

## 148 Changing our minds (Part III)

I know I have this thing about seeing patterns, but the great plan of God<sup>[145,146]</sup> is very much a game of two halves – 2000 years each way (please forgive the topical allusion!).

First, we had Abraham and his OT followers through 2000 years where God was trying to banish the *bad news* of being seen as an angry smiter. Then God led the way, by coming to earth, to kick off the second wonderful half of really, really *good news*.

People suddenly understood how God came to bring victory over sin and evil, through the cross, a new Exodus where we are released from slavery into a loving community – that’s really **Good News**. People travelled around the known world, keeping that focus on loving community. Monastics, in particular, showed the way, as centres of healing and hope for the people. Brilliant!

That answered one of my ‘big questions’: “How the heck did Christianity spread so rapidly?!”

Another ‘big question’ I’ve aired, based on my own experience of church life, was, “So if Christianity is supposed to be ‘a relationship with God’, why doesn’t it feel like that?!” And that was answered right at the start of my quest, when I ‘discovered’ the Trinity.<sup>[article 0]</sup>

But here’s a third ‘big question’, and this has been one of the biggest blocks to my evangelistic efforts for 50 years: “You say I should believe in Jesus, but look at the evil the church has done!”

And, yes, I have total sympathy with unbelievers. How could so much hellish evil have been committed, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth?! Surely, Jesus came to *release us* from religious domination. I’m thinking Crusades, Spanish Inquisition, Catholic/Protestant wars, Christian-led colonialism and, in modern days, Ku Klux Klan, Apartheid and (I’ll risk adding) clergy child abuse and gay bashing. How, how how?!

Hang on! Maybe I’m seeing another pattern here. Another game of two halves? This time it’s a thousand years each way, but the other way around: first the good news and then the bad news. Am I wrong? All the above are in the second millennium, right?

So is there hope for us in the third millennium? I think there is! I really think God is on the move, wanting once again to release us from religious domination. I’ve seen a few signs, but please share your thoughts and feelings:

- Return to the idea of Trinity as relationship – this kicked off the transformation of my faith.
- Emphasis on Celtic<sup>1</sup> spirituality and monasticism (that’s first millennium monasticism, as community, before it got perverted into religious domination).
- The Bible is no longer a book of two halves. Gone is the (smiting) “God of the Old Testament”! It’s all one big plan of a loving, redeeming, rescuing God, as in Greg Boyd’s *Cross Vision*.<sup>[124–129]</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> No, that wasn’t a deliberate football allusion!

– Return to the first-millennium emphasis on the gospel as Christ’s victory over evil, and our being rescued and redeemed, see Derek Flood’s *Healing the Gospel*.<sup>[50–54,57]</sup> So our evangelism starts with God’s amazing love, not with God’s wrath.

Thank you, Father, for your amazing love.

Paul Bev. 13.07.21