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I've always been a salesman, ever since I was a kid, although in those early years it wasn't always, er, strictly legal. My first job was as a teacher, but since I started my own business in 1984, I have always earned my living by selling 'things' and/or my own services.

I've always enjoyed making money by selling, but there is an altruistic streak: if I find something that's particularly useful/effective/helpful, I really enjoy sharing it with other people... maybe you can see where this is going...

I can also recommend keeping a written record of the stages of your life, over the years – just the main phases and significant events, especially those of spiritual significance. Mine is 15 years per (electronic) page and 40/50 words on each, i.e. just the headlines.

So, after my seven years of questioning my faith, what do I see? I know I've talked about this before, sorry, but the more I challenge myself and my beliefs the tighter the focus becomes. This latest view is after one-and-a-bit reads through Brian McLaren's *A Generous Orthodoxy* – not an easy read, but it has helped me.

I came to faith around 1968 in a very conservative Cambridge CU environment where we were taught by some eminent people such as Michael Green and John Stott. It was made clear that our responsibility was to 'hold the (biblical) line', mainly against liberals and Catholics, but also against charismatics. Being the 1960s, we held the line on sex, too: strictly for marriage only. (No particular mention was made of gay relationships, but there was no need as everyone knew how abhorrent it was – to us, anyway.)

We were also taught how Cambridge Men spearheaded both Bible translation and also the 'modern missionary movement', e.g. 'the Cambridge Seven' in China. Our responsibility, at home and abroad, was to preach the gospel of personal salvation.

Living in Kenya in the late 70s, we met Catholics, who clearly loved Jesus, and loved and served people, and they had neither horns nor a forked tail! Then in 1985, we encountered charismatics and realised that spiritual gifts *were* for the 20th century, not just the first.

Embarrassingly, in the next stage (the early 2000s), I thought that one particular person with charismatic gifts was right, and everyone else – *everyone* else – was wrong. I can't credit how stupid I was, but I believe it was an important stage in my journey, after which I worked out – though it has taken me a few years to realise – that 'being right' is not why Jesus lived, died and rose again!

Brian McLaren's book has been really helpful to me in ranging through historic Christian movements, illustrating how God used each, despite the messes they made, to show us... well, to show us lots of different things that could be valuable, so long as we don't then persecute those who are 'wrong'. And all those movements were, of course, 'Bible-based'. Food for thought?

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