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Having gone back to the drawing board in 2017 and started questioning everything I'd been taught as a Christian, it wasn't long before I realised that I'd spent almost 50 years as a practising Pharisee. To be fair to myself, as a Bible-believing Christian, I really *did* know what was right because better men than I had thought it through carefully and had worked out a systematic theology. My job was to persuade others of that truth – and I was moderately successful at doing so, over the years.

What I have also realised, more recently, is that I've also been a practical Sadducee (they didn't believe in the resurrection). Oh, I *believed* in the resurrection, but only in the sense that Jesus having risen from the dead *proved* 'the gospel' (as I saw it then).

But why the title? Well, as a student in Pembroke College chapel I lied every time I read the 1662 communion service: I didn't 'bewail my manifold sins and wickedness'. Even today, with the toned down wording of the confessions, I struggle to say them with real conviction – I don't think I deliberately do things to hurt anyone; at worst, I tend to be care-less and lazy and not help other people when I could.

OK, I guess I'm a self-optimist, and I have friends whom I know are self-pessimists; they say the confessions with full conviction. Am I terrible? Maybe it's a psychological thing: we're just different characters?

But my main sin, I now believe, is *not living by faith*. Let me explain.

As a member of a small Christian sect in the 2000s, I experienced healings and prophecy, and I saw these as signs that validated (*proved*) the leader's teachings. I now see how stupid I was, but at the time it was very real.

As a well-meaning Pharisee, I tried to help people 'see the truth', and I had biblical *proof-texts* to persuade them. I spent years persuading both fellow Christians and unbelievers (including my own family) of those supposed truths.

As a Sadducee, I believed in the resurrection, but only as a means of *proving* my views. I gave away countless copies of Morison's *Who moved the stone* in the 1970s and 80s.

My form of Christianity (but to be fair, it *is* what I was taught in the churches I attended) was based, therefore, on being able to *prove* things from the Bible. It was not, in reality, trusting (having faith in) a Person: I was living by proof, *not* by faith.

Having spent years knowing I was right, and persuading others, I now know I'm probably wrong about lots of things, but I have a deeper and deeper sense that I'm on a journey – the Way of Jesus – a journey that has a destination: the Great Day when everything will be gloriously restored! Statistically, I'll probably die before That Day, but I believe that God will somehow keep me safe (in heaven, I guess) until we're restored.