

368 *Fifty years a CP*

I don't think I was being unduly hard on myself by saying that I had spent fifty years as a Christian Pharisee;^[366] rather, I was being realistic. None of the people who know me best – my family – now follow the way of Jesus. (Or do they? They are loving, caring people who go out of their way to help folk in need; they just don't go to church.)

But as a CP, I would have said that I (we as a church) had presented 'the gospel' to them, but while they at first accepted it, they now reject it: their responsibility.

Having lost my faith, then gone back to the drawing board, I have had (do still have!) a lot of questions. And, let's face it, Christians do disagree (and have tortured and killed one another) on a whole range of issues, amongst ourselves and with those outside the faith.

In a sense they are all theological issues – about God-and-the-Bible – but it might help (or not) to divide them into disagreements on moral issues, ethical ones and questions of church order, but with political issues mixed in. Complicated!

As a well-meaning CP, just like the first Pharisees, I studied the Bible to find out what was right, and then tried to put it into practice – and what's wrong with that?! Well, let's step back and ask what is God trying to achieve overall for humankind? Why did God inspire people to write both the Old Testament and the New Testament?

Presumably, if people get to know what God is really like – different from the view of the gods in Abraham's time (~2000BC) – we will love God more, love one another more and be more able to resist evil. Does that sound about right?

After ~500 years, God gave them the ten commandments. Then for ~1100 years God tried to work with those people, that specific ethnic group, trying to improve their ethical and moral sense, and help them relate well to God and to the people around – with mixed success! Then 400 years of silence. Then Jesus. We can read the story of what happened and how people at the time related to God-in-Jesus – it went horribly wrong, seemingly, but we know the end of the story!

So how does a recovering CP view that story, 2000 years later?

To me, the good news is about God; how God related – tried to relate – to a people, against all the odds (people are very contrary); how God came (Jesus came) and related to real people; how God came (the Holy Spirit came), and now relates to all people.

The 'good news' is not primarily about **me**, how **I** can relate to God; the 'good news' is not a **mechanism** – how **I** get saved; the 'good news' is not about **morality**, much less about ethics. The real good news is about a wonderful Person, in all three aspects, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Vague and waffly, sorry. Happy Valentine's Day, anyway!