

About The Author



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In 1981 he had an overwhelming experience of the Holy Spirit and was called into ministry in 1983 to *'proclaim the Good News, to heal the sick and suffering and set the captives free.'*

He served as a Deacon and Elder at Kirkintilloch Baptist Church and Counselling Co-ordinator at Kilsyth Community Church.

With his wife Andrea he was involved in pastoral ministry, counselling and discipling individuals and couples for over thirty-five years. They were blessed with four grown-up children and five grandchildren.

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over forty years*

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LEAVES IN FALL

PETER HODGE



In Fall

from

The Journal of a Journey

PETER HODGE

Leaves In Fall



Painting by Lorisa Zorina © Adobe Stock Images

*We live for 70 years, or 80 if we're healthy, yet even
in the prime years there are troubles and sorrow.
The years pass by so quickly and we fly away.*
PSALM 90:10 ISV

*Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*
PSALM 90:12 NIV

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To the numerous individuals, with whom it has been a privilege to walk a mile or two in their moccasins at different stages of the forty-year journey. Their names in most cases have been changed to protect their anonymity.

Ultimately, as JS Bach wrote on every page of his music,

- S.D.G -

- Soli Deo Gloria -

'Glory to God Alone.'

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A Journey.....and a journal

Leaves In Fall are leaves from the daily journal of a nobody named Simon, born a child of Adam, born again a child of God, and called to '*proclaim the Good News* ('*Your God reigns*')¹, and demonstrate its arrival by healing the sick and setting captives free.²

If God is real, why is the world in such a mess and all man's efforts rendered meaningless by the pitiless march of death? How might one know for sure that death is not the end and God is knowable in reality, not just in theory?

Simon made up his mind he would believe in God, if he showed up in situations neither he nor others could control or manipulate. In short, in a supernatural intervention of some sort that could be verified.

On the 21st of January, 1981, he heard an inner voice telling him to start a diary, saying:

'You will see what I will do.'

The diaries, from which these leaves have fallen, trace a spiritual journey searching for answers to the questions Simon posed. Over the years they have borne witness *not only* to the reality of the devastating results of Adam and Eve's disobedience in a garden, *but also* to the results of another Man's obedience in another garden, demonstrating that God is real and death is not the end. Above all, they show God wants a relationship with individuals, who are genuinely seeking him, and confirms he is real in words and actions that are verifiable.

The journey from a lost paradise to paradise regained is the story of human history - a journey each of us will take one way or another.

¹ Isaiah 52:7 ² Luke 4:18-19

Chapter One

The Journey Begins

The Journey Begins.....*with a crisis and a supernatural encounter*

When Simon and Andrea met as students at St Andrews University, they were sincerely religious, and called themselves Christians, but they were unconverted. Andrea was from a Methodist background; Simon from an Anglican one. They were married in 1965, and moved to Lenzie, just outside Glasgow, a year later, when their eldest daughter was born. Two years later, Andrea gave birth to two more beautiful girls.

In May 1974, Andrea was diagnosed with MS (multiple sclerosis) and by 1975 was struggling physically. One day two Christian neighbours found her in tears and offered to pray for her. Somewhat reluctantly, she agreed, if it made them feel better! Some weeks later she was sitting in the sitting room listening to a Mahler symphony. In a vision she saw two mediaeval princes, one in white, the other black, jousting for her hand in marriage. She realised she had a choice - either to go with the White Prince (Jesus) or the Black. There and then she gave her heart to Jesus and experienced a peace she had not known before. A year later Andrea gave birth to a baby boy to the delight of the whole family.

In 1980 Andrea was asked to host a prayer group for the Luis Palau Crusade in Glasgow the following year. The group met in September 1980 for the first time. On the 23rd of November, Simon asked for prayer for help to give up smoking forty to fifty cigarettes a day. Three days later a locum dentist asked: '*How long have you had these white patches in your cheeks?*' and indicated it might be a sign of cancer. Christmas dinner was a painful affair, because of the stitches they had used to sew up the inside of his cheeks after taking biopsies.

On Boxing Day 1980 everything fell apart. The telephone rang and it was Simon's mother to say his father was in hospital after an emergency operation, during which he suffered a mild heart attack and they discovered a tumour in his pelvis. Andrea burst into tears and admitted that she couldn't cope with a lively four-year-old son running rings around her because of her MS, and Simon was facing the prospect of cancer from his smoking. In desperation he went into the back room, fell on his knees and cried out:

'God if you're real, I need you to show up, because this family is going down the tubes.'

Delivered From Smoking.....with a word

It wasn't an eloquent prayer - just a desperate cry for God to show up. In the middle of January the results of the biopsies came back from the Dental Hospital, Glasgow to say it wasn't cancer. But, in spite of the warning, he was still smoking heavily. Little did he realise that when God speaks, he always shows up to prove he is the LORD.¹

On the 31st of January, ten days after hearing the words '*you will see what I will do,*' Simon came out of a class on Christian counselling at St Mary's Parish Church, Kirkintilloch, and as he lit up a cigarette in the dark, cold winter's night, felt a hand on his right shoulder. He turned round to see who it was. There was no one there and he heard the inner voice say:

*'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit with whom you have been sealed.'*²

When he woke the next morning, he had no craving for the early morning cigarette he always had before going off to work. Over the following four days it gradually dawned on him he had been delivered from the addiction, that had kept him a prisoner to a sense of shame and failure for years. He still didn't realise, however, this was just the beginning of a journey and, to begin with, it caused him to wonder, when he had actually been converted.

When Simon was fourteen, he had been confirmed in the school chapel by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, and had taken vows to follow Jesus. But three days after hands were laid on his head, he was dismayed to find he was the same fallen adolescent he had been before. Disillusioned, he had concluded there must be another way to God, if he exists at all.

What Simon heard that January night was the first part of the verse in Paul's *Letter to the Ephesians*, in which God says he will seal his children with his Spirit '*for the day of redemption.*' It was just the start of God showing him that he is real and wants a relationship with those, who seek him with all their heart.³

¹ God says this in several places in the Bible: eg Exodus 7:5; Ezekiel 7:27; John 14:20;

² Ephesians 4:30; ³ Jeremiah 29:13

Baptised With Holy Spirit.....and with fire

In the Gospel of Matthew, John the Baptist announces to the crowds, flocking to be baptised in the River Jordan and wondering if he was God's long-awaited Messiah:

*'I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'*¹

A month after being delivered from his addiction to cigarettes, Simon went with a Christian friend to a conference on Revival being held in Shawlands Cross Parish Church, Glasgow. The minister, The Reverend Alistair Sandison, was one of a group of evangelical Church of Scotland ministers, who held a monthly *Festival of Faith* in different churches in the city. After a time of worship and some drama sketches Alistair talked about the conditions for revival. He emphasized that every revival over the centuries had been preceded by a hunger for God's Word and an earnest seeking of God in prayer, as a result of a sense of increasing spiritual desperation at sin in the society. He mentioned the Welsh Revival of 1904, when the young preacher Evan Roberts had prayed:

'O God, bend me!'

When he said that, Simon found himself bent double in the pew, and found it difficult to breathe. It lasted for perhaps two minutes, and then he was able to sit up and continue taking notes. He thought it was rather strange, but soon became engrossed in what the speaker was saying.

Towards the end of his talk Mr Sandison described the events preceding the revival in Lewis in 1948, under the ministry of The Reverend Duncan Campbell. In particular he told of how a number of deacons had met regularly for prayer in a barn to ask God to pour out His Holy Spirit in revival power. Nothing had happened for several months, until one night a young deacon had stood up and prayed the words of verses three and four of Psalm 24.

*"Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."*²

¹ Matthew 3:11; ² Psalm 24:3-4

Then the young man had cried:

'O God, are my hands clean and is my heart pure? Bend me, O God!'

With these words Simon found himself again bent double in the pew, but this time there was tremendous heat, and his eyes were like a couple of taps with water pouring out of them. This continued for what seemed ages, although it was probably only for four or five minutes.

Shortly afterwards, the meeting came to an end, and they all decamped to the hall for tea. Simon found himself shaking, in need of several cups of sweet black coffee, and wondering what on earth had happened - was it some kind of psychological disorder heralding a nervous breakdown?

The next day he was taken by a Christian friend to see The Reverend David Black, Pastor of Bishopbriggs Christian Fellowship, who was known to move in the gifts of the Spirit. After listening to his account of what had happened, Mr Black said:

'Well, it sounds to me, Simon, as if the LORD has baptised you with His Holy Spirit. After delivering you from smoking, He is now cleaning you up inside'.

The Scientific Proof of Deliverance & Healing Forty Years Later

Stobhill Hospital: Diagnostic Imaging Report		Page 1 of 1
Ref. Locn. : GP PRACTICE	DoB : [REDACTED]	CHL No. : [REDACTED]
Referrer : Dr David Gilmore	CRIS No. : [REDACTED]	Curr Ward : G107HAU
VERIFIED Verified By: Dr Gregory O'Neill 23-Sep-2020 1514.		
Clinical History :		
cough for 8 weeks		
XR Chest :		
The heart is not enlarged. The lungs are clear.		
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"><div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">RECEIVED - 5 OCT 2020</div><div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; text-align: center;">NORMAL</div></div>		

The proof of this miracle of grace came on the 19th of October 2020, almost forty years after prayer for deliverance, when the GP reported a chest x-ray showed Simon's lungs were 'Clear' and 'Heart Not Enlarged,' as shown in the report above.

One of Simon's Bible readings for that day was headed: *Are you salty?* and quoted Mark 9:49 *Everyone will be salted with fire!*

¹ TodayGodIsFirst October 19, 2020 *Are you salty?*

Blaise Pascal's *Night of Fire*

Blaise Pascal was a brilliant seventeenth century French scientist and mathematician, famous for inventing the *Pascaline* - a forerunner of the modern computer - and for experiments in physics, resulting in a unit of measurement - the *pascal* - being named after him.¹ When Pascal died, inside the lining of his jacket they discovered a note, referred to as his Memorial, in which he described an experience of being overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit of the Living God. The note read:

'The year of grace 1654, Monday, 23 November, feast of St. Clement, pope and martyr, and others in the martyrology. Vigil of St. Chrysogonus, martyr, and others. From about half past ten at night until about half past midnight,

FIRE!

GOD of Abraham, GOD of Isaac, GOD of Jacob not of the philosophers and of the learned.

Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace. GOD of Jesus Christ.

My God and your God. Your GOD will be my God.

Forgetfulness of the world and of everything, except GOD.

He is only found by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Grandeur of the human soul.

Righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you.

Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.

I have departed from him: They have forsaken me, the fount of living water.

My God, will you leave me? Let me not be separated from him forever.

This is eternal life, that they may know you, the one true God,

and the one you sent, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ.

I left him; I fled him, renounced, crucified.

Let me never be separated from him.

He is only kept securely by the ways taught in the Gospel:

Renunciation, total and sweet.

Complete submission to Jesus Christ and to my director.

Eternally in joy for a day's exercise on the earth.

May I not forget your words. Amen. '²

¹ <https://sciencing.com/pascal-unit-8714810.html>;

² B.Pascal Memorial <https://ccel.org/ccel/pascal/memorial/memorial.i.html>

23:11:1654

*

there was a fire that night
that set pascal ablaze -
the God of abraham, of isaac and of jacob
in epiphany so overwhelming
his whole body soul and spirit
blazed with light and joy
to show him that the heart
has reasons of which
reason of itself is ignorant –
a blow to egotistical expressions
of belief in man's ability to reason
God out of all our logical equations

perhaps his own near-death
experience in an accident and
visits to his sister in the convent
softened his proud heart to open up the door
and let the Spirit in to settle things -
no need to bet a wager any more
upon the possibility of God's existence
but to now stake everything on Jesus
as the priceless pearl worth all the treasure
in the field of human exploration
he'd been seeking in his physical experiments
and mathematics all those years

the dice was thrown the matter settled -
he would wager both his life and death
on Jesus Christ to gain the crown
of life eternal and find grace and
peace in Him alone -
to know the one true God and Jesus Christ
whom He had sent whom he had fled
renounced and crucified
in years before now found
in unconditional surrender
to be lost no more

*

A Promise Of Resurrection.....for a dying man

Over the course of 1981 Simon's father's cancer gradually progressed and it was clear that he was dying. He and Simon spent long hours on the telephone sharing their thoughts about life in general and their different experiences of God. His father in particular admitted that God had done a sovereign work of grace in his son in a letter, in which he said *'you and Andrea have clearly had a conversion experience.'* This was something he had never said before and came as something of a surprise to Simon, who could not remember ever hearing his father using that sort of language.

Simon grew up as an only child in a Christian family, where his father was an Anglican minister for nearly fifty years, who had met and married his mother out in Singapore, when she was working as a Sister in a T.B. (tuberculosis) hospital run by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) before the Second World War. They had returned to Britain in 1948, where his father had been Vicar of several country parishes in Kent and Hertfordshire. When Simon had shared his experience of deliverance from smoking and baptism in the Spirit, his father confessed that he had no experience of such things himself. His faith was founded squarely on the Word of God, although there were whole areas, where he confessed to being agnostic.

When he heard his father saying this in early January 1982, Simon was worried and consulted an Anglican minister in Lenzie to ask if such questions about faith were common, when we are approaching death. He said it was quite common, but that God is faithful and we can trust him, even when we ourselves cannot hold on. As Simon trudged home through the snow and ice on the 5th of January, he heard the inner voice again saying:

'Hosea 6:2.'

It seemed bizarre because it felt just like the game of charades (*'Think of a Book'*) they had been playing a few nights before. He knew Hosea was one of the Minor Prophets in the Old Testament, but had no idea how many chapters it contained, nor what the verse said. In any case, he was cold and he dismissed the thought until after tea and the usual hustle and bustle of bath-time were over.

When Simon did remember later, his first thought was to look to see if it made any sense before he shared it with Andrea. But immediately, he realised that if it really was from God, it would be obvious, and so the pair of them sat down to read the verse together. They were not prepared for what they read in Hosea verses 1- 2.

*'Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.'*¹

Verse 2 is a specific promise of resurrection on the third day - a promise especially precious because both Simon and his father realised he was dying. On Thursday the 21st, Simon received a phone call from his mother to say his father's situation had deteriorated and he had been admitted to hospital again. Simon travelled down to Lancaster the next day and went in to visit him. The following day he took his mother in to the hospital to visit and, while they were there, his father said at one point:

'I see a man with his hands out towards me.'

This was a most uncharacteristic remark, because he always said his faith was based upon the Word of God and not on special experiences. When Simon asked his mother if she would like to visit again that evening, she said she was finding it too difficult. And so Simon found himself going into a strange hospital on his own at night, not knowing how he would cope, if he was there when his father died, but also wanting to be there so he did not die alone.

When he got to the ward, it was clear there was a real battle going on. He approached the bed, took hold of his father's hand and said:

'It's OK, Dad. I love you, Andrea loves you, the children love you and God loves you.'

As soon as he said that, the battle seemed to cease, as if his father realised he could let go, and there was a sense of peace. To all appearances his father was unconscious and unable to engage in any conversation. Five minutes later, however, he announced out of the blue:

'It's marvellous!'

Simon asked him what was marvellous, but got no reply.

¹ Hosea 6:1-2

Five minutes later Simon found himself repeating the first verse of a Psalm over and over again.

*'Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy name.'*¹

As he repeated the words over and over again - something he had never done before and has not done since - his father appeared to hiccup three times and died in front of him.

The ward was busy with visitors, but eventually a nurse arrived. She drew the screens around the bed, she took his other hand and said:

'He was a lovely man!'

Simon looked at her and said:

'Are you a Christian?'

'Yes,' she replied. And there in that busy ward of a strange hospital, Simon saw the Father's loving-kindness in meeting his needs as an only son, as he gently took his earthly father to be with him.

¹ Psalm 103:1

Baptism In Water.....as an act of obedience

Not long after being baptized in the Spirit on 28th February 1981, Simon became aware of the issue of baptism in water. The problem was he had been brought up within the Church of England to affirm Paul's words ¹ *'There is one Body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one LORD, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.'*

Water baptism represented three problems for Simon. He had been baptized in water as an infant, when he was christened at the age of three weeks in Colombo, Ceylon, by believing parents. Secondly, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had recently dealt severely with a minister in the north of Scotland for 'baptizing' adults, who had been 'born again' as believers. And thirdly, he was reluctant to do something that might hurt his father and mother. But after his father's death, the question of believer's baptism presented itself in two ways, that also demonstrated God's sense of humour.

The first was while reading Matthew 3:13-17 in his daily Bible reading one day, particularly verses 13-15. The Holy Spirit drew his attention to Jesus' words:

*'Let it be so for now; it is right for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.'*²

Simon thought to himself:

'But Jesus had already fulfilled all righteousness as a true-blue Jew: conceived by the Spirit and filled with the Spirit from birth; a descendant of David; circumcised on the eighth day in the Temple; barmitzvahed, aged 13. So what did Jesus mean by saying:

'It's right for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness?'

As he thought and meditated on this, it dawned on him that Jesus was giving us an example as his disciples to follow. John's baptism in water was for the forgiveness of the penalty of sins in response to the people's confession of their sins (verse 6).

John pointed out that he baptized people in water as a sign of their repentance.

'But after me will come one who is more powerful than me...He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'

¹ Ephesians 4:4-6: ² Matthew 3:11

Baptism in Spirit would be an inner purging by the fire of the Spirit to cleanse and fill us with God's enabling grace to give us victory over the power of sin. As soon as Jesus rose up out of the water, 'at that moment heaven was opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him. And a voice from heaven said: *'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'* In other words, Jesus was baptized in water and almost simultaneously in Spirit, as an example of the normal Christian baptism into the supernatural Body of Christ (as opposed to merely the fulfilment of a ritual for becoming a member of the Visible Church).

Having been convinced from Scripture of the need to be baptized as a believer, the LORD sent a messenger to reinforce the point, in the shape of a former Higher Latin pupil, whose father was a leader in the local Exclusive Brethren. He phoned to ask if he could come round to see Simon, after hearing that his former Latin teacher had become a Christian. But the LORD also had a surprise in store for him.

After a brief time of small talk, Andrew* came straight to the point.

'You need to be baptized.'

Simon smiled, as he explained he had already been baptized as an infant.

'That doesn't count,' said Andrew.

'You need to be baptized as a believer.'

Whereupon Simon proceeded to pull out a Greek New Testament and show Andrew the passage in *The Book of Acts*,¹ where it says that the Philippian jailer 'and his whole household,' including slaves and children, were baptized.

'Where does it say that?' asked Andrew.

'In the original Greek text,' Simon replied.

It appeared to come as a surprise to Andrew that the King James translation of the New Testament came from a Greek text, from which all other translations have been derived.

¹ Acts 16:33

'Well, I still think you need to be baptized as a believer.' he said.

'Funny you should say that,' Simon replied, *'because that's what the LORD has also been telling me!'*

On the 15th of May, 1983, he was baptized in water as a believer, along with his twin daughters and several others, in Kirkintilloch Baptist Church.

Learning To Recognize The Voice Of God.....by repetition

A year after his father's death, two passages of Scripture kept appearing to Simon in various contexts over a period of two and a half months from January to March 1983.

*'The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour.'*¹

*'The Spirit of the LORD is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour.'*²

In spite of experiencing God speaking to him on several occasions, it took Simon over two and a half months to realise God was calling him into ministry a year after his father died. Between January and March he was presented with the same two passages of Scripture twenty-two times in different settings. The Pastor would open a service by reading one or other passage for no apparent reason. It would appear as a quote at the beginning of the chapter of a book Simon was reading. At other times it appeared in his daily Bible reading notes. Eventually, he began to wonder if God might be calling him into ministry. to *'proclaim the Good News, heal the sick and set the captives free.'*

This feeling was confirmed by the fact that people began phoning up to ask if they could come to see him and Andrea about a personal problem. When folk arrived, Simon explained they didn't have any answers to their problems, but they knew Someone who did, called Jesus. Then they opened each session with prayer, inviting Jesus to take control of the proceedings and listened as individuals shared their deepest feelings about a whole range of issues. Sessions always ended with a time of prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to come and minister in whatever way he felt the person needed.

¹ Isaiah 61:1-2; ² Luke 4:18-19

The Call To Ministry.....officially

In January 1985 Simon was elected a deacon at Kirkintilloch Baptist Church. Until then there had been no official recognition of his call to ministry. On Thursday, the 20th of September he went to hear Colin Urquhart and a team from Roffey Place in the City Halls, Glasgow. Colin Urquhart spoke on *'The Holiness Of God.'* At the end he spoke a prophetic word to the assembled company.

'I've been telling you what to do...I want those of you in positions of leadership to lead My people. I want you to repent and obey. Who will go for me?'

He continued:

'I believe God is calling some here tonight to the ministry. Some He's been calling before. Others have never thought of it...If you feel God is calling you to ministry, come out to the front. I believe God is going to use three men out at the front in a very particular way.'

Simon found himself down at the front of the City Halls, Glasgow, standing next to an architect, who was a member of Shawlands Cross Parish Church, where the LORD had baptized him in his Spirit four years earlier! Colin prayed for them all that they might know the LORD's anointing and blessing as they sought to be obedient to his call on their lives.

An entrance in the diary read:

'Felt very unemotional, almost in a daze, but also that it is His call. Also, the loneliness of the call and the need to wait on the LORD. Had a picture of a desert scene, like those in Westerns, of miles of desert broken only by cactus plants - a picture of utter loneliness.'

The Bible reading in *Our Daily Bread* the following day appeared to confirm what Colin Urquhart said the previous evening.

*'So prepare your minds for action, be self-controlled. Set your hope fully on the grace given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. For it is written: 'Be holy because I am holy.'*¹

¹ 1 Peter 1:13-18

Later that evening Simon went to a House Group meeting. At one point the leader read Colossians 3, including verse 3, which Colin Urquhart had quoted the previous evening. That Sunday a visiting preacher preached on Colossians 3:1-17, Romans 12:2 and 1 Peter 1:13-16 *Rules For Holy Living*.

When Simon mentioned his sense of call to the Pastor, he said:

'Well, you should test it, by applying for ministry with the Baptist Union of Scotland. The next meeting of their Joint Ministerial Board is in February or March.'

At the beginning of March, 1986, he was interviewed over two days by the Ministerial Recognition Committee of the Baptist Union of Scotland and accepted as a candidate for ministry. In the summer of 1986, he began part-time studies at home and over the next two years sat and passed the exams for the Cambridge Diploma in Religious Studies. In the autumn of 1987, he even found that his teaching timetable at school left him with no classes on a Friday morning - the only time in his teaching career this had happened - enabling him to attend the Sermon and Homiletics classes at the Scottish Baptist College in Glasgow!

Everything looked set fair for full steam ahead.

‘What Do You Mean: ‘You Hear God Speaking’?’

When an individual first hears God speaking to him/her, they don't always realise God is speaking. A lot of times it is because s/he has never been taught to expect to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. We see a classic example of this in the Old Testament story of how God spoke to the young boy Samuel, as he was serving as an altar boy in the Tabernacle at Shiloh, under the tutelage of the old priest Eli.

‘Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.’¹

The Greek phrase translated as ‘the word of the LORD’ in the Septuagint (LXX Greek) Old Testament is ‘*rhema Kuriou*’ or ‘a *rhema*, or spoken, word of the LORD.’

Notice that Samuel did not yet know the LORD and God had not taken the initiative up to that point to speak to him. It was the start of a process that resulted in Samuel becoming the foremost prophet in Israel in the years that followed, including God using him to anoint David as King twelve years before he actually ascended the throne.

Simon and Andrea saw an example of this one day, when Shona came for coffee in June. Shona's husband came from a Dispensationalist background, and believed the gifts of the Holy Spirit died out at the end of the Apostolic Era. During discussion Shona said:

‘What do you mean that you hear God speaking? I’ve never heard God speak to me.’

Simon replied:

‘You must have done, or you couldn’t be a Christian. Jesus said “My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me.”² So if you’re a Jesus sheep (baa!), you’ve heard the voice of the Good Shepherd. Think for a moment and ask yourself: ‘When was the last time I definitely heard God speaking?’

¹ LXX 1 Samuel 3:7; ² John 10:27

Shona thought for a moment and then said:

'It was in January this year, I think.'

[Note: This was just after she said she had never heard God speak!]

'What was God saying?' Simon asked.

'He was telling me to be baptised as a believer,' Shona said rather sheepishly!

'And have you been?' said Simon.

'No! I think I need to speak to the Pastor!'

Simon suggested they did an experiment to see if God would speak through his Bible reading that day in *Our Daily Bread*, which happened to be from Isaiah.¹ It's a wonderful passage, where God speaks tenderly to his children, beginning with the words:

'Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. The voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" ¹

In spite of the fact all three of them were graduates, Simon felt he was to read the passage out aloud. As soon as he started reading the words:

'Comfort, comfort my people, says your God,'

there was a tangible sense that Jesus had already begun to minister his love to each of them, and especially to Shona. And as he continued reading, it was as if the LORD was saying:

'Don't be anxious or worried about whether I'll speak to you or not. Just let me come into every room in your house by my Spirit and be continually filled.'

Afterwards, Shona said she felt excited, as well as slightly apprehensive, about what God might say.

¹ Isaiah 40:1-31

Two days later she came up to Andrea at church in great excitement. She said that when she had gone home, she put on the television, while she did some ironing. The program happened to be a public, or schools, service broadcast all about pottery. She watched as a potter threw a lump of clay onto his wheel and began fashioning a beautiful jug. She said:

'I stood there transfixed at the care that potter was expending on that piece of clay. I remembered God's picture of his children being like clay in the potter's hands. If a potter can take so much trouble over a mucky old piece of clay, how much more precious must we be to our Father. I never realised God could speak to me through the television!'

Simon and Andrea marvelled at God's sense of humour and his loving-kindness as our heavenly Father, who just longs to speak to his children and hear them speaking to him in prayer. A few years later Eric was ordained as a Baptist pastor, with Shona supporting him in a pastoral ministry.

‘Open Your Mouth & I Will Fill It’.....a word for a neighbour

In the summer of 1987, a new lodger moved into the house across the road. Blonde-haired, tall and carrying a violin under her arm, Sarah* looked like a musician, and turned out to be a student at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. Simon and Andrea discovered this one Sunday, after they stopped and offered her a lift on their way to church. She accepted gratefully and said she was going to Matins at the local Episcopal Church in Lenzie. As they dropped her off, they said:

‘If you ever feel bored with studying and would like a coffee, our kettle is always willing!’

A few weeks later the doorbell rang and it was Sarah.

‘I wondered if that offer of coffee still stood?’

‘Yes, of course,’ Andrea replied.

Soon the three of them were sitting, drinking coffee and making small talk in the kitchen. Sarah shared how she came from a naval family - her father and one of her brothers were both serving in the Royal Navy - but she had a music scholarship at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama. She was a gifted violinist and enjoyed her music. The conversation flowed quite naturally, and, when she left, Andrea said she was welcome to come across anytime. It soon became clear that this particular visit was just a reconnaissance expedition to check them out.

A few weeks later in November, Sarah appeared at the front door again.

‘Can I come in? I really need to talk to someone, and I know you two are Christians. I’m confused about the direction I should be taking, and wondered if I could talk things through with you.’

Sarah shared how she enjoyed her music, but was obviously concerned about her family’s reactions. Simon said they didn’t have any advice to offer, but suggested praying and seeing what the LORD had to say. Sarah agreed, and the three of them decamped to the sitting room.

Before they prayed, Simon read some words from James' Letter:

'If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ¹ So let's pray and ask God to give us His wisdom on the matter,' he suggested.

All three bowed their heads and waited in silence. As the minutes went by, there was a sense of God's peace in the room, but also a complete absence of an answer to Simon's prayer! A short while later, he was aware of a picture in his mind of a completely blank, white wall! He thought:

'LORD, I'm confused. I've asked you for wisdom and all I can see is a blank wall.'

No answer. A few minutes later he was aware of the words:

*'Open your mouth and I will fill it.'*²

Simon discovered later they are from Psalm 81. But he found himself even more confused and almost arguing with God.

'LORD, I've nothing to say to Sarah. I hardly know her, and I don't have any wisdom to give her. That's why we're asking you for it!'

How would you feel in a situation like this? He felt completely non-plussed and thought:

'This is silly. I can't open my mouth, because I've got nothing to say.'

A minute or so later he was aware of the same words again:

'Open your mouth and I will fill it.'

He still didn't realise the LORD wasn't saying Simon had anything to say. He was saying:

'You don't know what to say to Sarah, but I do. So open your mouth and I will fill it.'

Simon was ashamed to admit he was so spiritually dull and immature, that he didn't understand what God was saying. But God is patient and faithful. A minute or two later He said the same thing a third time (remember the boy Samuel).³ This time Simon's response was one of impatient unbelief.

¹ James 1: 5; ² Psalm 81:10; ³ 1 Samuel 3:1-12

'OK, LORD, if this is really you, I'll open my mouth for you to fill it. But I sure hope you're in this or we're all going to look pretty silly.'

With that Simon opened his mouth and began to say something like:

'I don't know whether this means anything to you, Sarah, but.....'

He didn't get any further. All of a sudden there came a gut-wrenching cry from Sarah, as she poured out one of the most powerful prayers of confession they had ever heard. When she had finished, and they had recovered from the shock, Sarah told them the following story.

She had been at Spring Harvest, a Christian festival geared particularly to young people and young families, at Easter time. One morning at the end of a seminar, they had broken into groups to pray. At one point the guy sitting next to her had said he felt the LORD giving him a word for her. Sarah's reaction had been very negative.

'I thought to myself - I don't believe God could speak to me through someone like him,' and she had left the meeting angry and determined to dismiss any idea of it being a word from the LORD.

During their time waiting for God to speak that morning, God had reminded Sarah of the incident, and had shown her she had been wrong to dismiss what he had been saying to her through that young guy. And so her tears and prayer had been of confession and repentance for her pride.

Greatly relieved that God had really spoken, they had another coffee before Sarah left, a completely different woman from the one who had come in that morning.

Before she left, Simon warned her that the Recruiting Officer at the Royal Navy Recruitment Office in Glasgow would take one look at her and say:

'You're exactly the kind of person we're looking for!'

A few days later, she came to see them again and said:

'It's really funny, because the guy said the exact words you said, Simon!'

Andrea and Simon never did find out what the LORD had said to Sarah at Spring Harvest. But a few weeks later she popped in to say she was leaving. It transpired that a life on the ocean wave appeared to be beckoning.

Warning Of Trouble Comingin an angelic visitation

In July 1988 Andrea and Simon's eldest daughter graduated from St Andrews University and decided to take a year out, before deciding what to do next. She arranged to work for a year as an *au pair* to a Christian family in Atlanta, Georgia, looking after their three children.

In August 1988 Simon received news he had passed the exams for the Cambridge Diploma in Religious Studies, which had been part of the requirements to be met as a candidate for ministry with the Baptist Union of Scotland, and had even been given leave from the school to attend the Sermon and Homiletics classes at the Scottish Baptist College on a Friday morning. All seemed set fair for moving on with progress to ministry.

On the 25th August 1988, just before Zoe was due to fly out to Atlanta, Simon woke from a dream, in which he heard the front door bell ring. When he opened the door, there was a person standing in front of him - he couldn't see his head, only his torso - who said:

'I have just come to warn you trouble is coming.'

As Simon looked across the road, looming up over the terraced houses opposite was a huge bank of black clouds. They were moving imperceptibly towards him out of the north-east. His immediate reaction was concern about Zoe's impending trip to America. But when the storm broke, it came out of the north-east, just as he had seen in the dream.

In September Andrea flew up to Shetland to spend a month with her father and visit friends. Things were a bit strained between them, but Simon put this down to their usual communication problems, and to the fact that he had been closeted away for months studying for the exams. Now that these had been successfully negotiated, things seemed to be on course for the next stage.

What Simon hadn't realised was that Andrea had been having more and more misgivings about the whole idea of 'The Ministry,' but had felt unable to communicate her concerns to him. She could not see herself at all playing the role of a traditional minister's wife in a manse situation. But she had felt unable to raise her concerns with Simon.

The Crisis Of Belief.....the storm breaks

Towards the end of September Andrea had made up her mind that she had to address the problem and decided to prolong her stay in Shetland. Their daughter Eilidh had gone up for a short holiday, and came down on the 21st of September, bearing a letter from Andrea, because there was a postal strike.

The first couple of pages were filled with news of the holiday. Andrea was enjoying being able to see her father. It was just a normal newsy letter until Simon reached page three, when things suddenly became a lot more serious. Andrea said she had been doing a lot of prayerful thinking 'since our call to the ministry' and had 'reached some conclusions, she had been unable to communicate.'

There followed two pages describing Simon's autocratic behaviour towards her and to the children, culminating on page seven with a statement saying she was not going into 'The Ministry' with him, and she was not returning until Simon was doing something about his 'sickness.'

Simon could not believe his eyes. It was a complete bolt out of the blue, and yet it ought not to have been. The warning signs had been there for years. They had suffered, like many married couples from problems of communication - he was the talker, Andrea was the silent one. He was so concerned to be a dutiful husband and parent that he couldn't allow himself to admit that others might be right or spend time with the family!

For her part Andrea misunderstood what the term 'The Ministry' meant for Simon. He meant a pastoral ministry for them both to folk in need of counselling, healing and deliverance, as well as opportunities to preach. It didn't matter Andrea had MS and was in a wheelchair.

When the storm broke, Simon was reminded that the LORD had even warned him a month earlier in the dream that trouble was coming, and it had even come out of the north-east. Strangely, he felt no anger or animosity - just a general numbness and terrible sorrow things had reached such a serious state, and he hadn't even noticed it. That night he slept like a log, in spite of the turmoil that was beginning to build up inside, as the reality of what was happening began to sink in.

At 5am the next morning he woke and was aware of the Holy Spirit highlighting a number of things - eleven in all - about his failings, which he noted on a pad he kept beside the bed. When he woke later, it all seemed just a nightmare, but there on the pad were the words the LORD had given him a couple of hours earlier.

Friday was a school holiday, and he arranged for his son to go to a friend's, while he went through to see Jim Powrie, Minister of Chalmers-Ardler Parish Church, Dundee, to seek his wisdom on the situation. Jim was an old friend, whom Simon had taught Higher Greek, when Jim was studying for the ministry in Aberdeen twenty years earlier. He listened, as Simon poured out his heartfelt anguish at the situation, fearful of what his friend's reaction might be. His response was immediate.

'I believe this is the beginning of Andrea's healing, and the start of the LORD's training course for you!'

It was such a relief for Simon to be able to be real, and not rejected. Before he left, Jim gave him a couple of verses, which were like gold dust during those dark and confusing days. The lines are from a hymn by John Newton, who also wrote *Amazing Grace*:

*'And can He have taught you to trust in His Name,
And thus far have brought you to put you to shame?'*¹

Simon returned to Lenzie, not knowing what the future held, but convinced God was somewhere in the confusion. The key was to be willing to submit to whatever he wanted to do.

¹ J. Newton *Olney Hymns* Book 3 Hymn 37 *I Will Trust And Not Be Afraid*

The Sifting.....but Jesus is praying

Shortly afterwards, a meeting was arranged with Dr Charles Anderson, a retired physician and gracious man of God, who had been used greatly over the years to help ministers and other Christian workers, whose lives were falling apart. Dr Anderson listened attentively to Simon sharing the problems, as well as his clear sense of call 'to preach the Good News, heal the sick and set the captives free,' before highlighting two main issues - a decision about the ministry, and the relationship with Andrea. He pointed out the real problems with a traditional pastoral ministry in the light of Andrea's MS and also because of the fractured nature of their marital relationship.

'The primary issue is to assure Andrea that the marriage relationship is the most important thing, more important even than the call to ministry. Andrea can see the problems and does not want a patched-up job. There's clearly a need for counselling for you separately and together.'

When Dr Anderson had finished, he turned to Simon and said:

'Do you have any questions, Simon?'

'Just one,' Simon replied.

'Where does all this leave me, as regards what I believe to be a clear call from God to preach the Good News, heal the sick and set the captives free?'

He replied:

'The present relationship problems would certainly be a barrier to pastoral ministry at the moment, although there might be the possibility of a teaching ministry without the disturbance of a manse situation.'

He went on to say:

'You often find that God puts those He calls into ministry through the mill first as a form of training,' and he mentioned the chapter headed 'Two Diagnoses' in Paul Tournier's 'A Doctor's Casebook,'¹ pointing out there is the medical diagnosis (for example, anxiety issues), but also the question:

'What is God saying in all this?'

¹ P. Tournier A Doctor's Casebook Chap.2 Two Diagnoses SCM Press, 1963

Dr Anderson continued:

'I believe God is saying to you, Simon. "I'm preparing you through this time of stress for ministry. You don't know what that is, but I do."

Jesus once said to Simon Peter: "Simon, Simon. I'm letting Satan sift you. But I have prayed that your faith will not fail and, when you are turned again, feed My lambs." The LORD obviously has some form of ministry for you both.'

As they drove back to Lenzie, Simon felt a great sense of relief - relief that someone could see God's hand in all the confusion, and that God would show the way forward, if Andrea and he were willing to submit to His discipline and undergo counselling for their problems. It was clear there could be no ministry without a loving relationship between husband and wife, undergirded by the unity only the Holy Spirit can give us.

On the 28th of October 1988, a month later than originally planned, Andrea flew back from Shetland, and the long process of learning to forgive and love one another again began.

Chapter 2

Shattered Dreams

High Hopes.....and shattered dreams

They had gone with such high hopes to the meeting in Govan Town Hall, Glasgow - the eight-year-old boy with his mother and father - to hear a Christian speaker, who was reputed to have the gift of healing. He had experienced cramp being healed one night, when his father prayed and asked Jesus to remove the pain and it had gone. So he was sure Jesus would heal his mother's MS (multiple sclerosis) and that she would get up from her wheelchair and walk out of there.

The speaker even had a 'word' for the worship leader's wife, who had been unable to conceive, that '*she who has been barren will conceive a child within a year*' and it had happened a year later, when she had the first of her two boys. There was an air of anticipation as the speaker invited people, who would like prayer for healing, to come forward. A short while later, some people in the ministry team had gathered round his mum and prayed for God to come and heal her. There had been a sense of peace, but the three of them had left with his mother still in her wheelchair and with him in tears.

That day saw the results of Adam and Eve's rebellion in The Garden of Eden in a way that only really became clear years later - the pain of the loss of intimate communion and disappointment with God, described in a poem titled *Wilderness* at the front of a book by Louis de Bernieres,¹ containing a series of whimsical cameos of life in an English country village of a bygone era. Ironically, years later the boy had given a copy of the book to his father, who grew up in English country villages just like that described, but had not realized the significance of the poem.

The poem beautifully describes the way the enemy of our souls shatters our world of childhood innocence, where God is in complete control, by selling us the lie that God is indifferent to our cries and to our painful longing for an intimacy that has been stolen.

¹ L.de Bernieres *Notwithstanding: English Village Stories* Vintage Books, 2009

Wilderness

There is a wilderness where once I lived
Whose every inch I knew and loved.
I roamed there as a dreaming boy
Before reality began;
I walked there still, remembering,
As I grew up to be a man.

Sweet little in that wilderness I knew
Of God's indifference and of lovers' pain.
Too young to suffer, I remember
Longer summers, deeper slumbers,
Better laughter, Warmer rain.

They had been to a service of healing in 1981, just after Simon's deliverance from smoking, in the hope of a miracle at the hands of a nun named Sister Nina, who had witnessed healings across the world at similar events conducted by a Roman Catholic priest named Francis McNutt, who had an international ministry of healing for many years and authored a classic book on Healing.¹

The atmosphere in the church that day had been highly charged, but when Andrea finally got to see Sister Nina, she had said the word she had for her was

'Courage.'

They had left discouraged, but the years that followed showed it had been a 'word' from God through all the struggles of life confined to a wheelchair most of the time.

These experiences raised well-known and rehearsed objections to the whole idea of a God of love, who is supposed to be all-powerful and all-loving, and yet allows babies to die of terrible diseases, while seemingly doing nothing about the evil in the world.

For Simon it posed a real dilemma, because he was living with the reality of having been soundly converted and delivered, and yet having to watch as his wife's MS progressively grew worse. How come these twin realities were true? And where was God amid the chaos of the world, that seemed to be increasing year by year?

¹ F McNutt *Healing* Bantam Doubleday, 1977

Trouble In A Garden Centre.....a story of lost intimacy

That day in Govan the enemy fired a missile into the heart of an eight-year-old boy, who had invited Jesus into his life as a five-year old and later was baptised as a believer at the age of sixteen in the same Baptist Church his father and twin sisters were baptised years earlier, while his father held his towel - a mortal wound to childhood faith that led him to abandon trust in God and turn instead to the scientific, rationalism of the New Atheism, propounded so seductively by writers such as Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking.

It is a story only too familiar to those, who have been searching for an intimacy that only God himself can satisfy - a desperate search for love that is the source of all our idolatrous addictions. For at the root of all addictions is the lie that God, if he exists at all, cannot be trusted and that we must seek the god within us to survive. Ever since 'The Fall' human beings have experienced a longing for intimacy, that has led them to look for love in the wrong direction and to use other human beings, or substances, as substitutes for the love that has been lost.

The problem is that every substitute for love has an addictive power that requires more and more of it to anaesthetize the pain of what has been called 'love hunger'. Alcohol, drugs, exercise, food, gambling, pornography, relationships, sex, smoking and an overwhelming need to prove oneself by beating others are all idols that not only act as agents to anaesthetize the pain but also lead to the bondage of addictions. By the time we realize what we have done, we are enslaved. The only One who is able to deliver us is our Maker, who has loved us with an everlasting love, the Bible says.³

Over the years of ministry that followed Simon's call, he and Andrea witnessed the disastrous consequences of a diabolical rebellion, that had its origins in heaven before it was transferred to earth.

¹ R Dawkins *The God Delusion* Transworld, 2006; ² S Hawking *A Brief History of Time* Transworld, 2011; ³ Jeremiah 31:3

The Origins Of Evil.....man's desire to be God

Genesis Chapter 3 is a picture of the desecration of God's perfect creation as a garden with two trees at its centre: the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil* and the *Tree of Life*. They symbolize two aspects of God's character: his *omniscience*, in knowing the reality of absolute good and evil (ie truth), and his *omnipotence*, in terms of his eternal power and immortality. Ever since The Fall, mankind has been searching for both these attributes in his desire to be God. For, as Sartre exclaimed, "*to be human is to long to be God - or, if you prefer, humanity is fundamentally a desire to be God.*"¹

This rebellion can be seen writ large in the modern preoccupation with two goals:

- The **Scientific search for *omniscience* and *immortality***; and
- The **Occult search for *secret knowledge* and *secret power***.

The Search of Science for Omniscience & Immortality

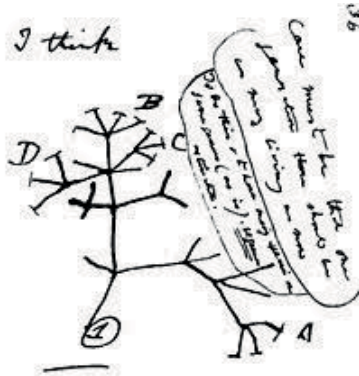
The New Atheism's claims that science can explain everything is the result of Eve's disobedience in eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, because it would make her wise in her own eyes. Science's preoccupation with the search for a way of extending human life, through scientific breakthroughs such as the human genome 'Tree of Life,' is part of man's desire for immortality in the face of death. Indeed, there are even some who claim that one day mankind will find the elixir of life beloved of mediaeval alchemists and fakirs. At the other end of the scientific spectrum are those, who have put their faith in the new religion of Techno-Humanism, espoused by people like Yuval Noah Harari and ex-Google engineer Anthony Lewandowski, with his robotic *deus ex machina* in the First Church of Artificial Intelligence (AI) (page 47).

The scientific counterfeits of the Biblical 'Tree of Life' are to be seen in:

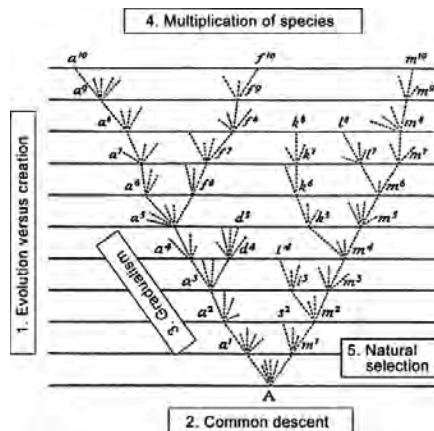
- a. **Darwin's Tree of Life**, which posited a single origin for all living things
- b. **The Discovery of the Double Helix** by Crick, Watson and Wilkins in 1953.

¹ quoted by Alister McGrath *The Twilight of Atheism* p151

- a. **Darwin's Tree of Life** - seen in an early form in the sketch from one of his notebooks.



Darwin later developed this idea of a common origin of all living things further as shown in the diagram below.



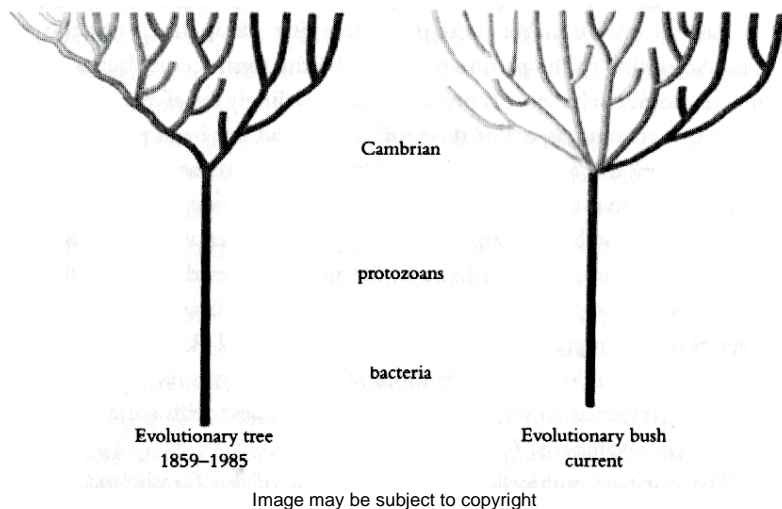
a section from the original phylogenetic tree in Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859)

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Reproduction-of-a-section-from-the-original-phylogenetic-tree-in-Darwins-Origin-of_fig6_26814265/download

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In what is sometimes referred to as 'Darwin's Doubt,' however, Darwin realized the fossil evidence was lacking for the ideas of a common origin of all living things and continuous development of different species through a process of natural selection.

Evolution by natural selection *within* phyla ¹ is not in dispute. But recent research since 1985 has shown a difference between Darwin's 'Tree' from a single origin and modern evolutionary theory, based on the fossil evidence of the sudden simultaneous appearance of different species in the Cambrian Explosion 530 million years ago. Schroeder points out that since 1985 'the fossil evidence indicates that all animal *phyla* appeared almost simultaneously 530 million years ago in the Cambrian period. All further development was confined to variations within each phylum,' ² as shown in the diagram below highlighting the difference between Darwin's 'Tree' and modern 'Bush' of life.



The only 'transitional form found in the evolution of modern birds from reptiles' is *archaeopteryx*, which combines both classes of reptiles with jaws, not beaks, and birds with feathers in a single animal. But Schroeder offers a convincing argument from Leviticus that actually this link between two separate animals is the 'link' that was never missing.³ More recently, Woese's third domain of *archaea* has suggested even more differentiation at the base of the phylogenetic 'tree of life' than was previously hypothesized.⁴

¹ *Phylum* (plural *phyla*): a principal taxonomic category that ranks above class and below kingdom, equivalent to the *division* in botany. ² GL Schroeder *The Science of God: The Convergence of Scientific and Biblical Wisdom* pages 88-89; ³ Schroeder op cit pages 94-96; ⁴ C.R. Woese https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Woese#Discovery_of_the_third_domain

The other scientific take-over of the Biblical picture of man's origins is to be found in the writings of other scientists, including Francis Crick of 'double helix' fame. It needs to be said, however, that not all his scientific colleagues share his atheist beliefs, as witnessed by Francis Collins, former Director of The Human Genome Project,¹ who has stated that belief in a creator God is not as incompatible with a scientific rigour as some of his colleagues like to claim.

b. The Human Genome & DNA: The Work of Crick, Watson & Wilkins (1953)

The discovery of the 'Double Helix' by Crick, Watson and Wilkins in 1953 was hailed by the press at the time as the scientific 'Tree of Life' and later represented in paintings and diagrams like the one below.



Image may be subject to copyright

It is another example of science employing biblical language to serve the atheist agenda of those, who dismiss the idea of the supernatural as creationist myths. Francis Crick even described his transition in 1947 from the study of physics to evolutionary biology as "*almost as if one had to be born again*".²

¹ FSCollins <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2931629/>

² F.Crick <https://www.crick.ac.uk/about-us/our-history/about-dr-francis-crick>

Scientific Arguments For & Against God

Examination of the literature shows scientific arguments both *for* and *against* the idea of a Creator God and intelligent design of the universe. These arguments are summarised in the table below.

Arguments for God (<i>supernaturalist</i>)	Arguments against God (<i>anti-supernaturalist</i>)
The Kalam Argument the universe had a cause	Who created God?
The Big Bang involved immense power & supernatural creation	Spontaneous Generation The Universe arose spontaneously: no need for God to light the touch paper
Orderliness of Universe enabling scientific research	Evil & Suffering in Nature denies idea of a good Creator God
The Cosmological Constant involving fine-tuning of constants such as electro-magnetic force & gravity	Anthropic Argument no answer for the 'Goldilocks Enigma' & the fine-tuning of the universe
Intelligent Design seen in the fine-tuning of the universe and the coding in DNA of life forms	Less Than Perfect Design a creator God could do better with the design of some aspects
Sudden Appearance of Phyla in the Cambrian Explosion with no evidence of transitional forms	The Origin & Evolution of Species the result of evolution through natural selection, not by creative design
The Moral Argument human beings created by a personal God distinct from the rest of the animal world	The Natural World Is Amoral and operates on materialist laws of cause and effect
Humans Have Free Will to make moral choices between good & evil	Universe Governed By Laws deterministic, beyond man's control
The Beauty In Nature is evidence of a Creator of beauty	The Universe Is A Closed System there is no such thing as the supernatural

Table 1. Comparison of Scientific Arguments For & Against God

A Select Reading List:

R Dawkins	<i>Unweaving The Rainbow: Science, Delusion & The Appetite For Wonder</i> Penguin, 2006
M Denton	<i>Evolution: Still A Theory In Crisis</i> (revised edition) Discovery Institute, 2016
R Feynman	<i>Surely, You're Joking, Mr Feynman</i> WW Norton, 2018
S Hawking & L Mlodinow	<i>The Grand Design</i> Bantam, 2010
J Lennox	<i>God & Stephen Hawking: Whose Design Is It Anyway?</i> Lion Hudson, 2011
J Lennox	<i>Can Science Explain Everything?</i> The Good Book Co, 2019
AE McGrath	<i>A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science & Theology</i> [The Gifford Lectures 2009] Westminster/Knox Press, 2009
AE & JC McGrath	<i>The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist Fundamentalism & The Denial Of The Divine</i> SPCK, 2007
GL Schroeder	<i>The Science Of God: The Convergence of Scientific & Biblical Wisdom</i> Broadway, 1997
WJ Warner	<i>God's Crime Scene: A Cold Case Detective Examines The Evidence For A Divinely Created Universe</i> David C Cook, 2020

Satanic Stealth Tactics..... the big lie

In his book *People Of The Lie*, author M Scott Peck maintained that evil ultimately arises from the free will to choose to submit oneself to one of two higher powers: God or the devil.¹ Confronted with such a choice, why would anyone choose evil?

The answer is to be found again in Genesis 3, where we see satanic stealth tactics used to convince the first human beings of the big lie: “*God’s not good.*” It goes like this.

Step 1: Cast doubt on what God says. “*Did God say...?*”

Step 2: Distort what God said: “*...you can’t eat the fruit from any of the trees?*”

Step 3: Deny the truth of what God said: “*You will not die!*”

Step 4: Sell the lie: “*God is just a killjoy and not good. You can be God.*”

It is a strategy that has worked well over aeons and continues to deceive mankind in their millions today. The trick: to mingle truth with lies and so deceive the unwary that there’s no harm in seeking to be God yourself.

The Evidence That God’s Not Good: The Problem of Evil & Suffering

The classic strategy the enemy employs is to point to all the suffering and evil in the world. If God was really good, he would not allow poor creatures to endure such pain. And if he was omnipotent, he would do something about it. It is a devastating strategy, as we saw earlier, and one seen in the apparently random cruelty of an impersonal universe and in the meaninglessness of life subject to the inevitability of death. It can be seen in Darwin’s dawning realization that his faith in God was misplaced, because natural selection pays no attention to human feelings, the proof of which was to be seen in the death of his dear daughter Annie at the age of ten in 1851, eight years before *On The Origin of Species* was published.²

The ultimate expression of the lie that ‘*God’s not good*’ is to be found in Nietzsche’s nihilism and in existentialist claims that this world is all there is, that God is dead, if not indifferent, to human pain and suffering, and that ‘Hell is other people,’ as Sartre put it in *Huis Clos*.³

¹ M Scott Peck *People Of The Lie: The Hope For Healing Human Evil* Ebury, 1998;

² C. Darwin *On the Origin of Species by means of natural selection* London: Murray, 1859; ³ J.P.Sartre *Huis Clos* Paris, 1944

From there it is a short step to the claims by Dawkins and others that religion, and especially Christianity, is the source of all the evil in the world and should be eradicated like a coronavirus from the face of the earth. Such claims, of course, fly in the face of the history of man's inhumanity to man since the so-called Enlightenment, with all the horrors of the French and Russian Revolutions, Stalinism, two World Wars, the killing fields of Pol Pot's Cambodia, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution under Mao Tse Tung.

The Deceptiveness of the Spider's Web

A second strategy is to show God is not nearly so attractive as alternatives that seem harmless: the sparkle of the silken spider's web, with no sign yet of spider. This can be seen increasingly today in the various ways people try to avoid the reality of death and concentrate instead on seeking pleasure and relief from pain by using substitutes for love such as alcohol, drugs, exercise, food, pornography, relationships, sex and work, or by turning to the occult to satisfy the craving for a spiritual reality without God.

The Search For Pleasure And Relief From Pain

The Roman emperors realized that in order to keep the masses happy and prevent riots, they needed to provide for their physical needs and entertainment. Hence the rise of what became known as 'bread and circuses' - free bread and gladiator fights in the arena.

Modern versions of such tactics can be seen in social welfare programmes and mass entertainment on TV and on the Internet, including programmes like *The Hunger Games*, with its nod to Roman bloodshed as public entertainment.

The Resort To Occultism In The Search For Knowledge And Power

The attraction of the occult is also to be seen in TV programmes like *Medium* and *The Witches*, as well as in the rise of New Age spiritualities, Witchcraft and Freemasonry.

The Occult Search for Secret Knowledge & Secret Power

The huge upsurge in occultism, evidenced by the popularity of the *Harry Potter* books and prime time TV programmes, like *FortSalem* and *Long Island Medium*, as well as the open dedication by high profile singers like Madonna and bands like Black Sabbath, Venom and Slayer to demonic entities, has been accompanied by an increase in divination, sorcery and witchcraft. It is the increasing brazenness and savagery of the satanic that is so breath-taking, as evidenced by the openly anti-Christian tour by Madonna, *Desecration of the Bride* and album covers by groups like Venom and Slayer (below).



Venom: *Welcome To Hell*



Slayer: *Repentless*

Images may be subject to copyright

The attraction of the occult is the search for *secret knowledge*, through divination (eg Tarot, Ouija, palm reading and horoscopes) and *secret power*, through sorcery and witchcraft, including New Age techniques of healing based on Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism (eg Reiki, Yoga and Acupuncture).

In recent years some Christians, including pastors like Rick Warren, have even promoted 'Holy Yoga' as being of God, denying the reality of its occult roots and maintaining it is simply a healthy form of exercise to be practised within a biblical framework of prayer, Bible reading and worship.

‘Holy Yoga’..... an oxymoron



The Yoga Tree of Life, The All-Seeing Third Eye, The Serpent & Chakras

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The occult origins of so-called ‘Holy Yoga’ can be seen in the illustrations above, which show the occult Tree of Life and All-Seeing Third Eye (*left*), a worshipper in the lotus position with the seven *chakras*, *Kundalini* Serpent Spirit and an occult version of the cross. It shows clearly how Christians can be deceived by the enemy, who is able, Paul wrote,¹ to transform himself into ‘an Angel of Light’.

On two occasions Simon had evidence that ‘Holy Yoga’ is demonic and part of Satan’s strategy to deceive the unwary.²

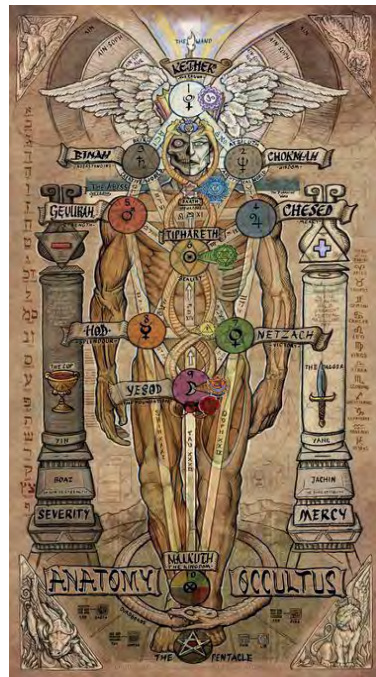
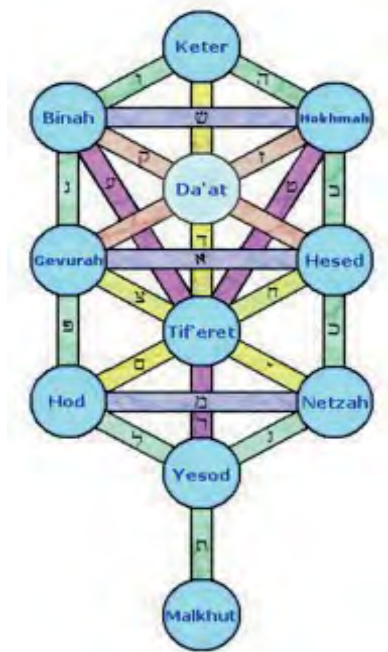
¹ 2 Corinthians 11:14; ² ‘*The Hood of the Cobra*’ (page 155) and ‘*A Dream about Holy Yoga*.’(page 137)

The Perversion of Judaism.....The Kabbalah & The Occult Tree of Life

Traditional Judaism is not immune to the perversion of the *Torah* by those seeking the source of secret knowledge and secret power down the centuries. This is seen most clearly in the three-stage development of the *Kabbalah*, from a theoretical exegesis of Jewish scriptures to sixteenth century mysticism and magick.

*"The ultimate purpose in the study of Kabbalah is the perfection of the Self..... Making the Self into a better, more expanded individual, more transcendent, more attuned to the roots and essence of one's soul."*¹

The occult nature of Kabbalah can be seen in the images below of the ten sephiroth in the occult Tree of Life. Below are examples of the Tree of Life (left) and the *Anatomy Occultus*, (right) including the twin pillars of Boaz and Jachin to be seen in Freemasonry.



Images may be subject to copyright

¹ Source: https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/170308/jewish/What-is-Kabbalah.htm

There are striking similarities between Witchcraft and Freemasonry, both of which are referred to as '*The Craft*', as can be seen from the table below.

FEATURES	WITCHCRAFT	FREEMASONRY
<i>Nickname</i>	'The Craft'	'The Craft'
<i>Open/Secret</i>	Secret	Secret
<i>Meeting Place</i>	'Temple'	'Temple'
<i>Central Point</i>	Pentagram	Pentagram
<i>System</i>	Three Basic Degrees	Three Basic Degrees
<i>Initiation Rites</i>	At Each Degree	At Each Degree
<i>Ceremonial Cleansings</i>	Of 'Temple' before each ritual	Of 'Temple' before each ritual
<i>Biblical Symbols/ Rituals</i>	Perversion of Biblical symbols	Perversion of Biblical symbols
<i>Candidates Stripped</i>	Of All Secular Clothing & metal	Of All Secular Clothing & Metal
<i>Candidates Blindfolded</i>	'Hoodwinked'	'Hoodwinked'
<i>Candidate's Chest Pierced</i>	By Sword	By Compasses
<i>Tools Used</i>	Symbols of Genitalia	Symbols of Genitalia
<i>Passwords</i>	Secret	Secret
<i>Death & Resurrection Ritual</i>	Initiate is the Heroine	Initiate is the Hero
<i>Use of Fear for Control</i>	Painful Rituals & Terror	Painful Rituals & Terror
<i>Oaths & Curses</i>	At Each Stage	At Each Stage
<i>Perversion of Truth</i>	Darkness=Light	Darkness=Light
<i>Object of Worship</i>	Goddess & Horned God=Satan	TGAOTU; Satan
<i>Destiny</i>	Eternal Death	Eternal Death

Table 2: The Similarities between Witchcraft & Freemasonry

The 'New Enlightenment'when darkness is light

The Third Millennium witnessed the arrival of a New Enlightenment - one dedicated to initiating a New World order: One World Economy, One World Government and One World Religion. The evidence for this was to be seen increasingly in 2020 with the coronavirus pandemic, which showed how easily the whole world can be paralysed and taken over by a global system.

The evidence, however, is perhaps more subtle than the move to global economics, health regulations, or the rise of the Chinese Empire, and can be seen in things such as satellite technology, the worldwide web, and the development of the Cloud - a move for control by an unseen power, which the apostle Paul referred to as the '*Prince of the Power of the Air*', the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.¹

Such a statement is immediately labelled a 'conspiracy theory' by those who reject a supernatural, Judaeo-Christian worldview - hardly surprising, when you realize that the spider is never seen until its victims are well caught and escape is now impossible. The evidence, however, is all there for those with eyes to see and ears to hear.

Consider for a moment the following facts:

- Satellite technology, unknown until the twentieth century, has now made possible worldwide communication of a kind impossible when the apostle John had a vision, in which he saw that Jesus will return and every eye will see him.²
- Jesus himself said: "*For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*"³
- The development of the worldwide web and the Cloud now means that the control of personal data has passed from the individual to an unseen body, which could be used for evil purposes as well as good. Such global control smacks of George Orwell's book '*1984*', in which a totalitarian regime controls the lives of every individual.
- The moves to a One-World Economy, Government and Religion are to be seen in the existence of the World Monetary Fund (WMF), the United Nations (UN) and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

¹ Ephesians 2:2; ² Revelation 1:7; ³ Matthew 24:27

The Death of God & The Deification Of Man

GK Chesterton once wrote: *“When a man stops believing in God, he does not believe in nothing; he believes anything.”* With moral relativism we see the outworking of the Nietzschean idea that, if God is dead, *“morality is no longer defined with reference to God, but solely with reference to human needs and aspirations.”*

This denial of absolutes of good and evil is what Ivan in Dostoevsky’s classic tale of faith and unbelief, *The Brothers Karamazov*, observed:

*“If God does not exist, everything is permitted.”*¹

Evidence of this in recent years is to be seen in the cynical murder by poison of political opponents by the Russian government, the barbaric assassination by the Saudi government of the journalist Jamal al Khashoggi in an embassy in Turkey, and the wholesale imprisonment and ‘re-education’ of over one million ethnic Uighurs by the Communist government of The People’s Republic of China.

Evidence of the deification of man is also to be seen in the tyrannical rule of the Sung dynasty in The People’s Republic of North Korea and the erection of idols to its leaders in Pyongyang, reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar’s demand to be worshipped in Daniel 3:1-7.



Worshippers in front of statues of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, Pyongyang
Image may be subject to copyright

¹ Fyodor Dostoevsky *The Brothers Karamazov* Part 4, Book 11, Chapter 4

Techno-Humanism & the A.I. *Deus ex machina*

The ultimate deification of man is to be seen in the creation by ex-Google engineer Anthony Lewandowski of a robotic 'god', to be worshipped as part of his First Church of Artificial Intelligence, which he has named *Way Of The Future* (WOTF).



Photograph: © Ociacia/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Author Yuval Noah Harari in *Homo Deus*¹ has claimed that traditional Judaeo-Christian religion will shortly be a thing of the past and be replaced by Techno-humanism and Datism - the use of data to control and manage human affairs. In such a situation there will be no need for a personal Creator God of Christian mythology, he claims.

The prophet Isaiah said something about this two thousand six hundred years ago. 'This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD of Heaven's Armies:

*"I am the First and the Last; there is no other God. Who is like me? Let him step forward and prove to you his power. Let him do as I have done since ancient times. [.....] You are my witnesses—is there any other God? No! There is no other Rock—not one!" All who worship idols will be disgraced along with all these craftsmen —mere humans — who claim they can make a god. They may all stand together, but they will stand in terror and shame."*²

¹ Yuval Noah Harari *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* Vintage, 2016;

² Isaiah 44:6-11

The Palaeontology of the New Age.....New Age, Old Religion

The roots of the New Age can be traced back to the rebellion in The Garden and to Satan's lies that cast doubt on God's goodness. They consist of four statements:

- **Lie No.1 You Will Not Die** - the basis of Atheism and Reincarnation
- **Lie No 2 Your Eyes Will Be Opened** - Occultism & Eastern Mysticism
- **Lie No 3 You Will Be Like God** - New Age teaching to find the god within
- **Lie No 4 You Will Know Good & Evil** - postmodern Moral Relativism & Scientific Rationalism that claims to have all the answers to life

New Age practices like Yoga, Reiki, Meditation, and Mindfulness all have their origins in the Eastern religious systems of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, which aim at creating altered states of consciousness in the practitioner to open the spiritual channels for demonic access, while deceiving the individual into thinking s/he will find the god within. The reality, of course, is that once helplessly trapped like flies within a web of lies, they realise too late they have become the slaves to demonic spirits with an invitation to an audience with *'Their Satanic Majesties'*, as in the title of the Rolling Stones' rock music album.

The ultimate goal of every form of New Age occultism is the same: to lead the participant to surrender to the 'Prince of this World', as Jesus called him: Satan.¹ It comes as a surprise to many to discover Satan is in control of this present World, because the moment Eve and Adam disobeyed God's explicit instructions not to touch or eat the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they ceded all authority to Satan. This is the extraordinary claim he makes as he tempts Jesus just to worship him and all the kingdoms of this world will then be his.

*'And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."'*²

¹ John 14:30; ² Luke 4:5-7

The Unholy Trinity of Father, Mother, & Son

At the heart of this rebellion against the Almighty Creator God was the Father-Mother-Son trinity of Nimrod, Semiramis, and Tammuz, later seen in the other pagan religions as Baal, Ashtoreth, Tammuz (Canaan), Osiris, Isis and Horus (Egypt); Zeus, Hera, Dionysus (Greece); and Jupiter, Juno and Minerva (Rome).



Egyptian trinity of Osiris, Isis and Horus
Image may be subject to copyright

The worship of Virgin Mother and Child to be seen in these religions appears later in Constantinople with the Empress Pulcheria in 450 AD, who introduced veneration of the Virgin Mary in an amalgamation of Roman civic and religious rituals - the origin of Roman Catholicism's later idolatrous worship of the Virgin Mary as 'Queen of Heaven'.¹

¹ Vasiliki Limberis Divine Heiress: the Virgin Mary and the creation of Christian Constantinople, Routledge, 1994

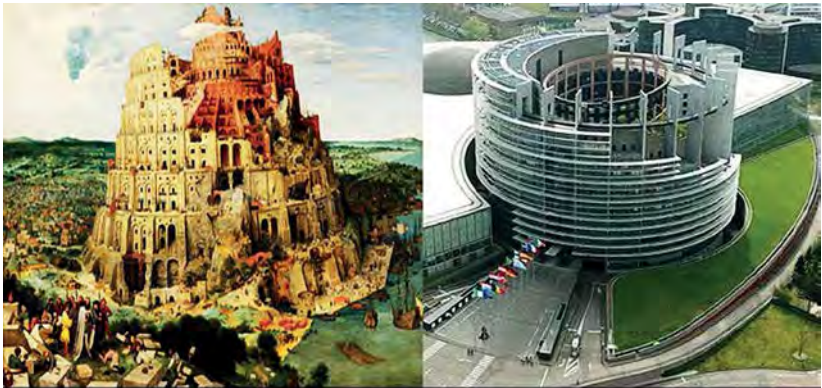
The Tower of Babel.....man's aspirations to be God

In Genesis ¹ we read the story of a tower built by rebellious King Nimrod reaching to the skies as a deliberate challenge to God's authority on earth.

"Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

The story of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel is the origin of the polytheistic religious systems that spread through Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman empires.

The foundation of a new 'Roman Empire' is to be seen in The European Union, with its Parliament Building in Strasbourg looking unfinished just like the Tower of Babel. Such an idea is ridiculed as a 'conspiracy theory.'



Photo©nixseraph.deviantart.com

Is it simply an amazing coincidence or a deliberate enactment of the age-old rebellion? The European Union even printed posters reversing the Biblical 'confusing of their tongues' by replacing it with the slogan: *'Europe: Many Tongues, One Voice.'*

¹ Genesis 10:8-10 and 11:1-9



Source: <https://www.capitalandconflict.com/geopolitics/the-blockheads-of-babylon/>

In another 'coincidence' at the front of the European Commission HQ there is a sculpture of a bull with a woman on its back - a reference to the Greek myth of the rape of Europa by the Greek god Zeus, who had transformed himself into the appearance of beautiful white bull. It is an image seen in *The Book of Revelation* 17:1-5 of the woman riding on a bull.



Statue of Europa riding on the Bull in front of the European Commission, Brussels

Photo: © Sebastia Giralt on www.flickr.com

Doorways To Danger.....the deceitfulness of the New Age

There is nothing new about the New Age. Its roots go back to the Garden of Eden and the serpent's stealth tactics to deceive Eve. What is new are the methods Satan employs today to seduce the gullible. Jesus warned:

*'For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.'*¹

And the tactics are the same: to mix truth with lies and to make the potentially lethal appear attractive and harmless. Below are some examples.

Twisting Scripture: A New Age Take on 'The Woman At The Well'

" Christ Jesus was waiting at a well in Samaria, while his disciples went to the city to buy some food, when a Samaritan woman came along and drew some water from the well. Christ asked her for a drink, whereupon she was very surprised, because Jews did not normally have anything to do with the Samaritans. Then Christ told her about the "Living Water". He said to her: "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall become in him a well of water, springing up to eternal life!"²
" (Christ Jesus - John 4:13b-14)

The "Living Water" that Christ was talking about was what the Hindus call "Kundalini", which means, "coiled energy". Kundalini energy is what Christians call "the power of the Holy Ghost". This power of the Holy Ghost is located in the Sacrum Bone. The Greeks (actually it was the Romans!) called it "sacrum" meaning "sacred". They obviously knew the secret knowledge of our inner being, which has been the sacrum's sacred secret! Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi has been revealing this secret knowledge of our inner being for the last 30 years or so, and this is what she said regarding the power of the Holy Ghost." - from an article entitled "The Holy Spirit and Kundalini [Living Water]" (emphasis added)

Simon was struck by Satan's perversion of Scripture in the same way as he did in the Garden of Eden, taking a statement by God and twisting it to deceive the unwary into thinking the *Kundalini* spirit (coiled serpent at the base of the spine) of the New Age is the same as the Holy Spirit of John Chapter 4.

¹ Matthew 24:24; ² John 4:13b-14

Cracked Pot Religion

Another modern form of Eastern mysticism in seemingly Christian garb is the recent fad for *Kintsugi* - based on the Japanese story of *The Cracked Bowl Mended With Gold*.

It seems so innocent and such a beautiful idea - that the broken pieces of our lives can be put together and healed by simply focusing on the Self and essential goodness in ourselves.

An example of how this has been 'Christianized' was seen when a woman, claiming to be a Christian, gave Simon a card with the quotation from Psalm 46 verse 10: '*Be still and know that I am God,*' and the words: '*Love Kim in Him.*'

Be still and know that I am God

Psalm 46 v10

Love

Kim in Him



"When the Japanese mend broken objects, they aggrandize the damage by filling the cracks with gold. They believe that when something's suffered damage and has a history it becomes more beautiful."

Billie Mobayed

The person who handed out this card was also handing out agate pebbles, saying she had to hand out a million of them - an occult commission.

Kintsugi stresses the beauty of working through brokenness to healing of the self from the woundedness of life experiences through a more positive mindset, as seen in a website titled *Beauty Starts With Me*.¹



'As this beautiful song states, we are light. Our souls are sparks of the light of G-d. When you are feeling sad or down, just remember YOU ARE LIGHT.

*Humm the song softly to yourself.....I am Light, I am Light, I am Light.....
I am Light, I am Light, I am Light....I am Light.*

***You are NOT the things your family did, or the voices in your head.
You are NOT broken pieces. YOU ARE LIGHT.'***

Notice there is no mention of Jesus Christ the Son of God, who came in the flesh as a man, and said: 'I AM The Light of the World,' nor of the G_d (sic) being worshipped. Rather you, the reader, are Light.

'As a philosophy, kintsugi can be seen to have similarities to the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, an embracing of the flawed or imperfect...and to the Japanese philosophy of "no mind" (無心, mushin), which encompasses the concepts of non-attachment, acceptance of change, and fate as aspects of human life. (Wikipedia)

¹ <http://beautystartswithme.com/beautifully-imperfect/>

A Forensic Examination.....*exposing generational evil*

A classic example of the extent to which Satan has perverted God's good order was to be seen, when Simon was invited to investigate the underlying problems of a man, who had had an international ministry for over thirty years. But every time he returned home, he experienced the enemy's spiritual attacks in the form of a spiritual torment, that would incapacitate him for days.

Prayer ministry from other Christians over the years had revealed the roots lay somewhere deep in a past involving dark and hidden secrets. But each time ministry had stopped short of revealing what these secrets were or how to deal with them.

On the 24th of August 2013, as Simon prayed, he became aware of the words:

'A Forensic Examination.'

What he did not know at the time is that a 'forensic examination' is a legal term referring to a detailed examination of the evidence, especially medical, to be presented in a court of law in cases of suspected sexual abuse. What followed showed just how relevant this 'word' was for uncovering a history of generational sin, which the Bible calls 'iniquity.'

Satanic Dedication of Mr X at Birth

The first sign of trouble was when Mr X reported that his birth had been 'engineered' to happen at midnight on 30th April/1st May, which is called *Walpurgisnacht* - or Beltane - one of the two 'high shabbats' in the Witches' Calendar, the other being *Samhain*, or Halloween. An uncle, who claimed to be a Christian, had arranged for the birth to take place at his house and his mother had dedicated him to Satan in his blood in return for a promise of protection, she believed, in Isaiah 28:15.

Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement, when the overwhelming whip passes through it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter"

X's mother believed this meant her dedication of the child to Satan at his birth bought her protection from demonic evil. But she had not read the following verses in Isaiah:¹

This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

*'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb-line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding-place. Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the realm of the dead will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it. As often as it comes it will carry you away; morning after morning, by day and by night, it will sweep through. **The understanding of this message will bring sheer terror** (emphasis added).*

A closer reading of these verses gives a very different picture. Far from providing her with protection, she had '*made lies [her] refuge, and in falsehood [she had] taken shelter.*' The following verses show that because of that, when Yeshua 'the precious corner stone is laid in Zion', God will take his plumb-line to judge the people righteously and 'your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the realm of the dead will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it.' Far from the dedication of her baby to Satan at his birth being a means of ensuring her own protection, she will feel the full force of God's judgment, when her time comes, because of her involvement with witchcraft and the generational iniquity down her family lines. The realisation of this fact would indeed bring her sheer terror.

It transpired that X's mother was a *Grande Dame* named 'Diana' – not her real name – and a member of a coven, that met in the country village, where X was born and lived for many years. This fact had played a major part in his sense of being tormented over the years. At the age of thirteen he had been 'married' to his mother, after they moved to another town and his father and mother went to live with them. The mother had also initiated her granddaughter into witchcraft, and she played a major part in transmitting demonic spirits against X in later years, when he was involved in Christian ministry.

¹ Isaiah 28:16-19

Circumcision on the Eighth Day after Birth

But even at this most evil of beginnings God had his hand upon X, for the same uncle, who delivered him, had circumcised him eight days after he was born, in accordance with Jewish tradition – a fact later confirmed, when it emerged his father came from a long line of Levitical priests. And so, it seems, began a duel between God and Satan for the life of this young boy, involving generational iniquity of the vilest sort on both sides of his family.

A Strange ‘Word’ And A Wrong Interpretation

Interestingly, these early events were hinted at in ‘words’ that were given X at various times, when he had sought ministry. On one occasion a man had given him Exodus 4:24-25, which reads:

‘At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him [Moses] and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!”’

These verses have been variously interpreted by commentators because of the question of the identity of ‘the LORD’ in verse 24 and the meaning of Zipporah's words in verse 25. X certainly believed they referred to his circumcision on the eighth day, but the question was: How does this fit with the idea of God seeking to put him to death?

The Real Meaning Of Exodus 4:24-25

The real meaning of these verses came in an online article,¹ which contained the answers to two questions:

Q1 Who is the attacker against Moses? God or another?

Q2 Who does the *him* refer to? Moses, his son Gershom or Eliezer?

The following quotations from the article help to explain the meaning:

“In Hebrew, the word “*feet*” is sometimes used as a euphemism for the word “*genitals*.” Very few translators chose to use the word “*genitals*” in their interpretation. The Hebrew for “*bridegroom of blood*” written as “*hatan damim*,” is derived from a Semitic root verb which means “*to perform marriage*.”

In Arabic this phrase is linked to Hebrew, but means “*perform circumcision*.”

¹ Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zipporah_at_the_inn

In ancient Akkadian language related to both Arabic and Aramaic/Hebrew, this phrase means “to protect.” Moses’ wife Zipporah was from Midian in the north-western region of the present-day Saudi Arabia, where Akkadian was spoken in Zipporah’s day. Some claim that, in the ancient Akkadian language, casting the foreskin meant “to protect.” So “*You are a bridegroom of blood,*” can also mean, “*This blood will protect you.*”

Exodus is unambiguous that it is Yahweh (God) himself performing the attack on Moses. But this would mean God was attacking the very man he had chosen to lead the Children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. Other texts make the attacker an “*angel of the Lord*”. The version of this episode in the Book of Jubilees (2nd century BC) attributes the attack to ‘*Prince Mastema*,¹ another name for Satan:

‘You yourself know what Prince Mastema desired to do with you, when you returned to Egypt on the way, when you met him at the shelter. Did he not desire to kill you with all of his might and save the Egyptians from your hand, because he saw that you were sent to execute judgment and vengeance upon the Egyptians? And I delivered you from his hand and you did the signs and wonders, which you were sent to perform in Egypt.’¹

The Key to Understanding the ‘Word’ from Exodus 4:24-25

The key to this ‘word’ lies in understanding two things –

- (1) The attacker is not God, but *Prince Mastema* - aka Satan
- (2) The ‘word’ *covenant* the Holy Spirit gave X is not a covenant that X made when he gave his life to Christ (many years after his birth), but the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision that God honoured eight days after his birth.

Satan thought he had X’s life sewn up for eternity, when his mother dedicated him at or before birth to Satan. But God had other ideas, because X is in the line of Levitical priests dating back directly to Aaron through Joshua. God in effect neutralised the satanic dedication in blood at birth by circumcising him as a child of Abraham on the eighth day by the shedding of the blood of circumcision.

¹ *The Book of Jubilees* 48:3-4

The reason for the continued harassment over the years, which intensified when X married, was that the legal grounds for satanic bondage were never removed by confession, repentance and renunciation of every curse brought upon him through personal sin and, more importantly, by ancestral sin on both sides of the family. It also transpired that his wife was involved in the occult.

One of the clearest results of the 'forensic examination' the LORD ordered was the exposure of the extent of the evil in both family bloodlines, which had never been dealt with, because the curses were sealed in such a way that ordinary deliverance ministry would never be able to break them.

Seals on Satanic Curses

Another reason why previous attempts at deliverance had failed was that no one had understood the importance of breaking the seals placed by occultists over curses placed on the victim.

In the course of prayer and listening to the LORD, it became clear that two seals that had been placed on the curses uttered at X's dedication were:

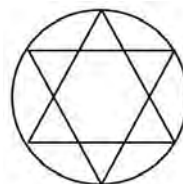
The Sigil of Satan

The Sigil, or 'seal' (Latin *sigillum*), of Satan shown here was placed over the curses uttered against X by his witch mother and the coven at his satanic dedication at birth.



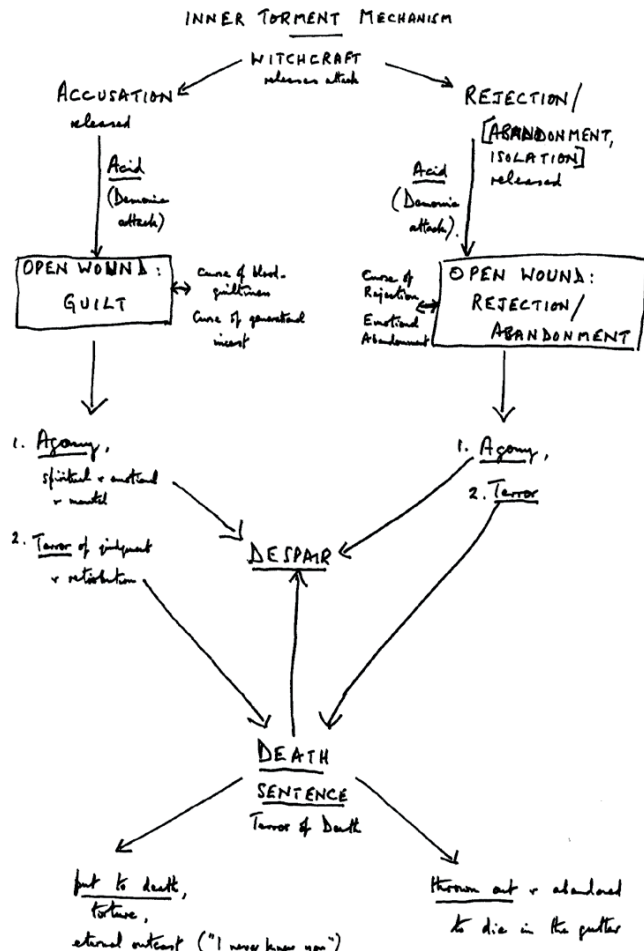
The Seal of Solomon

The Seal of Solomon is in the form of a hexagram inside a circle – a pentagram surrounding the Star of David, referencing the curses associated with X's heritage from a line of Levitical priests.



The Result of the Occult Roots: Demonic Torment

In email correspondence with Simon, X described the effect of these occult roots as almost unbearable torment, which left him incapacitated after each time of ministry. He described it in a diagram (see below) showing witchcraft used to torment him with accusations and feelings of rejection and abandonment, leading to feelings of utter despair, and a terror of being tortured and condemned to death.



Exposing Generational Iniquity in Two Families

The discovery of X's satanic dedication at birth and subsequent circumcision was the start of a lengthy process of uncovering the extent of generational sin on both sides of his and his wife's families.

Some Christians argue that because of Christ's victory over Satan at Calvary, they are no longer subject to the curses of the Old Testament. But they forget that when Jesus said he came not to abolish the Law but to fulfil it, it included all the *Torah* found in the Pentateuch. This highlights the uncomfortable fact that curses can come from God as well as from Satan or other human beings.

The Old Testament Curses In Leviticus & Deuteronomy

The Old Testament books of Exodus,¹ Leviticus² and Deuteronomy³ contain explicit statements of God's blessings on thousands of generations of those, who keep his commandments, but his curses to the third and fourth generation of those, who reject him and break his commandments. The latter curses fall into several categories:

- **Idolatry**

which breaks the first commandment to have no other gods but YHWH

- **Immorality**

breaking God's laws regarding sexual relationships with human beings outside the marriage covenant or animals

- **Intentional sin against others**

eg Bearing false witness, Lying, Murder, Slandering a neighbour, Stealing another's property or moving his boundary

- **Mediumship, Spiritism & Witchcraft**

involving divination, sorcery and witchcraft in order to gain secret knowledge and secret power from Satan rather than from God

¹ Exodus 34:6-7; ² Leviticus 19:31; 20:1-6, 27; ³ Deuteronomy 18:9-12

Biblical Curses for Generational Iniquity

It soon became clear that both X and his wife had inherited the curses God had pronounced in the Bible as a result of the iniquity practised by their forebears on both sides of each family.

X's Family Tree

X's father was from a long line of Levitical priests, which had deviated from the Law of the LORD (*Torah*) and followed the mystical traditions of the *Kabbalah*, which we have seen (see page 43) is steeped in occultism. They had also practised Freemasonry – the occult religion that claims to have its origins in Solomon's temple.

His mother's side of the family involved mediumship and witchcraft, while his mother had committed fornication with several men, including a Satanist, and had had several self-induced abortions, including that of X's twin brother, while X was still in the womb.

X's Wife's Family Tree

His wife, whom he had married against advice from family and friends, also came from a long line of occultists. Her paternal grandfather had practised Freemasonry and witchcraft at the ancestral hall he built. Her mother's side of the family included psychics, while her mother practised witchcraft and exercised a Jezebelic control over her and her granddaughter, whom she had molested, when she was young, and initiated into witchcraft.

In the light of all this, it was hardly surprising X was being hammered each time he stepped out in obedience to exercise the ministry to which he had been called. It was also confirmation of the 'word' the LORD had given Simon about '*A Forensic Examination*'.

The next stage was to seek the LORD's guidance as to how to proceed.

The Case against Mr X and Mrs X

A detailed examination was undertaken by email correspondence with Mr and Mrs X over several months to list the various sins of each of their forebears on both sides of each family with a view to identifying the Biblical curses they had brought upon the families. The results were startling as shown below.

THE CHARGES vs Mr X

- 1 That X's father broke the Levitical code
- 2 That X's mother broke God's law re sexual relations
- 3 That X's mother broke God's law regarding incest
- 4 That X's grandmother murdered several unborn children by self-administered abortions, and his mother's abortion of X's twin brother
- 5 That X's mother *either* dedicated or allowed X to be dedicated to Satan at birth and/or afterwards
- 6 That X's mother initiated her grand-daughter into witchcraft at birth & later
- 7 That X's Uncle *either* circumcised or allowed X to be circumcised by someone other than a *mohel*
- 8 That X's grandfather and his father broke God's law by practising Freemasonry and hating God
- 9 That he pronounced a curse on his son who was born out of wedlock
- 10 That X's maternal grandmother and great grandmother practised witchcraft and spiritism (and dedicated their children to Satan?)
- 11 All other sins of the forebears right back to Adam
- 12 That X had sexual relations with Mrs X before they were married

1. LEVITICUS 17-21 The Holiness Code

2. ACTS 15:20 Instead, we should write and tell them to abstain from eating food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from consuming blood.

3. DEUTERONOMY 27:20 Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his father's wife, for he dishonours his father's bed

4. EXODUS 20:13 You shall not murder

5. EXODUS 20:2-6 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

6 DEUTERONOMY 18:9-13

7 LEVITICUS 17-21 The Holiness Code

8 EXODUS 20:2-6 see above

9 DEUTERONOMY 23:2-3

A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

DEUTERONOMY 18:9-13 When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practises divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God.

THE CHARGES vs Mrs X

1. That Mrs X's great grandfather practised witchcraft at his ancestral home
 2. That Mrs X's grandfather was cursed by a person in line with **JOB 17:5**
 3. That Mrs X's paternal grandmother was a psychic with psychic links to her mother and grandmother
 4. That Mrs X's mother was a Jezebel who exercised witchcraft over her daughter
 5. That Mrs X's mother-in-law sexually molested Mrs X daughter from a young age and allowed satanic abuse to be perpetrated on her over many years
 6. That Mrs X herself is a self-confessed 'witch' and acts as an occult booster transmitter for demonic attacks
 7. That Mrs X exercises Jezebelic control over her husband X
 8. All other sins of the forebears stretching right back to our ancestor Adam
 9. That Mrs X had sexual relations with X before they were married
1. **DEUTERONOMY 18:9-13** When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practises divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God
 2. **JOB 17:5** If anyone denounces their friends for reward, the eyes of their children will fail. cf **LEVITICUS 26:16** God's punishment for rebellion
 3. **DEUTERONOMY 18:9-13** see above
 4. **DEUTERONOMY 18:9-13** see above
 5. **DEUTERONOMY 18:9-13** see above
 6. **DEUTERONOMY 18:9-13** see above
 7. **DEUTERONOMY 18:9-13** see above
 9. **ACTS 15:20** Instead, we should write and tell them to abstain from eating food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from consuming blood

These show the legal authority given to Satan to harass X and his family over the years and formed the basis of God's case against them in the Court of the Judge of the Universe. All these were checked with X before ministry began.

In the Courtroom of the Judge of the Universe

In Zechariah Chapter 3 we are invited into the Courtroom of the Judge of the Universe and shown an extraordinary sight. For we see Satan standing at the right hand side of Joshua the High Priest, accusing him before the Angel of the LORD — who is traditionally interpreted as the pre-incarnate Christ - and saying Joshua is unfit to be in God's presence!

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan,

'The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?'

Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel.

The Angel said to those who were standing before him,

'Take off his filthy clothes.'

Then he said to Joshua,

'See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.'

Then I (Zechariah) said, *"Put a clean turban on his head."*

So, they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the Angel of the LORD stood by. The Angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua:

*'This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'If you will walk in obedience to me and keep my commands, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here.'*¹

When Satan lays his accusations of sin against God's servant, we see Jesus arguing his case before God as *'a brand plucked from the fires (of Hell).'* Simon and friend prayed about the way forward, and sensed the LORD saying to present the case against X and his wife before the Throne of God, and for X to seek God's forgiveness through confession, repentance and renunciation of everything that had given the enemy a legal right to harass him. Then they were to plead the blood of Jesus for God's forgiveness, break all curses and anoint X with consecrated oil.

¹ Zechariah 3 1-7

Ministry to X in the light of the Forensic Examination

The evening before ministry the three men met to discuss the format of the proceedings and to pray for the LORD's protection and guidance throughout that Jesus Christ might be glorified in everything.

The next morning as they met in the conference room of a hotel, there was a real sense of being in the Presence of God, with his angels arranged at one end of the conference table and the three men seated at the other.

Before the proceedings began, they celebrated the LORD's Supper to declare the victory Christ won at Calvary. There followed a time of ministry involving presentation of the case for the prosecution, listing the charges against the defendant and the curses listed in the Bible for generational iniquity and personal sin. This was followed by presentation of the case for the defence, involving the defendant's confession of the Lordship of Christ and repentance for the sins of his forebears as well as his own sins, pleading the Blood of Jesus as the basis on which God has promised forgiveness, and renunciation of the curses placed on him by his mother's dedication of him at birth and removal of the seals placed on the curses by the enemy. Ministry involved breaking the seals and the curses and cutting all ungodly soul ties with his forebears.

The final part of the ministry time was the declaration of God's promises of forgiveness and cleansing of all sin confessed and the verdict 'Not Guilty', because of the victory Christ won at Calvary on our behalf. They then anointed X with consecrated oil as a sign of the Holy Spirit sealing what the blood had cleansed. It was followed by a time of praise and worship singing: *'I'm accepted, I'm forgiven, I am loved by the True and Living God'*; *'Amazing grace'*; and *'I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene.'*

There was a beautiful sense of release and the LORD's *shalom* as the proceedings drew to a close.

Postscript:

While it was clear progress had been made, it became clear that further ministry would be needed.

Chapter 3

The Crux Of The Problem

The Crux of the Problem.....what is the point of the Cross?

That day in Govan Town Hall was something Simon struggled with for years. It was as if the enemy was simply smirking at the family and saying:

"Where is your God now? God's not good, or else he would have healed that little boy's mother of her MS."

If Jesus really did win the victory at Calvary, why didn't he answer that little boy's faith?

'And why didn't he zap me,' Simon thought, 'with his Holy Spirit as a fourteen-year-old, when the Archbishop laid his hands on me at my confirmation?'

[*Note: Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, was also Grand Master of the Order of Freemasons of England and Ireland. It is an interesting echo of the Donatist schism,¹ which raised the issue of whether a person's salvation rested on the righteousness of the minister performing baptism or the act of baptism itself - *vel ex opere operando vel opere operato*. - 'whether from the one performing the act or from the act performed'. When Simon heard God speak to him years later, he heard: 'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit with whom you have been sealed.' This suggests that God had indeed heard his vows at his confirmation, even though the person administering the sacrament laid unholy hands on his head.]*

What exactly did Jesus' death in agony of body, soul and spirit on a Roman cross outside Jerusalem in 33 AD achieve? If he has won the victory over sin, death and Satan, why doesn't it feel like that?

Christians have placed their faith in a risen and exalted Saviour, not a dead hero like a Che Guevarra. The issue is whether or not Jesus is who he claimed to be and whether his death has brought the results he claimed for those, who put their faith in him.

¹ For The Donatist Schism see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donatism>

The Necessity of the Cross & Resurrection.....to reverse *The Fall*

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, it resulted in three devastating consequences.

- **Sin** entered the world and with it the wages of sin - physical death.
- **Suffering** in the form of physical disease and emotional anguish
- **Separation** from God and from one another in a loss of intimacy

Even as they were banished from God's presence, God promised to send a redeemer, who would reverse the situation and restore the intimacy that had been lost.¹

When Jesus began his ministry, he announced that the kingdom-rule of God had come in his person. His mission was to reverse the consequences of Adam's disobedience, as Paul writes in his *First Letter to the Corinthians*:

*'For just as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.'*²

And he announced his mission manifesto in the synagogue in his home town of Nazareth, when he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah at the chapter detailing the Messiah's commission:

*'The Spirit of the LORD is upon me for he has anointed me to proclaim Good News to beggars. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'*³

When he announced that Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled before their very eyes, the citizens of Nazareth were outraged and wanted to throw him off the cliffs at the edge of town.

What Jesus was saying was that God's kingdom-rule, which had been hijacked by Satan in the Garden of Eden, was in the process of being restored in his Person. Wherever he went, his message was the same:

*'Repent for the kingdom-rule of God has come near. Believe the Good News.'*⁴

¹ Genesis 3:15; ² 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; ³ Luke 4:18-19; ⁴ Mark 1:15

The Meaning of the Cross

Simon was reading John 16:8-11 during his Quiet Time one day.

'And when he (the Holy Spirit of Truth) comes, he will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.'

As he finished, he sensed the Holy Spirit saying: *'Do you understand what you have just read?'*

He had to admit he understood the simple meaning of the words, but didn't really comprehend their real meaning. As soon as he admitted this, he was aware of the Spirit saying: *'It is -*

- **Man's sin of unbelief**, because people don't believe Jesus is the Son of God and the only way to God.
- **God's righteousness**, because Jesus' return to the Father was the only way we can be put right with God.
- **Satan's judgment**, because on the Cross Christ defeated all the powers of hell.'

The Cross Points In Three Directions:

- It **deals with the problem of human sin**, by offering the promise of forgiveness and cleansing to all, who confess their sins and repent by ending their rebellion against God.
- It **satisfies God's demand for punishment of sin** by Jesus' death on the cross in place of the sinner and resurrection to give us eternal life.
- It **pronounces a guilty verdict on Satan's** perversion of God's perfect creation and offers legal authority and power to believers over all the power of the enemy.

Without Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection, there would be no forgiveness of sin, no way of getting right with God, and no ability to overcome the power of the enemy in this world or for his ultimate destruction on the Day of Judgment.

The Power of the Blood of Jesus.....further proof of Christ's victory

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible is about **two covenants sealed with blood**: one **divine**, the other **satanic**.

In Genesis Chapter 3 we see God's covenant of 'atonement,' or 'covering of sin,' instituted after Adam and Eve's sin through the shedding of the blood of an animal to make a covering of skins for the hapless pair. In the very next chapter, we read of the first murder resulting from their rebellion against God, when Cain murders his brother Abel.

From this point on in the Old Testament we read of these two covenants - the divine and the satanic – played out in the history of God's people in different ways.

A. The Divine Covenant of Blood Sacrifices in OT and NT in the form of the

(1) The Abrahamic Covenant of Circumcision and

(2) The Mosaic Covenant of Atonement through the system of **animal sacrifice**

In Leviticus ¹, we read: '*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*'

From Genesis ² and on through the Old Testament prophets, God promised an 'anointed one' - a 'mashiah' or 'Messiah' - who would come to save God's people through a new covenant of the heart.

(3) The New Covenant Sealed With Jesus' Blood

The promise is finally fulfilled with the birth of Jesus Christ - the Lamb of God - who will save his people from their sins by the shedding of his blood on the Cross at Calvary. The writer of *The Letter to the Hebrews* ³ says that sinners can now

come to Jesus '*the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.* Where the blood of Abel spoke of revenge and punishment, the Blood of Jesus speaks of a covenant of grace through the forgiveness of sins on repentance and faith.

In Revelation ⁴ we read that God's children overcome Satan by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony - even to the point of death, if necessary, prior to the final consummation of the Kingdom-rule of God in heaven and earth.

¹ Leviticus 17:11; ² Genesis 3:15; ³ Hebrews 12:24; ⁴ Revelation 12:11

B. The Satanic Covenant in Blood

The satanic covenant is also instituted in blood through animal and human sacrifice, together with sex acts, in witchcraft and satanic rituals, as part of the price Satan requires of his worshippers, in return for secret knowledge and secret power.

The forensic examination Simon conducted into the problems being experienced by Mr X showed that he had been dedicated at birth in a covenant undertaken by his mother, in the vain hope of satanic protection, which was sealed in his blood. What became clear from the forensic examination and ministry to X was that the blood of the covenant of circumcision, performed according to the Mosaic Law eight days after his birth, and his commitment to Christ as a teenager 'covered' the Satanic covenant undertaken by his mother, enabling him to minister. But, because the satanic covenant had never been exposed and the generational iniquity dealt with, the enemy still had legal authority to harass him every time he returned from ministry. It was further reinforced by the fact that his wife and daughter were both acting as satanic 'booster stations' using witchcraft against him.

Evidence of the Power of the Blood of Jesus

Proof of the victory Christ won at Calvary through his death and resurrection was seen on several occasions over the years. During ministry sessions Simon would sometimes invite an individual, who had been involved in the occult, to read the Blood Scriptures (see next page). These are verses from the New Testament that declare what the Blood of Jesus has achieved for Christians as part of the power of the Word of God, as the Sword of the Spirit, to achieve the victory mentioned in Revelation.¹

On two separate occasions, when Simon invited the person to read the Scriptures, the individual was able to start reading in a normal voice and at a normal pace, but as s/he read further down the page and neared the verses from Revelation about Christ's victory, the voice got quieter, the speech got slower and the eyes began to close. On trying to open the person's eyelids, Simon was left looking at just the whites of the eyeballs. [see also Francis McNutt. ²]

¹ Revelation 12:10-11; ² F.McNutt *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual*,

The Blood of Jesus

Man's greatest problem is sin which God will only forgive when we put our trust in the Blood of Jesus Christ shed when He died on the Cross at Calvary to pay the penalty for our sins. There is no other way of salvation for **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22)** As Christians **we have been saved by God's grace through faith in the LORD Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8)** **God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14)** In the light of this we can claim the inheritance that has been sealed for us by the precious Blood of Jesus and can affirm the promises given to us in God's Word.

1. Matthew 26:28 Jesus said: "*This is My Blood of the New Covenant which is shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins*".
2. Ephesians 1:7 In Christ Jesus we have redemption through His Blood and forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of His grace. (cf Colossians 1:14)
3. Romans 5: 8-9 God demonstrates His love for us by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. So then having been justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Jesus.
4. Romans 3: 25 God publicly displayed a propitiation in His Blood through faith to demonstrate His righteousness
5. Ephesians 2: 13 Now in Christ Jesus we who were previously far away from God have been brought near to God by the Blood of Jesus.
6. Colossians 1:19 For it was God the Father's desire to reconcile all things to Himself through the Blood of Christ's Cross. We therefore are reconciled to God through the Blood of Jesus
7. 1 Peter 1: 18-19 You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver and gold but with precious blood as of an unblemished and spotless lamb, the Blood of Christ.
8. 1 Peter 1: 2 You have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by the sanctifying work of the Spirit so that we might
 - a. obey Jesus Christ, and
 - b. be sprinkled clean by His Blood
9. 1 John 1: 8-9 If we walk in the light as He is in the light,
 - a. we have fellowship with one another
 - b. the Blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin

Through the Blood of Jesus therefore I am

- a. Redeemed from the Law of sin & death and the wrath of God
- b. Justified in the eyes of a holy God just as if I'd never sinned
- c. Cleansed from every sin in the past and every sin confessed
- d. Sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit of God day by day

Satan therefore has no legal authority over me because I belong to Jesus and am accepted by God who sees me clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

10. Hebrews 10: 19 We have confidence to enter God's Holy Place by the Blood of Jesus
11. Revelation 12:11 The children of God overcome Satan by
 - a. The Blood of the Lamb
 - b. The Word of their testimony (what the Blood has done for us)

On another occasion, when Simon was preaching, he happened to mention the Blood of Jesus. All of a sudden, a woman and her son stood up at the back of the Hall and shouted:

'No! No! You mustn't say that.'

If anyone was asleep up to this point in the sermon, they certainly got a rude awakening! It simply proved yet again that demons hate any mention of the Blood of Jesus, because it has sealed their eternal destiny in hell and proves the reality of Christ's victory, when Paul says in his *Letter to the Colossians* he disarmed, disgraced and defeated all the powers of Hell on the Cross.

'When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the indictment of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.'

¹ (NIV)

The Blood of the Cross & Satanic Bondage

The power of the Blood of Jesus is seen in its ability to deal with generational iniquity as well as personal sin. During the course of ministering to folk over the years, it became clear that the key to deliverance from various kinds of spiritual bondage is to use the weapons God has given born again Christians.

At one point in ministering to a couple, Simon was aware of the LORD saying:

'Remove the legal authority you have given the enemy.'

'Then exercise the spiritual authority I have given you.'

A spiritual principle to be seen in the Bible is:

'The Spirit does not anoint what the Blood has not cleansed.'

This is to be seen, for example, in Leviticus and the instructions for cleansing lepers.²

¹ Colossians 2:13-15; ² Leviticus 14:1-32;

A. Removing the Legal Authority Given to the Enemy

The Bible makes it clear that **repentance from sin** – *both generational and personal* - is the prerequisite for God to deal with the problems of satanic bondage. We see David, Nehemiah and Daniel repenting *not just* for their own sins, *but also* for the sins of their forefathers. ¹ ; ²; ³

This is because God says he will deal with the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him, but will show loving-kindness and mercy to thousands of generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

This may take some time if there has been generational sin of the kind seen in *A Forensic Examination*. Drawing a family tree and identifying the sin in each generation can be helpful in where to target ministry.

B. Exercising The Spiritual Authority You Have Been Given

Before returning to heaven, Jesus gave his disciples and the seventy-two his authority (*exousia*) and power (*dunamis*) over all the power of enemy forces. This includes using the Word of God against the lies of the enemy in a **truth encounter**, and commanding demonic ‘squatters’ to leave the person in a **power encounter**, when demonic spirits surface and refuse to leave or use delaying tactics, such as mockery (‘*you’ll never get us out*’; ‘*we’re not leaving*.’)

Because demons are not bound by time, it is useful to get them to look at the Blood of Jesus, as if they are present at Calvary, when Jesus cried:

‘It is finished!’ ⁴

And to remind them:

‘It is written - “And they overcame Satan by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.” ⁵ *So, in Jesus’ Name, go now to the place appointed for you by Christ and there await his instructions.”* ¹

¹ Psalm 51; ² Nehemiah 1:4-7; 9:1-2; Daniel 9:1-19; ³ Exodus 20:5; 34:7; ⁴ John 19:30;

⁵ Revelation 12:11

The Ruthless Efficiency of Roman Crucifixion

The Romans were ruthlessly efficient at executing people.....slowly, in the most agonizing and humiliating way possible. The whole purpose of crucifixion was to deter others from committing the crime the crucified man had committed. It was reserved for the most heinous crimes committed by slaves, criminals and others, who were not Roman citizens.

The Roman historian Appian¹ reported that, after the slave revolt of Spartacus was crushed in 73 BC, six thousand slaves were crucified along the Appian Way from Capua to Rome, a distance of one hundred and thirty-two miles. When the Romans sacked Jerusalem in 70 AD and crushed the Jewish rebellion, Josephus ²tells us they crucified five hundred people a day, so that they ran out of wood for the crosses. Many took days to die of thirst and ultimately of asphyxiation.

The Gospel writers avoid giving any detailed description of Jesus' crucifixion itself, because their readers knew only too well the gory details from everyday life in the Roman world. Crucifixions, like the public executions conducted by the Nazis and Islamic terrorists, were designed to strike terror into a captive population. Below is a description of a typical crucifixion.

'The crucifixion was carried out by a specialized execution squad of four Roman legionaries, under the command of a centurion. First, the condemned man would be stripped naked and scourged with a *flagellum*, studded with metal or bone fragments designed to lacerate the body. This would cause the person to lose a large amount of blood, and victims sometimes died just from the shock. The condemned man was forced to carry the horizontal cross beam (Latin: *patibulum*), weighing about a hundred pounds, to the place of execution. During the march, the prisoner would be led through the most crowded streets bearing a *titulus* – a plaque announcing the prisoner's name and crime. On arrival at the place of execution, he would be stripped of any remaining clothing, and nailed to the cross naked, or with just a loincloth.'

¹ Appian *Civil Wars* XIV:120; ² Josephus *The Jewish War* 11:1

'If the crucifixion took place in an established place of execution, the upright pole (Latin: *stipes*) might be permanently fixed in the ground. In this case, the condemned person's wrists would first be nailed to the *patibulum*, and then he would be hoisted off the ground with ropes to hang from the elevated *patibulum*, while it was fastened to the upright *stipes*. Next the feet or ankles would be nailed to the upright stake with 'nails,' which were tapered iron spikes approximately 5 to 7 inches (13 to 18 cm) long with a square shaft $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm) across. A *titulus*, or plaque, would also be fastened to the cross to tell onlookers the person's name and crime as they hung on the cross.' (Wikipedia *adapted*)

Although the Romans carried out thousands of crucifixions across the Empire, the only archaeological evidence we have is from the discovery of an ossuary (box for bones) containing the remains of a Jew named Jehonanan, dating back to the Roman Empire around the time of Jesus, found at Givat HaMivtar, Jerusalem in 1968.¹ It contained the heel bone with a nail through it, as seen in the photograph below.



Image may be subject to copyright

Victims were often left hanging on the cross for days until their bodies rotted or were devoured by wild animals. In Jesus' case, the soldiers carried out *crurifragium*, or leg-breaking, on the two thieves crucified on either side of him, but when they came to Jesus, they discovered he was already dead, and so they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers thrust a spear into Jesus' side releasing a mixture of blood and water from the *pericardium*.²

¹ *Israel Exploration Journal* 20 (1–2), 1970: 38–59; ² John 19:31-37

A Prophetic Picture of Jesus' Crucifixion

We will never be able to grasp the awesome reality of Jesus' death on the Cross at Calvary and of the agony of body, soul and spirit he experienced as he hung dying as the perfect 'Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world.'¹ But one year as Simon was preparing a few notes for a prayer meeting, the Holy Spirit drew his attention to Psalm 22, and took him through a mini-Bible study just before the meeting began, opening his eyes to some amazing features of the psalm.

Psalm 22 is most famous for Jesus' cry as he hung dying on the Cross *'My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?'*

The psalm was composed by David, about a thousand years before Christ, and describes what someone being crucified is feeling as he hangs dying on a cross, in an extraordinary, prophetic picture hundreds of years before crucifixion was known in Israel. It consists of three sections.

Part 1: An Anguished Cry of Dereliction (vv1-10)

The victim is crying out to God in agony that he is feeling abandoned by God. At the same time, he reminds God of his faithfulness to previous generations, who trusted God, whenever they were in trouble, and he delivered them.

Part 2: A Prophetic Picture of Crucifixion (vv11-21)

These verses describe in detail what the condemned man is feeling as he is dying. Matthew² quotes various details from the psalm in his account of Jesus' crucifixion to show how it fulfilled this prophetic picture.

Part 3: A Triumphant Shout of Resurrection (vv22-31)

The final verses of the psalm are a declaration that this death is not the end, but will result in generations to come experiencing the reality of resurrection life and will praise God that 'He has done it!'³

¹ John 1:29; ² Matthew 27:27-54; ³ John 19:30

Part 1: An Anguished Cry of Dereliction (vv 1-5)

It begins with the line made famous by Jesus when he cries out:

'My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me and answering my anguished cries?'

It is the cry of a man feeling absolutely abandoned by everyone, including God. What makes it worse is that his forefathers put their trust in God, and God was faithful and answered their cries for help.

Part 2: A Prophetic Picture of Crucifixion (vv 6-21)

What is so extraordinary, however, about this psalm is that it contains a detailed description of what it feels like *physically* to be crucified.

- There's the mockery: *Let God save him since he delights in him*
- He is surrounded by powerful enemies like the ferocious bulls of Bashan
- Roaring lions are standing with open mouths ready to tear him to pieces
- The word 'dogs' was a derogatory Jewish term for 'Gentiles' and it was Roman soldiers, who were crucifying him.
- There is a detailed description of his physical feelings: all his strength is draining away like water; heart melted like wax; dry mouth and tongue sticking to its roof
- The victim's hands and feet are being pierced (with seven-inch Roman nails)
- He is experiencing the degradation of hanging there for all to see, while the bystanders gloat and mock his misery
- His executioners are dividing up his clothing among them, even casting lots for his cloak that was woven in one piece

Of course, we can never enter into the abyss of human sin and satanic evil Jesus entered as the Saviour of the world to deal with the full effects of Adam and Eve's rebellion in the Garden.

The Agony in the Other Garden

Simon was struck one day by an amazing statement in *The Letter to the Hebrews*:

*'Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.'*¹

Some people give the impression they think because Jesus was the Son of God, the prospect of dying on a cross was not really a problem for him. That's not what the Gospel writers say. Luke describes the reality of the agony Jesus underwent in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before his crucifixion.

*'He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.'*²

Doctor Luke includes a detail that reveals the full horror of the choice Jesus faced that night, when he writes that *'being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.'* Sweating blood is a rare medical condition called *haematidrosis* - 'a condition in which capillary blood vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to exude blood; it occurs under conditions of extreme physical, emotional stress, or terror.'³

Jesus, was facing the agonising choice, not just of being obedient to God the Father's will for him to die for the sins of the whole world, but also of facing the terrors of hell and of satanic evil. He pleaded with Abba, if it was at all possible, for him not to have to face the full fury of God's wrath at sin and evil. On his obedience hung not just his fate but also the eternal fate of all humanity.

Because of his obedience Jesus could shout out with the psalmist the last verses of Psalm 22.

¹ Hebrews 5:8; ² Luke 22:39-44; ³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2810702/>

Part 3: A Triumphant Shout of Resurrection (vv22-31)

The final verses of the psalm are a declaration that this agonising and humiliating death is not the end.

- People will praise God because he has not abandoned his afflicted one, but has heard his cry for help.
- All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him and worship the LORD.
- Dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.
- All who go down to the dust - the dead - will kneel before him
- Future generations will be told about the Lord.
- They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn: *"He has done it!"*

It is the cry of triumph Jesus utters as he dies. *Tetelestai! It is finished!*¹

As Simon was meditating on this psalm, he sensed the Holy Spirit say:

'When you are dying on a cross, you don't have much breath and so your words are few. Jesus quotes the first and last lines of this psalm as a form of shorthand to say to those standing by. *'Do you understand what you are witnessing today?'*

Every male Jew standing around the Cross that Friday would have been amazed, because he had learned that psalm off by heart for his *bar mitzvah* ceremony, when he was twelve or thirteen. Some of those present at the crucifixion must have left the scene, scratching their heads and realising they had just seen that psalm fulfilled before their very eyes. Some of them must have been among the three thousand, who heard Peter explain the significance of Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and heard him say:

'Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah. When they heard those words, they were cut to the heart and asked Peter: 'What must we do to be saved?'

The answer? *'You need to repent and get right with God before it is too late!'*²

¹ John 19:30; ² Acts 2:1-41

The Forbidden Chapter.....the picture of the Suffering Servant

Isaiah Chapter 53 is famous for its depiction of the Messiah as a Suffering Servant, who is so beaten up and disfigured prior to his execution, that people, who see him, don't recognize him and turn their faces away in disgust at the appalling sight.

In fact it is so appalling a picture that the rabbis have 'photoshopped' it out of the *Tanakh* - the Jewish Old Testament - altogether. It has become known as '*The Forbidden Chapter*.' The 17th century Jewish historian, Raphael Levi, admitted that long ago the rabbis used to read Isaiah 53 in synagogues, but after the chapter caused 'arguments and great confusion,' they decided that the simplest thing would be to just take that prophecy out of the Haftarah readings in synagogues. That's why today, when Isaiah 52 is read, rabbis stop in the middle of the chapter and the week after jump straight to Isaiah 54.

Why Do Rabbis Omit Isaiah Chapter 52:13 - Chapter 53:12?

The reason why the rabbis omit these sections is because they refer to the coming of the long-promised Messiah, whom the Jews do not recognize has already been fulfilled in Jesus the Christ (Greek) - Yeshua ha Mashiah (Hebrew). They even describe 'the Servant of the LORD' as suffering for the sins of his people, before he is exalted, saying: '*there were many who were appalled at him - his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness.*'¹

In spite of his horrific suffering, however, the day would come, when even kings would come to look to him in reverence. The problem, Isaiah says, is that people do not believe the good news they have heard, that '*Your God reigns.*'²

The Messiah will suffer in our place, bearing our sickness, our suffering and pain. And most shocking of all, he would suffer because of *our* sins, not his. He would be wounded and pierced for *our* transgressions of God's Law. He would be 'pierced because of *our* iniquities and crushed (LXX³ lit '*traumatised*') for *our* sins.' It is not difficult to see why the rabbis were anxious not to let their congregations see the prophecy has already been fulfilled for a first time.

¹ Isaiah 52:14; ² Isaiah 52:7; ³ LXX = Septuagint (Greek) text of the Hebrew text

The Jewish Sages Realised Isaiah 53 Is About The Messiah

Dr Eitan Bar, in his book *Refuting Rabbinic Objections to Christianity & Messianic Prophecies*,¹ points out that 'Jewish sages from ancient times always interpreted Isaiah 53 to be about the Messiah. The problem seems to have emanated from the writings of Rabbi Rashi in Spain, who did not admit that Yeshua was Messiah, and tried to reinterpret the prophecy to refer to the nation of Israel, not to a person.

Part of the problem seems to be that there are two strands of prophecy concerning the Messiah. That is because prophecy often is like a picture with a foreground and a background. The foreground concerns an early timescale, while the background is looking forward into the future.

In Jewish prophetic literature there were two strands concerning the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah. The first refers to the Messiah as a Suffering Servant.

SUFFERING SERVANT	CONQUERING KING
PSALM 22:1-21	PSALM 22:22-31
ISAIAH 53:1-12	REVELATION 17:14; 19:11-16
DANIEL 9:25-26	DANIEL 7:13-14
ZECHARIAH 12:10-11	ZECHARIAH 14:1-9

But when he returns, he will come as Conquering King to bring in God's eternal kingdom-rule forever. They could not see that both prophetic pictures were right and that when Jesus died on the Cross at Calvary, he was fulfilling the prophecy concerning the coming of Messiah as Suffering Servant. The second prophecy will only be fulfilled, when he returns as Conquering King, to establish God's kingdom-rule in heaven and earth at the Day of Judgment.

We live between the *First Coming* of Christ, when Jesus came to inaugurate God's kingdom-rule potentially, and his *Second Coming* in glory as Conquering King to establish God's eternal kingdom-rule in heaven and earth.

¹ E.Barr *Refuting Rabbinic Objections to Christianity & Messianic Prophecies*
Crossway, 2001

The Road To Faith.....by way of *The Cross*

Simon's disillusionment with religion as a fourteen-year-old was heightened by his addiction to nicotine and the realisation he didn't seem to be able to kick the habit. But his addiction to a substance was only a symptom of a much deeper longing for an intimacy Adam and Eve forfeited by their rebellion in The Garden.

Longing for Intimacy & The Addiction Cycle

The origin of much addictive behaviour is the subconscious attempt to deal with the pain of what some have called 'love-hunger.'¹ To deal with the pain of a lack of being loved, some will turn to people, substances or activities that will temporarily alleviate the lack of love. The problem is that the anaesthetic effect of each of the substitutes is short-lived and requires more and more of it over time as its effectiveness wanes.

Simon's addiction to cigarettes was symptomatic of a much deeper problem - a longing for intimacy, which at the time he did not recognize could only be met by reconnection with the One, who had loved him with an everlasting love. The problem, like all addictive behaviours, was it seemed so harmless to begin with. His father had been a smoker, though not a heavy one, and at the time he was growing up it was regarded as ok. By the time scientific studies had shown a link between smoking and lung cancer, he was well and truly hooked.

The Search For Love In The Wrong Direction

The result of the 'love-hunger' we experience in childhood is to look for love in the wrong direction. This search may take various forms. For Simon it led to academic study to prove he was not a failure, but at the cost of spending time with Andrea and the children. For others, who came to see them, it included alcoholism, drug abuse, eating disorders, involvement in the occult, pornography, sex, and workaholism.

¹ G. Satinover, in Whitehead, Briar. *Craving for Love: Relationship Addiction, Homosexuality and the God Who Heals*: Monarch, 1993, page 87

Love Hunger & The Addiction Cycle

*'The addiction cycle is driven by the love-hunger, which craves a substitute for the love it has not experienced in the form of an anaesthetic agent. We tend to make symbolic substitutions of one thing for another – typically using appetitive drives like food or sex, e.g., hunger can be substituted for emotional need and then we eat to satisfy our hunger. In other words, a higher thing – a spiritual need – is replaced by an appetitive drive which we attempt to satisfy and it makes us temporarily feel better..... People get trapped in it because they want to feel better and it doesn't feel dangerous for a start. But after a repetitive process they find it doesn't work as well as it did, the original pain is still there, and the appetitive drive, originally a guest in the house, has become not just master but tyrant.'*¹

For Simon the addiction to nicotine had become 'not just master but tyrant,' as Satinover says. Worse still, it brought a sense of desperation and guilt, felt by many addicts, that he could not help himself break the addiction. He was faced with the realisation, as Paul says, there was a battle raging inside between the desire to be free and yet the inability to bring about that freedom of himself.²

God's Promise Of A Supernatural Heart Transplant

What Simon needed was a new heart that only God could give him. Fortunately, God had promised just such a supernatural heart transplant through the prophet Ezekiel over two thousand five hundred years ago.³

'I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.'

The question was: How could you get this new heart?

¹ G. Satinover cited in Whitehead, Briar. op cit. page 87. ² Romans 7:23-24; ³ Ezekiel 36:25-27

How Can I Get A New Heart?.....Jesus' three riddles

The answer came one day, when Simon was reading about Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus, a member of *The Sanhedrin*, the Jewish religious council, who came to Jesus secretly at night, for fear of what his fellow council members might think.

Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus speaking in parables, or riddles. When his disciples didn't understand their meaning, he explained:

*'The reason I speak to them in parables, is because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "You will indeed hear. but never understand, and you will indeed see, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them."'*¹

Nicodemus begins by saying he realizes Jesus has been sent by God, because it is obviously God, who is enabling him to perform the miracles he has been doing. In reply Jesus presents Nicodemus with three riddles, each prefaced by the statement:

'Amen! Amen!' meaning *'Truly, truly.'*

When Jesus says this, he is meaning:

'You need to pay attention to this, Nicodemus, because I'm telling you the truth.'

Riddle # 1: 'Amen! Amen! You Must Be Born Another'

*'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a person is born **another**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'*²

Nicodemus is confused, because he thinks *another* means *'again,'* and reckons it's a physical impossibility for him to be literally born again. He doesn't realise the word also means *'from above'* - that is, *supernaturally*. Jesus goes on to explain that just as you can't see the wind, so you can't see the Holy Spirit, who is the One, who is going to transform a person's life from above from the inside out.

¹ Matthew 13:13-15; ² John 3:3,7

Riddle # 2: 'Amen! Amen! You Must Be Born of Water and of Spirit' ¹

There are two possible meanings to this riddle. The most common is that birth by water refers to *natural* birth (the breaking of the waters), while being born of Spirit refers to *supernatural* birth at regeneration. But Simon was struck one day by what Jesus says, by what happens at his baptism, and by what the disciples do in *The Book of Acts*,² and sensed he referred to *Baptism in Water* and *Baptism in Spirit*.

Water Baptism is the washing away of sins, mentioned in the Ezekiel passage and practised by John the Baptist at the River Jordan, as a sign of God's forgiveness of the sinner on confessing his/her sins, asking God's forgiveness and repenting of his/her rebellion against him by going his/her own way. Jesus himself modelled this as an example for his disciples to follow, although he was without sin. When he rose up out of the water, he was baptised by the Holy Spirit, who descended on him in the form of a dove and he heard God the Father saying: '*You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*'³ He then went into the desert 'full of the Spirit' and was confronted by the Devil trying to tempt him to abandon his mission of salvation.

Spirit baptism - being baptised, or 'overwhelmed,' by the Holy Spirit - is God's way of affirming that we really are his children and of empowering us for ministry. It was what Simon experienced a month after being delivered from smoking, and has been described by numerous Christians down the ages, including the American evangelist D.L. Moody, who at the time was an effective preacher, but realised he lacked something.

*'I thought I had power. I had the largest congregations in Chicago, but the two women kept praying for me. There came a great hunger into my soul, when I visited New York. I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York - oh, what a day! - I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went to preaching again. The sermons were no different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience, if you should give me all the world -- it would be as the small dust of balance.'*⁴

¹ John 3:5-6; ² Acts 8:14-17; 8:26-39; 9:10-19; 10:24-48; 19:1-7; ³ Matthew 3:16-17;

⁴ DL Moody *The Life of Dwight L Moody* Fleming Revell, 1900

Riddle # 3: ‘Amen! Amen! You Must Look to the Son of Man Lifted Up’

Jesus prefaces the third riddle by chiding Nicodemus for being a religious leader and not knowing these things. He says if he doesn't understand earthly realities, how can he expect to understand heavenly reality. And he refers to an incident that happened, when the Children of Israel were crossing the Wilderness on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. He says:

‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.’¹

The Children of Israel had been miraculously delivered from slavery in Egypt and had been led out into the Wilderness as a test of their trust in God. But when they became thirsty and hungry, they complained to Moses, asking why he had led them out into the desert to die. When God heard their complaints, he was angry at their unbelief and sent venomous sand vipers to bite the Israelites and many were dying. In their grief, they pleaded with Moses to do something about the situation. When Moses went to God, God told him to make a snake out of bronze and put it on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, if they looked in faith to the bronze snake on the pole, they would be saved from death.² Jesus says that just as Moses lifted up a bronze snake on a pole, so when the Son of Man (Jewish code for ‘Messiah’) was raised up, everyone who looked to him in faith would receive eternal life.

The Three Persons of the Trinity Are Involved In Our Salvation

As Simon was meditating on this passage one day, the Holy Spirit showed him that our salvation involves each person of the Trinity. The Father initiates the process by showing us we need a supernatural heart transplant. The Spirit is involved in conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment and performing the transplant. The Son's death on the Cross, his resurrection and ascension, are the way we receive eternal life. The three riddles are Jesus' way of telling us that the only way to get to heaven is by a supernatural experience of God in Three Persons. They are the answer to all the arguments of the anti-supernaturalists. As Leonard Ravenhill reportedly said:

‘A man with an argument (about God) is no match for a man with experience (of God).’

¹ John 3:14-15; ² Numbers 21:4-9; ³ Quoted in DC Talk *The Voice of the Martyrs*

God's Training Course.....to grow our faith

Jim Powrie had said to Simon, when he completed the Cambridge Diploma and then things fell apart, he believed God's real training for them was just beginning. It was a painful time, during which he and Andrea were submitting to counselling by people, who had actually never been formally trained in counselling. But all through the confusion and pain they continued to receive requests from individuals for help with personal problems and Simon was invited to preach in various churches. They also experienced the LORD speaking in beautiful ways.

For example, an SGM Newsletter in December 1988 contained the following word of encouragement.

*'Before David could become king of Israel, God had to put him through a special training program. David spent years in the wilderness, living rough, being pursued by his enemies, often in the depths of despair. But through these experiences he learned that 'the LORD is my Rock, my Fortress and my Deliverer.'*¹

*'The disciples learnt the same lessons in different circumstances. God puts us all through storms tailor-made for our particular personalities....It's then we hear him say: 'My peace I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.'*²

On 31st December, as Simon was reading Martyn Lloyd-Jones' *Joy Unspeakable*,³ he came across a marvellous hymn written by John Newton, the author of *Amazing Grace*. It expressed all the pain and confusion Simon was feeling at their present trials, but also wonderful encouragement in its final verse. The title of the hymn was '*Prayer Answered By Crosses*' (see the next page).

¹ Psalm 18:2; ² John 14:27; ³ M. Lloyd Jones *Joy Unspeakable* Kingsway, 1984

Prayer Answered By Crosses

I asked the LORD that I might grow
In faith and love and every grace,
Might more of His salvation know
And seek more earnestly his face.

'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I trust, has answered prayer,
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.

I thought that in some favoured hour
At once He'd answer my request,
And by His love's constraining power
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of this, He made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart
And let the angry powers of Hell
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea more, with His own hand He seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe,
Crossed all the fair designs I'd schemed,
Blasted my plans and laid me low.

*'LORD, why is this?' I trembling cried.
'Will You pursue your worm to death?'
"Tis in this way," the LORD replied,
'I answer prayer for grace and faith.'*

*'These inward trials I employ
From self and sin to set you free,
And break your schemes of earthly joy
That you may find your all in me.'*¹

~ John Newton

¹ J Newton Olney Hymns Book 3 No.36 *Prayer Answered By Crosses*

The Father, The Son & The Lorry.....a parable about The Cross

During this time there was evidence of the LORD confirming his call to preach the Good News, heal the sick and set the captives free, when several people were converted as a result of sermons Simon had preached. After one particular service, however, he was stunned by a rebuke from a brother in Christ, who said:

'Stop preaching Simon and start preaching the Cross of Christ!'

The man came from a Brethren background and objected to Simon interspersing exegesis of the Word with illustrations from the way God works in the lives of individuals today. At the time his words cut Simon to the quick, but he soon realised it was all part of the LORD's discipline to get him to focus more on the Cross. Over the next eighteen months or so, the Holy Spirit gave him the outline of more than twenty-four sermons on '*The Meaning of the Cross*'. At the same time he devoured the writings of others, including Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Max Lucado, Alister McGrath, Leon Morris, Andrew Murray, Charles Spurgeon and John Stott.

A Video Clip of The Father, The Son & The Lorry

On the 4th of December, as he was preparing to talk to the local Primary Crusader class, the Holy Spirit gave Simon a moving picture. In the video clip, he was standing beside the main road near the Public Hall in Lenzie. It was a beautiful summer day as a father and his young son, holding a football under his arm and wearing football strip and shorts, walked up the road together. The wee boy was so happy, as he walked along the road holding onto his father's hand. The next moment the ball slipped out from under his arm and rolled into the road. Immediately, he let go of his father's hand and dashed into the road to retrieve his ball.

At that moment the father caught sight of a large lorry coming up the road. Quick as a flash he leapt into the road, grabbed his son and, with what appeared to be a very violent gesture, threw him to the pavement. The next moment, there was a terrible screeching of brakes and despite the driver's best efforts to stop his vehicle, the father fell under the lorry's wheels and was killed.

Baffled By The Vision

Simon was stunned, completely baffled by what he had 'seen' in his mind's eye. He knew God was saying something to him about the Cross, but at that moment did not understand what he was saying.

'Father, I don't understand what the picture means. I'm confused.'

A minute or two later he became aware of a question:

'How would you feel if you were the little boy?'

He began to weep. He pictured himself as that little boy, who had just witnessed his father dying under the lorry in order to save his life, and a whole range of powerful emotions began welling up inside him.

The first were guilt and shame at being the cause of his father's death. If only he hadn't dropped the ball, his father would still be alive. If only his father hadn't tried to fetch the ball. How could he ever forgive himself for being the cause of his father's death? Why did he not see the lorry coming earlier and shout to get out of the way?

But then he experienced an enormous sense of pride in his father - he had given his life for his son, so he could live. If that was so, he would strive to live his life in a way that would make his father proud. And as this thought occurred, Simon sensed his heavenly Father saying:

'That's right, Simon! I want you to live your life in the knowledge that my Son died for you, so that you might live to glorify me.'

Postscript:

Years later Simon met the man's son in a shop. The son knew nothing about his father's rebuke to Simon years before. When the conversation turned to sharing about their faith and the LORD's goodness, the son said at one point:

'I remember you preaching a powerful sermon on The Cross!'

It seemed his father's rebuke had actually produced fruit!

A Picture.....and a 'word' for broken men

On one occasion Simon was given a picture and a word for a group of men, who were coming out of brokenness of various kinds. The LORD told him to show the picture below to the men.



Image may be subject to copyright

After meditating on it for a few minutes, he sensed the LORD say:

'Put down the mallet!

Stop crucifying me with your sinning, and realise I not only died to forgive your sin but also rose again to give you the Holy Spirit's power over all your brokenness and bondages.'

The Reality of the Resurrection.....pictured by believer's baptism



Baptism in the River Jordan Photos: © Rick Barker used by kind permission

Baptism in Water: A Powerful Picture of Death & Resurrection

Jesus' death on the Cross at Calvary was only part of the process of reversing the results of The Fall of Mankind in the Garden of Eden. In his *Letter to the Romans* Paul says that believer's baptism in water is a picture of what happened to Jesus and what needs to happen to every person seeking eternal life in Christ.

'Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.' (NIV) ¹

That's why Jesus told Nicodemus he needed to be baptised in water and also in Spirit. Water baptism is a sign of the forgiveness of sins; being baptised, or overwhelmed, by the Spirit is the guarantee of eternal life with him in heaven, as Paul wrote in his *Letter to the Ephesians*, ² and empowerment for ministry.³

Simon realised he did not have the assurance of resurrection life, until he was overwhelmed by the Spirit sitting in a church in Glasgow listening to a talk on Revival.⁴ Many people he and Andrea counselled over the years, when asked: *'Do you know if you died tonight, you would go to heaven?'* had replied: *'I hope so.'* The reality of Jesus' resurrection is to be seen in the 'born-again' experience for every person, who has been '*born anothen,*' or '*from above,*' by the Spirit of God, and baptised in water and in Spirit, as Jesus said.

¹ Romans 6:3-4; ² Ephesians 1:13-14; ³ DL Moody page 88; ⁴ *Baptised with fire* pages 5-6

The Gospel In Two Pictures.....

Toni used to be very fit and active in her younger days. But all that changed, when she fell ill with a coxsackievirus and shortly afterwards started having weird electrical pulses shooting through her body from head to foot. In spite of months of undergoing every kind of test, which revealed no organic neurological problems, she was forced to take early retirement and told she was suffering from what the Consultant Neurologist diagnosed as Functional Neurological Disorder.

Simon had got to know Toni, sharing the Gospel and his testimony with her and asking if he could pray with her from time to time. At one point he asked if she would like to join him in inviting Jesus into the situation in *A Prayer Inviting Jesus to be LORD of Every Area of My Life*. They had prayed the prayer together, but nothing seemed to happen.

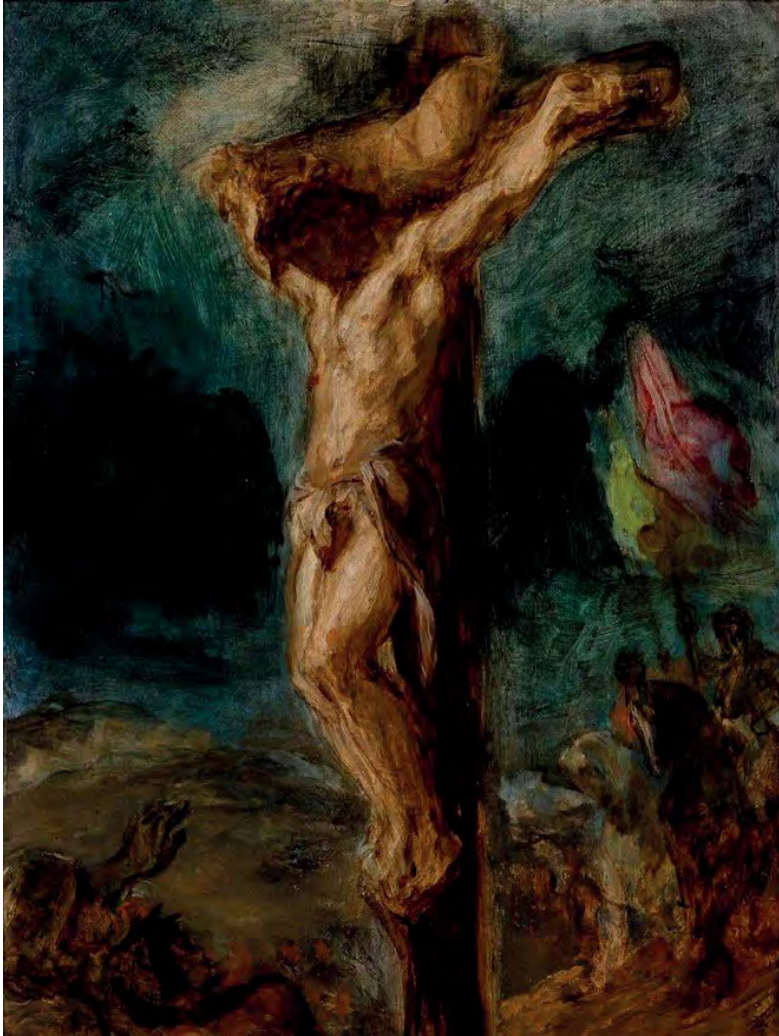
Some months later, when there was still no sign of God having answered her prayer, Simon asked if it would be all right for him to pray and ask Jesus to make himself real to her in some way, and somewhat reluctantly she had agreed. Nothing appeared to have happened, when Simon said:

'Were you aware of anything when I prayed?'

'Yes,' Toni replied.

'When you were praying, I got two pictures. The first was of Jesus hanging on the Cross. The other was that picture you gave me the other year of the Streams of Living Water.'

'That's amazing,' Simon said. 'The whole Gospel is encapsulated in those two pictures. You see, the Cross demonstrates that Jesus died for our sins, while we were still sinners and didn't want anything to do with God.'



The Crucifixion Sketch for a Painting by Eugene Delacroix Wikimedia Commons

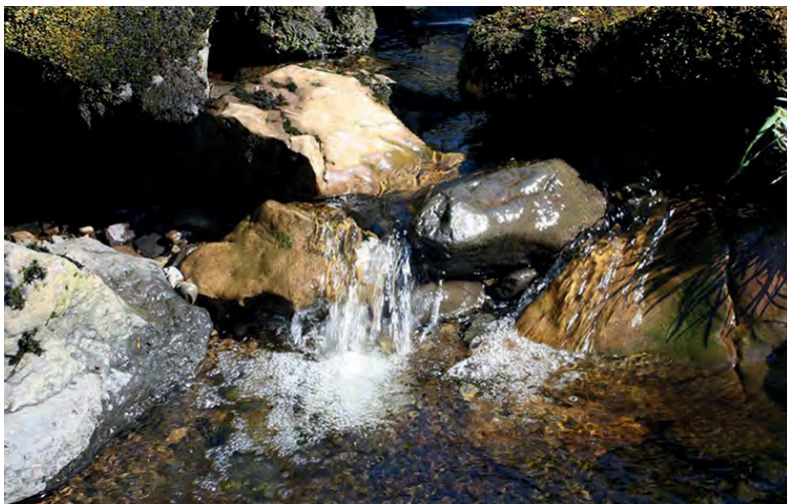
JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS

paid the *penalty* for our sins and guarantees God's forgiveness

*So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.
And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit
has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.*

ROMANS 8:1-2

The photo on the card of Streams of Living Water was the promise of the Holy Spirit's power of resurrection life, as Jesus promised all those who are thirsty and come to him to drink him in. In just two pictures, God had confirmed the Good News he is in control and loves Toni.



The Kirk Burn, Clachan of Campsie, near Glasgow, Scotland

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S STREAMS OF LIVING WATER

guarantee eternal life when we die
give us the power of the Holy Spirit over sin

*All of you who are thirsty, come to Me and drink.
Out of your innermost being will flow streams of living water*

JOHN 7:37-38

Inauguration of the Kingdom-rule of God.....in the Person of Jesus

Jesus' ministry involved not only the **proclamation** of the arrival of the kingdom-rule of God but also the **demonstration** of its reality through the salvation, healing and deliverance of sinners.

When John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod Antipas for calling out his sin of adultery with his brother's wife, John was left wondering if he had got it all wrong and sent word to Jesus, asking if he really was the Messiah.

'When the men came to Jesus, they said,

"John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. He replied to the messengers,

*"Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor (lit. beggars)."*¹

Later, Jesus commissioned first the twelve disciples and then seventy-two others to go and do what he had done: preach the Good News of the arrival of God's kingdom-rule in his Person, heal the sick and set the captives free.² And just before his ascension back to heaven, Jesus gave his followers the Great Commission:

*'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'*³

Dallas Willard points out that the Church has failed to obey Christ's commission in what he calls 'The Great Omission,'⁴ because we have not taught disciples to do everything Jesus did. Instead, we have focused on baptisms and converts rather than making disciples, who do what Jesus did and tells them to do.

¹ Luke 7:20-22; ² Luke 9:1-5; 10:1-20; ³ Matthew 28:18-20; ⁴ Dallas Willard: *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings On Discipleship* Lion Hudson, 2006

The Problem of Living in the 'Now & the Not Yet'

What Simon witnessed in Govan Town Hall was evidence of what George E. Ladd called '*Living in the Now and the Not Yet*'¹ - the interval between the First and Second Coming of Christ. It is what Belgian theologian Oscar Cullman called 'the interval between D-Day and VE-Day in World War Two.'²

The decisive point in the war was the establishment of a beachhead with the landings of thousands of troops in Normandy in 1944. But between then and the Nazi surrender in 1945, marked by Victory in Europe Day (VE-Day), more lives were lost than in the previous four years.

What Simon witnessed was the reality of that inauguration, but not consummation, of the kingdom-rule of God. For in truth Christ's victory was demonstrated in the fulfilment of the word to the worship leader's wife a year later with the birth of their first child, but the little boy's mother's MS was not healed.

For over two thousand years, the Church has proclaimed the kingdom-rule of God in the Person of Jesus Christ and demonstrated the reality of that fact with signs and wonders following the preaching of the Good News, which is:

*'Your God Reigns.'*³

But Satan is still 'The Prince/Ruler of this world,'⁴ because of the authority ceded to him by Adam in the Garden. It took the obedience of the Second Adam as the Suffering Servant⁵ to reverse the consequences of The Fall in part with the promise that he will return, the next time as Conquering King to establish God's kingdom-rule in heaven and earth forever.

The diary God told Simon to begin to keep in 1981 was the way he was to witness for himself the answers to his prayers for God to demonstrate the reality of Christ's victory and the evidence for Simon of what God alone could do.

¹ GE Ladd *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* Eerdmans, 1974; ² O.Cullman cited in C Marvin Pate *The End of the Age Has Come: The Theology of Paul* page 33; ³ Isaiah 52:7;53; ⁴ John 14:30; ⁵ Isaiah 53:1-12

john in machaerus

*

even a saint could
lose his head in here
the dungeon dank
the scratch of rat
the clank of chains
each time the jailer
comes to bring
my meagre rations
or to say the king
has sent for me
to give him a
command performance

not that he's wanting
to receive the message
to repent of sleeping
with his brother's wife
'am I my brother's keeper?'
he will say and smile
salaciously to show
that when it comes
to quoting scripture
as a herod he's
no stranger to
the Word of God

and all the while
he looks for miracles
from some magician
who to save his life
will prostitute himself
with tales of crowds
gathering to hear
a galilean preacher
dressed in beggar's gear
baptising thousands
while the pharisees
and others of their ilk
looked on in outrage
and the crowd all cheered

herod just wants
forgiveness of his lust
and for me to give his
ears a tickle
pat him on the head
with reassuring
te abso/vo for his soul
and go to bed
as if the problem
has been solved
while here i languish
in this rat-infested hole
to wonder if it's all
just in my head

how do i know it's true
or have i simply lost my mind?
how do you tell
if you are sane
or just deluded
in the hellish pain
of being shackled
in your dungeon
underneath your
castle of despair?

have i been fooled
about this Man -
by birth my cousin
but the One they call
Messiah God-Anointed -
born of the Holy Spirit and
appointed to be
Saviour of the world
the spotless Lamb of God?

will i wake up one day
to find it's all been
just a figment of
a wild imagination
a delusion
mere mirage
hallucination?

*"tell john
what you have seen
with your own eyes -
the deaf can hear
the blind can see
the captive soul
receives its liberty
the broken-hearted
are made whole"*

the clink of key in lock
a chink of light
as prison door
swings open and
the executioner
with sword in hand
comes in
without a word
my head upon
the block
a flash and
all at last
is sight

*

Chapter 4

Examining The Evidence For God

How Do You Know God Is Real?.....where's the evidence?

Some years ago Simon came across Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, a classic novel of faith and unbelief, in which the atheist brother Ivan says:

*'If God does not exist, everything is permitted.'*¹

It seems a perfect summary of the present situation in the world, where the Russian government can poison its political opponents with apparent impunity, a journalist like Jamal Khashoggi can be savagely executed in a foreign embassy by an Arab hit squad at the behest of a Crown Prince, and where the People's Republic of China can imprison and 're-educate' over one million Uighur Islamists in concentration camps. In such a world, how can you know that God is real and active?

For years Simon wrestled with these issues, ever since his son said he did not believe in God any longer, and challenged him with the question:

'Is there any evidence that would cause you to change your mind?'

It was a good question in the light of two major obstacles to faith in a God of love: (a) the claims of scientism to be able to explain everything, and (b) the problem of evil and suffering in the world.

In the first place, it raised the issue of the kinds of evidence there might be *for* God and the whole theory of epistemology - the philosophy of knowing, that reminded Simon of his studies in Greek and Latin years earlier as a student in St Andrews, and especially the works of Plato² and Lucretius³ - the former's Theory of Forms, and the latter's humanist atomic theory, to be found especially in Book 3.

At first glance it seemed there are two ways of finding whether God is real or not:

A. Examination of the Evidence - the area of Christian apologetics *for* God

B. Experience of the Reality - involving a personal encounter *of* the Living God

¹ FM Dostoevsky *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) trans R Pevear & L Volokhonsky Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2002; ² Plato *The Republic*; ⁴ Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* Book 3

Some Questions About The Evidence *For* God

In his reading around and reflections on the question, Simon concluded that one way would be to examine the evidence and arguments *for God* and compare them with the arguments against.

Some of the questions Simon found himself facing included:

1. What types of knowledge are there?
2. Is scientific knowledge the only valid form of knowledge?
3. What kinds of evidence are there for each?
4. What forms of verification and proof are appropriate for each?
5. What about Heisenbergian uncertainty? Can anything be known?
6. Do all forms of knowledge involve faith, or 'right belief'?
7. How reliable is the evidence of the Bible?
8. Did Jesus really exist?
9. Did Jesus die and rise from the dead? What is the evidence?

Two Challenges

The first challenge facing the dispassionate observer in this area is the denial of any possibility of God's existence by the outright atheist, who refuses point blank to admit even the possibility of the supernatural. Clearly, if God does not exist as a possibility, no evidence will alter that conviction. It is a choice - a statement of faith even - based on a closed-mind worldview, that the universe is a 'closed system,' precluding any possibility of outside 'interference.' For many years Simon wrestled with his son's refusal, like Dawkins,¹ to be willing to examine the possible evidence for God.

A second challenge concerns questions about the kinds of evidence that are viewed as valid. And here a general theory of epistemology is relevant, especially when facing the claims of scientism, that the only valid knowledge is that based on the 'scientific method.'

¹ R. Dawkins in https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Richard_Dawkins *passim*

A Definition of the Scientific Method

'a method of procedure that has characterized natural science since the 17th century (Note: Age of Enlightenment), consisting in systematic observation, measurement, and experiment, and the formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses.'
(Wikipedia adapted)

It should be obvious that over the centuries science has produced many important discoveries about the universe, which have reaped untold benefits for mankind in terms of controlling disease and improving the lives of millions, while at the same time being responsible for some of the most egregious evils in the world, such as the invention of weapons of mass destruction, biological warfare, and methods for the sinister control of populations.

While recognising the essential validity of the scientific method for empirical research, it clearly is incapable of answering questions about 'how' society should function, or 'why' the universe came into being. Such questions are the subject of logic, metaphysics, philosophy and religion, each with its own rules for verifying truth.

Categories of Knowledge

Some of the arguments are caused by confusion of the categories of knowledge, as John Lennox has pointed out with grace and wit.¹ In essence there are three:

- **Empirical** based on the scientific method
- **Rational** based on the methods of logic, metaphysics and philosophy
- **Spiritual** based on revelation and intuition

They reflect the Biblical view of the tripartite structure of human personality of body, soul and spirit.

Pascal² and Bhaskar³ pointed out that the kinds of evidence and methods of verification and proof for these differ in kind.⁴

¹ J Lennox *Can Science Explain Everything?* The Good Book Company, 2019

² B Pascal *Pensees*; ³ R.Bhaskar *The Theory of Stratified Reality* in A.McGrath op.cit p 24;

⁴ For more on epistemology, Plato, Pascal and Bhaskar's 'Stratified Reality' see Appendix.

1. The Evidence of the Created Universe

*'Every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.'*¹
*The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands.*²

The inscription in St Paul's Cathedral, London, on the tomb of its architect, Sir Christopher Wren, reads: *'Si monumentum requiris, circumspice,'* which is Latin for: *'If you are looking for (his) monument, look around you.'*

Years ago Simon was struck by a cartoon of the earth with the caption: '© God!' He thought it was obvious this universe did not create itself, but it seems there are many scientists, who cannot bring themselves to countenance a Creator and Intelligent Designer of it all. Reading the writings of Alister McGrath on the fine-tuning of the universe³ and watching Francis Collins, former Director of the Human Genome Project, sharing his belief in God in the light of his work as a scientist⁴ suggested a number of reasons why belief in a Creator God was not as absurd as some, like Hawking,⁵ would have you believe. These include:

- The mathematical orderliness of the universe making scientific research possible
- The immensity of the universe: our galaxy alone is 200 million light years across
- The power in creating and maintaining the universe
- The unique features of the Cosmological Constant enabling human life
- Intelligent design suggested by the genetic code for life
- The beauty of the universe – especially post-Hubble telescope and Voyager missions
- The creation of human beings with a moral sense of right and wrong, suggesting a Personal Creator and Judge of Right and Wrong

The alternative, suggested by such eminent scientists as Stephen Hawking, is that *'because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist.....It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going.'*⁵ This is in contradiction of the scientific dictum *'nihil ex nihilo'* - *'nothing comes from nothing.'*

¹ Hebrews 3:4; ² Psalm 19:1; ³ AE McGrath *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest For God In Science & Theology* Westminster/John Knox Press, 2009; ⁴ F.Collins *How I Became A Christian* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaEQyNeaFZs>; ⁵ S Hawking & L Mlodinow *The Grand Design* Transworld, 2010

The arguments for and against a Creator and Intelligent Designer of the universe basically fall into two camps - those who deny the possibility of outside influence of any sort, including God, and those who argue that the evidence all points to a Creator of enormous power and intelligence to set the whole thing in motion.

One of the questions Simon pondered was whether the so-called laws of physics and mathematics have been invented or discovered by man. There would seem to be an argument that the history of the philosophy of science shows that such 'laws' have been progressively discovered by human beings, beginning with the Egyptians, who had the mathematical and engineering knowledge to build the pyramids, to the Milesian School in Asia Minor, Aristotle, Euclid and Pythagoras, not to mention the Islamic scholars of the Middle Ages, who 'invented' zero. In other words, they already existed, simply waiting to be discovered. What sort of mind created the Cosmological Constant, which even a scientist like Richard Feynman classed as being a mystery?¹ What marvel of evolution produced the genetic coding of the double helix, discovered, not invented, by Crick, Watson and Wilkins in 1953?

The scientific method is brilliant at describing how the universe works according to apparently predictable laws that can be defined mathematically and replicated by careful experiment, observation, hypothesis-testing and conclusion. But is a Crick or Watson able to produce a single sperm from nothing, or a Hawking graph the furthest galaxies of the known universe from scratch? In short, are they simply evidence as, Sartre proclaimed, of man's desire to be God?

One of the mysteries the psalmist David noted ² is that of a God, who is capable of such creative and sustaining power, and yet who, for his own reasons and glory, wants to have an intimate relationship with individual human beings - a mystery Dawkins deemed ridiculous.

*'The first cause cannot have been an intelligence, let alone an intelligence that answers prayers and enjoys being worshiped.'*³

¹ R.Feynman, see Note 1 page 232, ² Psalm 8:1-9; ³ R. Dawkins *Why There is Almost Certainly No God* in The Huffington Post, 23/10/2006

2. The Word Of God - The Judaeo-Christian Bible

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*¹

The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God – totally different in character and substance from the sacred books of other religions, and subject to different forms of verification and proof.

Of course, many reject any idea the Bible is inspired or contains truth. They claim there are many inconsistencies, that the account in *The Book of Genesis* is not confirmed by science, that the historical accounts are not borne out by archaeology, and that the moral imperatives to be found in it simply reflect the *mores* of the ancient world, which are no longer relevant to today's society. In short, the Bible is just an ancient religious relic, revered by those, who have not yet left behind their childhood beliefs in fairy stories.

The problem is at one level the critics are right. The Bible is just a dusty book of stories of an ancient time, when read by someone, who has yet to meet its author. That was true for Simon, prior to his encounter with the Living God. But that all changed the moment he was overwhelmed by the Spirit, who inspired the authors of the books in the Old and New Testaments. For a start, he found God speaking to him through individual verses, when he least expected it. It was as if someone had taken a magnifying glass to the words, which were jumping off the page at him. As the author of *Letter to the Hebrews* wrote:

*'The Word of God is living and active: sharper than a two-edged sword, penetrating even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.'*²

The power of the Word of God is to be seen in a number of ways.

- It is real and authentic in its portrayal of the human condition, suffering and evil
- Its historical accuracy is affirmed by archaeology, especially in recent excavations
- Its supernatural power is to be seen in its ability to change millions of lives over centuries
- Its sixty-six books have a unity in spite of their diversity of form and content
- The fulfilment of its prophecies are far beyond the statistical probability of chance

¹ 2 Timothy 3:16-17; ² Hebrews 4:12

3. Jesus Christ: Son of God, Messiah

*'We did not follow cleverly invented stories, when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.'*¹ (NIV)

Who Is Jesus?

Josh McDowell,² following on from CS Lewis,³ suggested four possible answers to the question: Who is Jesus? These are:

- He is a **legend**: he is not a historical figure but part of the Christian 'myth.'
- He was a **liar**: he deliberately lied about being Son of God and the Messiah
- He was a **lunatic**: he was a deluded individual on a par with the psychotic who believes he is a poached egg
- He is actually **the Son of God, Messiah, God's promised Saviour of the World**

To these we can add the suggestion of Matthew Hartke that he was simply a failed apocalyptic prophet, who claimed the end of the world was near, but it did not happen.⁴

Is the Jesus of the New Testament a Historical Person?

There have been some who have claimed he is just a mythical figure. The general consensus was summarised by Michael Grant, a classical scholar:

*'In recent years, no serious scholar has ventured to postulate the non-historicity of Jesus, or at any rate very few, and they have not succeeded in disposing of the much stronger, indeed very abundant, evidence to the contrary.'*⁵

John Dickson⁶ points out that there are more historical documents to confirm the historicity of Jesus Christ than for other famous ancients, like Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, and that the earliest dated Gospel, the Gospel of Mark, was written not more than 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, and based on the recollections of the apostle Peter. The same is true for the Pauline Letters, which were written before Paul's execution around 64-65 AD.

¹ 2 Peter 1:16-21; ² J McDowell *Evidence That Demands A Verdict* Vol 1.; ³ CS Lewis *Mere Christianity* Collins, 1952 pp 54-56; ⁴ Matthew Hartke in debate at [podcasts.apple.com/fi/podcast/ was-jesus-failed-apocalyptic-prophet-matthewhartke/id267142101?i=1000396797348](https://podcasts.apple.com/fi/podcast/was-jesus-failed-apocalyptic-prophet-matthewhartke/id267142101?i=1000396797348); ⁵ M. Grant *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* Collier, 1992; ⁶ Is Jesus History? The Good Book Company, 2019

Questions About The Reliability Of Resurrection Accounts

William Lane Craig in a debate with Bart Ehrman¹ highlighted the importance of distinguishing between (a) the reliability of the evidence for Jesus' resurrection, and (b) the explanations offered, which largely depend, he maintained, on an erroneous view of miracles.

Questions about the reliability of the Gospel records concerning Jesus' resurrection have also been robustly refuted by Gary Habermas² and the testimonies of sceptical writers like Frank Morison³ and Lee Strobel.⁴ But still there are those who refuse to believe the evidence presented by such research. It is another reason why Jesus did not rely simply on Christian apologetics to reveal the truth (see page 87).

Jesus' Fulfilment Of Old Testament Prophecies About The Messiah

A major form of evidence for Jesus' claim to be the long-promised Messiah is to be found in the number of Old Testament prophecies to be seen fulfilled uniquely in him. There are those, like Bart Ehrman⁵ who claim that these have simply been made to fit the story of Jesus after his death.

'The reality is that the so-called "messianic prophecies" that are said to point to Jesus were never taken to be messianic prophecies by Jews prior to the Christians who saw Jesus as the messiah. The Old Testament in fact never says that the messiah will be born of a virgin, that he will be executed by his enemies, and that he will be raised from the dead.'

Ehrman apparently fails to recognize that the Jewish rabbis actually *do* understand that passages like Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 specifically refer to the Messiah, and are extraordinarily prophetic in their details - so much so, that Eitan Bar points out Isaiah 53 as *'The Forbidden Chapter'* and why it is skipped over in synagogues to this day.⁶ Simon was struck by the evidence produced in a video by *The Jesus Project*, listing the prophecies and their fulfilment in Jesus Christ.⁷

¹ WL Craig & B Ehrman <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRTUrvTTRAQ>; ² GR Habermas (with MR Licona) *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*; ³ F Morison *Who Moved The Stone?* Faber, 1930; ⁴ L. Strobel *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* Zondervan, 2013; ⁵ B Ehrman <https://ehрманblog.org/jesus-and-the-messianic-prophecies/>; ⁶ ¹ E Bar *The Forbidden Chapter* in <https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/inescapable-truth-isaiah-53/>; ⁷ <https://www.jesufilm.org/blog-and-stories/old-testament-prophecies.html>

The Probability Of Prophecies About The Messiah Being Met In Jesus

Most evangelical scholars and Messianic Jews today point to Jesus' fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies as being way beyond the possibility of chance. The idea that *just eight* of over two hundred prophecies about the Messiah could be fulfilled in Jesus Christ by chance has been calculated by statistician Peter Stoner to be 1 in 10^{17} , or 1 chance in 10 followed by 17 zeros.¹

Jesus' miracles were certainly seen by Jews at the time as being fulfilment of the 'signs' that would accompany the arrival of *ha Mashiah* (Hebrew) or *Christ* (Greek), as John is at pains to emphasise in his Gospel account. And his teaching was recognised by the ordinary people as having an authority that set it apart from that of the Scribes and teachers of the Law, to the point they asked among themselves:

*'Could this man be the Christ?'*²

Jesus Liar Or Lunatic?

What about the claims Jesus was a liar, a lunatic or a failed apocalyptic prophet? The Pharisees certainly claimed he was in league with Beelzebul - the Devil - because of his ability to cast out demons from demoniacs.³ The crowd asked whether he could actually be the Son of David - code for The Messiah. Jesus himself pointed out that the Devil would hardly be casting out demons from people he had demonised! So if he wasn't a lunatic, it must be God enabling him to perform such miracles.

Was he a liar or a failed apocalyptic prophet? Simon wondered. It's hard to see how any sane person could really believe such ideas, when you consider the amazing statements Jesus made about forgiving enemies as well as friends, who have hurt you, and his prophecy that not one stone of The Temple in Jerusalem would be left standing on top of another - a prophecy fulfilled in 70 AD, when Roman general Titus sacked the city and razed the Temple and all the buildings to the ground. In recent years archaeology has confirmed the truth of the statement beneath the Western Wall at the Temple Mount.^{4 5}

¹ P Stoner cited in <https://www.jesusfilm.org/blog-and-stories/old-testament-prophecies.html>;

² John 4:29; ³ Matthew 12:22-30; ⁴ For the site of the Temple see <https://the310course.com/site-of-the-temple>; ⁵ David Shaw <https://fulfillingthepromises.com/2019/06/24/jerusalem-70-ad-not-one-stone-left-upon-another/>

4. The Church Of Jesus Christ

Another major piece of evidence *for* God is the growth of the Church of Jesus Christ, which has survived all attempts to annihilate it over the centuries, since its birth at Pentecost in 33AD, fifty days after Jesus' ascension.

In the Gospel of Matthew we read that Jesus took the disciples on a forty-mile hike north from the shores of Lake Galilee to Caesarea Philippi. ¹ Simon was struck by the account of Rick Barker, good friend over twenty years and Senior Pastor of Cariboo Christian Life Fellowship in British Columbia, of a visit he made with a tour party some years ago to Caesarea Philippi, in the foothills of Mount Hermon.² The centre of attraction was Pan's Grotto - an enormous cavern dedicated to the Greek half-man, half goat god Pan - which the ancients believed was the gateway to the underworld, and called '*The Gate of Hades*, or '*The Gates of Hell*.'



Pan's Grotto at The Gates of Hell, Caesarea Philippi Photo © Rick Barker used by kind permission

When they got there, Jesus asked the disciples who people thought he was. They replied that some thought he was John the Baptist come back to life, after his recent execution by Herod Antipas; others that he was Elijah, or one of the Old Testament prophets. Jesus went on to ask:

'But who do you say that I am?'

¹ Matthew 16:13-20; ² R.Barker *Gentile Jester In The King's Court: God Stories From Israel* 2017, pp 118-125

Jesus' Answer To The Claims Of Other Religions

Peter the 'Big Mouth' comes out with his famous confession:

*'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God!'*¹



KEY:

- 1 Temple of Augustus
- 2 Grotto of the god Pan
- 3 Court of Pan & The Nymphs
- 4 Temple of Zeus
- 5 Court of Nemesis
- 6 Tomb Temple of the Sacred Goats
- 7 Temple of Pan & The Dancing Goats

Temples at Panium, ancient Baniyas Photo © Rick Barker used by kind permission

Jesus went on to make a remarkable statement.

*'That was Spirit-inspired, Rocky! (using a pun on Peter's Greek name Petros, meaning 'Rock) And I tell you, that on this rock - that statement of yours - I am going to build my Church, and The Gates of Hell here (meaning all the other gods and religions represented here) will not be able to prevail against it.'*²

The proof is to be seen to this day with the Church's survival in the face of almost insuperable odds over the centuries and is the answer to Simon's question earlier:

'What about other religions?'

¹ Matthew 16:16; ² Matthew 16:18

5. God's Chosen People - The Jews - & A Promised Land - Israel

God promised Abraham he would be the father of many nations, that God would give him a land for them to settle in, and would bless other nations through his people.¹ Those promises have been fulfilled down the centuries through God's Chosen People - the Children of Israel, the Jews.

In spite of several periods of exile from the Land, because of their rebellion against God's covenant, and the attempts of tyrants and states to eliminate them from the face of the earth, God's Chosen People have survived, and in 1948 were able to return to the Promised Land as the nation of Israel.²

The stage appears to be set for the final showdown prophesied by Jesus himself, the prophet Zechariah and the apostle John in *The Book of Revelation* at Armageddon,³ when Jesus returns for a second time, not as Suffering Servant now but as Conquering King, to bring in God's eternal kingdom-rule on earth. Before the *Parousia* (Christ's Second Coming) the Temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt, there will be increasing lawlessness until the Man of the Lawlessness, the Anti-Christ, appears and The Tribulation, or time of terrible trouble, occurs.⁴ Only after the nations surrounding Israel have conspired to destroy it, will the Messiah appear as Conquering King to usher in God's eternal kingdom-rule.

The Objective Nature Of The Evidence *For* God

The five kinds of evidence presented in this chapter, Simon believed, are *objective* evidence for God's existence, in the sense they are not dependent on personal bias or opinion as such. The fact that they are not accepted as evidence by those who deny the possibility of the supernatural, a Creator and Intelligent Designer of the universe or the historicity of Jesus Christ, does not alter their reality.

Arguments about the evidence *for* God, however, are not the only way in which we can know that reality, as Simon discovered over the years following his personal experience *of* God, which is the subject of the next chapter.

¹ Genesis Chapters 12 and 17; ² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel;

³ Revelation 16:16; Ezekiel 38-39; Joel 3:2; Zechariah 12; ⁴ 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Chapter 5

*Experiencing The Reality Of God:
How Do You Know It's True?*

The Roles Of Faith & Reason.....heart and head

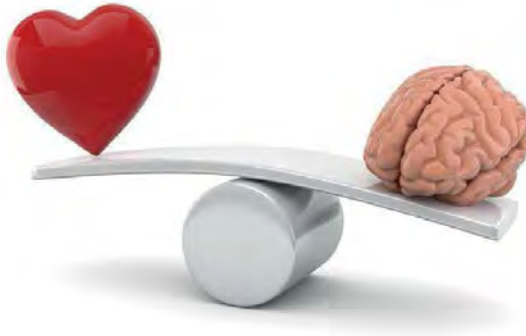


Photo: © Adobe Stock Images

*'Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths clear.'*¹

A Rational Faith: A Passionate Love

The Christian faith is a rational faith based on objective evidence, as we have seen, but also involves a supernatural heart transplant, when we are born *anōthen* by the Holy Spirit, baptised in water for the forgiveness of sins and removal of the guilt, and overwhelmed by the Spirit, in order to hear our heavenly Father say:

*'You are my beloved child in whom I am well pleased.'*²

Two questions that plagued Simon over the years were:

Q1 What is truth? How can I know it?

Q2 What is faith? How can I get it?

The answers to these questions came in two surprising ways:

- (a) Through the chance discovery of a note on the fly-leaf of DL Moody's Bible;
- (b) A result of Simon's background in Greek and looking at the actual Greek texts of two key passages in the New Testament.

¹ Proverbs 3:5-6; ² Matthew 3:16-17; Luke 3:21-22

What Is Truth?.....living in a post-truth world

Perhaps no era in history has faced as many questions about truth as the present one. Indeed, some commentators maintain we are living in a post-truth world, where disinformation on social media, and the blatant lies of politicians seem to be the norm. In an age of moral relativism and scientific rationalism, how are we to discern where truth lies (as opposed to lies claiming to be truth)?

CS Lewis in *Mere Christianity*¹ addressed the issue of moral relativism, saying that every human being throughout the world, irrespective of upbringing, religious beliefs, cultural or political norms, has an inbuilt sense of what is right and what is wrong. This can be seen in the fact that each of us says to ourselves at some point: '*I shouldn't have done that,*' or '*I ought to do this.*'

The concept of absolute good and evil brings us back to The Garden of Eden and the idea of the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*. For to admit the idea of good and evil is to admit there is an Arbiter, who knows all there is to know about both ends of a spectrum that is Truth. In short, it requires One, who is in the sole position to be Judge of All the Earth, as Abraham said.²

Of course, the corollary of this is true, as Dostoevsky observed, when Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov* declares: '*If God does not exist, everything is permitted,*'³ since man is the sole arbiter of good and evil, right and wrong. In his rebellion against God, mankind sought to usurp the authority that belongs to God alone and is paying the penalty for his rebellion, as the Bible says. The Bible is also clear that there are consequences for those who call good evil and evil good.⁴

For Plato Truth was to be found as an absolute reality, or ideal Form, on which our human ideas of truth are based.⁵ There are numerous modern theories about truth.⁶ The question is: Where can it be found?



Photo: © Adobe Stock Images

¹ CS Lewis *Mere Christianity* Harper Collins, 1983; ² Genesis 18:25; ³ F. Dostoevsky *The Brothers Karamazov* Part 4 Bk 11 Chap 4; ⁴ Isaiah 5:20; ⁵ Plato *Republic* passim;

⁶ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth/>

How Can I Know The Truth?

When Jesus was hauled up before the Roman governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate, Pilate was convinced Jesus was an innocent man. When confronted by the Jewish religious leaders' accusation that Jesus was stirring up rebellion against Rome and claimed to be the King of the Jews, Pilate asked if their accusations were true.

Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him,

"Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered,

"Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"

Pilate answered,

"Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?"

Jesus answered,

"My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

Then Pilate said to him, *"So you are a king?"*

Jesus answered, *"You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."*

Pilate said to him, *"What is truth?"*¹

Reputed to have been found on the fly-leaf of DL Moody's Bible were the words:

"Pilate asked Jesus in Latin: 'QUID EST VERITAS?' meaning 'What is truth?' to which Jesus makes no reply. An anagram of Pilate's words reads: 'EST VIR QUI ADEST,' which means: 'It is the man who is (standing) here.'"

Pilate was staring at The Truth right in front of him.

¹ John 18:33-38

Truth Is A Person, Not A Set Of Beliefs

Jesus is the only Person to have made the extraordinary claims that he made. These include his claim to be the Son of God, one with the Father, and to be The Way, The Truth and The Life.¹ In saying this, Jesus was saying that if we want to know what the truth is, we need to come to him. He does not show us the truth; he *is* The Way to God, The Truth of God and The Life in God.

Henry Blackaby in *Experiencing God: Knowing & Doing The Will Of God* tells a story to illustrate that Jesus is the Way.² A farmer had invited him to visit his farm in the flat plains of Saskatchewan and gave him instructions how to get there:

'Go to the edge of town till you come to a big red barn. Turn left and carry on till you come to a large tree. Turn right and continue for three miles.....'

The next time he went, the farmer was in the car with him. He didn't need to give directions about the way; he *was* the way. In the same way, Jesus doesn't just tell us the truth; he *is* The Truth. We just need to be submitted to him day by day, listening to his voice, checking it is *his* voice and not our fleshly ideas or even the enemy, and then doing what he tells us to do. When we obey, he always gives us the confirmation we have heard correctly (see *The Wise & Foolish Builders* page 148).

Heart & Head: Faith & Reason

In *The First Letter of Peter*, the apostle says:

*'In your **hearts** honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a **reason** for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.'* ³ (emphasis added)

Peter emphasizes *both* a **heart** response to God *and* a **head** reasoning as the basis of Christian apologetics.

¹ John 14:6; ² H.Blackaby & C.King *Experiencing God: Knowing & Doing the Will of God* Lifeway, 2006; ³ 1 Peter 3:15

Varieties Of Religious Experience

One of the objections to Christian claims of experiencing God is that all religions claim to have religious experiences. Research into them has been well documented by William James ¹ and others like Roy Clouser.² It has shown that religious experiences fall into three main categories:

a. Perceptual phenomena such as voices, visions and miracles.

b. The sense of a presence (both personal and impersonal) in what Otto ³ called the 'numinous' and the *mysterium tremendum* - 'the mystery that causes trembling.'

c. Mystical communion or union with a divine being.

Clouser points out that these are not mutually exclusive, or the only kind of experience labelled 'religious,' but 'they all produce a belief in something, or some other, as divine, and produce beliefs that are non-inferential ⁴ - that is, they do not involve any intervening reasoning process.

Moreover, these experiences all produce an irresistible certainty of truth - the revelation of a kind, James said, 'which no adverse argument, however unanswerable by you in words, can expel from your belief.'⁵ Hence the adage:

'A man with an argument is no match for a man with experience.'

The experience need not be sudden or dramatic. Belief in God with certitude can come gradually as a result of a long chain of experiences and thought processes. The point, however, is that at some point something happened to question God's existence and led to a certainty about him. This might be through the death of a relative or close friend; a close shave with death; the ageing process heightening one's awareness of one's own mortality. It can come through hearing a radio broadcast, a sermon, a song, or reading a Bible text. Sometimes it happens suddenly, as in the case of a woman atheist, 'who woke up one morning and it all looked true.'⁶

¹ W.James *The Varieties of Religious Experience* Longmans Green, 1929; ² R. Clouser *Knowing With The Heart: Religious Experience & Belief In God* IVP, 1999; ³ R.Otto *The Idea of the Holy* OUP, 1923; ⁴ R. Clouser *op cit* p 59; ⁵ W.James *op cit* pp 72-73; ⁶ R.Clouser *op cit* p 63

How Do I Get Faith?

As an adolescent after being confirmed at school and realizing nothing had changed, Simon was frustrated because he realised he did not have the faith in God he saw his parents had. The question was: How does one find that kind of faith?

In his *Letter to the Romans* Paul says: *'Faith comes through hearing, and hearing comes **through a rhema of Christ.**'*¹ (emphasis added)

This is one of a number of places in the New Testament, where translators have translated the Greek text to fit their own theological preconceptions. Below are some examples from this verse:

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. NIV

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

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. ESVUK

Faith Comes As A Gift Of God At God's Initiative

In *The Letter to the Hebrews*² we see that Abraham's faith consisted of four elements:

1. Abraham heard God's voice (*rhema*)
2. He believed God's word (and obeyed by leaving Haran)
3. He waited on God's timing (after initially trying to get a son his way, not God's)
4. He received God's promise (of a son of his own flesh)

Faith comes as a result of God taking the initiative and revealing himself to a person in some way: for example, in a burning bush, a dream, a personal encounter, a *rhema* (as in 'the word came to Isaiah'.etc)

The person knows it is God speaking because it has the certitude about it mentioned by James (see page 125). That faith is the faith of Jesus in God the Father and is given as a gift, not earned by works, Paul writes in *The Letter to the Ephesians*.³

'For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.'

The question is: Whose faith is it?

¹ Romans 10:17; ² Hebrews 6:13-15; ³ Ephesians 2:8-10

The Faith *Of* Christ vs Faith *In* Christ.....translating the Greek text

Paul's *Letter to the Galatians* contains another example of mistranslating the actual Greek text. The Greek text of Chapter 2 verse 16 literally reads:

*'knowing that is not justified a man from works of the Law (Genitive case = 'of') except through faith of Jesus Christ (Genitive case), and we into Christ Jesus (eis + accusative case) have placed our faith in order that we might be justified from faith of Christ (Genitive case) and not from works of Law (Genitive case), because from works of Law (Genitive case) not will be justified all flesh.'*¹

In other words, *'knowing that a person is not justified by works of the Law, but through (the) faith of Jesus Christ, we also have placed our faith in Christ Jesus in order that we might be justified from (the) faith of Christ and not from works of the Law, because no one will be justified by works of the Law.'*

Most translations of the verse translate the genitive '*of*' as '*in*' as below:

'We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.' ESV

Dallas Willard² points to the episode of the disciples caught in a storm on Lake Galilee. Jesus is calmly asleep in the stern of the boat, while the disciples are fearing for their lives. When they wake him up and say: *'Don't you care that we're going to drown?'* Jesus replies:

*'Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?'*³

Dallas Willard comments that the disciples obviously had faith in Jesus. The trouble was they didn't have Jesus' faith in God at that moment! So the answer to the question: How do I get faith? is: Come to Jesus and ask him to give it you by his Holy Spirit making Jesus alive in you. This is what Paul goes on to explain in verse 20 of Chapter 2 of *The Letter to the Galatians*, where we find a similar problem with the way the Greek text has been translated.

The literal translation of the Greek text reads: *'Live no longer I, but lives in me Christ. What now I live in the flesh, in the faith I live of the Son (Genitive case) of God (Genitive case), having loved me and given himself for me.'*

In other words:

*'(The old) I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. (The life) I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.'*⁴

It is Jesus' faith and Jesus' righteousness, not mine, which is a gift from God, to which I respond by putting my faith in Jesus, as I surrender to him day by day.

¹ Galatians 2:16; ² Matthew 8:25-26; ³ Dallas Willard *The Divine Conspiracy: Recovering Our Life In God* Harper One, 2009; ⁴ Galatians 2:20

Faith Comes Through A *Rhema* Of Christ

Faith comes, Paul says, through hearing what Jesus is saying to me at a particular moment and I obey.¹ If that is so, Simon realised he needed to surrender himself each day to God to listen for Jesus' voice. This involved practising four spiritual disciplines we see Jesus practised: a quiet time alone with God; listening to God in prayer, Bible reading, meditation and fasting; talking to God in prayer; and praising and worshipping God with our lips and lives, as we reach out with Jesus' love and compassion to a sin-sick world of suffering and death.

Two books that made a profound impact on Simon about this topic were Andrew Murray's *Waiting On God*² and Henry Blackaby's *Experiencing God: Knowing & Doing The Will Of God*.³ The major emphasis in each is to recognize that God is the Boss and the servant's job is to wait for his/her Master's voice. In *Waiting On God*, Murray pointed out that an army is stationary for one of two reasons: *either* it is waiting for orders *or* it is waiting for supplies.

Blackaby also emphasizes the importance of waiting on God for his instructions about how we are to join him in his work rather than setting our own agendas and programs and asking God to rubber-stamp them. We experience God in reality as we adjust our will to go his way, rather than doing our own thing. When we are obedient, he confirms that he has spoken by the results.

The Importance Of Listening To God

Waiting on God each day is an intentional act of surrender to God, asking him to give us his instructions for what is on his mind. It involves spending time alone with God as our first love, practising the spiritual disciplines Jesus practised each day. It is also a time to recharge our spiritual batteries, acknowledging the truth of what Jesus said to his disciples:

*'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, **for apart from me you can do nothing.**'*⁴ (emphasis added)

As we listen and are obedient, God does his work in us and through us for his glory.

¹ page 126; ² A Murray *Waiting On God* Fleming H Revell, 1896; ³ H Blackaby & C King *Experiencing God: Knowing & Doing The Will Of God* Lifeway, 2006; ⁴ John 15:5

Hearing the Voice of God.....God's Logos and God's Rhema

The Bible claims to be the Word of God - God's **Logos**, or **Written Word**. But it originated with God speaking by his Holy Spirit to individuals. This **Spoken Word**, or **Rhema**, is why the Bible is called *'the inspired Word of God.'* Paul writing to his young disciple and pastor Timothy says:

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.' (KJV)¹

When Logos Becomes Rhema

Over the years Simon found the Holy Spirit would take a verse, or phrase, from the **logos** Word of God and speak to him for a specific purpose, at a specific time and into a specific situation. That is when **logos** became a **rhema**. When it happened during his Quiet Time with God, it was as if someone had taken a magnifying glass to the passage of Scripture, so that words or phrases 'jumped off the page.' That's what the writer of *The Letter to the Hebrews* meant when he said the Word is *'alive and active* (Greek: *energes* means 'active' or 'producing a result') *and sharper than a two-edged sword.'*²

When Simon came out of a counselling class one cold, dark January night, and lit up a cigarette, he was aware of the words:

*'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit, with whom you have been sealed.'*³

He didn't realise it at the time, but the Holy Spirit had taken part of a verse from the Written Word (**logos**) and made it a Spoken Word (**rhema**) for him personally, for the specific purpose of showing him that God had heard his anguished prayer at a prayer meeting two months earlier and was wanting to set him free from his addiction.

The Bible shows God speaking to individuals and giving them specific assignments, speaking in different ways: through words, angelic visitations, strange sights, dreams, visions, prophetic words through his spokesmen and women, the prophets. The individuals always recognised it was God speaking, not just because it was strange or dramatic, but because when he spoke, he confirmed what he said by subsequent events.

¹ 2 Timothy 3:16; ² Hebrews 4:12; ³ Ephesians 4:30

Testing What You Think Is God.....so as not to be fooled

But how do you *know* that what you are hearing, or seeing, is of God, and not down to your own imagination, the fallibility of the senses, the attempts of others to deceive you, or even satanic stealth tactics?

The first step is to acknowledge that we are all fallible and apt to deceive ourselves and to be deceived by others. A degree of healthy skepticism, therefore, is essential and includes the question:

'Where is the evidence for that statement?'

In reading the pronouncements of famous scientists, Simon found that just because they are famous does not necessarily make what they say true! Classic examples of this were some of the utterances by scientists such as Peter Atkins, Richard Dawkins, and Stephen Hawking, who represent the New Atheism's evangelists. A prime example is Hawking's claim that *'philosophy is dead'* - a philosophical, not a scientific, statement - which is self-refuting and merely demonstrates Hawking's ignorance of the rules of philosophy!

Another classic error, as John Lennox points out,¹ is to confuse categories.

'Because Hawking has both an inadequate concept of God and of philosophy, he blunders into a further series of errors by asking us to choose between God and the laws of physics. He confuses two very different things: physical law and personal agency. The choice he asks us to make is between false alternatives. This is a classic category error. His call for us to choose between physics and God is as manifestly absurd as demanding that we choose either the laws of physics or aeronautical engineer Sir Frank Whittle in order to explain the jet engine. Both explanations are necessary: they do not conflict, but complement one another.'

Diagnosis & Discernment

Two main ways of testing whether a thing is of God or not are:

- a. Natural diagnostic techniques - using observation, questions and reasoning
- b. Spiritual discernment - both general when we become Christians and a specific gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹ J Lennox *Stephen Hawking & God* <https://www.rzim.org/read/just-thinking-magazine/stephen-hawking-and-god> September, 2010

Ten Tests Of Words, Healings & Deliverances Claiming To Be Of God

Over the years Simon had to admit he had sometimes been deceived by his own thoughts and feelings, by the deceitfulness of others, and at times by the enemy of our souls. But he also discovered there are certain tests we can apply to something that claims to be of God.

Test #01: Who Took The Initiative?

In *The Book of Amos* we read:

*'Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plans to his servants the prophets'*¹

This has certainly proved true for Simon over the forty years of keeping a diary, since that first instruction on the 21st of January, 1981. It is the opposite of the scientific requirement for controlled experiments to prove or falsify a particular hypothesis. This is not surprising, since we read in Isaiah that God says:

*'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'*²

The God, who created the universe according to his own rules, is not subject to the scientific rules of those, who do not even acknowledge his existence. The amazing thing is he invites us to join him in his endeavours and then confirms that he has spoken by subsequent events, as Simon saw within a fortnight of hearing the inner voice - events over which he himself had no control and could not fake.

In spite of this, when Shona complained she had never heard God speak to her, the experiment with Simon's Bible reading that day showed God is capable of speaking, not only through his Written Word, the Bible, but also through a film of a potter throwing a pot in a television program!³

¹ Amos 3:7; ² Isaiah 55:8-89; ³ See *What Do You Mean You 'Hear God Speaking'?* pp 18-20

Test #02: Is It Confirmed by Subsequent Events?

Throughout the Bible we see God declaring he is going to act: *'Then they will know I AM the LORD!'*¹ Over the years the test was able to be applied, not just to words like *'Royal Jelly'*,² but also to dreams, such as the *Warning of Trouble Coming*,³ and pictures, such as *'A Pair of Skis.'*⁴

Test #03: Does It Conform To Scripture & The Character Of God?

No 'word' claiming to be from God can ever contradict Scripture or the way we see Jesus behaving. Clear examples of the need for this test were to be seen in the so-called ministry of Todd Bentley at Ignite Church, Lakeland,⁵ and in the behaviour of other self-styled healers, such as Morris Cerullo, which Andrea and Simon witnessed at a rally in the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow. Not only were the claims of healings not substantiated, but there was the obscene spectacle of plastic buckets being handed out and appeals to donate generously before any so-called ministry even started, while people in wheelchairs were more or less ignored and left the way they had arrived.

Test #04: Does It Draw Sinners To Repent & Turn To God?

Jesus' ministry called sinners *'to repent for the kingdom of God has come near.'*⁶ Any genuine 'word' or action that is of God will always draw sinners to repent and turn to God. An example was the young man healed of a damaged neck and shoulder as a result of an accident and delivered from a demonic spirit of trauma.⁷ His immediate response was to praise God as his heavenly Father in a deeper way than he had before.

Test #05: Does It Give All The Glory To God?

The effect of healing or deliverance from God is for the person to give praise and all the glory to God, as we see in the New Testament with the healing of the lame man at The Beautiful Gate of The Temple,⁸ and the example above.

¹ Exodus 7:3-5; Ezekiel 36:22-23; ² *'Royal Jelly'* p.138; ³ *'Storm warning'* p.24;

⁴ *'A Pair of Skis'* p.135; ⁵ *'Deceived & deceiving'* p.143; ⁶ Mark 1:14-15; ⁷ *'Surprised by Healing'* p.177; ⁸ Acts 3:8-10

Test #06: Is It Confirmed By Independent Witnesses?

Is the 'word', dream, picture, healing or deliverance confirmed by independent witnesses? This includes the test of 'repetition' of the same 'word', 'dream,' or 'picture' in several different contexts, or from several different independent sources.

Test #07: Is There Scientific Evidence To Confirm It?

The clearest example of this was Simon's healing and deliverance from addiction to nicotine, confirmed by x-ray forty years later in 2020.

Test #08: Is There Evidence Of Real Change Over Time?

The healings of Jean ¹ and the youth worker ² from Glasgow witnessed to thirty and five years respectively were clear examples of this.

Test #09: Is There Evidence Of Changed Lives?

The deliverance of Gerda in Edinburgh evidenced by her changed life and confirmed by her Pastor.³ Kelly's deliverance from addiction to Temazepam ⁴ led to a complete and lasting change in her life.

Test #10: Are There Other Possible Or More Plausible Explanations?

For example, is there evidence of well-known techniques for crowd manipulation, stage hypnotism, mind control, cold reading, illusion or occultism to explain what happened? Or could the changes be due simply to coincidence or chance?

Applying The Tests To The Stories That Follow

Over the years Simon applied the tests to the various experiences that could be interpreted as being of God, while recognizing that those who deny the possibility of the supernatural would probably dismiss them out of hand.

In the pages that follow, you can try applying the tests to the various accounts of individuals who have heard a *rhema*, had a dream, seen a picture or vision, experienced being healed of a physical problem or delivered from demonic oppression.

¹ page 174; ² page 177; ³ page 135; ⁴ page 164

Applying Hearing Tests To 'Words' Claiming To Be Of God

Below are some examples for applying the tests to some of the accounts in the book.

'Words'

<i>'I want you to start a diary. You will see what I will do.'</i>	i
<i>'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit with whom you have been sealed.'</i>	4
<i>'Hosea 6:2'</i>	9
<i>'Open your mouth and I will fill it.'</i>	21
<i>'O what a tangled web we weave'</i>	146
<i>'Royal jelly'</i>	138
<i>'Don't minister what you haven't got to people who don't need it'</i>	140
<i>'Philippians 3: 10'</i>	183-185
<i>'I am putting you on a new highway'</i>	183

Dreams

<i>'I've just come to warn you, trouble's coming.'</i>	24
<i>'Holy Yoga and Acupuncture'</i>	137
<i>'Black Knight, White Knight'</i>	151

Visions/Pictures(stillandmoving)

<i>'A Pair of Skis'</i> [picture in a prayer meeting confirmed three days later]	135
<i>'The Father, the Son and the Lorry'</i> [in response to prayer and Bible meditation]	92
<i>'Put Down The Mallet'</i> [in response to prayer for a group of recovering addicts]	94
<i>'The Gospel In Two Pictures'</i> [after prayer asking Jesus to reveal himself]	96
<i>'I am shaking the things that can be shaken'</i> [confirmed six days later]	228

Salvation

<i>The Windows of the Soul</i>	198
<i>'Lazarus, come out!'</i>	200

Healings

<i>'He says my chest is clear'</i>	174
<i>'There were three cracks and I was healed.'</i>	177

Deliverance

<i>Ministry and manifestations</i>	170
<i>'I'm free! I'm free!'</i>	157
<i>'Off The Jellies'</i>	164
<i>'Called to be Fishers of Men'</i>	186

A Pair Of Skis

In February, 1993, Simon attended the early morning prayer meeting at Chalmers-Ardler Parish Church, Dundee, where he had been invited to preach at the Morning Service. During the prayer time the Church Officer had a picture of a couple of men (no faces) with large ears. What she didn't know was that Jim and Simon had spent a large part of the previous day talking about listening to God!

Later during the time of prayer, Simon was surprised to receive a picture of a pair of skis at an angle, which suggested the feet were going in two different directions and that the skier would end up doing the splits. Not being a skier, and not knowing anyone who was about to go skiing, he just tucked the picture away in his mind and wondered what the LORD might be saying.

Three days later he collected one of the twins from Edinburgh Airport on her way back from spending a few days in Belfast with her twin sister. When they arrived at her flat, they were met by Gail, who was concerned about a young woman, who was displaying some bizarre behaviour.

Gerda*, it transpired, had a 'history' of strange behaviour, ever since becoming a Christian four years earlier. After tea, Simon was asked if he would see Gerda to try to discover what was going on. He asked Susan, another of Eilidh's flat mates, to be with him, when he interviewed Gerda in their sitting room.

After a brief time of prayer and explaining to Gerda that they were not going to do anything weird, Simon got her to tell him a bit about herself and the problems she was having. During the course of the discussion, it became clear that Gerda's problems were related to the fact she had been involved in various things, which had given the enemy legal access to harass her. They only showed up after she gave her life to Christ, because now she had 'changed teams' and the enemy didn't like it!

There appeared to be three main entry access points the enemy had used to harass her. These were: *Rejection, self-rejection and fear of rejection*; *Several sexual relationships before she became a Christian*; and *Occultism* both (i) from her mother, who was Austrian and a 'charmer', and (ii) her own involvement with Ouija boards, Tarot cards, horoscopes, etc.

During a time of Bible reading and prayer, they read Isaiah Chapter 47 and Revelation Chapters 18-19 out loud. When Simon mentioned the Isaiah passage, Gerda said she had read it just yesterday or that morning! He shared the picture of a pair of skis going in different directions, which the LORD had given him three days earlier at the prayer meeting in Dundee. Gerda immediately exclaimed:

'How did you know I skied in Austria?'

Of course, Simon didn't, but God knew. He also knew she was trying to live her life with a foot in both camps, and was going to end up doing the spiritual splits, if she carried on any longer. Susan felt led to read Ezekiel 16:1-14, where God describes his Chosen People Israel as a precious jewel. Interestingly, the last part of the chapter also deals with Israel's promiscuity and harlotry.

After first establishing the Lordship of Jesus Christ in Gerda, Simon prayed against the Jezebel spirit responsible for idolatry and sexual immorality. As he prayed, the LORD ministered to Gerda, who began yawning and belching - a common indication of spirits leaving a person at the presence of the Holy Spirit. At the end Gerda expressed a great sense of relief that her guilt had been taken away and that she was clean before her LORD. There was a lovely sense of the LORD's love, joy and peace in the place.

A few days later Simon received a card from Gerda. It read:

'What can I say and how can I say it? (I'll now hand over to God) Ezekiel 34:26 'I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill, I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing.' I don't really know, so I'll just have to repeat myself and say THANK YOU! Many blessings!'

[Note: Ezekiel 34:27 reads: *'Then they will know I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those, who enslaved them.'*]

A month later, Simon received a card from the Pastor of the fellowship, where she worshipped, saying that Gerda was *'a changed person'* and was enjoying the worship there. Praise God!

A Dream & Interpretation about 'Holy Yoga' and Acupuncture

Sometimes God sends a dream to expose the source of a problem, or to show us what to do. One of the clearest examples of this was a dream the LORD gave Simon about a situation involving a Christian chiropractor, who was practising acupuncture and what she called 'Holy Yoga.'

In spite of being told that Yoga is based on Hindu religious beliefs, involving the channeling of demonic spirits, she insisted that what she was doing was of God. Simon prayed before going to bed one night and asked the LORD to speak into the situation. Just three hours later he woke from a dream.

The Dream

He was in a large house, with a grand staircase and basement. As he prepared to go to bed, he noticed the front and back doors of the house were unlocked, and so he locked them.

As he moved to go up the stairs, he looked behind, and there in the basement was a group of 'figures' lurking in the shadows. At that point Simon woke from the dream. He didn't understand what it meant, but went back to sleep after asking the LORD to give him the interpretation.

The Interpretation

The following morning he received the interpretation.

The unlocked front and back doors = Yoga and Acupuncture

The figures lurking in the basement = Demonic spirits that have entered
through these occult 'doorways'

They are inside the house and need to be ejected, so that she could live her Christian life in the power of the Holy Spirit, not the counterfeits. Once the demons have been ejected, the doors need to be locked and sealed by the Spirit.

Simon asked the LORD for confirmation of the dream and interpretation. The following day one of his Bible readings was Daniel's prayer in Daniel Chapter 9, thanking God for wisdom to interpret the king's dream!

‘Royal Jelly’

On one occasion when ministering to a lady, who had been complaining of being oppressed, Simon asked her friend, who was helping him minister, if she had been aware of God saying anything to her. Her friend replied:

“I don’t understand it, but I keep getting the words ‘Royal Jelly.’”

The moment she said the words, the woman they were ministering to said:

“Oh, I’ve just run out of that. I can tell you what the problem is. It’s a spirit of the New Age.”

It transpired that she took Royal Jelly pills, made from Queen Bee secretions, she bought from a health foods store and had just run out of her supply. The underlying rationale was demonic. When Simon came against spirits of the New Age in the Name of the LORD Jesus Christ and commanded them to leave and go to the place appointed for them by Christ, she said: *“They’re away!”*

Cockroaches

On another occasion, the LORD spoke prophetically through a picture he gave someone else. While praying with Simon, Jack had a picture of a medicine bottle with the skull and crossbones on it. Then he saw a woman open the bottle and take out pills, which turned into cockroaches as she put them into her mouth. When Simon shared the picture a few days later with a woman who came to see him, she said immediately:

“That’s amazing. I’ve just remembered, I used to steal pills from my auntie and grandmother’s medicine cabinets and pop them like sweeties to make me feel drunk. It was part of my rebellious period when I was about nineteen!”

It illustrates the fact that occultists place demonic curses on pills and potions to infiltrate individuals as part of the enemy’s control of drugs. [Note: The Greek word for ‘sorcery’ in the New Testament is *‘pharmakeia’*, from which we get our words ‘pharmacy’ and ‘pharmaceuticals.’] Simon came across a reference to demons as ‘cockroaches’ later in Wagner and Pennoyer’s *Wrestling with Dark Angels*.¹

¹ Neil Anderson in P.Wagner & D.Pennoyer *Wrestling with Dark Angels* Monarch:1990, page 140

A Conman Convicted & Converted

*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*¹

In the summer of 2011, Simon had some work done on the roof of the house by a firm of roofers from Skipton in Derbyshire, who were doing work in the local area. Although he had misgivings at the start, because they were not local and did not provide a proper detailed estimate of the work, they were pleasant and seemed to have done a good job cleaning the tiles and painting on a covering to stop moss growing on other houses nearby. They even engaged Simon in conversation about Christian topics, and he got a feeling that God was at work in at least one of the three brothers, who ran the business.

In June 2012 there was a ring at the doorbell and, when he went to the door, he was met by one of the brothers, who greeted him with the words:

'We are doing work in the area and I just thought I'd come and look up my friend Simon.'

They said they had noticed they had missed some of the paint on the tiles near the chimney and would fix it for him. So they went up on the roof. When they came down, they reported that the roof of the front dormer bedroom was in a pretty poor state. Simon asked them to take a photo with his digital camera to let him see. Sure enough, the felt looked as if it needed to be replaced. They went on to recommend a fibre-glass based system in place of the old felt and bitumen, because it was seamless, would not crack, and would last at least thirty years. After talking it over, Simon again made the mistake of not getting a proper estimate in writing and agreed a price. They said they would have to go down to Skipton to collect materials, but would return the next day.

They returned the following day to begin the work and, as they were getting started, Simon checked the price for the work was for both front and back dormer roofs.

'Oh, no! That's just for the front.'

When he had recovered from the shock, Simon agreed they should go ahead and do both roofs for a price that seemed reasonable. One of them began to remove the existing felt, while two others went away to get more materials.

¹ Luke 6:36

While they were away, Simon had a look at the materials they had left in the front garden. When he asked about the grade of materials, the gofer could not tell him. So Simon decided to go onto the internet to see how much other firms were charging. When he saw the prices were a fraction of the price he had been quoted, he went outside and commented to the gofer:

'I think we're being taken to the cleaners!'

A short while later the brothers arrived back in response to a tip-off from the gofer. They expressed concern that Simon was not happy, and even offered to do the work for nothing rather than see their reputation damaged. Simon said he was happy to pay a fair price for good work, and just to go ahead with the front roof that afternoon. After a couple of hours, as they were finishing off what they had done, he asked them to take a photo on his digital camera, to show him what they had done. No sooner had he passed the camera up to one of the brothers than he exclaimed:

'Oh, I've put resin on it. I'm really sorry. I've got some solvent that should be able to clean it up.'

Angry and realising he had been conned, Simon told them to finish what they were doing and go. They said they would return the following Monday to do the back roof. Monday dawned bright and clear, but there was no sign of the roofers.

Thinking perhaps they had decided to cut their losses and not return, Simon was surprised when they turned up the next day, when rain was forecast! He told them he was very unhappy with the way they had treated him, and that they should just put the whole episode down to a learning experience for all of them. The men left, without any money being exchanged or any attempt to replace the digital camera.

Simon was angry and decided to pray about things, and then contact Trading Standards. But as he prayed about the whole situation, he was reminded of Jesus' parable about *'The Unmerciful Servant'*.¹

¹ Matthew 18:21-35

Simon Peter had asked Jesus how often he needed to forgive a brother, who had sinned against him. Seven times? Jesus replied:

'Not seven times. Seventy-seven times.'

To illustrate the values of the kingdom of God, he told a parable about a servant, who owed his master thousands of pounds of debt. The servant, unable to repay the debt, pleaded with his master for more time to repay the money, rather than being sold into slavery with his wife and children. In an act of mercy, the master took pity on the man and cancelled the debt.

But the servant went out and found one of his fellow servants, who owed him a paltry sum. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded he repay the money immediately. When the master heard of this, he was furious and ordered the unmerciful servant to be thrown into prison until the whole debt was repaid.

Jesus finished the parable by saying:

'This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

Simon felt the Holy Spirit convicting him of his need to be merciful to the men, just as God had been merciful to him in forgiving his sin. So Andrea and he prayed that the LORD would convict them of their deceit and cause them to repent.

There was heavy rain during the night and as Simon was going to bed, he noticed the tell-tale signs of a leak in the front bedroom, where the men had laid the new roof. After a visit to the loft to identify where the water was coming in, he managed to stem the leak for the time being and the following morning phoned a local builder, who came and took photographs of the state the cowboys had left things in, before laying a new felt roof. The next day it poured with rain, but no sign of leaks!

At various times over the following months, Simon wondered if he should contact Trading Standards. But each time he was reminded of Jesus' words.

On the 18th January, 2013, there was a gentle knock at the front door. When Simon went to investigate, he was met by a young guy who said:

'I don't know if you remember me.'

For a moment Simon didn't recognise him, but then remembered he was one of the men, who had conned them the year before. Before he could say anything, the young man said:

'I've just come to say sorry. You see, I've been saved. I've become a Christian.'

'Come on in, brother!,' Simon said. *'Sit down and tell me about it.'*

Over a coffee Gerry* admitted he had been nervous about coming, in case Simon phoned the police, but described how he had had no peace after leaving him that day. He admitted they had set out deliberately to con him and Andrea.

Gerry went on:

'After what we did to you, we had no luck at work. Things also went wrong at home with my wife and kids. I'm a gypsy and live on a campsite outside Darlington. But I got saved just after Christmas and have been to church the past two Sundays.'

'About five months ago a good friend, who is a Christian, got cancer. Just after he was diagnosed and before he had chemotherapy, he invited me to church with him. While I was sitting in church, I kept remembering what we had done to you.'

'Then just after Christmas another Christian met me on the site and invited me to church along with a guy, who had just been saved. A few days earlier he had been talking and something inside me really wanted to listen. We talked for about an hour. I knew then I had to give my heart to the LORD. So I did that night in church. It's amazing! I'm a different person. My family all think I'm crazy, but I don't care.'

It seemed that Gerry had been convicted of his sin, genuinely converted by the Holy Spirit and was now a different person!

Deceived & Deceiving

Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.¹

Jesus answered: *'Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many.'*²

In June 2008, the Pastor's wife had gone with a friend from Paisley, along with thousands of other Christians to Ignite Church, Lakeland, Florida, to witness amazing so-called miracles being performed by a self-proclaimed healer named Todd Bentley.

On the 17th June 2008, the Pastor phoned to report that her assessment of what she saw was that, *'although there was evidence of the flesh and the demonic, she had no doubt that Todd Bentley and Lakeland were of God.'*

Coincidentally, Simon's Bible reading in *Our Daily Bread* for 17th June, 2008, was 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, and 12-15. The notes were headed *'Captain Thunderbolt'* and contained the following apparently true story.

'When an English robber, called Captain Thunderbolt, escaped the law and moved to the eastern US in 1818, he began practicing medicine. He took on the name Dr John Wilson. He often wore three suits of clothes to escape recognition by making himself look larger and covering up a deformed leg.

Just before the man died, he asked his friends to bury him without removing his clothes. But to prepare his body for proper burial, that request could not be honoured. The mortician was surprised to find scars from wounds and a withered leg. A search of 'Dr Wilson's' house revealed a stash of watches, jewellery, and diamonds. The sheriff learned that the doctor was in fact Thunderbolt, a thief in disguise. They had been fooled!

Satan and his followers have disguises too. It says in 2 Corinthians 11:15, '[Satan's] ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness.'

¹ 2 Timothy 3:13-15; ² Matthew 24:24

Jesus warned his disciples not to be fooled by the fakes and told them how to test what they saw and heard, by looking at the kind of fruit produced by such self-proclaimed Messiahs and miracle workers.

In the case of Todd Bentley, it did not require great spiritual discernment to see that whatever signs and wonders were being produced were not of God. For example, he claimed on TV that God had told him to kick an old woman suffering from stomach cancer with his boots in her stomach and she would be healed. And none of the so-called healing miracles, or claims of people being raised from the dead, has been substantiated by medical evidence.

Shortly afterwards, it was announced that Todd Bentley had been having an adulterous affair with a member of staff and had divorced his wife to marry her. But in spite of all the evidence, some well-meaning, but gullible, Christians continued to claim that it was definitely of God and, by implication, the way that Jesus behaved during his ministry on earth. It was another reminder of the warning Jesus gave his followers:

*'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day: 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your Name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly: 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*¹

Simon had personal experience of the wickedness of Lakeland, when his son-in-law travelled from Scotland to Lakeland to receive 'ministry' from Todd Bentley on the 23rd February, 2008. In another amazing 'coincidence' the Pastor had even made a recording on videotape of the ministry that evening, which was beamed across the world by satellite on the 'God-Channel.' At one point, to Simon's amazement, there was his son-in-law on stage going forward for ministry for the mouth cancer, from which he was suffering. Todd Bentley's 'ministry' was to shake his head, shout '*Satan you're a liar!*' and command Satan to come off his tongue. It all took less than half a minute, and then he turned away to deal with another poor soul in the seemingly never-ending line of individuals desperate for ministry.

¹ Matthew 7:21-23

He finally died at home with wife and the family doctor at his bedside. His three-year-old son, who had been popping in and out of the bedroom all morning, happened to appear shortly after he died. In the beautifully innocent way of small children, he took one look at his father and announced:

'Daddy all better now.'

‘O What A Tangled Web We Weave!’

It was annoying not to be able to remember the second line, and so Simon got out the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, and looked up the word ‘web.’ It turned out to be a quote from Sir Walter Scott’s poem *Marmion*.

*O what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive.*¹

It seemed a rather strange thing to wake up with, and Simon sensed the LORD might be trying to tell him something. So he tucked it away in the back of his mind and got on with the day. In the afternoon of the 15th February, 1999, he had a meeting with a man, who had asked to come and see him, after he had spoken at a Business Men’s Fellowship dinner at Stirling a month or two earlier.

When he arrived, Joe* began sharing about his own and his family’s problems, which were formidable. Eventually, Simon handed him a pen and a piece of paper, and asked him to draw his family tree, showing the various members of Joe’s family, and their relationships to one another, because he couldn’t get his head around all the ins and outs of what Joe had been saying?

The finished attempt was pretty rough and ready, but it was quite evident that things were even more mixed up than had first appeared. As he continued to describe his problems, Simon remembered the words he had heard at half past seven that morning!

Turning to Joe, he said:

‘I don’t know if this is relevant, but this morning I woke with the first line of a couplet going through my head. The words were:

‘O what a tangled web we weave....’

Joe immediately replied:

‘When first we practise to deceive!’

Simon could hardly believe his ears!

¹ Sir Walter Scott *Marmion*

'I just get an overwhelming impression of deceit and double-dealing in your life, and in your whole family.'

'Yeah! I'd agree with that,' Joe replied.

'Well, I'm not sure where we go from here,' Simon said. *'But between now and next time we meet, I'm going to ask the LORD to show me how to proceed.'*

On the morning of their next meeting on 8th March 1999, as Simon was praying about what they should do, he sensed the Holy Spirit say:

'Do a Bible Study on the life of Jacob.'

It so happened Simon had just finished an outline of his life. Jacob is an excellent example of the way a trait like deceit can be observed in several members of the same family, and down through the generations. His name means 'Grabber,' or 'Deceiver,' and he was just one of a long line of deceivers, that included his mother Rebekah, his uncle Laban, and his wife Rachel.

The point of the Jacob story is that God eventually brings him to his knees, and changes both his name and his nature from 'Jacob,' meaning 'Deceiver,' to 'Israel,' meaning 'Overcomer,' after wrestling all night at the River Jabbok with a stranger, who turns out to be the angel of the LORD.

When Joe arrived and Simon told him what he felt the LORD had said to him that morning, he said:

*'I was reading about Jacob at Peniel in my UCB Bible reading just this morning!'*¹

Over the next months they met together to discuss some of the issues in his life, and to look at ways in which he might let God deal with the deceit and chaos in his family and other relationships. There were no dramatic changes, but two years later he arrived at the door to return some books. He shared he was now involved in a ministry of helps and was generally trying to go God's way. And as he was leaving, he said:

'By the way, those words about 'O what a tangled web we weave,' were spot on!'

¹ UCB Word for Today, 8 March, 1999

Wise & Foolish Builders.....*building your house on solid foundations*

When God speaks, he always confirms in some way that it is him. Simon learned the importance of obedience to what we hear God saying one day, when the LORD took him on a Bible study of the parable Jesus told about *The Wise and Foolish Builders*.¹

The difference between the two builders is that one hears God speaking and is obedient, while the other also hears God speaking to him, but does nothing about it. As he was pondering on the meaning of this, he felt the LORD saying:

‘Do you understand what you’re reading, Simon?’

Whenever God asks you that question, the answer is always: *‘No!’*

He sensed the LORD asking:

‘What happens, when I tell you to do something and you are obedient?’

‘You always confirm it was you in some way, LORD.’

‘Right! What happens if I give you an instruction and you do nothing about it?’

‘Nothing, and I don’t get any confirmation,’ Simon replied.

‘That’s right! Each time you hear me give you an instruction and you obey, you get the confirmation that you heard correctly. What does that do to your faith?’

‘My faith is increased.’

‘Yes – you have just laid down a layer of faith cement. Each time you do that, you are building a foundation of faith that is rock solid. The result? When the wind blows and the floods rise, your house is built on solid foundations and will not be shaken.’

Obedience Is Key To Experiencing God

In *Experiencing God: Knowing & Doing The Will of God*, Henry Blackaby emphasised the importance of obedience if we want to experience God in our lives. Jesus said:

‘If you love me, you will do what I tell you.’²

¹ Matthew 7:24-27; ² John 14:15-17

A Strange Word For A Stranger

It was a bitterly cold weekend for a church anniversary. Simon was looking forward to a long lie on Saturday the 24th February, 1990. But as he lay between sleep and waking, he became aware of the words:

'Don't minister what you haven't got to people who don't need it.'

'But LORD, I'm not ministering this weekend. I don't understand what you are saying,' he said to himself as he tried to wake up.

Perplexed but grateful for a long lie, he got dressed and made his way down to the church. Arriving a few minutes late, he found a seat near the front and spent the next hour listening to the guest speaker. At the end of his talk, as he turned to speak to a friend sitting behind him, his eyes scanned the assembled group of church members, and were arrested by the sight of a stranger he did not recognize sitting at the very back of the church.

'That's funny,' he thought. *'You don't usually see strangers at a church anniversary weekend, especially on a wintry February Saturday morning.'*

When he asked his friend who the stranger was, she replied:

'Oh she's a clinical psychologist or something. She's only just started coming here.'

Having recently completed a Masters degree in Educational Psychology a few years before, Simon was intrigued to meet this newcomer to the fellowship and made his way to the back, where he introduced himself and asked her what made her come to a church anniversary weekend. She said:

'I've just moved up here from Newcastle, where I was working as a psychologist. The strange thing is that before I left, I led several of my colleagues to the LORD.'

As she continued speaking, Simon became aware of the words he had heard as he was waking up, and said:

'This may sound rather strange to you, because we have never met before. But this morning, as I was waking up, I was aware of the words: 'Don't minister what you haven't got to people, who don't need it.'"

As he spoke, the stranger's eyes began to fill with tears. They sat down in a pew, and she began to share the pain of how her marriage had broken up, and she had just moved back up to Scotland to stay with her parents in a nearby village.

As they talked, Simon felt the LORD saying He wanted to heal her before recycling her to help others.

'If you feel you want someone to talk to, just give me a phone. Andrea and I would be happy to help if we can.'

Over the following months Jane* came to see Simon and Andrea and shared the pain of her marriage breakup and various issues involved in the depression, from which she was suffering. As they listened and prayed together, they had the privilege and joy of seeing God healing her hurts and setting her free to praise and worship Him as her loving heavenly Father.

Some months later, she announced she felt the LORD calling her to go to Bible College in British Columbia, where she met a Christian guy. After moving to Canada with her husband, Jane worked for a Christian counselling service, helping hundreds of individuals work through their emotional problems. She had experienced first-hand the Wounded Healer's healing grace herself so that, as Paul says: ¹

'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.'

¹ 2 Corinthians 1: 3-5

Black Knight, White Knight.....deja vu

One night in January 1994 a young man was wandering down the main street in Kirkintilloch, in an alcoholic daze yet again in a vain attempt to deaden the pain of grief and his general sense of desperation. His mother had died some years earlier, and he had moved in with his grandfather to look after him. But when his grandfather died of cancer, Rory had turned to the bottle for consolation.

His mother had been a godly woman, who had taken Rory to Sunday School, where he had heard the stories about Jesus and of how God loved a sin-sick world so much, that He sent His Son to show us what God is like – ‘*God with skin on,*’ as one preacher had commented.

Rory had special needs, and after leaving school got a job at the local mental hospital, working in the garden with other men. There he learned to marvel at how a seed could grow in the dark, and push its way up to the surface through ground frozen solid in winter, and emerge as a snowdrop, or as one of the vegetables they grew in the hospital gardens. But in spite of the security of a sheltered job, Rory missed his mother and grandfather terribly. It seemed the only thing to do was to drink himself into oblivion and numb the pain for another few hours.

This particular night as he lurched along the street, he passed the Baptist Church. Hanging at a slightly drunken angle above the front door of the church was a banner, advertising a recent evangelistic outreach proclaiming ‘*There’s More To Life.*’

‘*Too right,*’ he said to himself. ‘*There must be more to life than this, that’s for sure!*’ he muttered, as he staggered home to his council house.

The next day he decided he would go and see what they had to say at the Book Shop on the main street adjacent to the church. Liz, the manageress of the shop, welcomed Rory and offered him a cup of coffee in the coffee shop. They seemed to be a friendly bunch, and he was encouraged. Soon he was a regular customer, plying Liz, and anyone else who would listen, with questions about the Bible and books about Jesus.

He was obviously desperate for company and in need of pastoral support, and so Simon was asked to meet with him to see what help the church might give. He arranged to meet Rory in the Ministry Centre at ten o' clock the next morning with Frank, a recovering alcoholic. He had been warned they would smell him before they saw him. Sure enough, Rory arrived on the dot at ten o' clock, unshaven, dishevelled, and smelling like an alley cat!

Simon asked him:

'Have you had any breakfast yet?'

'Naw!' Rory replied

'Would you like a bacon roll?'

'Oh, aye!' he said. And so began the ritual of starting each session with prayer and a trip to a cafe nearby for bacon rolls.

As they listened to Rory sharing about his situation, it was obvious that God was on his case, and so Simon suggested they might look at a booklet by Norman Warren entitled *Journey Into Life*. It is a simple presentation of the basics of the Gospel - the Good News for a suffering world. It starts with an outline of man's natural sinfulness and rebellion against God. When they got to the bottom of the first page, Simon turned to Rory and asked:

'Do you understand any of this?'

'Naw!' he replied.

Simon's heart sank. How on earth could they help Rory see there was more to life than his drunken stupor, if he couldn't read or understand even the simplest facts of the Gospel? And then he remembered there was a video presentation of *Journey Into Life*.

'Would you like to see a video next time?' he asked.

'Oh, aye!' said Rory.

The following week, the three met and, after the obligatory bacon roll, watched the video of *Journey Into Life*.

At the end there was an interview with Cliff Richard, in which he described how he had become a Christian as a teenager. He had gone home from a Crusader meeting, lain down on his bed, asked God to forgive his sins, and had asked Jesus Christ into his life by faith. Rory turned to Simon and said:

'I'm going to do that when I get home.'

The following week, when Rory arrived, he was clean-shaven and wearing a smart pair of clean jeans. As they munched their bacon rolls, Simon asked:

'Well. How have things been since last week?'

'Fine,' he replied.

'I didn't do what Cliff Richard did straight away, when I went home. I waited till evening. Then I went to my bedroom and lay on my bed, just like Cliff Richard. I asked God to forgive my sins, just like Cliff Richard. And then I asked Jesus into my heart, just like Cliff Richard. In fact,' he added, *'I said it three or four times, just to be sure.'*

'And.....?' Simon asked.

'What do you mean?' said Rory.

'Well, did anything happen?' he asked.

'Yeah. I had this feeling inside me here,' he said, pointing to his stomach.

'Was it a good feeling or a bad feeling?' Simon said.

'It was a good feeling,' Rory replied.

'That night I had a dream,' he went on. *'I dreamed I was in this forest. There were two paths, or tracks, one over here,'* he said pointing to his left, *'and one over here,'* pointing to his right.

'And then I woke up.'

Simon thought. *'Don't tell me this is just a religious shaggy dog story!'*

But Rory continued.

'The next night I had the same dream. Only this time, over here on the left-hand path was a Black Knight on a black horse, beckoning me to go with him.'

'Who was that?' asked Simon.

'That was Satan!' he said.

'But over here,' he went on, pointing to the right, *'on the right-hand side was a White Knight on a white horse, beckoning me to go with him.'*

'Who was that?' asked Simon.

'That was Jesus,' Rory replied. And he went on:

'I had the same dream every night last week. And on the last night, when I looked over here, there were my mother, my grandfather and my two aunts (who had all been Christians) standing beside Jesus, all beckoning me to go with Him.'

'Which one did you go with?' Simon asked.

'I started to go with the Black Knight, but then I went with Jesus,' he said, adding: 'You probably think I'm very stupid.'

By this time Simon felt pretty choked, as he replied.

'Rory, I don't think you're stupid at all. You see, what you don't realise is that what you saw in your dream is almost identical to what my wife Andrea saw, as she sat listening to some music in our sitting room fifteen years ago. She saw a Black Prince and a White Prince. And just like you, she decided to follow Jesus as her White Prince on a white horse. I'm probably the only person in Kirkintilloch, who can identify completely with the pictures God gave you last week.'

A year later on Easter Day, 15th April, 1995, Simon had the privilege of holding Rory's towel for him, as he was baptised in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Hood Of The Cobra.....the kundalini spirit of Yoga exposed

The phone rang one Friday in 1992. A woman's voice the other end said she had been given Simon's name by a friend, and wondered if he could help. She was praying with a Christian friend, who had started to behave very strangely, becoming abusive and speaking in a strange voice.

'I wonder if you could come over and help.'

There were two problems. Simon had never met either of the women before, and he did not want to be involved in ministry on his own, if he could avoid it.

After a further phone conversation, when the urgency of the situation was impressed on him, he reluctantly agreed to meet the two women the following day.

When Simon arrived at the flat, the two women greeted him warmly and began to relate a bit of the background.

Mary* had become a Christian a few years earlier after a life of rebellion of almost every kind. She had been involved with drugs and had had a child by a partner, who was violent and abusive towards her. The pair of them had been members of a biker gang called the Blue Angels, and had lived a life of violence, drugs and involvement in the occult. Mary had been involved with Tarot cards and had also practised TM (transcendental meditation) and Yoga, it transpired later.

Her conversion was a miracle of God's grace. Before she gave her life to Christ, she had had a number of very vivid dreams, in which she saw Bible passages and the Holy Spirit showed her the meaning of what she was reading. The result was that Mary had eventually asked Christ to come into her life to deliver her from the drugs and the violence. She had been nurtured by a Christian friend Joan*, who was a member of a nearby Baptist church, which held services in the local community hall.

Over the course of a year or so, the pair of them had met regularly several times a week to pray and read the Bible together. The problems began when they were praying against spiritual strongholds in the area. That's when Mary had begun manifesting strange behaviour.

When she had finished sharing her background, Simon asked her how she was feeling at that moment. She said:

'It feels as if there's a canopy round the back of my neck and shoulders.'

When she said that, Simon asked her if she had ever practised Yoga. She said she had.

'What positions did you practice?' he asked, thinking she would mention the Lotus position.

'The Cat and the Cobra,' she replied.

The moment she said that, Simon said:

'That's it! The canopy you mentioned is the hood of the cobra. Yoga is a Hindu word meaning the yoking of your spirit with the Brahman, or universal, spirit worshipped by Hindus. I'm going to pray against that and ask the LORD to break that yoke. In Isaiah Chapter 10 verse 27 we read: 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off your shoulder, and his yoke from off your neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the oil of anointing.' Then I'm going to anoint you with consecrated olive oil as a sign of the Holy Spirit's ministry.'

Mary agreed. As soon as Simon finished reading Isaiah 10:27 and had anointed Mary on the forehead with the sign of the cross in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, she cried out:

'Oh, it's burning! It's burning!'

Immediately afterwards she added:

'It's away! The hood's away.'

And from that moment Mary was freed from her strange behaviour, as she and Joan waged spiritual warfare in the heavenlies.

Out Of The Darkness & Into The Light.....delivered from bondage

Simon had been invited to speak at an evening service at Chalmers-Ardler Church, Dundee, in February, 1990. It was now a year and a half since the crisis, and the LORD had been confirming his call by sending various people to see him and Andrea.

This particular evening, he had sensed the LORD telling him to preach on a little incident in Acts Chapter 16. In it Luke records the spread of the gospel to Philippi in Greece. But every day, when Paul and Silas went to speak about Jesus, they were followed by a young slave-girl, who kept shouting out:

'These men are servants of God Almighty and are telling you how to be saved.'

You would think that Paul would have been pleased, because this girl was actually telling the truth - Jesus is the only way to God. But Paul realised that, although she was telling the truth, she was distracting people from hearing the gospel. Instead of being under the influence of the Holy Spirit, this young slave-girl was actually being used by her slave owners to earn them money by telling people's fortunes. She did this, Luke tells us, under the influence of a demonic spirit called Python. This demon was also associated with the oracle at Delphi, to which all kinds of people flocked to have their fortunes told.

It was a dark, cold January night as Simon made his way to the church hall, where the service was being held. The sermon he had prepared was entitled '*The Cross Is A Sign Of A Spiritual Battle*,' and consisted of three simple points.

1. A Conflict Between Two Kingdoms (vv 16-17)
2. A Name Above Every Name (v 18)
3. A Deliverance That Was Demonstrated (v 18)

At the end there was a sense that God had confirmed his word, when a number of people went forward for prayer.

¹ Acts 16: 16-18; ² John 14:6

As Simon made his way to the manse, out of the bushes beside the front door stepped a youngman. Simon could barely see him in the dim light above the door, as he approached and said:

'Can I speak to you?'

Simon showed him into the sitting room, and disappeared into the kitchen to make a cup of tea, praying that Jim and Rhoda would appear quickly and not leave him alone with this complete stranger. Then he joined the stranger in the sitting room and tried to make small talk, by asking his name and whether he had any family.

It transpired that Frank* was married with two children, but at that time was living with a girlfriend, who was into reading Tarot cards.

'Every time I go into the bedroom, there's this strange presence in the room,' he said.

As they continued talking, he began to share that he used to come about the church twelve years earlier, but had drifted away. He had actually come to the church hall that evening, but had left before the service began, for reasons that soon became clear. For as he continued to talk about his backsliding, involvement with the occult and drug dealing, he suddenly stopped and said:

'I don't know why I'm telling you all this. I don't know you from Adam!'

'Well,' Simon replied. *'It's strange, because I was preaching this evening on just such a situation, that happened about two thousand years ago in a Greek town called Philippi. I believe God has brought you here, because He wants to set you free from the stuff you're in bondage to.'*

He nodded, but became agitated and said:

'I know. The trouble is, I'm being torn apart inside,' and he motioned with his hands to show what was happening in his chest.

At that moment, to Simon's great relief, the front door opened and he heard Jim and Rhoda arriving! The three of them continued the conversation, and it became obvious that the LORD had brought Frank to the church that evening to turn him back to God and to set him free.

But first he needed to admit he had wandered away from the LORD, and had got involved in things God hates: adultery, drug dealing and the occult. Only if he was willing to repent and turn his back on these things would God forgive him and set him free. As Jim and Simon presented him with the options, a tremendous battle began, as the demonic spirits in him tried to prevent him from praying a prayer of repentance.

At one point when Frank had left the room to go to the toilet, Jim turned to Simon and said:

'Frank used to come about the church regularly about twelve years ago. But he always had a stubborn and rebellious spirit about him.'

At one point during the time of ministry that followed, a rebellious spirit in Frank said to Simon:

'You don't know who I am, but he does,' pointing to Jim!

By this time it was getting late, and so they suggested calling a halt to the proceedings. But before he left, Frank managed to ask God's forgiveness for his sins, and agreed to meet with Jim and some of the men in the fellowship for prayer ministry. Over the next few months, he was soundly delivered from the things that had been harassing him.

The following July Simon saw Frank again at the end of the Sunday morning service, when he came bounding up to him and Andrea and announced:

'I'm free! I know I'm free!'

They rejoiced together to see the change in his whole appearance and behaviour. He was back with his wife and children, had stopped his drug dealing and involvement with the occult, and was coming to church on a regular basis. It was a practical demonstration of the reality that Jesus came to set the captives free.

A Haunted House

The phone rang and when Simon answered it, it was Yvonne*, who had come to see him and Andrea a few months earlier.

'Simon, I wonder if you can help. My cousin Judy and her husband Ted* have just had a frightening experience. Ted woke up last night to see a 'ghost' bending over their ten-month-old daughter Rosie's* cot. And when he went through to their other four-year-old daughter Suzie's* bedroom, he found the toys in there scattered all about. The Holy Spirit brought your name into my mind and I wondered if you might be able to help.'*

She went on:

'They say the house used to be used for séances with a Ouija board. Judy used to be involved with Ouija boards a few years ago, and it got so bad my mother called in the Roman Catholic priest. Judy's a back-slidden Christian, who thinks she might have asked Jesus into her life, but is not sure.'

Two days later Simon visited Ted and Judy in their home. He sat and listened to Judy describe how she had become a Christian about five years earlier. Her mother read the tea leaves and her husband's father became a Freemason three years earlier. Her parents divorced, when she was about thirteen, and her mother left to set up home with a woman friend, with whom she still lived. Judy was still very bitter towards her mother.

The house was one of five in a terrace, all of which had gone on fire at some time over the previous few years. Their own house had been used for séances and other occult activities, and as a result was regarded by the neighbours as 'unlucky,' and evoked comments like

'You're not going to live there, are you?'

After listening to Ted and Judy, Simon said he would try to arrange to visit them with a Pastor friend to pray with them, and ask God's help in freeing them from whatever was harassing them.

'There's a battle going on for control of Ted's life and for the whole family and the house at the moment,' he said. 'I think it has been triggered by your involvement in the occult, and by the fact the house has been used for occult activities.'

A visit was arranged for the following Friday. When Simon asked Judy:

'How's Ted's drink problem?'

She replied:

'How did you know about that?'

Simon told Judy again he felt there was a battle raging for control of (a) the family, (a) the individual members, and (c) the house, and added:

'But God wants to set you free! You need to make up your mind whose side you are on.'

The following Friday they visited Ted and Judy and spent a couple of hours with them. During the meeting, they identified a number of issues.

- (a) An issue with the maternal grandmother. This was confirmed by Judy, who said she had been raped by her father, when she was eight years old. The grandmother had brought up the children, when he was jailed.
- (b) The grandmother had also taken over looking after Judy and her brother and sister, when her own mother suffered post-natal depression after the birth of the first child.
- (c) The grandmother died when Judy was twelve years old, and about a year later her mother left to set up home with her lesbian lover. This had led to her parents' divorce.
- (d) An inspection of the bedroom, where the baby's cot was, revealed an occult emblem, consisting of an ear-ring with nine imitation diamonds on one side and a broken cross on the other, under the carpet under the cot.
- (e) As they talked and listened to Ted and Judy, Simon had the distinct impression someone was sitting on the stairs of the open-plan sitting room, watching and listening to their conversation.

This idea of a “watcher” was confirmed later, when Simon’s friend climbed a ladder to inspect the loft. He said that, as he put his head through the opening, he was met by a pair of eyes looking at him, as much as to say:

‘Oops! I’ve been found out!’

They got Ted and Judy to pray, and ask God’s forgiveness for their involvement in things God hates - consulting mediums and being involved in Ouija sessions. Judy also prayed a prayer forgiving her mother for abandoning them and going off to live with her lesbian lover. She also asked the LORD’s forgiveness for turning her back on him, after inviting Jesus into her life.

Simon cut the ungodly soul ties between her, her mother and maternal grandmother. Judy later said she had felt something leave her, when he did this. They prayed round the house, sprinkling each room with consecrated water, as a sign of the Holy Spirit cleansing the house of the resident evil, and invited the Holy Spirit to come in and take control of the home and the family.

A short while later Judy phoned to say everything had settled down and they felt a sense of peace in the house.

Cleansing A House Dedicated To Buddha

In January 2013 Simon was asked to see a young couple, who were having problems with an evil atmosphere in their house. The wife in particular was afraid of being left alone in the house with two young children, when her husband was on night duty.

It transpired that the couple had bought the house the previous year. The estate agent’s website still carried details of the house, showing statues of Buddha in several of the rooms. It suggested that the previous owners had dedicated the house to Buddha.

Before visiting the family, Simon prayed and asked the LORD to give him the strategy for dealing with the situation. He sensed the LORD say:

‘There are two aspects to this: (a) The Place; and (b) The People. And there are two stages: (a) Dealing with the darkness; and (b) Letting in the light.’

Armed with these instructions, Simon looked at 2 Chronicles Chapter 29, in which God tells Hezekiah how to cleanse the Temple in Jerusalem, which had been desecrated by King Ahaz. God tells Hezekiah to do three things: (1) Consecrate the priests. (2) Cleanse the Temple of the evil. (3) Consecrate the Temple.

Listening to the couple revealed several things. They were both lovely young Christians, but admitted they had wandered away a bit from their first love in all the busyness of life with two young children. They also admitted they had not consulted God before buying the house. The first thing to do was to re-establish the Lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives, which they readily agreed to do, using the *Prayer Inviting Jesus Christ To Be LORD of Every Area of My Life*.

After consecrating a jug of salt water to God as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, Simon invited the husband, as head of the household, to cleanse all the rooms in the property, including outhouses, by sprinkling them with the consecrated water. Finally, they consecrated the property to the LORD Jesus Christ by anointing the door-posts and lintel of each room and the entrances/exits with anointing oil and commanded all demonic spirits to leave, without harming anyone, to go to the place appointed for them by Christ, and not return.

A few days later, Simon received an email to say that since then the whole family had enjoyed uninterrupted nights' sleeps and the evil presence was gone.

Off The ‘Jellies’set free from drug addiction

The case of Kelly highlighted the importance of pastoral ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit, as well as non-directive, person-centred counselling. Simon was told she was so violent the staff at the local council housing department refused to deal with her. She was also abusing drugs and alcohol, was in a violent relationship, and had been involved in the occult. As he watched her walking down the main street from the church office, the question was how could anyone get close to help her?

Some months later the phone rang in the office. It was Gordon, the manager of the church drop-in centre.

‘Simon, I’m up at the drop-in centre. Could you come and pray with Kelly?’

When Simon arrived, Kelly was sitting in a dilapidated sofa, drinking coffee, and smoking like a chimney. She looked terrible - peroxide white hair swept straight back to reveal the haggard face of a drug addict with eyes sunk in black sockets. She smiled a weak sort of smile as she greeted Simon. She was shaking all over.

It transpired that Kelly had been ‘off the jellies’ for two weeks. This in itself was something of a miracle, because she had been addicted to Temazepam capsules (‘jellies’) for twelve years.

‘I need help, Simon,’ Kelly said.

‘Well, I can’t actually do anything for you, Kelly, but Jesus can. Are you willing to invite Jesus Christ to be LORD of every area of your life, and to fill you with His Holy Spirit?’

‘Aye!,’ said Kelly.

So Simon handed her a copy of *A Prayer Inviting Jesus to Be LORD of Every Area of Our Lives*. It includes confession of sin and asking God’s forgiveness, because Jesus died on the Cross in our place. They read it over together.

Haltingly, shaking like a leaf, and encouraged by Gordon and Simon, Kelly prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come and take over control of every area of her broken life. At the end they signed their names as witnesses to this simple, and yet momentous, act of faith.

Kelly asked if she could come to talk through some of the issues in her life. And so it was agreed that she would come for six weekly sessions. It was also agreed that, if she stayed the course and stayed off the 'jellies,' she could go for a break to a Christian family in Argyll, who ran a haven for broken people like Kelly.

With the help of a friend, who acted as a taxi woman, Kelly attended punctually every week for the six weeks. Each week she poured out some sordid detail of the abuse and hardship she had endured since childhood. Several times Simon and Gordon's wife were in tears, as they shared her pain. At the end of the six weeks, she was still off the jellies, and so they took her down to a lovely spot in Argyll with views across the Sound to Arran and seals playing around the rocks - a place of beauty and tranquility.

Two days later Simon got a phone call from the couple, who ran the centre, to say that Kelly had done a runner. She had been really blessed by David, his wife and their two young children, but there was just one problem - she could not handle unconditional love for the first time in her life.

Some months later she turned up at the church office to announce she was still off the jellies, and asked if Simon would write her a reference. She had decided to try to make a fresh start, and was hoping to apply for a house in another town in the central belt of Scotland. Simon told her he would have to tell them about her violent past, but also that Jesus was changing her from the inside out.

Sure enough, there was a phone call from a housing officer to say that Kelly had applied for a house and was asking for a reference. A short while later she phoned to say she had moved into a small house in a housing estate, and invited Simon and Irene, the Church Administrator, round to see her in her new surroundings.

When they arrived, they could hardly believe it was the same woman. Her face had filled out and she had lost the hunted look she had the previous year. Her son, who was still on drugs, was staying with her, and there were no carpets on the floor, just bare boards. But she was still 'clean' and enjoying the Christian love and fellowship of a little Gospel Hall just along the road.

It was another miracle of God's grace and testimony to the truth, as the apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:8:

'The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.'

Kelly was living proof.

‘You On Drugs Or Something?’can a Christian be demonised?

It was a beautiful summer's evening on Sunday, 4th June, 2000, when the doorbell rang at about half past nine. When Simon answered it, there was Gordon*.

‘Can I have a word with you?’ he asked.

‘Come on in. It’s good to see you.’

It was several years since Simon had seen him at the Scripture Union (SU) meetings at the local academy.

‘I need to speak to you. I tried to speak to the minister at church, but he just said:

‘You on drugs, or something?’

‘The thing is, I spent about four hours last night on the phone, speaking in a demonic tongue to my friend Tom.’*

It turned out it had been Tom who had suggested he contact Simon, after being really worried by Gordon's bizarre behaviour.

The immediate question was: How could someone, who had made a commitment to Christ several years earlier and had apparently been a Christian all that time, suddenly start manifesting evidence of the demonic?

To begin with Gordon was very reluctant to believe the problems were supernatural, and was not sure he really wanted to go God's way. He tried to rationalise away the recent events, and was not convinced he needed to repent and invite Jesus Christ to be LORD of every area of his life.

Simon lent Gordon a copy of *The Bondage Breaker* by Neil Anderson and a copy of *Steps To Freedom In Christ*, and told him to phone him, when he was ready to let Jesus Christ be LORD of every area of his life.

Gordon phoned the next day at lunchtime to say he wanted to deal with the things harassing him, and they agreed to meet two days later. When he arrived, they began with prayer and looking at Simon's Bible reading for that day in *Our Daily Bread*, which was headed *‘The High Cost Of Sin.’*

As they talked, a number of issues surfaced, including Gordon's attempts to meet his crucial needs for love, self-worth and security in ungodly ways; generational issues, stemming from his father's atheist and rationalistic attitudes; occultism through involvement with horoscopes, spiritualism, and books by Stephen King; and sexual relationships outside marriage, borne out of a deep sense of loneliness and hunger for love. The trigger for a lot of what had been happening appeared to be a deliberate act of rebellion against God's laws about sex.

In August 1990 Gordon had been baptised in the Holy Spirit, and a few months later had been baptised in water. But the very next night after his baptism, he had deliberately slept with a girl for the first time. That single, simple act of rebellion against God's law regarding sexual relationships led to a descent into addiction to drink, pornography, sex, and smoking. He had also become involved in occultism through his ex-girlfriend, with whom he had broken up a few months earlier.

Simon began by getting Gordon to invite Jesus Christ to be LORD of every area of his life - something he said he could not do at the start. So they read the passage in Philippians 2:8-11, where Paul says that *'at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father.'*

Then Simon bound whatever was preventing Gordon from inviting Jesus to be LORD, and they looked at Scripture passages affirming our identity in Christ as Christians. Eventually, Gordon was able to pray and invite Jesus to be LORD of every area of his life.

As they read Scriptures, such as Daniel 9:4-19 and Leviticus 26:40-42, asking God to forgive not only our sins but also the sins of our ancestors, and asked God to cut any ungodly links with Gordon's forebears and break any generational curses resulting from involvement in the occult, he reported a whole lot of stuff lifting off him.

During one session a spirit of nicotine addiction left with a roar, its departure confirmed later by Gordon's total deliverance from smoking. He also knew freedom from alcoholism, addiction to pornography and satanic rock music. This proved to be just the start of a lengthy process, during which there were demonic manifestations, sometimes in the presence of others, who reported seeing a dark shape descend on Gordon at one point and smelled a foul sulphurous smell.

Over the next couple of years, as Gordon continued in fellowship, he sensed God calling him to Bible college and eventually into pastoral work, helping others with the kinds of problems he had experienced, as part of God's process of recycling us as wounded healers, as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.'

Ministry & Manifestations

Since Simon's call and commission in 1983, he and Andrea had seen an increasing number of individuals with various kinds of problems. They began by saying they had nothing to offer the individuals, except a listening ear and prayer in the Name of Jesus Christ. Each ministry time began with a prayer, inviting Jesus to come and take control of the proceedings. Then they would sit and listen, as the folk shared about some problem or other troubling them. These ranged from relationship problems with marriage partners and children to problems arising from deliberate sin and rebellion against God's commandments. At the end of each session Simon would offer to pray with the person(s) before s/he left, and often witnessed the Holy Spirit ministering God's love to the person in a wonderfully gentle way.

There were some occasions, however, when they discovered the problems arose from some form of enemy infiltration, or harassment, of the individual. To begin with this caused some confusion, because they were being told from the pulpit that Christians could not be 'demon-possessed,' and that there was no scriptural warrant for what was called 'deliverance ministry.' The problem was they were being confronted with individuals, who were manifesting a very different kind of spirit from the Holy Spirit, when Simon prayed and invited Jesus to come in the power of his Holy Spirit and minister to them.

Simon had witnessed this first hand in Dundee, after preaching a sermon on the deliverance of a slave-girl in Philippi. The irony in that case was that the man had not even heard the sermon, but appeared after the service and began manifesting demonic spirits as they talked in the manse. The first time this happened in Simon's house was when Gladys* came to see them after an evening service.

Gladys was a member of the fellowship and had been a Christian for several years. Her father had been a drunkard and a Freemason, but had shown her affection. Her mother went out to dances, leaving Gladys to look after her brother and two sisters. There had been incidents of sexual abuse by a stranger and an uncle, when she was small. Her mother suffered pre-senile dementia, and was shunned by her father and his family.

Gladys married Harry* and they had three children - a boy and two girls. Harry's mother committed suicide (Harry had found her), and her father had died after discharging himself from hospital with pleurisy. Harry always rejected Gladys' requests for emotional support, and so she withdrew more and more into her own world. She became interested in Zen Buddhism, Transcendental Meditation (TM), and Spiritualism, where she claimed she had contacted her dead mother, and had encouraged her children to become involved in the occult. The result of her own involvement was that she suffered from nightmares, in which she felt she was being strangled by something.

Over the next hour and a half Simon and Andrea listened to Gladys pouring out her troubles before coming to prayer. As they waited on the LORD, they sensed there were a number of issues that needed to be addressed. These included: clear demonic bondage and harassment, resulting from her own and her father's involvement in the occult; the need for her to forgive her father and mother; and the need to break a number of curses Harry had uttered over her, before she left him.

Andrea also was given a 'word' and a 'picture,' in which she saw Gladys as a little girl being approached by a man, who exposed himself. But as he approached, she saw Gladys hold up the shield of faith, which got bigger and bigger the nearer the danger came. The 'word' was that Gladys needed to raise that shield of faith God had given her as a little girl.

The second time they saw Gladys, after chatting over a cup of coffee, Simon eventually asked her what was happening. And that's when things started to get interesting! For as they prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to come and minister to Gladys, she started retching and reporting that things were surfacing inside her. Simon quickly fetched a plastic bin and a box of tissues, as they witnessed the LORD dealing with a number of demonic spirits that had infiltrated Gladys, including Depression; Fear; Despair; Self-Pity; Loneliness; and Suicide. A spirit of Death also manifested, which was the result of Gladys nursing the dying for eleven years. Another spirit, that was associated with her job as a nurse, was a spirit of Divination, which had come into her through a blind woman on the ward, where she worked, who had insisted on telling her fortune.

Once again Andrea was given a 'picture' and a 'word' about the Sword of the Spirit, which is the *rhema* Word of God, and the need for Gladys to wage aggressive warfare and not to be passive. They also prayed and asked the LORD to break the ungodly ties and effects of her father's Freemasonry, her husband's Tarot and other occult activities. They also came against spirits of Resentment, Bitterness and Anger. When Simon mentioned Anger, Gladys said: '*Not Anger, Disappointment.*'

Interestingly, the previous day Simon had been listening to a tape by Derek Prince entitled 'Cult & Occult: Satan's Snares Disclosed,' in which Derek Prince highlighted three areas -

- A. *Divination* (foretelling the future; counterfeit revelation & prediction);
- B. *Witchcraft* (including spells, curses and hypnosis); and
- C. *Sorcery* (charms, music, dancing and drugs).

Using Acts 19:17-19, he showed how believers need to:

- (1) Confess their sins;
- (2) Repent of and renounce forbidden practices; and
- (3) Sever all contact with past occult practices and contacts.

Gladys reported feeling as if she was being torn apart inside, as the various demonic spirits surfaced and were dealt with by the Holy Spirit. Derek Prince's comments about demonic spirits being organized in groups appeared to be borne out. These were:

- 1. Fear; Depression; Self-Pity; Despair; Suicide and Loneliness,- the Control spirit
- 2. Spirits of Death, Depression and Suicide
- 3. Spirits of Divination including Astrology; Tarot (which entered when Gladys was forced to listen as a blind woman told her fortune on night duty in the hospital)
- 4. A familial spirit of Freemasonry from her father's heavy involvement. Gladys used to wear his Masonic apron as a girl and knew all the Masonic handshakes
- 5. Spirits of Rebellion, Resentment, Bitterness and Disappointment

The manifestations that occurred as Gladys was delivered included:

- (1) Cold feelings ('*The opposite of hot flushes*') as spirits of Death & Suicide left
- (2) At one point Gladys reported feeling "*very hot all over*"
- (3) "Loneliness" caused a sharp pain in her left-hand side near her hip as it left
- (4) "Tarot" caused a sharp pain in the right-hand side of her chest as it left.

Can Christians Be Demonised?

This was Simon and Andrea's first real introduction to the extent to which Christians can be infiltrated by demonic spirits, if they have opened themselves up to them by disobeying God's Law. There were two problems:

First of all, speakers were stating categorically from the pulpit that a Christian cannot be 'demon-possessed.' There are two problems with such statements -

- (a) There is no word in Greek for the English phrase '*demon-possessed*.'
Individuals are described as being '*demonized*,' or as '*having an evil, or unclean, spirit*.'
- (b) Different people are described as demonized to a greater or lesser extent, from 'having an unclean spirit' to the other extreme, represented by the Gadarene demoniac, who was inhabited, or taken over, by a 'Legion' of five thousand demonic spirits. Obviously, a Christian, inhabited by the Holy Spirit, cannot be taken over completely by demonic spirits unless s/he has deliberately broken God's laws and given Satan legal authority to harass him/her.

The other problem was that Christians can be, and sometimes are, afflicted by demonic spirits and infiltrated by them, where they have given satan the legal authority to do so.

Entry Access Points For Demonic Spirits

- A. Generational spirits, which have been passed down a family through deliberate sin, or unwittingly.
- B. Idolatry, including Freemasonry, and other religions.
- C. Immorality, involving sexual activity outside marriage and forbidden in the Bible.
- D. The occult, ranging from fortune telling, horoscopes and divination, using Tarot cards, Ouija boards, pendulums, or crystals, to witchcraft, sorcery and Satanism.
- E. Curses, resulting from God's judgement of sin or as a result of curses placed by satanic agents.
- F. Trauma from dramatic incidents either in the womb, at birth or from accidents

In the early Church so many converts came out of pagan backgrounds, that it was common for individuals to be taken through a process of deliverance before they were baptised in water. With more and more individuals involved in the occult and witchcraft today, it is good to know Jesus is still setting the captives free.

Forgiveness & Healing.....unlocking prison doors

Jean had suffered from chest problems for many years, even before her husband Jim had died leaving her a widow. Every winter the chronic bronchitis from which she suffered grew worse, and she always seemed breathless. So when she heard that The Reverend George Fox, a Church of Scotland minister, was to hold a healing service at St Columba's Parish Church, Kirkintilloch, on the 5th of June, 1989, she decided she would go and see if the LORD would do what the medical profession apparently could not.

Simon received a phone call from Jean, asking if he would take her to the healing service. George and Doris Fox were well known for a Christian ministry of prayer and healing, based in the Healing Centre at Braehead, near Crossford in Lanarkshire. The place had been gifted in trust by the late Sir Hugh Fraser, and many testified over the years to the way in which God had healed them of all kinds of conditions, many of them as a last resort after conventional medicine had failed. Simon's role in the proceedings was just as a taxi man, he thought.

The service consisted of a few hymns and prayers, followed by a reading of Scripture and a short sermon, in which Mr Fox outlined the healing ministry of Jesus, pointing out the church's ministry of healing over the centuries. He then invited anyone wanting to receive ministry to come down to the front, where he or one of the team would pray and ask Jesus to minister.

Simon asked Jean if she wanted him to accompany her down to the front.

'You do whatever you feel the LORD telling you to do,' was her reply.

Simon didn't really feel he was to be involved, and so he sat and watched as a line of people made their way down to the front for prayer and laying on of hands. When she returned to the pew, Jean said:

'He says my chest is clear.'

Inwardly Simon was pleased she felt the LORD had ministered His love to her. Now they could go home. And that was when he found himself asking her a question.

'Jean, how long have you suffered from chest problems?'

'Twenty years,' she replied.

'Was it associated with a particular event?'

'Yes. My sister told me never to see a favourite aunt ever again.'

'What happened, when she said that?'

'I collapsed to the ground, unable to breathe.'

What Jean described is what used to be called *hysterical conversion*, or '*conversion hysteria*.' It occurs when someone experiences a shock or trauma of some kind. The mind, assailed by the sudden shock, feels overwhelmed and transmits the emotional pain to the body, where it is converted into a physical symptom. In Jean's case, the shock of being told by her sister that she was never to see her beloved aunt ever again was almost like a death sentence. It was so shocking that her body shut down, and she collapsed to the ground, unable to breathe.

But there was more to come. Although Simon had gone with Jean to the service with no other purpose than as a taxi man, he found another question forming in his mind.

'How do you get on with your sister?' Simon asked.

'She hates me,' said Jean.

'Is she older or younger than you?' Simon said.

'Older,' she replied.

'How much older is your sister than you?'

'Seventeen months.'

'What happened when you were born?'

'Ten days later my mother died of child bed fever.'

It was the key that unlocked the prison door for Jean. Unknown to either of the women, the hatred Jean's sister felt towards her stemmed from this tragic event. To her infant mind the arrival of her younger sister must have been associated with the disappearance of the mother. And although the child could not work out what she was feeling, her feelings of pain at the disappearance of the mother turned to feelings of rage against the one, who was associated with the pain.

As they sat there in the pew, it was clear that the LORD in His goodness had just uncovered the causes of Jean's chest problems and was obviously healing her. Simon took Jean home and over a cup of tea they chatted about what had happened. At one point he said to Jean:

'You realise what you have to do to be healed?

'I've got to forgive my sister, haven't I?'

'Yes!'

'But what if she is not willing to forgive me?' Jean said.

'That's her problem,' Simon said.

So there and then, Jean bowed her head and prayed, forgiving her sister, for the pain of not being able to see her nephew and niece over the years, and thanking God for his grace and mercy in healing her bronchitis.

Jean's sister later developed cancer, from which she eventually died without being reconciled to Jean.

Jean's Christian GP agreed her chest problems appeared to have been healed. Her healing took place when she was seventy. She died in May 2020, just seven months short of her hundredth birthday.

Surprised By Healing.....three cracks and 'I'm healed!'

In February, 2006, Simon was invited to lead a workshop on '*Discerning The Spirits*' as part of an Alpha day conference on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, entitled *Gifted To Serve*, being held at Blairbeth-Burnside Parish Church, Cambuslang. The workshop looked at how to tell the difference between the real and the fake in spiritual healing.

At the end of the conference everyone met together in the sanctuary for a time of praise and worship, during which an invitation was given to anyone, who would like prayer ministry, to go forward. Each of the workshop leaders was available to pray with those who came forward. Simon had been sitting at the back of the sanctuary, when the invitation was issued, and found himself standing on his own, while people went forward to the front for ministry from the other leaders.

The time of ministry, praise and worship was drawing to a close, when a young man came towards him. He explained he was involved in youth ministry in one of the Glasgow churches, and had swithered about coming forward for prayer, but did so because he had suffered severe neck and shoulder pain for several years as a result of a serious accident. Simon suggested they pray and invite the LORD to minister into his pain.

After inviting the Holy Spirit to come and minister, the young man began praising God for a new and deeper sense of our heavenly Father's love, and it was clear that the Holy Spirit was ministering in a lovely way: so much so that Simon suggested he sit on a chair to avoid falling over!

A short time later Simon sensed the LORD highlighting certain things in the man's life, which he needed to address and, as he began to pray into these, there was a very definite reaction, or check, as if something or someone did not want to let go. As Simon continued to pray and rebuke it in the Name of the LORD Jesus Christ, there were three loud cracks and the young man sat up and exclaimed:

'I'm healed. I'm healed.'

Almost immediately he began to praise and worship God and broke into uncontrollable laughter, which was all the more noticeable because by this time the praise and worship time had finished, and the minister was bringing the proceedings to a close with prayer.

Below is an email account he sent a short time later, describing what he experienced that day. All the praise and glory go to our heavenly Father, who had met with and healed his child in such a beautiful and dramatic way.

Email Report of Experiencing Healing

'On Saturday 18th, February, 2006, I attended an Alpha Equipping conference, where the presence of the Lord was very powerful throughout the day. At the end of the conference a time of worship and prayer ministry was offered. I had been suffering excruciating discomfort and debilitating pain in my back and neck for many months. The source of my discomfort and pain was unknown and under investigation by doctors.

Earlier in the day I had told myself that I would not go up for prayer ministry, if it was offered, even though I was in a lot of pain and discomfort. As the worship started, my heart became heavy and I knew that the Lord was calling me to receive prayer ministry. I spent a good ten minutes wrestling with God about going forward, but eventually I gave in.

I had no specific prayer requests in mind, other than the fact that I was feeling weak and I was in pain. I asked the person, who was praying for me, to pray into my pain and physical weakness. I also made it clear that I wanted to give thanks to the Lord for His love and His goodness in my life.

As I began to receive prayer ministry, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me in a very powerful way. God began to speak to me and show me many different pictures. I shared these pictures and words as I received them, and more revelation came as they were prayed into. There was a strong sense of direction and leadership by the Spirit.

The first important part of this prayer time was when I began to receive the fullness of the Father's love. I was completely overcome by an awesome sense of peace and joy in my heart. My heavenly Father then reminded me of some situations in my past that had brought hurt and brokenness into my life. As floods of tears poured from my eyes, I knew that I was receiving emotional healing from these past situations.

The person praying for me then began to pray into where the Spirit had led him and spiritual warfare ensued. This was the second important part of this prayer time, as the healing process had begun. It was clear there were enemy strongholds present in my life and I was called into repentance. As I received deliverance ministry, the Lord continued to stay with me, giving direction by revealing pictures and words to myself and to the person ministering to me.

God made it very clear to me when everything had been dealt with. I was given a picture of a beautiful purple single tulip that was closed over. I asked the Lord what this picture meant, and, as I watched, the tulip opened up and fully blossomed into an explosive exhibition of colour. I was absolutely moved by the love and joy that I felt in my heart.

This was the big moment though. Throughout this time of ministry, I had been seated and bent over facing my feet. Once the prayer time had finished, I went to sit back up straight in my chair. As I slowly sat up straight, the top of my back cracked three or four times, and it seemed as if everything and everyone around me completely stopped. There was a major shift in the Spirit, and the atmosphere totally changed for me. I knew immediately that I had been physically healed by the power of the Lord. All I could say was:

'I've been healed, I've been healed. There's no pain in my back or tension in my neck.'

That is a moment that I will NEVER forget. I felt completely different. I had been released emotionally and physically in the name of Jesus Christ - what a glorious feeling it is to experience and acknowledge that. That evening, I received more emotional healing through prayer and a massive amount of love and encouragement from my Heavenly Daddy. Amen.'

Postscript

During a telephone conversation in 2011, a minister friend reported that a young man, who was helping them with some outreach work with young people, had shared how the LORD had healed him some years earlier.

Simon said:

'Oh that must be...'

His friend was amazed and asked how Simon knew his name.

'I was there and had the privilege of witnessing the LORD healing him that day,'

Simon replied.

Telling The Real From The Fake

Simon had been invited to share in leading a workshop at a Conference on Healing at Carberry Tower, Musselburgh, from 13th to 15th November, 2006, on the subject of 'Counterfeit Healing.' The purpose of the workshop was *'to examine the differences between healing that claims to be Christian and the various counterfeits to be found in the postmodern world, in order to avoid being deceived by the fakes, while seeking to be obedient to Jesus' commission.'*

On the first evening, as he was preparing to go to bed, Simon had two pictures. The first was of a narrow country lane with banks on either side. Sticking out of the left-hand bank was a pipe, which was spewing sewage onto the road. Mystified, he said:

'LORD, I know you are saying something, but I haven't a clue what it is!'

As he was about to turn off the light, he got another picture, this time of a six-lane highway with an enormous road laying machine coming straight towards him. Again, he confessed he did not understand what the LORD was saying, and asked his forgiveness, as he put the light out.

The next morning he woke shortly after 5am with the words:

'I am building a Highway of Holiness,' which are actually words from Isaiah.

*'Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts: "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. [.....] And a highway will be there; it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion or any ferocious beast will be found there. Only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.'*¹ (emphasis added)

¹ Chapter 35 verses 3-10

In the workshop, they looked at the differences between Christian and Counterfeit Spiritual Healing in terms of six features:

The Context? Christian? Or other?

The Process? Prayer to God the Father? Or to some other person or none?

By Whose Authority? In the name of Jesus Christ? Or some other, or none?

Who Are The Agents? Born again Christians in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Acknowledgement of Sin? Is there confession, repentance & renunciation of sin?

The Fruit? Is the person drawn closer to God through faith in Jesus Christ, and does s/he display the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

[Note: Occult healing ultimately results in bondage, including depression.]

They watched a DVD showing examples of different approaches, including alternative therapies being used in the NHS, involving the laying on of hands by practitioners claiming to be spiritual healers; an oil executive in Aberdeen, who was healed of a rugby injury that was scheduled for surgery, as he sat in a healing service conducted by the Minister of St Mark's Church, Aberdeen, who shared in leading the workshop; and various occult healing approaches, including *reiki* and crystal therapy. They also watched a video clip of a Benny Hinn rally at Norwich Football Club ground, showing the techniques used by one American tele-evangelist and his claims of healing in the name of Jesus Christ.

Jesus expressly warned his followers in Matthew 24:24 not to go looking for signs and wonders, and added that the only sign he would give a wicked and adulterous generation was the sign of Jonah. If they don't believe in his death and resurrection, no amount of signs and wonders will convince them, he explained in Matthew 12:38-40. And yet in spite of Jesus' warnings, thousands of gullible Christians flock to rallies organised by charlatans, who use well-known crowd manipulation techniques, involving the use of loud music, prolonged rhythmic chanting, clapping and whipping up of emotion, to induce a trance-like state, used by many stage hypnotists to gain control over a large crowd.

The workshop was certainly not without excitement, due to enemy activity, which came in the form of disruptive behaviour by a spiritualist, who refused to say '*Jesus is my LORD,*' when challenged to do so!

There were also some heated exchanges between some, who objected to doubts being raised about the Benny Hinn rally. Several of the participants were outraged at the suggestion that Benny Hinn was a fraudster under investigation by the US tax authorities, whose lavish lifestyle was funded by donations from vulnerable people, and whose claims of divine healing were not substantiated by any medical evidence.

On the 26th of April, 2011, Channel 4 broadcast a film titled *Miracles For Sale*, in which Derren Brown sought to expose the fraudulent behaviour of several American self-styled healers, including Morris Cerullo and Benny Hinn. The programme featured a former scuba-instructor being trained in the techniques used by TV evangelists and healers to dupe the sincere, but gullible, at a healing service in a Christian fellowship. It showed just how readily some Christians believe almost anything, if it is dressed up in the religious language of a spurious kind of Pentecostalism, and the lack of discernment in many, who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ.

Interestingly, healing in Isaiah 35 ¹ is associated with holiness. No more wandering down country lanes running with sewage and filth. God's children will know healing and *shalom*, when they repent of their waywardness and return to their first love, along a new highway he is building - a Highway of Holiness. As Jesus pointed out, you can tell the fakes from the kind of fruit they produce, in terms of whether or not folk are healed and the sort of lifestyles they display.

Simon read the Isaiah passage at the Communion Service, with which the conference ended, and reminded folk that the cross and resurrection of Christ are the origin of our salvation and healing. As he was leaving after lunch on the final day, Billy Kelly, Minister of Troqueer Parish Church, Dumfries, stopped him and said:

'When you were praying at the Communion Service and reading about the Highway of Holiness, I believe the LORD gave me a word for you. He says he is putting you on a new highway.'

What neither he nor Simon knew that afternoon was that the LORD was going to enable Simon to develop a discipleship course on the Internet highway just two months down the road to fulfill a 'word' he had spoken to Simon at 10:30pm on the 30th October.

¹ Isaiah Chapter 35

‘Philippians 3:10’.....a ‘word’ for a website

Just a fortnight before the Carberry Conference, Simon had woken at 10:30pm on the 30th October, from feeling unwell earlier in the evening, with the words:

‘Philippians 3:10.’

Straight away he recognized it as God giving him a key to developing a discipleship course, which he had been praying about for several months. Within a month he had the outline matrix of a course based on Paul’s statement of his goals as a follower of Christ, which he states are:

‘I want to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and share in the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.’¹

The basic shape of the course was modelled around Paul’s three goals - *Know God; Know Power; and What About Evil & Suffering?*


To begin with, Simon began writing booklets on different topics, like *Listening To God*, but soon realised it would be a huge logistical challenge to produce large numbers. In January 2007, he was aware of the idea of using the internet. There was just one problem: he had no experience of producing web pages, never mind designing a website. In February, he went into hospital for elective surgery to remove his colon. After a successful eight-and-a-half-hour operation, things seemed to be going well until five days later, when he was taken back into theatre for emergency surgery to deal with surgical sepsis. The surgeon. who operated. said he was looking at someone who was dying, in spite of his best efforts. The LORD obviously had other ideas, and Simon left hospital five weeks later than intended.

Over the next two years, he waited on the LORD for inspiration on what to write, and learned to create web pages and a primitive-looking website, which his son eventually uploaded for him in January 2009. His feelings about discipleship were reinforced by reading Dallas Willard’s *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings On Discipleship*,² which was published about the same time.

¹ Philippians 3:10; ² Dallas Willard *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings On Discipleship* Harper One, 2009

The 3:10 Discipleship Course.....worldwide


After several different versions of the original site, a major revision of the website, designed by a professional web designer, was uploaded in 2019 with a brand new Home page as shown below.



Discipleship
Course


"to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and
share in the fellowship of his sufferings"
Philippians 3:10

[Home](#) [Course Outline](#) [Know God](#) [Know Power](#) [Share Passion](#) [Resources](#)




Welcome To The 3:10 Course

a course designed to help you know the person, power and passion of Jesus Christ




EVIDENCE FOR GOD

This unit looks at the evidence for God and the roles of faith and reason.



EXPERIENCE OF GOD

This unit looks at how to get right with God and experience the reality of life in the Spirit.



WHAT ABOUT EVIL?

This unit looks at the problem of evil and God's answer to all the suffering in the world.

With the advent of ZOOM video-conferencing in the pandemic of 2020, the course has been used for groups including *Cariboo Christian Life Fellowship* in British Columbia and elsewhere. It has confirmed the 'word' the LORD gave Billy Kelly on the 15th of November, 2006!

Called To Be Fishers Of Men

Jack had grown up hearing about this man Jesus, who healed the sick, cast out demons and preached the good news of the Kingdom. He overcame sin, death, and separation from God the Father by his own sacrificial death on a cross and resurrection from the dead. He promised all those who trust in his perfect sacrifice and walk in obedience to him that they would not taste death, but live forever with him. The question that kept haunting him was:

“What do you do with the problem of death? Jesus promised all those who follow him will not taste death, but will live with him forever.”

This had created a deep hunger in Jack to find Jesus, but by the time he reached his teenage years, he had become disillusioned with his own carnality and that of others he saw in church. At the age of fourteen he began to hang around guys, who smoked and took drugs as part of a general rebellion against his Christian upbringing.

Two or three years later he met up with a friend he had known at school, who was different from the other Christians he had met. She had a love for others and a vitality, which left him saying to himself:

‘Jesus, I don’t think I know you. You need to show me how to do that.’

After leaving school he worked for a short time for an uncle as a civil engineer, but hated the prospect of spending the rest of his life working till sixty-five for what? It was the start of a quest for the meaning of life and an interest in philosophy. He started going to a church in Glasgow, where he made a couple of friends.

In May 2009 at the age of twenty he was baptised in water and was given as his baptismal verse Philippians 3:10, where Paul says his goal is:

‘to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and share in his sufferings.’

The problem was he had not yet been converted by the Spirit of the Living God.

God, I Want Out

In June that year he went with a group of non-Christians to Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. The others were all into drinking, drugs and partying and after a week trying to pray, he eventually gave in and decided to give up on any attempt to live the Christian life. He got involved in instructing scuba diving and wake-boarding as well as being on 'suicide watch' for folk, who got drunk or spaced out on drugs after they broke up with girls they had met.

On his return to Glasgow he had decided:

'God, I want out. I don't believe in you.'

New Year 2010 the brakes were off and he had his first sexual encounter with a girl from his previous church, who was married but getting a divorce. It was the start of a number of short-term relationships, which were evidence of a longing for intimacy.

The Search For Power And Knowledge

Around this time Jack was introduced to "*The Game*" by Neil Strauss on how-to pick-up girls and began studying the art of persuasion and indulging in drugs, sex, hedonism, debauchery, NLP, hypnosis, and magick. He began to watch 'darker' videos, staring at mirrors, drawing a magic circle, and learning how to cast spells. At one point he was shown a picture of a dagger and a Bible and told it was probably the reason his spells were not working. The solution was:

"Stab the Bible in an act of cutting yourself off from Christianity. We are the 'Aware Ones' The more you sever conscience, the more powerful you become. We are the Shepherds; the rest are like Sheep."

All of a sudden, he was sickened and threw his laptop across the room. The problem in his own words was:

"God kept showing up whenever I was looking for power and knowledge."

He knew it wasn't right but his conscience was becoming seared. He did not have any demonic experiences, but felt as if God was removing his hand from protecting him.

Walking Near The Edge

He went about with a guy, who was a leader and friendly with gangsters, and with 'Wee Man'. They would hang about in bars, drinking and smoking weed. They even hatched a plan to go travelling to Canada and S. America. In September 2011 he had an encounter on Facebook, while smoking weed, with the girl friend from school who asked:

"How's it going?"

In the mirror of her question he saw his life was a mess.

"Jesus still loves you, Jack," she said.

He felt a sudden fear come over him and sensed the words:

"You have to choose. If you go to Canada, My grace stops here, because you now become My enemy."

He took his druggie friend to the airport, but gave up on going to Canada. In spite of this, he was still partying, doing drugs, and so on, but did not know how to get out of it. He called a friend from church, who had befriended him earlier, and ended up weeping at messing up so badly. The friend just listened and encouraged Jack to go back to church. He went, but with his hood up, feeling:

"I don't know why I'm here."

All the time he wanted to be in Canada and couldn't understand why he wasn't.

Jack's Encounter With The Living God

The turning point came in May 2012, when he heard a sermon on King Ahab's repentance in 1 Kings 21:25-29, which really spoke to him, and proved to be Jack's encounter with God. He ended up on the church carpet, flat on his face, and heard God say:

"I love you, son!"

And as he lay there he experienced a deep sense of repentance and assurance:

"He (Satan) doesn't win me."

Jack thought he was flat out for just five minutes, but apparently it was an hour. He felt as if he was drunk and reported later:

"It was the most insane experience of my life."

Paul& Timothy

In August 2013, he was referred by a Christian friend to Simon for possible counseling. When they met, Jack said:

"Can I be your Timothy and you be my Paul?"

When Simon showed him the outline of *The 3:10 Discipleship Course* website,

Jack exclaimed: *"That's my baptismal verse!"*

So began a journey for the two of them that lasted the next seven years!

Deliverance

It became clear at the start that Jack had been involved in the occult, and so he and Simon met to deal with whatever the enemy had done to infiltrate Jack with demonic spirits. They began with establishing the LORDship of Christ in Jack, and adopted a protocol by Karl Payne¹ for the deliverance session, involving a declaration of the ground rules, prohibiting spirits from speaking to Simon except through Jack's mind.

When Simon commanded the control spirit(s) to identify themselves to Jack, he reported they included Dagon - the Fish god of the Philistines²; Ra - the Egyptian Sun god,³ Gethel - a dark angel responsible for secret and hidden things; and Jezebel,⁴ involved with idolatry, sexual immorality and witchcraft. There followed a time of confession of sin, repentance and renunciation of Jack's involvement in mind control, idolatry, divination, sorcery and sexual immorality. This was followed by a time of ministry in the Name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When Jack visited Simon a few days later, he reported:

"They're all outside now and I can think straight."

¹ K. Payne *Spiritual Warfare: Christians, Demonization & Deliverance Cross Training Press, 2008*; ² 1 Samuel 5:1-5; ³ Exodus 10:21-23; ⁴ 1 Kings 18 and 19; Revelation 2:19-26

Disciplined Discipleship

Jack and Simon met to explore the whole business of Christian discipleship. It began with how to listen to God and test what we hear, to avoid being deceived by our own fleshly ideas, the world's way of thinking in an age of scientific rationalism and moral relativism, and how to recognize the enemy's attempts to deceive us.

An important part at this stage was to develop a disciplined daily walk with Jesus, practising four spiritual disciplines Jesus practised to maintain our relationship with God: spending time alone with God; listening to God through Bible reading, prayer, meditation and fasting; talking to God in prayer; and praising and worshipping God with lips and life. Other topics included the tripartite structure of human personality of body, soul and spirit; the battle between the old carnal nature that wants to go its own way and the new nature led by the Spirit involving spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit.

Central to the Christian's life is what Jesus' death on the Cross and resurrection achieved for those, who have been born again. They looked at what it means to be born *anōthen* from above supernaturally by the Spirit; the meaning of baptism in water and baptism in Spirit; and how to use the weapons God has given us to win spiritual battles in our day to day lives. They listened to Henry Blackaby on *Experiencing God; Knowing & Doing the Will of God*, including the ways God speaks to his children and the Crisis of Belief that occurs, when he calls a person to follow him.

The Discipline Of Studying For A Degree

Jack had embarked on a degree course at Glasgow University studying English Literature, Religious Studies and Philosophy, although he was very unsure of how he would manage, because of the years he had spent away from studying since leaving school. He also discovered towards the end of his second year that he suffers from dyslexia. In spite of this, in 2017 he graduated with a 2:1 Honours M.A in English Literature and Philosophy from Glasgow University, to add to a qualification to teach English as a foreign language (TEFL).

When Do We Get To Do The Stuff?

All through his four years of study at university Jack had become very effective at witnessing to friends and people he met in Glasgow, which was providing him with valuable experience of the excitement and pitfalls of sharing the gospel in a society, that has turned its back on God and organised religion. He really enjoyed discussions with his classmates and with people he met in bars and coffee shops, and sensed a real calling to be an evangelist.

This experience also raised questions about why the Church is not more effective at getting the gospel out to the man and woman on the street. Part of his frustration was that he saw little evidence of the Church demonstrating the power of the gospel to change people's lives, which prompted him to challenge Simon one day:

"When do we get to do the stuff?"

They looked at *Doing What Jesus Did* by John and Sonia Decker¹ and watched videos showing students going out on the streets, offering to pray for people. The results appeared remarkable and included instances of individuals claiming to have been healed and delivered from demonic spirits as well as being baptised in swimming pools on confession of sin, repentance and declaration of faith in Jesus Christ.

Jack signed up for a training course in Dublin, and subsequently went on another in Belgium, involving street evangelism and ministry in the power of the Spirit.

The Call to Community in Barcelona

In 2017 Jack had a dream, in which he felt God calling him to go to Barcelona, although he did not know anyone there! When he went, he met a Colombian couple, who offered him accommodation in his parents' house. Josep was a member of a Christian community led by Marc, who were learning what it means to be an apostolic follower of Jesus Christ. After two weeks of training, Jack sensed the LORD gave him a vision of working in Barcelona, so he did not return to Scotland as he had originally intended.

¹ J & S Decker *Doing What Jesus Did: Ministering In the Power Of The Holy Spirit* Creation House, 2015

A Crisis of Belief

Due to unforeseen circumstances the work they had hoped to do was put on hold and after eight months' frustration, Jack was feeling completely lost. He had felt so sure God had called him to Barcelona, but everything was falling apart. Worse still, the hurts of the past and the loneliness were having a devastating effect on his walk with Jesus and his faith was being sorely shaken.

It was at this low point he began looking for ways to learn Spanish and found a language exchange website, where he met a girl from Mexico named Lucia, who seemed very sweet and was willing to help him with his Spanish. They began chatting more often as the weeks went by, but Jack hid the most important fact: that he was a Christian, but was not walking with the LORD. The Good Shepherd, however, was gently boxing him into a corner, and he eventually realized he would have to call Lucia and explain the situation.

Nervous about how she would react, he shared how the LORD had radically changed his life six years earlier, delivering him from all sorts of things and had given him the peace and joy of his presence. The silence at the other end of the phone was punctuated by the sound of crying. Something in his story was resonating in Lucia, who ten years earlier had been a church-goer and thought she believed in God, but had become disillusioned and walked away from the LORD.

Lucia's Story

Her first reaction was one of confusion.

"How come this guy is a Christian? I've never met a Christian guy like this! I mean, I've known some strong, Christian men of God in my life, but never a crazy one like this. His life sounds like some of those stories you read in the Bible. How could God get a random guy talk to me on the internet? It doesn't make any sense. If God did exist, I sure would like to know him like this guy seems to know him. Could God be calling my name after ten years of doing my own thing? No! no! no! This is crazy. I'm surrendering my mind to something I don't even understand. So why am I crying? Why is this sweetness that I'm feeling so hard? Am I really experiencing the Jesus this guy is talking about?"

The Heart Of Jesus

As she put the phone down, Lucia was still crying and wondering if it was real, and she became really scared. What if Jesus was really calling out her name? Finally, three days later she decided to find out who this Jesus was by picking up a Bible and reading one of the Gospels. She still found herself in tears because of the sweet sensation that had not left her. But as soon as she read the first line, she realized why people say God's Word is alive! It seemed as if every word touched every season of her life, and she was feeling Jesus' heart of love for a sin-sick world of suffering and pain - a heart, that in the middle of being despised and rejected by those he came to save, reached out to individuals with forgiveness, freedom and compassion. A heart that had been waiting ten years for her to respond to his love. A heart that had died to forgive her past and future sins. How sweet the heart of Jesus! How could she not surrender her heart to a heart so beautiful, so incomp-rehensible?

"Amazing love - how could it be, that You, My God, should die for me."

They agreed to take a week to pray and ask God if this friendship should continue or not. As the day approached, however, Jack felt confused and wondered if their conversation on Skype would be their last. But as they began to talk, he became aware she had really sought the LORD in prayer. This was a miracle because only two weeks before, this girl hadn't believed in God! He was amazed at the level of faith and confidence with which she spoke about the LORD after just a week. Lucia said that she now knew that God was with her, even if their friendship was not meant to last.

Three Prophetic Words

Jack returned to spending time in the Word, prayer and meditation. About six weeks later, he was reminded of three words the LORD had given him on the 27th of July, 2017. They were:

"Mexican. Lucia. Afghanistan."

He rushed home to check he hadn't just made them up and found them still on his computer. He knew Lucia was Mexican and decided he had to ask her if the words meant anything to her.

When he phoned, he discovered she was on holiday in New York, and that the taxi driver she spoke to the previous night was from Afghanistan, but the name Lucia didn't mean anything to her. They discovered, however, that every time Jack received something from the LORD, or shared something from the Bible with Lucia, it was something she needed to hear or was learning about too. But they still felt confused as to whether their friendship was to continue, because they seemed to come to opposite conclusions! In desperation, Lucia asked the LORD to explain the reason. She sensed him saying:

"I am the only One that, when I close a door, no one can open it. And when I open a door, no one can close it. "

She asked the LORD to tell Jack to knock to open the door, if he was still interested. When Jack eventually got in touch again, they realized God was saying they could continue to explore friendship. They agreed that trying to get to know one another better via Skype was a non-starter and that it would be better if Lucia could visit Scotland and meet Jack's parents.

A Fortnight Is A Lifetime

On the 8th of September, 2019, Lucia touched down at Glasgow Airport to be met by Jack and his parents. He was excited, but still had a lot of doubts about the way ahead. If the worst came to the worst, they could enjoy a fortnight's holiday together, and then go their separate ways with no harm being done. In fact, Jack confided in his mother that same evening that he didn't 'feel anything' for Lucia, whatever he was supposed to feel.

The following day was raining and instead of going to the seaside, Jack decided to show Lucia where he loved to pray and spend time with God. He took her up the Campsie hills and parked near a burn with a waterfall. They each went to pray and speak to the LORD. As he prayed, Jack felt the LORD clearly say that Lucia was the one he wanted to give him as his wife. He began to tell him all about her heart, her character, who she was and who she would be.



The Waterfall at Clachan of Campsie, near Glasgow, Scotland

Jack listened, but said to the LORD that he didn't have any feelings for Lucia as his wife. He sensed the LORD say:

"I know. I want to give you My heart for her? Will you take it?"

Jack thought deeply for a few moments and then said:

"LORD, I will do it, but only if you give me your heart. I don't want to continue this relationship without it."

They finished praying and headed for a nearby coffee shop, where they shared what God had been saying to each of them. Lucia had been reminded of a vision she had had a few weeks earlier, which had prompted questions about deliverance.

The Meaning Of Baptism

Lucia said that she really felt it was the moment for her to be baptised as a believer. Jack explained the meaning and significance of believer's baptism but Lucia politely declined Jack's offer to baptize her in a freezing Scottish burn.

As they drove home, Jack was struck by a powerful sense of how God was touching Lucia. She was weeping with joy, overwhelmed by God's love for her and the realization he had waited ten years for this day. Today, she would be reconciled to him for good as she went through the waters of baptism, dying to her old life and rising as a new-born daughter of God.

By this time, they were both in tears. Jack pulled the car into a layby as the pair of them were overwhelmed by the presence of God. The LORD was showing Jack Lucia's heart - broken, but beautiful - and felt the love of the Father for her and felt he could trust her with his heart.

Bathtub Baptism Surprise

That evening they drove to the house of a family friend where, after walking Lucia through repentance for sin and confession of faith in Jesus Christ as LORD, the bathtub was filled and Jack baptized her into the Name of the LORD Jesus Christ. As she rose from the water, she was filled with the Spirit and began praising God in a tongue other than her native Spanish. There followed a time of ministry, during which Lucia was delivered of two demonic spirits that had entered, when her mother had consulted a *shaman* while Lucia was in her womb.

There was great rejoicing and Jack and Lucia started dancing together. As they danced, Jack sensed the LORD say:

"Go for it! Ask her to marry you!"

Lucia was dancing and saying to the LORD:

"I want only your heart for me. I don't want anything that you wouldn't like to give me."

She had barely finished saying these words, when suddenly Jack went down in front of her on bended knee and asked her:

"Lucia, will you marry me?"

The assembled company clapped, and there were hugs all round and mugs of tea and coffee to celebrate.

A Father's Long-Range Blessing

They celebrated communion before phoning Lucia's parents in Mexico, for Jack to formally ask her father's permission to marry his daughter. To Jack's amazement he said that ten minutes before, he had sensed the LORD telling him that Jack would phone! He reassured him that no man can break the will of God, but that he should perhaps tell his wife before Jack spoke to her! The two families then shared their joy with one another on the internet.

Deliverance Confirmed

Next day when they went for a coffee, Lucia said the previous night she had seen two demons in her room, who had said to her:

"So you have a new life, have you? So what!"

The difference now, however, Lucia added, was that the two were *outside* her, trying to mock her new life and intimidate her into thinking that nothing had happened. It was simply confirmation her deliverance was real and of the way God was working in their lives.

A Mexican Wedding, Marriage In Scotland & Move To Spain

On the 2nd of February, 2020, Jack and Lucia were married in a civil ceremony in Mexico in the presence of Lucia's family and friends and were formally and legally pronounced man and wife. Jack flew back to Barcelona to arrange a marriage ceremony under God in May, but this had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, which hit Spain and Europe in March. As a result, it was decided to hold the marriage ceremony in Scotland in August, after Lucia managed to get a visa.

On Tuesday, the 18th August, 2020, Jack and Lucia were married in a service conducted by Jack's father at their home just outside Glasgow, when they covenanted with God to share their lives in serving the LORD together. Shortly afterwards, Jack returned to Barcelona, where Lucia joined him later, when she was able to get the necessary Spanish visa. The journey of a lifetime together with Jesus had just begun.

The Windows Of The Soul

*'The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!'*¹

'The eyes are the windows of the soul.' In ministering to individuals on a one-to-one basis, Simon found it was important to get the person to look at you directly. In the case of people who are demonised, they often cannot look at you. This is because the demonic spirits cannot bear to look at someone filled with the Holy Spirit. As a result, they will often struggle to maintain eye contact with you, and will sometimes go to extreme lengths to avoid having to do so.

Andrea and Simon witnessed this on two occasions in their sitting room. The individuals had been involved in the occult, and so they were asked to read *The Blood Scriptures* out loud. In each case s/he began reading in a normal speaking voice and at a normal speed. But as s/he progressed through the statements of what Jesus' blood has done for us, the pace of reading slowed and the voice grew softer until it was almost inaudible. Perhaps the strangest feature, however, was the fact that the eyelids began closing until the eyes were completely shut, thereby preventing him/her from reading the last verse, which is from *The Book of Revelation*.

*'And they (the saints) overcame him (satan) by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (as to what the Blood of Jesus has bought us), and were willing even to die, if necessary.'*²

When Paul and Barnabas encountered the sorcerer Elymas at Paphos in Cyprus, the Holy Spirit showed Paul the darkness within, causing a holy anger to well up inside him. 'Filled with the Holy Spirit, Paul looked straight at him' and cursed Elymas temporarily with blindness, until he repented of his evil ways. The effect on the Roman Proconsul Sergius Paulus was immediate - he believed Paul's teaching about Jesus.³

¹ Matthew 6: 22-23; ² Revelation 12:11; ³ Acts 3:6-12

There is also a positive side to the eyes as the windows of the soul, which is to be seen in some of the New Testament accounts. When Peter and John saw the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, 'fixing their eyes on him' they said:

'Look at us!' ¹

When he did, they saw God the Father ignite faith in the man to be healed, and so they prayed the prayer of faith, commanding him to walk in the name of the LORD Jesus Christ.

Sometimes the person to whom you are ministering will also be able to see what is in your heart, when they look at you intently. On the 14th of April, 1991, when Simon was preaching in a community hall in Central Scotland, a woman heard the Holy Spirit say:

'Look into Simon's eyes.'

Five months later when Simon was back preaching at the fellowship, the woman reported she had given her heart to the LORD at the previous service, as the Holy Spirit convicted her of her need to get right with God and invite Jesus into her life. She said that as she looked into Simon's eyes, she experienced a wonderful feeling of God's love flowing down like warm oil from her head to her toes. The reality of her conversion was plain to see from the joy on her face as she recounted what had happened.

¹ Acts 3:1-10

Raising Lazarus.....Jesus really is alive!

The phone rang on Thursday, the 21st of June, 1991. It was the Secretary of a local Baptist Church asking Simon to preach that Sunday because the Pastor was ill. After agreeing and putting the phone down, Simon prayed and asked God to tell him what to say. He sensed the LORD telling him to preach on *The Raising of Lazarus* in Chapter 11 of the Gospel of John, and so he spent time meditating on the passage and listening to what he sensed the Holy Spirit was wanting him to say.

On Sunday morning as he sat preparing an *Order of Service*, he felt the LORD say that he had a 'word' for three people, who were going to be in church that morning. The first was

"Remove the stone! There's going to be someone there this morning and they are experiencing a blockage in their Christian walk which I want to remove."

The second 'word' was:

"Lazarus, come out! There's someone there and they are like Lazarus dead in the tomb and if they will step out in faith as I speak to them, I will raise them to life by My Spirit."

The third 'word' was:

"Remove the grave clothes. There's someone there who has been a Christian for a while but is still wrapped up with things from their past which are hindering their walk with me. If they will come forward, I will remove them."

Simon was filled with a mixture of excitement and a certain trepidation because he did not know how the congregation would respond. But he was welcomed warmly and felt a great liberty during the service and when he came to preach. At the end, he announced he believed the LORD had a 'word' for three people present and proceeded to deliver the words he had received that morning.

As Simon made his way to shake hands with folk at the door, a man came up to him and said that one of the deacons had had to see to the Sunday School, but that the first 'word' was for him. It confirmed Simon had heard correctly!

As he made his way forward, he noticed a young couple sitting towards the back. The woman was in floods of tears and, as he approached, blurted out:

"That second 'word' was for me. I've just been born again!"

Simon was aware of the Holy Spirit baptising her with Jesus' resurrection life – something that was confirmed some months later, when he heard she had been baptised in water as a believer.

As he continued towards the church door, a woman came up and said she believed the third word about the grave clothes was for her and asked if she could come to see Simon and Andrea. Over the following months, they saw the LORD gently removing things from her past which had been weighing her down and healing hurts.

As he pondered what had happened, Simon realized he had witnessed Jesus raising the dead to life that morning right in front of his eyes! What a privilege!

Chapter 6

*Shadowlands:
Walking Through The Valley*

The Inevitability of Death & The Assurance of Resurrection

Simon had determined at the beginning of the journey he would know God is real if he showed up when there was no possibility of faking it or being able to manipulate the situation. In fact, if there was evidence that death is not the end.

What's The Evidence?

For Simon the evidence for life after death might be found in three ways:

A. The Word of God

- The promise of resurrection life in the Old Testament prophecies in the Psalms,¹ Isaiah,² Hosea,³ and the Gospels and the Letters ⁴
- The Gospel accounts of Jesus' fulfilment of his promise to rise from the dead three days after his crucifixion
- Paul's statements about the evidence in 1 Corinthians Chapter 15
- The promise of the Holy Spirit as the '*guarantee*' or '*deposit*' of eternal life

B. Reports of Near Death Experiences

There are also the accounts of individuals, atheists, Christians and those of other or no faith, who have had a Near-Death-Experience and reported seeing Jesus, or in some cases have had a glimpse of hell. Some of these testimonies were gathered by Dr Maurice Rawlings, an American cardiologist, who was himself converted as a result of witnessing the resuscitation of one of his patients from a cardiac arrest.⁵

C. Experiencing the Reality of God: The Guarantee of Eternal Life

- The experience of the baptism and in-filling of the Spirit in the lives of ordinary Christians
- The testimonies down the centuries of the deaths of Christians in comparison with those of other faiths and none

In 1982 Simon witnessed the death of his father and thirty-five years later that of his wife as evidence that 'precious in the sight of the LORD are the death of his saints.'⁶

¹ Psalm 22:22-31; ² Isaiah 53:11-12; ³ Hosea 6:2;13:14; ⁴ John 11:23-25; 1 Corinthians 15;

⁵ M. Rawlings *To Hell & Back* Nelson, 1993; ⁶ Psalm 116:15

The Sign of Jonah.....The Cross and Resurrection

The Pharisees and Sadducees had come to Jesus and asked him to perform a sign to prove his claim to Messiahship. On this occasion Jesus explained the meaning of 'The Sign of Jonah.'

*'A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'*¹

If people do not believe Jesus is who he says he is and the evidence of his death and resurrection, nothing will convince them. The greatest miracle of all is Jesus' death on the Cross and his Resurrection from the tomb on the third day, as he promised, to reverse the curse of The Fall of Man.

The Cross & Resurrection Are The Basis of Christian Hope

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 Paul summarises the basics of the Good News.

*'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.'*²

There were plenty of eyewitnesses still alive, who could have challenged Paul's words, if they were not true. But they had witnessed Jesus' resurrection from the tomb, as he had promised. And Paul goes on to point out that if Christ was not raised from the dead, we are all still dead in our trespasses and sins, with no hope of a life with him in heaven.

*'For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.'*³

¹ Matthew 12:38-40; ² 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; ³ 1 Corinthians 15:16-19

What More Evidence Do You Need?.....*Dives and Lazarus*

Simon was struck by Jesus' statement about the sign of Jonah¹ and how he illustrated the point with a parable about a Rich Man, called Dives, and a Poor Man, named Lazarus.

A. The Word of God

The Parable of Dives & Lazarus ²

Dives is shown living a life of luxury that is oblivious to the needs of others less fortunate than himself and the consequences for a possible life after death.

- He is totally self-centred and lacks the most basic compassion for the beggar at his gate.
- He lives only for the here-and-now.

Like a lot of people today his motto is: '*Eat, drink & be merry for tomorrow we die.*'³

The Rich Man's Philosophy of Life can be summed up as -

1. Look after the Number One and to hell with everyone else
2. Don't worry about life after death or the idea of judgement - they're just fairy-tales to frighten children.

Lazarus lies begging at the gate of the rich man's mansion, begging from anyone who will give him a crust of bread. He is covered in sores and so weak with hunger he doesn't even have the strength to stop dogs from licking the sores. He does not complain about his life of misery. Instead,

1. He trusts in the mercy of God and in human beings to show the mercy and compassion God commands in his Word.
2. He puts his hope in God's promise of life after death, as promised in God's Word, and in God's justice.

Two Destinations: Paradise and Hell

When he dies, the Rich Man, to his surprise, finds himself in torment in Hell. In the distance he sees the Poor Man in Paradise, being cradled by Abraham, the Father of the faithful.

¹ Matthew 7:13-14; ² Luke 16:19-31; ³ Isaiah 22:13

You Have All the Evidence You Need.... *The Bible, The Cross & Resurrection*

In his torment Dives begs Abraham to send Lazarus to slake his terrible thirst with a drop or two of water. But Abraham says that's impossible because there is an unbridgeable chasm between them.

'Well then, Father Abraham, I've got five brothers. Send someone to warn them that Hell is real.'

Abraham replies that they have all the evidence they need already in God's Word - The Law of Moses and The Books of the Prophets in the Old Testament.

The Rich Man retorts:

'No, Father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

Jesus closes the parable with the following prophetic words, spoken by Abraham:

*'If they do not believe Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced, even if someone rises from the dead.'*¹

If they don't believe the Bible, they won't believe, even if someone were to rise from the dead. Simon was struck by the irony of Jesus' words!

A Reminder of the Reality of Absolute Evil & The Demand for Justice

In 2016 Simon and his son visited Berlin, where they enjoyed sight-seeing and visiting *The Pergamon Museum*, with the altar on which Bishop Antipas of Pergamum was sacrificed in 92 AD to Molech in a bronze oven in the form of a bull, and saw the reconstructed remains of the Ishtar Gate, through which Daniel and the Jewish exiles were marched into slavery in 597 BC. They also visited *The Topography of Terror Museum*, built on the site of the former Nazi Gestapo Headquarters, where prisoners were tortured to death or sent to the gas chambers in the concentration camps. It included photographs of public executions by hanging of innocent people in the various towns the Nazis overran. As they made their way round the exhibition, Simon turned to his son and said:

*'This is why I believe in the reality of Hell, otherwise, there was no difference between a Hitler and a Mother Theresa. If God does not exist, everything is permitted, as Ivan Karamazov said, and evil is left unpunished.'*²

¹ Luke 16:31; ² F.Dostoevsky *The Brothers Karamazov* Part IV: Book 11, Chap 4

B. NDEs: Reports of Two Destinations.....*Heaven & Hell*

Jesus' parable shows there are two resurrections in life after death, based on a Day of Judgment, with two final destinations. They are based on God's fundamental justice in not leaving the wicked unpunished.¹

Moral relativism, which denies the reality of absolute good and evil, and scientific atheism, which denies the reality of God and life after death, leave the believer of these worldviews in a nihilistic, existential vision of hell on earth and of a despair, reflected in the increasing number of people taking their lives because they have no hope.

One possible kind of evidence of the reality of heaven and hell comes from the reports of individuals who have suffered cardiac arrest and had a Near-Death Experience (NDE).

Simon came across the writings and videos of Dr Maurice Rawlings, an American cardiologist and physician to President Eisenhower, who was an atheist until he witnessed one of his patients having a cardiac arrest and shouting to him to pray because he was in hell. The experience led to Dr Rawlings' own conversion and determination to study patients, who reported experiencing Near Death Experiences. He discovered that many who had no faith at all were reporting meeting a person they characterised as God, or Jesus, in a bright light and a sensation of joy. But he also found there were others, like the one he witnessed in ER, who had terrifying experiences of being in a place they called hell. And he found that these cases were being underreported.^{2, 3}

Not all scientists accept NDEs as evidence of life after death or characterise them as real, but claim they are an artefact of the brain being starved of oxygen or for some other reason.⁴

¹ Proverbs 11:21; Nahum 1:3; ² M.Rawlings *To Hell & Back: Life After Death* Thos Nelson, 1993; ³ M.Rawlings *Beyond Death's Door* Thos Nelson, 1998; ⁴ See for example, article in <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-near-death-experiences-reveal-about-the-brain/>

C. Experiencing the Reality of God.....*The Guarantee of Eternal Life*

The clincher for Simon was his own experience of being overwhelmed and filled with the Holy Spirit Paul mentions in his *Letter to the Ephesians*:

‘When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possessors to the praise of his glory.’¹ (emphasis added)



When Simon heard the LORD saying he had been sealed with the *arrabon* or ‘seal,’ of the Holy Spirit, he realised it referred to the vows he had taken at the age of fourteen, when nothing appeared to have changed. His mental assent to the truth of what Jesus did for us at the Cross had not resulted in a changed life, which only came about years later as a result of a crisis.

Not everyone has a dramatic experience or can point to a specific moment, when s/he became convinced of being born *anochen*. For many it is a process over time involving both the Word of God and an experience of the Spirit, which Jesus said is essential.² But all who have been born *anochen* by the Spirit have been bought with the Blood of Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing God’s ownership for ever.

The word *arrabon* also means ‘a betrothal ring,’ given by a bridegroom to his bride-to-be, as a guarantee of his love and intention to marry her. The actual fulfilment of that promise comes with the marriage itself.

The Bridegroom & The Bride

At different points in the New Testament we read that Jesus is The Bridegroom and the Church is The Bride.³ Everyone who has been born *anochen* and filled with the Holy Spirit has been betrothed to Christ in preparation for the Wedding Feast of the Lamb and his Bride. Because of this every born-again Christian has the certainty, or assurance, of resurrection life when we die.

¹ Ephesians 1:13-14; ² Matthew 22:29; ³ Ephesians 5:21-33; Revelation 21:2,9-10; 22:17

Shadowlands.....walking through the land of the dying

Simon's wife Andrea had been admitted to Glasgow Royal Infirmary in March 2017, after suffering severe head and neck pain for over a week. On admission a blood test showed she had a CRP (c-reactive protein) level of 310 - the normal range is 0-10 - indicating she had a raging infection, as a result of MRSA in two pressure ulcers, a urinary infection and meningococcal septicaemia. Doctors began treating it with IV antibiotics and fluids, but by the 20th she was unresponsive and suffering from *hypoactive delirium*.

On the 21st Simon sensed the need to anoint her with consecrated oil, when he visited at night, although there was no visible response. But the next day she was alert and able to respond, if slower than normal. On the Sunday their eldest daughter, Andrea and he celebrated Communion together in the morning, before their daughter returned to Kintore. The next morning Andrea's condition began to deteriorate.

The *Daily Bible Verse* for the 28th March was Jude 1:24-25: *God is able to keep us* and for the 29th Matthew 5:4 *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*. When Simon went in at lunchtime, he was met by the Ward Sister and a Registrar, who raised the issue of resuscitation in the event of cardiac arrest. They said that CPR was out of the question and so recorded DNACPR (*Do Not Attempt CPR*) in Andrea's notes.

The following day a Consultant and SHO reported that, in the light of Andrea's general deterioration and apparent failure of the antibiotics and fluids to halt the infection, they proposed to remove all antibiotics and fluids, while maintaining pain relief through a morphine pump. Simon's *Our Daily Bread* reading was Romans 14:8 *Whether we live or die, we are the LORD's*.

On Friday, 31st March, the Consultant met with all the family to agree to remove all drugs and fluids and allow Andrea just to die gently with dignity, peacefully and without pain. Simon and the children agreed they would take it in turns to stay with Andrea 24/7 so she would not die alone.

In the Valley of the Shadow.....his right hand will hold you

Simon's *Our Daily Bread* reading for 31st March was Isaiah 41:10.

'Don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed or look anxiously about you. I am with you and will be with you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.'

It was a real word of encouragement when things were looking bleak.

On Saturday the 1st of April at 05:30am Simon went in to visit Andrea alone.

When he whispered to her: "*Glory day!*", she replied: "*Bliss!*"

He read her David's words in Psalm 23:4 -

'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and staff comfort me'.

His *Our Daily Bread* reading that day was Romans 8:22-28:

'For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.'

Early on Sunday the 2nd the pair of them spent a very precious hour alone together. At one point Andrea said:

"Joel 21".

Simon said:

"There aren't twenty-one chapters in Joel, darling!"

‘Joel 21’: A Vision & Its Meaning

Later, Andrea asked:

“Am I going out of here?”

He didn’t have the heart to answer her, but was secretly saying to himself:

“Yes, to glory!”

Her condition continued to deteriorate, her breathing became very shallow and she was growing weaker by the hour. When Simon visited her at night, she said that before she had fallen asleep earlier, she had heard the words:

“You cannot escape the reality of God!”

And she went on to say she had seen a vision in which.....

“I saw everything toppling out of control in a crescendo of chaos. And then I saw the LORD come and take control, and it was so beautiful.”

It wasn’t till the following day that Simon realized the vision she had seen was amazing confirmation of the word “Joel 21” she had received, which was God’s shorthand for *Joel Chapter 2 Verse 1*:

‘Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; it is near.’

The next day Simon began making preparations for Andrea’s funeral. When he read Revelation 5:1-14 John’s Vision of the Worship of the Lamb to her, she said:

“Is that what is meant by the song: ‘All heaven declares the glory of the Risen LORD, who once was slain to reconcile man to God?’”

She added that it was in stark contrast to the vision she had seen earlier, which was a picture of utter despair.

When he went in to see her in the evening, Andrea said:

“Can you hear what that person sitting near the door is saying?”

Angelic Protection & Progress

This was the second time Andrea had mentioned a person, or persons, near the door of the little side room. The first time Simon had dismissed it as just a hallucination from the drugs, but this time he asked:

"Is he an angel?"

"Well, he does not seem to have evil intent," she replied.

Simon said:

"It seems God has sent a guardian angel to guard and protect you."

The next day at a meeting with the Consultant, she agreed there seemed to be a slight improvement and they would restart blood tests. In the evening the results came back showing her CRP had reduced from 180+ to 130 and the white blood cell count was down, showing the infection seemed to be reducing.

Two days later Andrea was alert and said she was feeling more like her normal self! Over the following fortnight she continued to make slow progress and the family celebrated her seventy-fifth birthday on the 24th April, when the reading in *Our Daily Bread* was Psalm 116:1-9:

*'I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. **The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: 'Lord, save me!' The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return to your rest my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.**'* (emphasis added)

The Long Road Home

Over the next two months progress was maintained and Andrea was discharged into a nursing home towards the end of June. Her general condition was still fragile and she was desperate to go home.

On 19th August when Simon visited her, she said:

"I feel really alive!"

This was in spite of not being able to eat properly and not looking well. Two days later, she again said she felt really alive, but a blood test showed that the infection from the osteomyelitis in her pressure ulcers was increasing, and so she was readmitted to hospital.

On the 23rd of August a former prayer partner visited and shared a 'word' she felt God had given her for Andrea. The word was:

'Exodus 14:14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.'

On the 27th Simon received a phone call from a close friend with a 'word' he believed was from the LORD:

"Tell Simon to anoint Andrea with oil in preparation for what I am about to do."

The following day one of his Bible readings was Psalm 41:1-3:

*'Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the LORD delivers them in times of trouble. The LORD protects and preserves them — they are counted among the blessed in the land — he does not give them over to the desire of their foes. **The LORD sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness.**'* (emphasis added)

On Friday, the 8th of September, Simon visited Andrea and, after rehearsing the various words the LORD had given her on her birthday and which he had confirmed by saving her from dying, he anointed her liberally on her forehead with olive oil from Jerusalem, infused with spikenard - 'a symbol of intimacy and worship' it said on the bottle.

'It's Not About Healing'it's about 'The More'

From time to time there were signs that God was doing something, and yet the overall picture was that Andrea was dying.

At one point Simon's *Our Daily Bread* reading was Luke 18:35-43, where Jesus asked a blind man:

"What do you want me to do for you?"

When Simon asked Andrea that question, she replied:

"It's not about healing. I want Jesus to speak to me."

And throughout this time, she was aware of the LORD speaking to her and realized God's main purpose was so 'she could walk before him in the land of the living,' as he had said through Psalm 116:9 on her seventy-fifth birthday in April, when she had appeared to be dying.

Running After 'The More'

On another occasion Andrea shared a dream she had had in answer to prayer, asking the LORD to speak to her, in which she and Simon had been running in an attempt to find 'The More' - whatever that was. She said:

"The LORD has taught us to become like little children. 'The More' is more of Him, so he can speak to us and through us. As the song says: 'More love, more power, more of him in our lives.'"

Baal Zephon.....with Moses at Pi Hahiroth

On the 23rd of September, Simon woke at 04:40am with the words:

“Baal Zephon.”

He knew he had read it somewhere, but did not know where or understand its significance at first. When he went on the internet, he discovered Baal Zephon was a Canaanite deity, associated with the Egyptian gods Typho and Set, and that there was a temple to him, visible from Pi Hahiroth on the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Pi Hahiroth was where Moses and the Israelites were trapped between the sea and Pharaoh’s forces, who were pursuing them with chariots. Escape seemed impossible. It was at this very juncture that God had spoken to Moses and said:

‘Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you have only to be silent.’¹

This was the ‘word’ Andrea’s former prayer partner had given her exactly one month earlier.

The ensuing weeks saw a slow decline in Andrea’s physical condition and an increasing desire to be allowed home. She was eventually discharged home from hospital at the end of October, and district nurses visited her each day to provide palliative care.

It was a time of some confusion for Simon, because Christian friends were bringing him words about healing and a possible ministry, warning people about the impending Day of the LORD. The reality was that Andrea was approaching her journey’s end.

¹ Exodus 14:13-14

The Crossing.....from the land of the dying to the land of the living

Simon's *Daily Bible Verse* for the 2nd of November was Psalm 130 verse 5:

'I wait upon the LORD; my soul waits for Him and in His rhema word I trust.'

Psalm 130 is a cry of faith from the depths of a desperate situation.

"Out of the depths (Latin: De Profundis) I cry to you, LORD; LORD, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy [.....] I wait for the LORD more than the watchmen wait for the morning."

The following morning his reading in *Our Daily Bread* was Psalm 13, and headed:

'LORD, I Trust In Your Unfailing Love.'

"How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me.'

The phone rang and Simon's eldest daughter Zoe said:

"Hi Dad! Have you read today's Our Daily Bread reading? God is good all the time, isn't he!"

The notes read:

"In our deepest pain, we turn to the songs of David because he writes out of his own grief. How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?" he asked (v.2). "Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death" (v. 3). Yet David could give his biggest questions to God. "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation" (v. 5). Only God can bring ultimate significance to our most tragic events."

Simon shared the reading with Andrea and prayed, asking Jesus to pour out his *shalom* and streams of living water, and for the Holy Spirit, who raised Jesus to life from the dead, to raise her up and to glorify God. Andrea nodded assent.

Two hours later, as the carers tended to her, Andrea crossed over from the land of the dying into the land of the living. She had reached journey's end.

Death A Reminder of Two Gardens

Simon was struck once again by the mystery of life and death. One moment you are looking at a living, breathing human being with their own personality and life history of joys and sorrows; the next at an empty shell with *rigor mortis* and decay setting in as a grotesque reminder of the results of Adam and Eve's rebellion in the Garden of Eden. The only answer: a Roman cross and an empty tomb after the agony of one man's obedience in another garden aeons later.

Celebration of a Life & God's Faithfulness

Andrea's funeral was a celebration of her life and God's faithfulness to her and the family. At the service of celebration, her friend Suzanne read a poem Simon had written some years earlier, based on an aria by Johann Sebastian Bach - '*mein gläubiges Herze*' ('*My faithful heart*'), from Bach's cantata based on John 3:16 ('*Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt*')

'God loved the world so much he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.'

It's a song of joy in the presence of Jesus. (see next page)

mein *gläubiges* herze
(in memory of johann sebastian bach)

*

Joy
indescribable
that bubbles
like a spring
of living water
crystal clear
and dancing
with delight
within my heart
that bursts
because
my Jesus
is here

like streams
of water in
a desert land
life-giving
to the deer
that thirsts for
just one drop
I dance
and sing
because
my Jesus
is here

and when
i stand
amazed in
glory gazing
on my God
and King
all sorrow
crying
suffering
and dying
will be gone
because
my Jesus
is here

*

Chapter 7

Journey's End

A Lesson From Nature.....metamorphosis



Illustration: Prawny at Pixabay

For the anti-supernaturalist, of course, any idea of life after death is laughable. How can a human being, composed of corruptible atoms and molecules, exist in any other state? Scientific studies carried out by forensic scientists have shown the stages in the process of decomposition of our mortal bodies, and that is that.

When Simon was a boy, his father used to explain the process of death and resurrection to him, using the illustration of the life-cycle of the butterfly. It led to him being fascinated with butterflies and to collecting specimens.

Years later, as a bereavement counsellor, he came across Doris Stickney's *Water Bugs and Dragonflies*,¹ designed to help young children grieving the death of a parent, or a close friend, understand the idea of resurrection as a transformation from one form of life to another. The water bugs at the bottom of a pond can't understand how one of their number from time to time disappears up a lily stalk, never to be seen again. Eventually, they decide the next one to climb the stalk will return to tell the others what they found. But, of course, when their pal has climbed the stalk, try as it might, it cannot return to the watery world from which it came, and is left to soar to heights it had never known before.

¹ D. Stickney *Water Bugs and Dragonflies* Bloomsbury, 1982

The Amazing Transformation.....*from death to life*

In 1 Corinthians Chapter 15 Paul poses the very question the anti-supernaturalist asks about life after death.

‘But, someone will ask,

“How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?”

‘How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or something else. [...] So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.’

‘If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: “*The first man Adam became a living being,*” the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.’¹

Paul goes on to declare that ‘*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*’ If that is so, how can mere mortals survive the process of death and decay? And what does a glorified body look like?

The answer to the latter question is revealed in Jesus’ appearance at the Transfiguration,² and on the first Easter Day, after his physical resurrection from the tomb.³

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:35-50; ² Matthew 17:1-3; ³ Matthew 28:1-8, 16-20; Luke 24:1-43; John 20:11-29

The Need For A Supernatural Experience Of God

In Chapter 3 we saw Jesus explaining to Nicodemus that you can't get to heaven unless you are born *anōthen*.¹ Nicodemus didn't understand what Jesus meant because he thought the little Greek word *anōthen* meant 'again.' But *anōthen* also means 'from above' – that is, supernaturally. And Jesus went on to emphasise the importance of being baptised, not just in water but also in Spirit.

Being baptised, or overwhelmed, by the Spirit, can be dramatic, or gentle, when an individual knows s/he experiences God's love in a deeper way than ever before. At these times, the person just 'knows with their knower' God as heavenly Father and is able to cry: 'Abba! Father!'

Eternal Life Begins At The Moment Of Conversion

Jesus was emphasising the need for a personal experience of the Holy Spirit here and now, in order to receive eternal life. The Greek word Jesus uses translated 'life' is ζωή (**zoe** pronounced like the name Zoe). Many Bible-believing Christians have never experienced this supernatural transformation Jesus is talking about, because they have been taught that faith is simply believing the Word of God, involving head belief but not heart experience. That was Simon's problem when he was confirmed at the age of fourteen. He was sincerely religious in his beliefs *about* God but had not yet had an experience *of* God. Jesus pointed out we need to know *both* the **Word** of God *and* the **Power** of God.²

Experiencing the supernatural birth by the Holy Spirit happens when someone hears a *rhema* of Christ, Paul says,³ and has a supernatural encounter with the Risen Christ in some form, as we saw earlier. It can be gentle or dramatic, but the person knows s/he has heard God saying 'You are my beloved child in whom I am well pleased,' as Jack did when he was flat out on a church carpet! ⁴ For Simon it was when he heard God say: 'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit with whom you have been sealed,' which is part of the verse ending with the words 'for the day of redemption.'⁵ He was saying: 'I have redeemed you, so don't go on grieving the Holy Spirit, who is the arrabon, guaranteeing eternal life with Me in heaven.'

¹ John 3:3-7; ² Matthew 22:29; ³ Romans 10:17; ⁴ page 188; ⁵ Ephesians 4:30

Weather Forecasting.....storm warning

The 15th October, 1987, has gone down in UK weather forecasting folklore as ‘*The Michael Fish Moment.*’ That’s because the weather presenter appeared on BBC television during a weather forecast that day and said:

‘Earlier on today, apparently, a woman rang the BBC and said she heard there was a hurricane on the way. Well, if you’re watching, don’t worry, there isn’t!’

In fact, the storm that hit South East England later that day was the worst for three hundred years, causing record damage and killing nineteen people.

Red Sky At Night & Red Sky In The Morning

In Matthew Chapter 16 we read:

“The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. Jesus answered:

*“When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.”*¹

It’s a scenario we see played out time and again throughout the Old Testament and history. God warns his children there is trouble coming, because they have abandoned his commandments and gone after other gods, and yet they still persist in their rebellion, aided and abetted by false prophets.

*“They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.”*²

At a time when the whole world is in the throes of a global pandemic and there are all the signs we are living in the times Jesus characterised as ‘the first labour pains’, the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ are noticeably silent. And yet it has not always been this way.

¹ Matthew 16:1-3; ² Jeremiah 6:14

God's Warnings Through David Wilkerson

Almost fifty years ago God spoke to David Wilkerson, in a series of visions warning of the coming chaos and calling people to repent. These warnings were contained in a book entitled *The Vision*, which was published in 1974.¹ Below is a summary that shows many have already been, while some are yet to be, fulfilled.

Worldwide recession caused by economic confusion

"At most a few more fat flourishing years, and then an economic recession that's going to affect the life style of every wage-earner in the world. The world economists are going to be at loss to explain what's happening. It's going to start in Europe, spread to Japan and finally to the United States."

A move toward a worldwide, unified monetary system.

"The US dollar will be hit bad and it will take years for it to recover."

The only real security will be in real estate (until a somewhat later stage, at which point this apparent security will also disappear).

Nature having labour pains

"A new kind of cosmic storm appearing as a raging fire in the sky leaving a kind of vapour trail."

Environmentalists will come under heavy criticism.

There will be major earthquakes.

There will be a major famine.

Floods, hurricanes and tornadoes will increase in frequency.

A flood of filth and a baptism of dirt in America

Topless women will appear on television, followed by full nudity.

Adult, X rated movies will be shown on cable television. Young people will gather at homes to watch this kind of material in groups.

Sex and the occult will be mixed.

There will be an acceptance of homosexuality, and the church will even say that it is a God-given gift.

Rebellion in the home

"I see the new number one youth problem in America and the world as hatred towards parents."

A persecution madness against truly Spirit filled Christians who love Jesus Christ

"There will arise a world church consisting of a union between liberal ecumenical Protestants and the Roman Catholic Church, using Christ in name only."

There will be a hate Christ movement.

There will be a spiritual awakening behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains.

Other events

There will be another wave of riots.

There will be a fall in moral conduct.

There will be a new drug popular with teenagers that will break down resistance and will encourage sexual activity.

Homosexual and lesbian ministers will be ordained

There will be occult practices in churches.

¹ D. Wilkerson *The Vision* Spire Books, 1974

A Warning About ‘The Shaking’is followed by a tsunami

At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’ The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’¹

On the 20th December, 2004, Andrea and Simon were watching the BBC News. Reporter Julia Bottfield had returned to Bam in Iran, where there had been a devastating earthquake on Boxing Day 2003, when more than 26,000 people were killed as they slept. As she showed pictures of the devastation, she showed before and after photographs of Bam citadel (Arg-e Bam), the world’s largest mud-brick structure.



The citadel in Bam (Arg-e Bam) before and after the earthquake on 26th December, 2003

As they watched and listened to the report, Simon became aware of the words:

‘I am shaking the things that can be shaken, so that the things that cannot be shaken will remain.’

They reminded him of some verses in *The Letter to the Hebrews*, where God warns his children of the coming Day of Judgment, when everything will be shaken until only what is of God remains.¹

Six days later the world watched in horror as more than 250,000 people died as a result of the Asian *tsunami* that hit Thailand, and spread across the Indian Ocean as far as Madagascar.

Was this an example of a ‘word’ appearing to be prophetic, but just coincidence?

¹ Hebrews 12:26-29

‘Joel 21’ - A Warning, A Call & A Promise

In 2007 David Wilkerson preached a sermon entitled *‘In One Hour Everything Is Going To Change’*, quoting Isaiah Chapter 24, and spoke of a sudden shaking on the earth. He went on to warn that destruction and judgment are coming:

‘Scripture strongly indicates it is now at the door,’ Wilkerson said.

Early on Sunday 2nd of April, 2017, the morning of the day it appeared Andrea was dying, while Simon visited her alone, she said she had heard the words:

‘Joel 21.’

Simon replied that there aren’t twenty-one chapters in the Book of Joel!

Later that evening, when her condition had deteriorated, her breathing was becoming shallower and she was growing weaker by the hour, she reported that before she had fallen asleep earlier, she had heard the words:

“You cannot escape the reality of God - the bigness of God.”

Shortly afterwards, she had seen a vision in which she said:

“I saw everything toppling out of control in a crescendo of chaos. And then I saw the LORD take control and it was so beautiful.”

It wasn’t until the next day the LORD showed us that ‘Joel 21’ meant ‘Joel Chapter 2 Verse 1’ and was the explanation of the vision she had had. For in that verse God warns his people of the coming judgment.

“Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the Day of the LORD is coming; it is near.”

Joel Chapter 2

Joel Chapter 2 contains:

- a. **God’s Warning Of Impending Judgment** in the Day of the LORD
- b. **A Call For The People To Repent** of their rebellious ways and return to God,
- c. **God’s Promise To Pour Out His Spirit** on all people

The Awesome Day of the LORD

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome Day of the LORD comes.

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.”¹

Global Warming, Wild Weather, Earthquakes, Famines & A Pandemic

The year 2020 saw some of the wildest weather involving floods and wildfires, earthquakes, famines and the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, there have been wars and rumours of wars and heightened tensions between the West, Russia, China and North Korea.

In the middle of all this, weather forecasting has become more and more accurate. As Jesus said:

‘You know how to tell the signs of the weather but don’t know how to tell the signs of the times.’²

The question, Simon thought, is:

Is anybody listening to God’s weather forecast?

¹ Joel 2:28-32; ² Matthew 16:2-3

In the twinkling of an eye.....when time stands still

"I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality."¹

'It's marvellous!' was what Simon's father said, out of nowhere, just minutes before he died in January 1982. Five minutes later, as Simon found himself saying the first verse of Psalm 103 over and over again, his father had hiccupped three times and died in the bed right in front of him in the middle of a busy ward at visiting time.

Now thirty-five years later, Simon watched as God had taken his wife to be with him, after months of demonstrating his ability to speak to and through her, as she was dying. One moment, she was there - a living, breathing being; the next, the breath of life was gone. What moments just before had been a person now was just an empty shell, subject to *rigor mortis* and decay. The mystery of life and death.

The Twinkling of an Eye and Relativity

Simon wondered what Paul meant when he said the transformation from mortal to immortal will occur "*in the twinkling of an eye*." Is that scientifically possible? He was intrigued to discover the following statement that might explain Paul's meaning.

"According to relativity, time stands still at the speed of light. Moving at that speed, the second hand on the clock would not have advanced, in the least. ... No time passes on the clock, traveling at uniform light speed, which means that no time passes during a photon's journey, either." (Wikipedia)

The '*twinkling of an eye*' is the speed at which a beam of light hits the eye – in other words, the speed of light ($v=c$), calculated to be 670,616,629 miles per hour or 299,792,458 metres per second, when travelling in a vacuum. Now, that is fast and not something you or I can really comprehend with our finite minds, if we are honest.

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Simon wondered how such a situation came to be a scientific fact discovered, not created, by scientists as one of the physical constants forming what is sometimes called '*The Goldilocks Enigma*' - the set of physical laws underpinning the *Cosmological Constant*. These physical constants are so finely tuned that scientists like Richard Feynman have said "*It's one of the greatest mysteries of physics: a magic number that comes to us with no understanding by man,*"¹ because there is no known scientific reason for their existence. In spite of this, the possibility of an Intelligent Designer is anathema to the atheist, for whom nothing is certain except the certainty a supernatural Creator does not exist.

The latest attempt at a general theory of everything is Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow's *The Grand Design*,² with the concept of the multiverse as a reasonable explanation as to why things are so perfectly suited to human existence, and Hawking's philosophical opinion that '*philosophy is dead.*' They are further proof of the New Atheism's determination that nothing should be certain, except the certainty there is no such possibility as God.

The Two Trees In The Garden³

The key to the mystery of life and death, Simon concluded, lies in the Two Trees in The Garden of Eden and God. For He is the only uncreated Singularity, who is both omniscient and omnipotent in his immortality, and who has the ability to rectify the devastating results of the first human beings' rebellion through the obedience of one Man, who was both fully human and fully divine - Jesus Christ, The Messiah - Yeshua ha Mashiah – whom the Jews rejected, when he came as a Suffering Servant and died on a tree outside Jerusalem. Whether they do so now or not, before him 'every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is LORD of Lords,'⁴ when he appears again in glory as Conquering King to claim his own and bring in God's eternal kingdom-rule in heaven and earth once and for all.

Even so, LORD Jesus, come! S.D.G. *Soli Deo Gloria* -To God alone be all the glory!

¹ R. Feynman quoted in <https://www.uh.edu/engines/epi3149.htm>; ² S.Hawking & L Mlodinow *The Grand Design* Bantam, 2010; ³ Genesis Chapter 3; ⁴ Philippians 2:8-11

when time stands still

*

when time stands still
the physicists aver
we will be moving
at the speed of light and
in the twinkling of an eye
will all be changed -
no day or night or
any past or future
only present time
when relativity gives way
to Absolute Reality
whose glory is so bright
there is no need
for sun or moon or
any other source
of light

where will we
be and what will
we be doing
at the apocalyptic
moment of eternity?
will we be blinded
by the sight of Him
whom we have loved
unseen revealed
in the unveiling of
the Alpha and Omega
gazing in wonder at
the Light of Life itself
no longer with
the eyes of faith
but now with
utter certainty?

or will we find that
we professing to be
so intelligent
so schooled
in worldly wisdom
and apparently
so sighted
have in truth
been blind
the blindfold
now removed
revealing the extent
to which we really
have been fooled?

what if the pot
discovers that
a potter made it
that it didn't make itself
or place it in position
on its shelf?
what if the scientist
uncertain about
everything except
the truth s/he claims
to be self-evident
wakes one day
to find that his/her
discoveries have
just been waiting
aeons to be found
but not invented
by some cleverness
of mind?

who does s/he think
made the originals since
nihil ex nihilo
means that nothing
comes from nothing?
who dreamed up the
axioms and theorems of
euclidean geometry
or graphed the farthest
galaxies the stars
black holes
electro-magnetism
gravity?

what finite mind
could scheme infinity
or even other worlds
and multiverses
much beloved by
those like hawking
who can't bear
to contemplate
the thought of a
creator of it all?

when we can travel
at the speed of light
and time itself
stands still
we'll see
in just the
twinkling
of an eye
who's right

*

Appendix

On Different Kinds Of Knowing

On Different Kinds Of Knowing

One of the battlegrounds is around the way we think we know the truth - what's known as 'epistemology', or 'the study of knowledge' - and the claim there is a war between science and religion. On the one hand the New Atheism trumpets there is no knowledge that is not based on the scientific method. Thus Peter Atkins, Professor of Chemistry at Oxford University claims that 'there is no reason to expect that science cannot deal with any aspect of existence,'¹ while Stephen Hawking averred 'it is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch-paper and set the universe going....Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing'² Such statements, along with Hawking's claim that 'philosophy is dead,' are themselves philosophical statements, not scientific facts, and are statements of faith in science's omniscience, or scientism, as John Lennox points out with typical Irish wit and grace in *Can Science Explain Everything?*³

Plato⁴ raised issues of *episteme* (ἐπιστήμη), or 'knowing,' *eu doxa* (εὐδοξία), 'right belief,' and *technē* (τέχνη) or 'know how', millennia ago. The questions are about the kinds of evidence and rules regarding the 'possibility' or 'probability,' that something is true in fact, while recognizing uncertainty about everything in this world, except 'death and taxes.'

Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth century mathematician and scientist, in his *Pensées*,⁵ argued there are different kinds of knowing, each with its own methods of verification and proof. Thus 'knowing' encompasses -

- **'Evidence-based, scientific knowledge'** based on the observation of physical events, the formation and testing of hypotheses about the causes of such events and the possibility, or probability, of their correctness.
- **'Rational beliefs and theories'**, based on the rules of logic, philosophical argument and metaphysics.
- **'Revelation'**, including the prophetic, based on spiritual, supra-rational, intuition that is subject to verification by the Bible, the Holy Spirit and subsequent events.

¹ P. Atkins in *The Limits of Science & The Reasons for God* St Aldates, Oxford Feb 2010;

² S.Hawking & L. Mlodinow *The Grand Design* ; ³ J. Lennox *Can Science Explain Everything?*;

⁴ Plato *The Republic* passim ; ⁵ B. Pascal *Pensées*

Pascal's Three 'Orders' of Knowledge

Pascal suggested Three 'Orders', or 'categories', of knowledge – '**Body**' (Physical), '**Mind**' (Rational) and '**Charity**' (what we call 'Spiritual'). In fragment #308 we see a summary of Pascal's epistemology, in which he distinguishes these three faculties:

'The infinite distance between Body and Mind symbolizes the infinitely more infinite distance between Mind and Charity, for Charity is supernatural. All the splendour of greatness lacks lustre for those engaged in pursuits of the mind. The greatness of intellectual people is not visible to kings, rich men, captains, who are all great in a carnal sense. The greatness of wisdom, which is nothing if it does not come from God, is not visible to carnal or intellectual people. They are three orders differing in kind.'

Because humanity shares the 'order' of the Body with other animals, Pascal argued, it is the lowest of the 'orders'. Rational thought is what distinguishes us humans from the animals. But though the senses of the Body and the reason of the Mind are paths to real knowledge, the two faculties deceive one another. False appearances and passions corrupt our senses from perceiving the world as it really is, and as such they are not infallible sources of knowledge.

For Pascal Reason alone cannot resolve the contradictions between Body and Mind and this is the detrimental limit of the order of the Mind. At best Reason can only point us toward the necessity of a third order of Revelation through Faith.

Scientific observation of the physical world, the formulation and testing of hypotheses, and the production of theories to explain observed phenomena is perfectly appropriate for what is physically observable and measurable, but is patently incapable of answering moral or philosophical questions, requiring the application of the rules, language and proofs of logic, metaphysics and philosophy. It also denies the reality of the spiritual aspects of human experience.

Bhaskar's Stratified Reality

More recently philosopher Roy Bhaskar has reframed these levels, or 'strata', of knowing in his *Theory of Stratified Reality* as '**Empirical**', '**Rational**' and '**Spiritual**'. The importance of this approach is that it argues that the methods of proof and the testing of hypotheses are different for the different kinds of knowledge.

'Bhaskar rejects what he calls the *epistemic fallacy*, which is based on the belief that ontological reality is determined by what is known. He argues that the specific nature of some reality determines the *manner* in which it is to be known, and the *extent* to which it can be known. 'For Bhaskar, ontology is determined neither by methodology nor epistemology. The 'epistemic fallacy' rests on the false assumption that the structures of the world rest or depend upon human observation. He is quite clear that the world is not limited by what can be observed. To put this another way, existence is not dependent on observation, or being observable.' ¹

John Polkinghorne points out that 'there are many things which we cannot observe, yet which we nevertheless believe with good reason to be there.' We habitually speak of entities which are not directly observable. No one has ever seen a gene....or an electron....No one has ever seen God (though there is the astonishing Christian claim that the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known John 1:18). ²

The refusal of scientific atheism to admit even the possibility of a supernatural, spiritual aspect of human personality and life, because it is not observable or measurable, results in a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which God obviously does not exist, because God's existence cannot be measured by naturalistic measures.

Bhaskar's solution is to propose the *stratification of reality*, which is a reflection of Pascal's 'Three Orders,' each with its own criteria for validating the reality at each level, or *stratum*. It is the nature of the object (of study) that determines the form of its possible science.' ³

¹ A McGrath *The Science of God* 144-145; ² op cit page 146; ³ op cit page 147

The Tripartite Structure of Human Personality

Pascal and Bhaskar's tripartite approach to epistemology can be seen ultimately as being related to the tripartite nature of human personality, seen in the biblical theology of **Body**, **Soul** and **Spirit**. This is consistent with the Bible's Trinitarian description of '*Man (being) made in the image of God*,¹ and bears certain similarities with Freud's Psychoanalytic Model of *Superego*, *Ego* and *Id*, and Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis of *Parent*, *Adult* and *Child*.

In 1 Corinthians 2:12-16 Paul talks about the difference between the 'Soulish person' (*psychikos anthrōpos*) and the 'Spiritual person' (*pneumatikos anthrōpos*). He says the Soulish person cannot understand spiritual truths, because he is not filled with God's Spirit. Only a person, who has been 'born *anōthen*,' as Jesus said,² can understand spiritual things.

Types of Evidence & Forms of Verification

Questions about the existence of God involve at least two forms of verification:

A. Examination of the Evidence

Evidence for God's existence, Simon believed, should include historical evidence, including the Gospels and other historical accounts, as well as evidence of events for which there is no naturalistic explanation. This includes verifying a 'word' or healing as being from God by subsequent observable events.

B. Experiencing the Reality of God

This is based on accounts of individuals' experiences, for which there is no obvious natural explanation, and which are interpreted as being of spiritual, or supernatural, origin. This includes healing after prayer, which is verifiable medically, or by the claimed healing being observed to be permanent over time. Another form of evidence is the testimony of individuals, who claim to have had a spiritual encounter with God, that has resulted in radical changes to their lives - for example, deliverance from addictions or demonic bondage through prayer in the Name of Jesus Christ and are in keeping with the biblical accounts in the New Testament.

¹ Genesis 1:26; ² John 3:3,7

on different kinds of knowing

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the scientific method we are told
by darwin dawkins atkins and their ilk
is the only valid kind of knowing and
an evolutionary advance on all man's
previous attempts to answer the
important questions he has faced
in his predicted chance career
from childish fantasies of ancient times
through metaphysical debate and reasoning
to present state of scientific adulthood

the observation of events the testing
of hypotheses by carefully controlled
experiments to see if what has been
observed can be confirmed and replicated
in reality of course is why we now can fly
cure some diseases that were always fatal
and create explosive energy so great
that it might yet exterminate mankind
to show that the selection of all those
who in their lust to know both good and evil
chose to turn their backs on God and trust
in their own wisdom just confirms that
the theology of man's original apostasy is true

was such rebellious behaviour the result
of natural selection chance mutation
of the human genes? or has some other
influence malign and manifestly evil
sought to turn mankind away from his
Creator and so learn too late the cost
of knowing good and evil is so great?

how is it we have lost our way and failed
to see the foolishness of being wise about
our origins? what cataracts have veiled our
eyes from seeing the direction we are going
and thus blinded us from understanding
there are many ways of knowing? in our
cleverness and pride in our own wisdom
have we simply shown that there are
times when it is foolish to be wise?

how is it that the man who gave us
dynamite became the one whose name
is now awarded to those individuals
whose fame is to be lauded as the
saviours of the world and men of
peace? why can we land a probe
on mars or on some asteroid from
outer space that's hurtling earthwards
and yet still remain incapable of stopping
wars that are more likely to exterminate
the human race? is that what
scientific creativity is for or have we been
deluded by a counterfeit of knowing
and professing to be wise have simply
shown how far from real wisdom
in our evolution we have grown?

how does the cat that sits and purrs
upon my knee and drools feline affection
know that he is safe and loved?
is the protection he receives
from one who cares by feeding him
perhaps the reason why he does not fear
the diabolical malignity of Schrödinger's
contrived experiment and has survived
the slings and arrows of any such
outrageous probability?

how does the whale or swallow know
the trackless pathways of the seas and skies
without the wisdom of the scientist who says
they both are guided by the sun or gravity to
plot their course and reach their goal without
the help of those who claim to be so wise?

how does the earth as if suspended by a
spider's web in space by force of gravity
maintain its place among the planets stars
and galaxies without the help of man or woman?
can our astronomical intelligence alter one whit
its path predictably elliptical around our sun
or cause the sun itself to falter in its course?

does any rose smell sweeter or more fragrant
in my garden all because a scientist can tell me
that its properties are sensibly detected by
olfactory receptors in my nose and yet
like darwin is unable to enjoy the pleasure
that i get from such breath-taking beauty?

what chance mutation of genetic code
in time produced the sonnets and the plays
of shakespeare sounded nine majestic
symphonies in beethoven's deaf ears or rose
like lark ascending for a meredith or williams
to the skies to thrill the soul with intimations
of another world in such a trill sublime?

the house i live in was envisioned
by an architect expressed in plans that showed
the general layout of the rooms the area of garden
at the back provision of utilities and access road
and built by brickies joiners electricians to create a
home - it did not build itself
nor was it built from nothing

if this is true for something so apparently
self-evident to eyes that look at what's
before them why do we accept
hypotheses and lies suggesting we
evolved by chance from simple organisms
over aeons from primeval slime?

can you create an embryo from nothing
form the eye that sees the ear that hears
the beating heart and lungs that heave with air
and fall methodically as metronome while gentle
brain waves lightly lull the lisping child to sleep
with dreams of counting sheep and lullabies?

how does the innocence of infancy discern
the difference between the one who cares
and nurtures it from birth only to learn that
there are others who would use that
innocence to shatter and abuse the
trust that lay well fed upon a mother's
bosom for their own perverted lust?

when descartes proposed that his ability
to think was proof of his identity
he merely showed mankind's propensity
to focus on himself and thus suppose
he could eliminate the need for God -
a notion as absurd as thinking that
the railway bridge across the river forth
was built by mental effort
not by blacksmith's brawn in an immensity
that dwarfs the tinker marveling
upon this miracle of engineering

if reason and empiricism are the source
of wisdom why do we behave so often
so unreasonably? how is it even when i
know the difference 'twixt good and evil
i prefer to the very thing i do not want to do
eschewing what i know i should be doing?

for scientists there's no such thing as
revelation or the possibility of outside
intervention in a world that's governed
by the laws of physics - once the universe
was formed there was no further need
for a prime mover and the matter
like the system has been closed to minds
so open to the possibility of everything but God

why did the One who brought the universe
to birth by simply uttering the words
'Let there be light' allow Himself
to be ignored or labelled as absurd and
disregarded as irrelevant by those He made
and placed on earth to glorify Himself?

what marvel of mankind's imagination
chose to love not just our neighbours
but our foes in spite of consequences
so extreme as to extinguish such a meme
that dawkins' pseudoscientific dogma has propounded
which both lacks the scientific rigour
he professes to espouse and is confounded
by the awkward facts of human history?

how could the only Person sent to save
mankind from an eternity apart from God
contrive to find Himself prophetically
defined in jewish scripture virgin born
in bethlehem anointed as Messiah -
God's appointed by the Spirit called to
save His people from their sins but
destined to be hung upon a roman cross
to rise up from the grave for those
who follow Him to know He is alive
by living in each one of them and
show the world the way again to God?

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