Protestants and all the other churches have got it completely wrong about the true nature of our salvation.

All Christians should believe in doing good works. All Christians should believe that we are saved by grace alone. But this free salvation by grace is always **unto** good works. The two always go together. Good works are the end of our faith, not the beginning.

Every other church on the face of the earth believes that they need to do good works and then, maybe, just maybe, they have done enough to get themselves into heaven. In other words, they are trying to impress God all the time.

But God is not impressed with any of it. We must see our **need** of a Saviour before we can be saved to eternal life, and that means seeing the total inability we have within ourselves to impress God with anything. **Then** crying out to God for mercy:

Luke 18:13

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

I feel sorry for monks and nuns, priests and bishops, and everybody else who tries to impress God or climb the ladder of their church hierarchy in some way or other in order to try and gain God's favour. None of us can do it. Rather, they need to see their sin and inability instead. The way they dress alone shows their pride. I'm sorry, but I'm not good enough to be a monk or nun or priest or bishop. I don't dress up to try to impress others of my piety. I cry to God for mercy. I'm a sinner. I'm nothing, and God is everything.

We all need to stop showing off how pious we are to all and sundry, because we're not pious at all, we're all sinners in need of a Saviour.

Life

Genesis 3:19

....dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

James 4:14

....For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

As we grow, we learn things and live in the light of what we learn. This knowledge changes over time as we learn new things and reject old things we used to believe when we were younger but don't any more. As we grow old, we start to forget things, until we grow so old we can't even do things any more and eventually die. That's life.

Furthermore, we are all born in sin. We live for the sole purpose of living for and pleasing self. We only ever show kindness to other people if it suits us. Usually we want companionship, so, what appears to be kindness to others is really, underneath everything, serving ourselves, because we want friends, we want their influence, help, money or we have some other such like purpose. We don't genuinely want them for who they are in themselves at all. And others will have exactly the same idea when they befriend us. We spend our entire lives living like this, only seeing our fellow humans for what we can get out of them for ourselves.

As we grow old and become more and more useless to others, we lose most of our friends, because we no longer serve their purposes. And we treat others in exactly the same way if they no longer serve our purposes. This is how we spend our lives.

What a useless existence.

But, there is a God to whom we shall all give an account.

Naturally, most people don't want to give an account to anyone else for their selfish behaviour. So, they find it very convenient that God is invisible to our natural senses, because they think that means they can quite happily not believe in his very existence and carry on the way they are.

Others, realising the pointlessness of living for themselves, embrace a man-made religion, an invented belief system that incorporates a supernatural world other than this one, maybe with a god or gods in control. And, the crazy thing is that they actually believe that they can please such deities by doing a few tasks themselves or behaving a certain way.

But we can never please the true God.

We are stuck in these self-centred bodies, only ever living for self. How can we ever live for God, if we can't even begin to live for anybody else?

If we want to know the truth about ourselves, then this is it.

We all, as individuals, need a Saviour to save us from this mess that we're in, because we can't get out of it ourselves.

So, let's now talk about church.

We become a Christian. We start going to church. And we find ourselves ending up following a very similar pattern in church circles to how we were in the world.

We begin knowing nothing about God at all. We grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As we grow in this new spiritual knowledge, we learn things and live in the light of what we learn. As in the world, this knowledge in us changes over time as we learn new things and reject old things we used to believe when we were younger but don't any more. And as we grow old, we start to forget things, until we grow so old we can't even do things in the church any more. And we eventually die.

So, we find that church life follows a very similar pattern to worldly life. But there is something else. As we grow in spiritual knowledge, we slowly learn that, no matter which church we are in, church, just like the world, is never as good as we expect it to be. No church follows Christ as He presents Himself in Scripture. So, we either have to put up with the imperfections we have got in the church we find ourselves in, or move churches. But even if we do move, it only results in our attending another imperfect institution with other difficulties. Eventually, as we grow old, we can't get to all of the church services any more anyway. And we find that, after all, well, actually we don't really mind that. As we mature in the faith, we grow out of "church" altogether. We have the Bible alone for our comfort and strength. Then when we can't even see to read or hear the Bible any longer, we simply rely on Jesus Christ Himself in our hearts. Until the time comes when He calls us home. And that is the true, spiritual, Christian life.

Hebrews 13:5

...he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Colossians 1:27

....Christ in you, the hope of glory

The Next Life

When we die, we will all be shocked. Those who don't believe there is life after death at all, will be shocked just by finding out that there is. But even if we do believe there is a life after our time here on this earth, the next life will be altogether different from this one. It will be something we did not and could not have ever expected or imagined:

Isaiah 64:4

For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

Firstly, after we die, all our desires, aspirations, supposed achievements, plans and ideas that we had in this world will disappear altogether. "We" will still exist, but everything we have lived for, and hoped for here, will be gone, and we will be left with nothing. It will be like having our legs kicked from under us:

Genesis 3:19

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Ecclesiastes 1:14

I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

James 4:14

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Matthew 6:19-21

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Christians will be very thankful that they have been saved from their sinful natures, and will enter glory by being given new sinless bodies, to be with Christ for ever:

1 John 3:2

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

But, having got into glory by the sheer grace of God alone, they will still be just as shocked as anyone else.

The next world will be altogether different. Heaven is not going to be anything like this world down here. It is not going to be a place of meeting all our loved ones again and chatting with them for ever over endless fellowship teas. That's not heaven. It will be nothing like "church" here. Christ will be all the glory. We will no longer have the desire to fellowship with men any more, but only with Him.

But, what exactly will we be doing in heaven? Down here we have lots to do. We need to provide for ourselves. We need to care for our ailing bodies. All around us we are overwhelmed with so many, many needs and opportunities to help others. There are always problems to deal with here. But in heaven nobody will have any problems at all:

Revelation 21:4

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

This is good. It would be such a welcome relief from the trials of this world. And we will be ever thankful. But if, in heaven, we won't need to provide for ourselves, or have ailing bodies to deal with, and nobody will need our help any more, what shall we actually, physically be doing there? We will be worshipping God and His Christ for evermore. But, apart from that, we can't really imagine what other work there would be to do.

In this world, we have things we can see to deal with. In heaven, we will have (as yet unspecified) true riches. This place is a testing ground for the next:

Luke 16:10-12

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

On occasions, men, in this life, have come into contact with aspects of the next life.

Often they have not recognised it, because it has been deliberately hidden from them:

Hebrews 13:2

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Judges 13:21,22

But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

Luke 24:15-16,31

And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.... And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

In fact, Jesus came to this earth in humility. Most people did not recognise who He truly was. We read of only one occasion when He revealed Himself for who He really was a little bit more, to some of His closest disciples:

Matthew 17:1,2

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

Some people in this world have actually seen things in the next life that it is not lawful to reveal here. It would be too much for us to comprehend:

Daniel 12:4

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Revelation 10:4

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

Some people in this world have encountered glorious beings from the next life, knowing they were such. Every one of them had to fall on their face as dead:

Genesis 17:3

And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

Joshua 5:14

And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?

Matthew 28:2-4

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

Revelation 1:17

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

One thing is for sure. If we ever come into contact with anything from the next life, there will be no strength remaining in us:

Isaiah 6:5 KJV

*Then said I, Woe is me! for **I am undone**; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

Daniel 10:8

*Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and **there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.***

Daniel 10:15-17

*And when he had spoken such words unto me, **I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.** And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord,*

*by the vision **my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.***

Isaiah 14:9-10

*Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, **Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?***

We certainly won't be defending ourselves in any way:

Matthew 22:12

*And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? **And he was speechless.***

Luke 1:22

*And when he came out, **he could not speak unto them:** and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for **he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.***

Acts 9:7

*And the men which journeyed with him stood **speechless**, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.*

And that is going to be the situation when we die. Our strength will be gone. We will enter the next world powerless and without strength:

Romans 5:6

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

I'm a sinner. Everything I have done in this life has been pointless, except what the Lord did through me after changing my heart. Other than that, I, personally, deserve eternal, conscious torment in body and soul in hell fire forever. That is where every one of us deserves to go, whether we recognise that or not:

Romans 7:23-25

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

If God sent every one of us to hell fire forever, He would have done nothing wrong:

Matthew 25:41

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels

When we reach the next life, the first thing we will see is the utter depth of depravity of the sinful nature that we had on this earth. And we'll see it so clearly for the first time. We can see some of it now, as the Lord reveals it to us. But even the best of Christians, in this world, are still far too full of self to see much of it here. That's why we will all be so shocked and surprised when we get to heaven. Even a lot of what we thought was our "Christian" life here will be seen to have been in error and pointless. And a lot of our beliefs too, which we sincerely held here, things that we imbibed from our church (and not from God), will be clearly seen to have been terribly wrong.

Those who were not Christians in this world, and who go to hell fire, will also see the depth of depravity of their sin too. But they won't be sinning for evermore down there. They will be desperately wanting to sin, wanting to continue the selfish lives they lived on earth, but they won't be able to. That's the hell of it.

Those who get to heaven will know it is not what they have done that has got them there, it is all of the Lord. These are the ones to whom, while they were still in this world, the Lord at least began to show them how much of a vile nothingness they really were. But that would only ever be a beginning. When we get to heaven, we'll see ourselves truly for what we really are. And that will be the biggest shock of all.

In the next world, in whichever place we end up, we will be nothing and God will be everything. We need to stop pretending it will be any other way.

Isaiah 2:22

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?