

336 True or false – more thoughts

I'm reflecting again on the time I spent in that small study group which had effectively become a sect. Thankfully God woke me up, through a drama based on Pilgrim's Progress, and I wrote to the leader to say that I would no longer be attending. But that left me bereft: What **do** I believe – does God exist, even, or is it all made up?

After five years trying to make sense of it, we moved house and church, which gave me chance to rethink things. But how did I manage to get into that situation in the first place?! I'm not a gullible person, and I've always had a strong, 'Yes, but **why**?!' type of character.

My recent articles have been sparked by discussions with – let's be frank – one or two people I disagree with fairly strongly. But if you and I have disagreed, please don't assume I'm talking about you. It's not about being right or wrong, anyway – surely it's OK not to agree on everything, and yet still love one another and work together? Anyway, more than once I've disagreed with **myself**!

In Alex Irving's course on the creeds,^[335] he said that they were established to avoid fundamental misinterpretations, and that within those credal boundaries it's OK to disagree and still work together to bring in God's kingdom.

When I moved church I realised that I was worshipping with people from some quite different 'churchmanships'. I'd say, 'Have you worshipped here long?' and the response was like a litany: 'Well, I came from a difficult situation, and I was just made so welcome here.' And many of those 'situations' related to church disagreements.

As I acknowledged in my very first article^[0] I have spent most of my life trying to persuade other people that I was right and they were wrong; and more than once I switched horses: I went from my conservative, 'Dramatic spiritual gifts were only for the early church' to 'If you don't have these gifts in your church you're missing out'. I can only apologise!

And I got into that sect because I thought that the leader's undoubted gifts of healing and prophecy validated his teaching. The other mistake I made was to accept his, 'The Bible teaches Xyz', as unarguable.

So if someone is saying to you, with confidence, 'The Bible teaches Xyz', and they don't see it as a matter of interpretation; or if a leader tells you, with confidence, that Zyx is true, based on their prophetic gifting; I'd simply urge caution, especially where following that leader might lead to a church split.

In that sect, I thought we must be the only Christians in the whole of the city of Norwich who really knew what was true. I did vaguely think it a little odd that God should be left with such a small number of representatives of The Truth.

Thankfully, God uses my present church even though we're not all 'right'.

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