

178 Full Circle – now in sharper focus

In early 2017, having moved house and church, I read a book that seemed to express exactly how I felt in my unhappiness with the faith I had followed for 50 years; and it echoed almost exactly what I thought that faith **ought** to be like. I was hooked, and started exploring.

Then, in mid 2017, I wrote an article^[0] because I had seen a **very distinct pattern in my life**:

1967 – Visiting a Christian conference centre, I found *loving community* and a *sense of mystery*.

1968 – As a student, I heard ‘the gospel’ (the ‘mechanics’ of salvation) and accepted it. I was well disciplined by the Cambridge CU – indeed, I’ve read my Bible and prayed almost every day since. It was drummed into me the importance of right theology, how CU students had preserved the purity of the gospel, against the onslaught of liberal theology. And we in turn fought against the charismatic movement – those gifts were *only* for the early church! I persuaded no-one.

1983 – I rediscovered *community* and *mystery*. In a wave of God’s love, and the gifts of the Spirit, I had finally found ‘the truth’, and spent years trying to convince my more conservative friends. I persuaded a few.

1994 – I received a gift, ‘tears for the lost’, and realised how wrong I had been trying to persuade fellow Christians. Instead, mainly via the internet, I set about proving that Christians are right by using (a) the incontrovertible evidence for the resurrection and (b) the miracles I had experienced. I persuaded a few.

Undated – Around the mid noughties, as my church gradually became less miracle-aware, a small Bible study group, focused around ‘Harry’,^[0] saw dramatic healing and prophetic gifts, and there was a real sense of *love* and *miracles*. But we were the only ones who were ‘right’. I persuaded no-one – I didn’t even try.

Unbeknown to me, I was caught in a sect. Meantime, Sue was discovering a widening spirituality through a two-year diocesan course.

2010 – Almost overnight, I realised what had happened, escaped from Harry and was totally bereft. Did God even exist? Was it all made-up, wishful thinking?

2011 – At a Cambridge CU reunion, I wept, but sadly no-one seemed able to help me. From there, I gradually rebuilt my faith, but along the same old lines. I had never stopped attending my church, and Sue, thankfully, never gave up on me.

2017 – We moved to a new church and I realised that **very distinct pattern in my life** – a battle between *being right* and accepting *community* and *mystery*. I now know for sure that I’m wrong about all sorts of things, but I know I’m part of a *loving community* and part of *God’s mystery*.

What a total and utter joy I now feel! And I’ve seen more miracles than ever before: many people who are going through serious trials and suffering are being filled with love and joy, and they are unselfconsciously radiating that joy to those around them. Just brilliant! Luvvit!