

Dedicated to all honest and fearless researchers

Specially written for Christian people by one who was a committed Christian, Church elder and worker for

forty years.

I would like to express my thanks to friends who have read this text and made helpful suggestions. First of all my wife Elaine who always has given me unfailing support and time in proof reading of all my books. I also value and respect the interest and encouragement of Dr. Bill Cooke, George Fine and Peter Hansen and others

Contents

1. Preface
2. Background to New Testament
3. The New Testament Manuscripts
4. The Synoptic Gospels
5. Mark the First Gospel
6. Hebrew Prophets and the Messiah
7. The Son of God
8. The Virgin Birth and Contradictions
9. The Teaching of Jesus
10. Prophecies by Jesus
11. The Crucifixion and Resurrection
12. The Gospel of John
13. Part two
14. Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles
15. Paul's Gospel
16. Paul Requires Loyalty
17. Paul Changes the Purpose of Messiah
18. Paul's Conflict with Peter
19. The Spirit and the Flesh (Paul's Confession)
20. The Justice of God (According to Paul)
21. Paul's Attitude to Women
22. Paul's Ethical Teaching
23. Paganism within Christianity
24. Concept of God
25. The Dependency Factor Part three
26. Life After Death
27. A Matter of Justice
28. Do We Need a Religion?
29. Social Ethics Index

Preface

In mid life I urgently needed to know without doubt what was indeed the truth about my religion. I was married, had four children and had become a regular church worker and officer. Now I needed to know for certain, what was indeed true and trustworthy.

The journey to find a solid conviction for myself had begun, I could not turn back. I have always regarded love, compassion, honesty and goodwill as natural human virtues and still do. After years of reading and searching I did succeed in building a satisfying and honest philosophy for myself. In this essay I have come back to the Bible itself. What was the message of Jesus to the people and does it still apply? Is the philosophy valid or is it all superstition? What was the influence of the Apostle Paul upon the teaching of Jesus? We will seek to answer these questions in this unusual study of the life, the people and the surrounding history of Jesus.

I knew that scholars regarded the Gospel of Mark as the first Gospel to have been written. So I listed the stories of Mark and compared them with Matthew and Luke, and discovered that both Matthew and Luke often followed the same sequence as presented by Mark in reporting the stories and teaching of Jesus. Did they copy and change Mark's story? I wanted to know why.

There is a rather full record of the life of the Apostle Paul and thirteen or possibly fourteen epistles written by him to the various churches. These make up a large proportion of the New Testament. But there is not even a hint in the New Testament of a sacred text being read in the churches. Surely if there had been a written story of the life and sayings of Jesus before the end of Paul's life it would have been mentioned somewhere in the New Testament. This alone gives us the approximate date of the writing of Mark as 70 A.D. or later. It also means that the stories of Jesus were carried orally from one person to another for thirty or more years before Mark put pen to paper. No wonder there is poor agreement between the Gospels.

I wrote out the heading of each of the incidents recorded in the three Gospels. Sometimes Mark's stories were reduced and sometimes they were enlarged with additional ideas by Matthew and Luke. Generally they do not disagree with Mark. What I concluded was that Matthew and Luke had both read Mark's Gospel to be able to follow the same sequence. It would have been impossible for them to make their selection out of the many orally passed stories and then accidentally follow the same sequence of writing as Mark. So my new study of the Bible story had commenced.

Our study will raise many questions which need to be answered. The writings of the Apocrypha, which are ancient Christian religious texts,

are not included in the Bible. Some scholars think they were written as late as the second century A.D, Therefore they will not be included in this study. The Bible itself is my chief witness and authority.

The influence of the first apostles appointed by Jesus, disappeared with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Romans expelled the Jews from the city about that time. Paul's epistles remained the only Christian texts for instruction. Paul's epistles now had the field all to themselves until the Gospel of Mark appeared followed by Matthew and Luke. The philological scholars tell us that the Gospel of John was the last to be written about 110 - 130

A.D. and possibly later.

Quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version, second edition, 1989. The evidence I use will be drawn almost entirely from the New Testament itself.

Chronology of the New Testament texts are,

55 - 65 A.D. Epistles of Paul to the churches.

70- 100 A.D. Gospel of Mark.

90 - 110 A.D. Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

110 - 130 A.D Gospel, of John.

150- 170 A.D Acts of the Apostles.

The New Testament section of this essay divides itself into three parts, firstly the Gospels that tell the life and teaching of Jesus and secondly we will look at the background on which Paul built his particular doctrine and the influence he had on Christian thought. Finally I record the results of my personal search for reality, justice and social ethics.

Steve Cooper, 2000.

Chapter one

Background to the New Testament

The Bible is the most published book in the history of the world. The 1995 World Annual Report of the United Bible Societies tells us that they printed the whole Bible in 2,123 different languages and dialects. The total quantity distributed that one year alone was 17,751,000 complete Bibles and another 11,255,000 New Testaments making a total of 29,006,000 New Testaments.

Most of the Old Testament was written over 2,000 years ago. It occupies approximately three quarters of the Christian Bible. There are thirty nine books of various lengths by different authors in the Old Testament- They record a large part of the Jewish sacred texts which set out the religious and ceremonial laws and observances demanded by their prophets. It contains a great deal of the history, traditions and myths of the Jewish people who are also called Hebrews and Israelites. The books were written over some hundreds of years. We do not know the names of most of the authors. The first five books of the Bible were not generally considered by the Jewish nation as divine commandments until 444 B.C. (see Nehemiah chapters 8-9). Many Biblical scholars believe that the books of the Old Testament were first written or collated during the second exile of the Jews in Babylon in 586 to 538 B.C.

My Encyclopaedia Britannica states, "It is certain that before the second century A.D. the various manuscripts of the Old Testament differed very materially from one another and that the official Hebrew text was probably fixed in the second century A.D. Thereafter it was scrupulously preserved."

Most of the larger books and some of the shorter were not completed by a single author but by several. They were gradually expanded through additions and alterations by a succession of persons. Most of the Old Testament was compiled in its present form and finally given authority by a council of Jewish Rabbis in the year 90 A.D. None of the Bible writings in their present form is older than the eighth century B.C. There are no original manuscripts of Abraham, Moses, King David or the early Hebrew prophets. Professor Thompson from Copenhagen University in his book "The Early History of the Israelite People" assures us that the first ten books of the Old Testament are based on fiction and were written 500 to 1,500 years after the events they purport to describe- He based his statement on 15 years study of archaeological evidence. This sounds very reasonable to me.

Writing was invented about 3,000 B.C. It developed painfully slowly from pictograms to phraseograms to syllabagrams and finally to an alphabet by the Greeks. It would be many years before writing was used for the recording of history. Herodotus 480-424 B.C. is regarded

as the father of historians.

It is evident that when the Jews were held captive in Babylon, 586 to 538 B.C., the cultural centre of the world at that time, they gathered together and recorded their own traditions and myths and borrowed some local ones.

The main difference between the Israelites and other nations was that about the tenth century B.C. they had accepted monotheism as a tenet of the national religion. That also was not an original idea. Monotheism was promoted, by the Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep around 1360 B.C. The nation of Israel took up the idea many years later. It would have been surprising if the Jews had not been influenced by the surrounding religions or incorporated some of the myths and beliefs into their own written traditions. What better way to prevent their nation being absorbed into other races than to record their traditional history, myths and legends. Thereby they would emphasise their national uniqueness and religious beliefs by reaffirming faith in Yahweh their own special tribal god. The Hebrew religion did not grow out of a vacuum. The Jewish religion and their nationhood have always been inseparably linked.

All the first believers in Jesus were devout orthodox Jews who continued to worship in the temple and synagogues. The early Christian group could be considered to be a separate sect of the Jews as indeed the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes were. They all believed their scriptures which promised a Messiah who was to come to rescue the nation from their enemies. Those promises and the expectation of the people was for a political leader who would, with the help of their God, bring about deliverance from their enemies. For God's promises to Israel see page 95.

Chapter two

The New Testament Manuscripts

There are five manuscripts which were the main source of our present New Testament. Material from more recent discoveries has been included in later additions- The first is the Vatican Codex. It was made in the middle of the 4th century, possibly one of fifty five ordered by the Emperor Constantine after his conversion to Christianity in 323 A.D. It is now placed in the Vatican and is said to be a most beautiful work.

The second is the Sinai Codex. In 1844 Tischendorf visited the St. Catherine monastery at Mount Sinai and found some 43 leaves of an Old Testament manuscript in a waste basket. Nine years later he returned and obtained another fragment. After a further six years he returned again under the patronage of the Emperor of Russia. In a room occupied by the Great Steward of the monastery he recognised the rest of the Old Testament and the whole of the New Testament. After another ten years and a lot of dealing and money the text ended up in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg. The British Museum purchased it from Russia for 100,000 British Pounds,

The third Codex, the Alexandria Codex was made in Egypt toward the end of the 5th century and presented to the Patriarch of Alexandria in 1098. This document was offered to James 1 of England who died before receiving it. So it was received by Charles 1, in 1628. The British Museum was founded in 1753 and the manuscript was deposited there.

The fourth manuscript is the Codex Bezae. It was made at the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th century. It came from St. Irenaeus monastery in Lyons in 1562 through Calvin's friend Theodore Beza. He presented it to the University of Cambridge in 1581. The left hand page contains Greek and the right hand page Latin in single columns. Many passages, especially in Luke and Acts differ greatly from other Greek manuscripts. This is our first indication that alterations have been made to the original texts.

The fifth manuscript is the Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus now deposited in the National Library in Paris. It was made in the 5th century in Egypt. Perhaps vellum was scarce at that time. The original Greek of the New Testament was erased and some sermons were written on it in the 12th century. Fortunately, with the use of chemicals, it was possible to restore the original writing in most places. I have to thank a little book, "The Thrilling Voices of the Past" by T.C. Innes, for this information. No date of publication or copyright is on the book.

The shame is that the world had to wait so long before records were available. We are forced to use manuscripts like the above which date from the fourth century A-D. The original documents are lost and we

have to use very old transcriptions which were to be further subjected to translations of translations. Errors were bound to have occurred. It would be impossible to avoid this happening.

In studying the New Testament we must look at the difficulty of original manuscripts- We should also remember that there were no copyright laws in those times to protect authors and their works. Anyone who had inherited or otherwise acquired a manuscript was at liberty to delete or add anything he wished to the work of the original author. There were no mechanical means of reproducing manuscripts. Scribes would copy manuscripts by hand, many times over, thereby laying them open to easy alterations and errors by a copier who may have wished to change the scribe. Perhaps he would try to update the text in conformity with current beliefs. In fact changes were made to the ancient texts.

Philological scholars (those who make a special study of languages) assure us that many, perhaps most, of the books of the Bible have been subject to alterations by persons who have wanted to include their own ideas. This also applies to the Old Testament which has had changes made to the original texts. There are many footnotes in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible which refer to other ancient manuscripts with a different reading or alterations. This to my mind confirms the opinion of the philological experts that the Bible texts have often been tampered with.

There are 27 books in the New Testament of which half are written by the apostle Paul. The earliest of all the Christian writings are the 13 or possibly 14 epistles written to various churches which had been established by Paul. They are believed to be written about 55 to 65 A.D. I believe that Paul's epistles have been less subject to alterations than the Gospels or Acts. They can be checked against the stories in the book of Acts and Paul's other epistles.

Jesus left no written record of his teaching. We are totally dependent on what was passed on by word of mouth and relayed through his disciples to the early followers of Jesus. He and all his disciples were orthodox, devout Jews who regularly attended the synagogues. The Jews who believed in Jesus continued to observe the Mosaic laws and attended the synagogues. They did not forsake Judaism for the Christian religion.

The present day understanding of Jesus is that his teachings are good ethics. He showed compassion to the needy, poor, sick and to children. He went about doing good. He taught that people should repent and live a sincere and righteous life keeping the ten commandments and ordinances of Moses. That is a life built on ethical principles in conformity to a moral code.

Chapter three

The Synoptic Gospels

There are three Gospels taking the same general view, (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) which broadly tell the main story and largely agree on the teaching of Jesus. Let us look at the first written Gospel which is Mark. Each succeeding Gospel has moved away from Mark's simple story of Jesus by additions and alterations.

The last chapter of Mark has two endings; a short and a longer ending. The longer ending is marked as being doubtful in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The footnotes includes the following. 'Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a^lose at the end of verse eight'. It would seem that the additional 12 verses have been added at a later time. I have therefore excluded them. This is another admission that the book of Mark has been subject to adulteration. I am not qualified to tell you about all the texts which have been subject to tampering. You will, however, have my opinion on some occasions. For all his life, Jesus was a devout Jew who believed in and sincerely trusted the Jewish God- He kept the commandments, respected the prophets and wherever he went, attended the synagogues and Temple. Jesus is presented in Luke 3:23, as a mature man of about thirty.

The direct religious teaching which Jesus gave, related solely to their Hebrew national Mosaic law and loving each other. In other words keeping the laws of the land and loving your neighbour as yourself. Thus he presents a moral code and a social ethical imperative. It was always a case of actions and not just words. His greatest criticism seems to be of the religious sect of Pharisees for hypocrisy. The teaching of Jesus is sound ethics. He presents his thoughts mainly in parables which are fictitious stories with a serious meaning.

Jesus was not interested in any other race of people. He was only concerned with the future reign of the Jewish Messiah as presented by the prophets and good social behaviour. This was the Kingdom of God he so often spoke about.

Remember that Jesus said "go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. 10:5-6. When a Gentile woman asked him to heal her daughter he replied, "Let the children first be fed for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." Mark 7:27. The dogs!! Is that how he felt about Gentiles? But he did fulfil her request and praised her faith.

Jesus showed no intention of starting a new religion. Nor had he any

desire to include Gentiles among his followers. Indeed he never made a disciple of a gentile. It has rightly been said that Jesus was not what is understood today as a Christian. In all his teaching he was only concerned with the Hebrew God, the prophets, and that people should keep the Mosaic laws in preparation for the restitution of the throne of King David. Never does he promote faith instead of good deeds. The Hebrew Messiah, according to the prophets, was intended to be a political, not a spiritual Messiah. His message to the people was repent and sin no more, only then will you be able to participate in the Kingdom of God. There was no substitute for this, repentance and good behaviour must always go together.

Our first difficulty in understanding the teaching of Jesus is the great gap in time before the stories about Jesus were recorded by Mark. Perhaps he was the same Mark who accompanied Paul in his missionary work. He was not even one of Jesus' twelve apostles who travelled with him about Israel. So his stories of Jesus were second hand, heard from others-It is believed that Mark was a member of the Christian Church in Rome who took on the responsibility of writing about the life of Jesus around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Roman army. The spoils from the Temple would have been shown in the victory parade in Rome. It could have been politically unwise for Mark to accuse Rome of the death of Jesus. So Mark relieves Rome of the Responsibility of Jesus execution. He blamed the priests and Jewish people instead.

Ultimately it was Pilate who decided that Jesus should be crucified. The charge was shown on the inscription over the cross "The King of the Jews." This gives the real reason for his death, the fact attested by all four Gospels. The Jews chafed under the Romans who had had enough trouble from them. Rome wanted to give a warning to those who wished to revive the old kingdom of David.

The Romans are renowned for keeping reliable records of their legal proceedings. We would expect to find the crucifixion of Jesus recorded but there is no record . The historian Tacitus writes about Christian troublemakers in 64 A.D. He is vague and late and should not be taken seriously. Christian writers never mentioned Josephus until the beginning of the third century A.D. when Bishop Ensebius suddenly produced a spurious version of Josephus which talked about Jesus. It was a late addition to the original text. The respected Christian scholar Origen writing at the beginning of the third century tells us that there is no mention of Jesus in the writings of Josephus. There were over twenty five Pagan writers who wrote about the time of Jesus. None of them mentioned Jesus.

Chapter four

Mark, the First Gospel

The date of the writing of Mark was about 70 A.D. There is not even a hint of the existence of a sacred text in the book of Acts or any of Paul's epistles. The only scripture the church had was the Jewish sacred texts of the Old Testament. We must therefore conclude that, at its earliest, the first gospel appeared after the death of Paul. If it had been available, it surely would have been mentioned by Paul and read in the churches. The very fact that it is not mentioned, lends support to the late date of Mark's gospel. Mark was certainly written after the life of Paul, perhaps a decade after Paul or about the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem- As Mark's Gospel is the first written story of Jesus, it will most likely be the purest and least subject to interference. There are, however, different ancient versions of the Gospels which means that there have been alterations and additions even in Mark.

Mark starts his story with John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus. There is no mention of a genealogy of Jesus; or the virgin birth: nor the visit of the wise men from the East: nothing recorded about the massacre of young children by Herod or the escape to Egypt and return by Joseph and his family. But all these stories are found in Matthew's gospel. In Luke we have a different set of early life stories of Jesus which have no relationship to Matthew's stories. Luke tells us that the angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit. Mary then visits her relative Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist; Zechariah, a local priest, prophesies about Jesus telling us that he would rescue the nation from their enemies;

the shepherds visit the child in the manger and the boy Jesus is delayed in the Temple.

Luke also gives a genealogy in which the father of Joseph is Heli, whereas Matthew tells us Jacob is the father of Joseph. Neither genealogy stands up to scrutiny. Why give a genealogy of Heli or Joseph if Jesus was divine and did not have a human father? Was the idea of a divine conception thought of after Mark's gospel was written? Mark did not seem to know anything about it.

We can however, learn a good deal by a careful examination of the New Testament itself.

Matthew follows Mark's stories in his own words and elaborates on them but does not contradict the main statements as presented by Mark. Matthew follows the first group of five stories from Mark in the same sequence. Mark chapter one equals Matthew three and four. Then Matthew records the Beatitudes and some of his own stories before continuing from Mark scattering in his own stories.

Mark	First group of 5	Matthew
1:1	John the Baptist	3:1
1:9	Baptism of Jesus	3:13
1:12	Temptation of Jesus	4:1
1:14	Beginning of Ministry	4:12
1:16	Jesus calls first disciples	4:18

Second group of 14

6:1	Death of John the Baptist	14:1
6:30	Feeding of five thousand	14:13
6:45	Jesus walks on water	14:22
6:53	Jesus heals at Gennesuret	14:34
7:1	Tradition of the elders	15:1
7:15	Things that defile	15:10

Mark		Matthew
7:24	Gentile woman's faith	15:21
7:31	Jesus cures at Galilee	15:29
8:1	Feeding four thousand	15:32
8:11	Demand for a sign	16:1
8:14	The yeast of the Pharisees	16:5
8:27	Peter declares Jesus	16:13
8:31	Jesus foretells his death	16:21
9:2	The transfiguration	17:1

Matthew retells Mark's stories in his own words enlarging or reducing Mark's work but preserving the same sequence as Mark. This is followed by a few more of Matthew's own stories scattered among Mark's stories. The sequence happens again from Mark 14 and 15. There are another eleven sequential incidents recorded in Mark which are copied by Matthew 26:1 to 27:1 in the same sequence as Mark. Then there are additional stories by Matthew mixed up among further stories from Mark. I can almost see Matthew with a copy of the Gospel of Mark at his left hand and a quill pen in his right hand, writing his commentary from Mark. The fact that the stories in Matthew appear in the same sequence as Mark in at least three groups of occasions is evidence that Matthew read Mark and that Mark was written before Matthew. It would not be possible for these incidents to follow the same sequence accidentally from stories passed by word of mouth among the church members. Therefore they must have been copied and altered by Matthew from Mark's account.

Mark	Third group of 11	Matthew
14:1	Plot to kill Jesus	26:1
14:6	The anointing	26:6
14:10	Judas agrees to betray	26:14
14:12	The passover	26:17
14:22	Institution Lord's Supper	26:26
14:26	Peter's denial foretold	26:31
14:32	Jesus in Gethsemane	26:36
14:43	The arrest of Jesus	26:47
14:53	Jesus and High Priest	26:57
14:66	Peter denies Jesus	26:69
15:1	Jesus before Pilate	27:1

Luke has twelve pre-adult stories of Jesus, all different from Matthew's stories and totally unrelated. Then the same thing occurs with Luke as in Matthew. Fourteen stories from Mark 11:27 to 14:1 are all recorded in Luke 20:1 to 22:1 in the sequence that Mark has recorded them with one exception. They are followed by a scattering of Luke's own stories. The evidence of several sequences convinces one that both Matthew

and Luke read and copied Mark but most likely neither of them read the other's work.

Mark	14 stories	Luke
11:27	Authority Questioned	20:1
12:1	Wicked Tenants	20:9
12:13	Paying Taxes	20:20
12:18	Question of Resurrection	20:27
12:28	First Commandment	
12:34	Question David's Son	20:41
12:38	Jesus Denounces Scribes	20:45
12:41	Widow's Offering	21:1
13:1	Destruction of Temple	21:5
13:9	Persecution Foretold	21:7
13:14	Desolation, Sacrilege	21:20
13:24	Coming of Son of Man	21:25
13:28	Lesson of fig tree	21:29
13:32	Need for Watchfulness	21:34
14:1	Plot to kill Jesus	22:1

The question is, how factually reliable are the gospels? The acts and words of Jesus had to be passed from one person to another for thirty or more years before they were written into a sacred text. Those stories must end up with serious alterations to the original words of Jesus. Indeed it would be impossible for verbal stories not to be changed throughout the years. The fact that additional words and details have been added and sometimes deleted from Mark's account

shows that accuracy has been lost. There would have been many stories of Jesus often told among the people. Matthew and Luke have stories of the early life of Jesus. Did someone imagine them or did someone dream the stories at night and regard the dream as a message from God? We have no indication, in history or in the New Testament, that there were written stories of Jesus before Mark's gospel. Church members obviously could not continue to rely on oral and sometimes conflicting stories to preserve the sayings of Jesus. It became necessary to have a written record. But that was a long time in coming and the church had changed a great deal in philosophy and organisation before an official scripture appeared.

It was not until 367 A.D. that Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria sorted through documents and arbitrarily discarded or accepted those he thought should be included in his New Testament list. That list was ratified by the Church council at Hippo in 393 A.D., over 300 years after Paul wrote his Epistles and the Gospels were written. It is impossible to know how accurately the words of Jesus were carried forward and finally recorded by Mark thirty to forty years after the crucifixion. It is also impossible to know what was in the original Mark. One wonders what were the documents Bishop Athanasius discarded- Were they the Gnostic texts we now call the Apocryphal writings, the Gospel of Thomas and others? Were there some which would have shed more light on the life and sayings of Jesus? What was the criterion that determined his choice? Was he committed to Paul's doctrine? By that time there was established a hierarchy of power and influence within the church that would not be easy to change.

There is no proof in historical records that Jesus existed at all. Not even a grave to mark his death. Many have tried to find the historical Jesus and have failed- It has been suggested by some that a mythical story of the perfect man was written and eventually the story became accepted as history. From then on the story has been modified over and over again to comply with the changing religious doctrine. This is similar to the English legend of King Arthur's round table which has no reliable evidence in history.

Chapter five

Hebrew Prophets and the Messiah

The Jews were expecting a political Messiah who had been promised to them by their prophets. He was to rescue the nation from their enemies, restore the throne of King David and establish a righteous Kingdom of God on earth. Israel was then to become a leader in the nations of the world.

The prophets said that Elijah would precede the coming of the Messiah and he would be rejected. Jesus thought that John the Baptist was Elijah returned to earth. The disciples of Jesus asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come" and Jesus said to them "But I tell you Elijah has come and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him." Mark 9:11-12- John the Baptist had been beheaded by Herod. Here we see the peoples' belief that the ancient prophets could return to live again on earth. Concerning the throne of the long dead King David, the prophets had said "I (God) will establish his line forever, and as long as the heavens endure." Psm.89:29. "For you will spread out to the right and to the left and your descendants will possess the nations and settle the desolate towns." Isah. 54:13.

By the time of Jesus we find that the peoples' expectation had not changed. Luke tells us, "And the Lord God will give to him (Jesus) the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end." Luke 1:32-33. Zechariah's prophecy as recorded in Luke gives the peoples' expectation of the Messiah, He said, "We (the Jewish Nation) would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.--rescued from the hands of our enemies." Luke 1:71. Luke gives a clear statement of the expectation and the function of the Messiah at the time of Jesus, (a) He was to be given the throne of his ancestor David, (b) Reign over the house of Jacob for ever. (c) Of his kingdom there would be no end. This is a political Messiah related only to the governing of the nation of Israel. Jesus expected no more. This is what he called the Kingdom of God. In no way can it be read as a world-wide spiritual kingdom.

There are many verses in the Old Testament which had always been understood to be prophecies telling of the coming of the Messiah. There seemed to be an effort on the part of the Christian writers to make the story of Jesus fulfill all prophecy as though prophecies are infallible. Did they believe what the prophets foretold was a future fact which could not be altered? Were the Christians so anxious to establish Jesus as a spiritual Messiah that they would add or subtract

from the recorded words?

The Hebrew prophets turned their desire into a divine promise of a Messiah. Time has proved that those prophecies were no more than wishful thinking. Jesus also sincerely believed the prophets and became convinced that he was the promised one who would, with the help of his God, establish the Kingdom of God in Israel. It is always unwise to take prophecies too seriously.

When it comes to the reality of being the Messiah, Jesus did not claim that position until half way through Mark's Gospel (chapter 8). It would seem that since his baptism, he had been wondering and possibly hoping that he was the promised Messiah. The people followed him, hung on to his words. He had leadership, charisma and personal power, he believed that his almighty God was able to perform miracles. The people were telling him that he was someone special, sent from God. He could have thought, maybe, I am the anointed one. But he never felt sure enough to declare the thought until he had first asked his disciples for their opinion. He asked, "Who do men say that I am," and they answered him, "John the Baptist, and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the Prophets" and he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ" and he charged them to tell no one about him." Mark 8:27-30. (the word Christ, is Greek for Messiah) Why would he not want the people to know? Did he want further proof or personal assurance?

The belief that he was the Messiah seemed to grow and grow until he comes to stand before the high priest at his trial. He was asked, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said "I am and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Mark 14:61-62- Jesus never explains what he meant by those words. Did he expect the Kingdom of God to be ushered in immediately in view of the high priest? Or did he just mean that it would happen during the high priest's lifetime? And what did he mean by the 'right hand of power coming with the clouds of heaven?' Jesus was never to wear King David's crown.

Jesus was still waiting, trusting and expecting God to fulfill the promises of the prophets. One wonders, what were the thoughts of Jesus during the next few hours as the sentence of death drew near, was he waiting for a miracle by God? The last words recorded that Jesus spoke on the cross were, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" A cry of utter disappointment and sadness. If Jesus was divine, he would not have said those words. He would have known what was happening- This does not suggest a willing sacrifice for the sins of the people. Did he realise too late, that he was not to be the Messiah of his people. He would not be the one to fulfil the expectations of the prophets and Jewish people.

The nation of Israel was under the heel of the Roman Empire and feeling very unhappy about it. Their prophets had promised a

national saviour, a Messiah to restore their national dignity and promote their God. Now was the time of their greatest need. Where was the Messiah, the anointed one whom the prophets had promised?

Chapter six

The Son of God

Jesus never claims to be divine or equal with God. He repeatedly called himself 'The Son of Man' which statement alone is a denial of divine conception. When a rich man addresses him as "Good Teacher" he replies "why do you call me good, no one is good but God alone." Mark 10:18. Here Jesus is really saying "I am not God." There is no indication that Jesus thought he was equal with God but there is evidence of submission to his God. When John and James asked him if, when he comes into his glory, they may sit one on his right hand and the other on his left, Jesus says, "To sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." Mark 10:40. In telling the same story, Matthew adds the words "prepared by my Father."

Jesus goes to the garden of Gethsemane and prays, "Abba Father all things are possible to you, remove this cup from me; yet not what I will but what you will.And again he went away and prayed

saying the same words." Mark 14:36-39. Jesus had separated himself from the others.

Was that so he could pray quietly? Why else would he have withdrawn from the others? Who then heard what Jesus said to his God? We learn three things from this verse. (1) Jesus believed God could do anything. (2) Jesus really did not want to do whatever he thought was required of him. But he does not tell us what the 'cup' was which he wanted removed. We should not assume to know the answer. Nor can we be absolutely certain these words were not added at a later time. How did Mark know what Jesus said when he wrote the story thirty or more years later? (3) Jesus put aside his desires and submitted to what God wanted- There is no sense of equality with God here, only submission.

It was not until three hundred years after the crucifixion that the church dreamed up the doctrine of the trinity and made it an official tenet of church doctrine. This doctrine was part of the Nicene Creed approved by church leaders in 325 A.D. The writings of Paul had a great influence on that decision. We have seen that Jesus made no claim to be divine. It was after the death of Jesus that his followers conferred the divine status on him. We will talk about this in chapter eleven.

Constantine's close relative Julian became emperor in 361 A.D. He reigned supreme for nineteen months until 363 A.D. when unfortunately he was killed in the war with Persia. Julian had been raised as a Christian in the tradition of Constantine the first Christian Roman emperor. Julian forsook his training and embraced Roman paganism. He sets out his reasons in a book "Against the Gahleans".

Unfortunately this book was lost. Much of it, however, can be recovered from the fifth century refutation by Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria. A naturally gifted writer, Julian presents a strong argument that Christianity was an apostasy from Judaism. He claims that "Christians had fallen into the error of worshipping a man. None of the Synoptic Gospels had ventured to call Jesus, God. The notion that Jesus was divine was fabricated after his death by his followers. The Jewish god was only a tribal god and should not have been elevated to the one and only true God. Moses made it very plain when he gave their god's promise to the Jews that their god was a tribal god who would favour them over other peoples". See Deut. 7:12-15 or page 95.

Julian asks "Why was it only now (in mid history) after such a long age, that God

has remembered to judge the life of men? Did he not care before?" Julian goes on about the creation myths of Genesis and the garden of Eden; he asks, "'What kind of god is it who would create men and women without the knowledge of good and evil?" Julian compares the wrathful and jealous god of the Bible to the Greek myths where the supreme god is never shown as angry or resentful So he returns to paganism as a better philosophy than Christianity. We should consider Julian's arguments. Are they valid? We have to thank "The Christians as the Romans Saw Them" by Robert Wilken for this information.

Jesus never claimed to be divine. In fact he denied it by constantly calling himself 'the Son of Man'. There is no reason to regard him as more than a human being of integrity, sincerity, love and righteousness.

Chapter seven

The Virgin Birth, Magic and Contradictions

The Bible statement of a 'virgin' giving birth to Jesus as it appears in Isaiah 7:14 is a mis-translation. The Hebrew word for virgin is 'bethula'- The word for an unmarried woman is 'almah'. This word 'almah' has been wrongly translated as virgin in the early text of the Bible.

The idea of a virgin being impregnated by a divine spirit was introduced by Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:26-35. Both would have been familiar with the Greek and Roman Gods who were said to have cohabited with human beings and had children by them. They also would know the story in the Bible which says "The sons of God saw that they (humans) were fair and took wives for themselves of all that they chose when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans who bore children to them. They were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown". Genesis 6:2-4. Matthew and Luke would not doubt the possibility of a divine conception. It would be natural for the believers to think that surely Jesus would have been born of a holy conception. They might feel it was right to assume a virgin birth without proof or authority.

Mark makes no such claim of the divinity of Jesus in his gospel. Surely if Mark thought the virgin birth was a fact, he would have included it in his story. Neither Mark nor Jesus made such claim. We must regard the idea as first appearing after the death of Jesus by thirty or more years.

There are contradictory verses in the New Testament such as the announcement that Jesus would bring peace and goodwill among men Luke 2:14 and "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother." etc. etc. Matt.10:35. There are similar verses in Luke 12:51-53. These statements do not appear in Mark. They are quite out of character with the spirit and direction of the life of Jesus. I suspect later additions.

There are other contradictions found scattered throughout the gospels which are difficult to accept. Here is another "To you has been given the secrets of the Kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything is in parables so that they may indeed see but not perceive and may indeed hear but not understand." Mark 4:11-12. This is out of context and opposed to the stated purpose of Jesus. To preach his message but not to let the people understand, is contradictory. Again and again he talks about the Kingdom of God but here he is withholding information from the people- Surely this is an insertion.

Around the time of Jesus, most of the people believed that things

could happen by magic- The expectation of the people was such that the words of Jesus were enough to cure many of their psychosomatic sicknesses. This is similar to a hypnotist who develops co-operation with his clients so that he can hypnotise them. In those days the people knew nothing about the workings of the human mind; nothing about hypnotism, the sources of dreams, trances, epilepsy or hallucinations and illusions. We know very much more than they did 2,000 years ago. To them, a dream became a message from God. Perhaps Jesus was an expert hypnotist creating illusions.

Again and again we see in the Gospels the expectation of the people that things can happen by magic. There was a strong belief that God could do anything and an equally strong desire to see evidence of divine power. The stage was set for belief in miracles and acts of God. The disciples found the tomb empty and quickly jumped to the conclusion that Jesus was risen from the dead. People have always believed that which they want to believe. Even today, fortune telling, psychics and spiritualism are big business.

Dr. Brian Edwards is a popular broadcaster and writer. He tells a true story of Irish Logic. "When I was a schoolboy in Northern Ireland my interest was in cycling. Each year, along with a friend, I would take off during the summer holidays on my maroon 3-speed to explore the highways and byways of that foreign land - the South! On one such occasion my friend and I found ourselves billeted with a delightful elderly couple in a little thatched cottage in County Clare. No electricity, no gas, the kettle permanently on the boil, and next to it an Irish stew, topped up with meat and murphies as the need arose. In the evenings the old man would smoke his pipe and tell tales of the fairies and the little people.

Bread and a saucer of milk were invariably put outside the door before retiring and invariably gone in the morning. On the last night, my friend - a Protestant atheist from Belfast - could restrain his scepticism no longer. "Tell me the truth," he said, "Do you really believe in the wee folk?" "I do not, I do not," the old man finally replied, "But they're there, mind you!"

Some people still believe in magic and good and bad spirits. Such miracles as curing the blind and raising the dead are considered by many as allegories for spiritual seeing and rebirth which should not be taken literally. It is well to remember that nature has some immutable laws which cannot be changed. To be able to walk on water without flotation support or instantly turn water into wine may be an illusion or an allegory but certainly cannot be a fact. The Greek philosophers regarded knowledge, truth and justice as paramount whereas faith needs no evidence of truth but is a leap in the dark.

Chapter eight

The Teaching of Jesus According to the Synoptic Gospels

The main purpose of the teaching of both Jesus and John the Baptist was to proclaim the Gospel (good news) that the Kingdom of God was at hand. In the past, it was believed that their God had punished the nation when they forgot to worship him or disobey his laws. John the Baptist called on the people to repent. Jesus also calls for repentance in preparation for the Kingdom of God. We are told of thousands who followed Jesus. When a rich man came to him and asked "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him "You know the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honour your father and mother". (The above are now universal laws.) And he said to him. Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." And Jesus looking upon him loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing, go sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me." Mark 10:18-21. No mention of belief. The instructions have two parts (a) Keep the laws of Moses and (b) be concerned about your neighbours and the poor. It offered a moral code of law and social and ethical attitudes toward one's neighbours.

A scribe came to Jesus and asked, "which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus replies "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this. You shall love your neighbor as yourself" Mark 12:29-31. Did not Jesus say, "Love your enemies; do not resist an evil doer; If anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile; Come unto me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest." Regarding taxes he says, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Mark 12:17. Then we have the golden rule "In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you." Matt. 7:12. This is the same universal golden rule first recorded about 600 B.C. and repeated by Confucius, Buddha, Plato and many others. It is the basis of social accord. The code of Jesus is humane. simple and concise. If we all obeyed the law of the land and loved our neighbours there would be little or no crime.

The disciples were arguing who is the greatest. Jesus called the twelve to him and said "Whoever wants to be first, must be last of all and servant of all." He advises "Be at peace with one another." Jesus was moved with compassion toward children and the poor and suffering. His parables taught neighbourliness, love, loyalty, endurance, justice and righteousness. Today we would call Jesus an honourable, law abiding and socially sensitive citizen. Most of all, Jesus was interested in the Kingdom of God, the time when, according to the prophets, God's laws (the Mosaic laws) would be acknowledged by all the

nations of the world. I ask myself does the teaching of Jesus measure up to the ethical standards of the Greek philosophers? For virtue and justice, Yes, I think it does, except perhaps for knowledge. He trusted the words of the prophets which finally proved unreliable. No prophecy is a certainty. No one has yet become the expected Messiah of the Jews.

Chapter nine

Prophecies by Jesus

We have seen that the New Testament Scriptures were not recorded immediately after the death of Jesus. They were unforeseen and not designed because the Jewish believers had expected the risen Jesus, their Messiah, to bodily return to earth. He was to return with the hosts of heaven and the power of God to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus had said "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God has come with power." Mark 9:1. And again, Jesus had been talking about "The Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory." Then he says "Truly, I say unto you this generation will not pass away before all these things take place." Mark 13:30. Twice Jesus had made prophecies which he said were to be fulfilled before the end of the lives of those listening. But now, 2,000 years later he has not yet returned. What are we to say about this? We must be serious and honest. We cannot doubt the sincerity of Jesus. Was he mistaken? If so, was he also mistaken about his Messiahship? It seems he was mistaken.

When the high priest asked Jesus, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed." Jesus said, "I am and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Mark 14:61-62. Jesus is telling the high priest that the Kingdom of God will be established in his own lifetime. What are we to make of this third statement of his expected return? Had Jesus taken the words of the prophets too seriously? Would a Messiah ever rescue the Jewish nation from their enemies or was the whole expectation an impossible wishful dream which had become an established fantasy?

The promise of Jesus to return to earth would create a high expectation of an immediate answer to all the problems of the church members. As time went on and Jesus had not returned, the Jewish believers faded away or returned to their old beliefs. The Romans expelled the Jews from Jerusalem about 70 A.D. The gentile believers had no established moral code or ritual to fall back on. The church could not realistically return to paganism, so they hung on in mutual hope and became more and more to rely on the teaching of Paul. If the prophecies of Jesus turned out to be false, what chance would the believers have of ever seeing the return of Jesus on earth. Many have tried to foretell the second coming of Jesus. Of course it is a false hope, there never was and never will be a Messiah to usher in the Kingdom of God on earth.

If Jesus had really been the Divine Son of a universal, all powerful God. his prophecies would have come to pass. The fact that this did not happen would indicate that he was not divine but totally a human person.

Starvation due to the failure of rain and other tragedies, known as 'acts of God', often happen. It tells us that the Christian God is either powerless and unable to influence nature or he is a heartless tyrant killing indiscriminately. You cannot have it both ways. One must immediately question if God exists at all.

Chapter ten

The Crucifixion and Resurrection

Did Jesus rise from the dead?

We learn from Mark 15:25 that Jesus was crucified at nine o'clock in the morning and at three o'clock in the afternoon he died. (verse 34.) So Jesus was six hours on the cross before he died. Joseph of Arimathea gained permission from Pilate to take the body on the evening of the Sabbath to place it in the tomb. Pilate was amazed that Jesus was already dead and called the centurion to confirm it. Add another four or five hours, and we have a total of ten or eleven hours since crucifixion. People crucified were often several days on the cross before they died. Jesus was a young, healthy man of about thirty. He suffered no vital organ damage apart from wounds in hands and feet. Is it possible that Jesus only appeared to be dead when Joseph took him down from the cross? Many who have appeared to be dead, have been resuscitated.

Some have suggested that there was time for Jesus to have been revived. Nothing is recorded as happening on the Sabbath day. There would have been over twenty four

hours between when he was placed in the tomb and the next episode on Sunday morning.

The story of the resurrection of Jesus is here set out in questions and answers. The gospels are shown in capitals.

At what time did the women visit the tomb? **MARK:** At the rising of the sun. **JOHN:** When it was yet dark. Who came? **JOHN:** Mary Magdalene alone. **MATTHEW:** Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. **MARK:** Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome. **LUKE:** Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and other women. Was the tomb open or closed when they arrived? **MATTHEW:** Closed. **LUKE:** Open. Whom did they see at the tomb? **MATTHEW:** the angel. **MARK:** a young man. **LUKE:** two men. **JOHN:** two angels. Were these men or angels inside or outside the tomb? **MATTHEW:** outside. **MARK, LUKE, and JOHN:** inside. Were they standing or sitting? **LUKE:** standing. **MATTHEW, MARK and JOHN:** sitting. Did Mary Magdalene observe the divine messengers when she first arrived at the sepulchre? **MATTHEW, MARK and LUKE:** she did. **JOHN:** she did not. Who became

frightened when they saw the messengers? **MATTHEW:** the keepers. **MARK and LUKE:** the women. Did the women see Jesus? **MATTHEW:** they did, Jesus met them just after they left the tomb. **LUKE:** they did not see Jesus. Did the women tell the disciples what they had seen? **LUKE:** they did. **MARK:** they did not. Did Mary Magdalene know Jesus when he first appeared to her? **MATTHEW:**

she did. **JOHN:** she did not. How many disciples visited the tomb? **LUKE:** Peter alone. **JOHN:** Peter and another. Was Mary Magdalene permitted to touch Jesus when he first appeared to her? **MATTHEW:** yes. **JOHN:** no. Where did Jesus appear to his disciples? **MATTHEW:** in Galilee. **LUKE:** in Jerusalem. Were all the disciples finally convinced of the resurrection? **JOHN:** they were. **MATTHEW:** they were not, some doubted.

Why such confusion and lack of certainty? According to the Synoptic Gospels Jesus saw his disciples but once after the resurrection. John's Gospel has it that he saw them on three separate occasions. Paul's account of the events following the resurrection of Jesus differs in almost every respect from the gospel narrative. Paul tells of about five hundred brethren who saw the risen Jesus yet according to Acts 1:15, the number of the faithful after the resurrection was no more than one hundred and twenty. I am indebted to Mr. John Bowden for the above analysis published 1968.

It is strange that those who claimed to have seen the risen Jesus on the first day of the week, Sunday, are agreed on almost nothing about what happened that morning except that the tomb was empty. There are various stories of people seeing the risen Christ but without convincing agreement. Jesus seems to have disappeared from the scene. If he was dead, his burial place has never been found. If he had been raised from the dead, there is no evidence of his ministry continuing, why? Was Jesus revived and then taken and hidden or even taken out of the country? We will never know. He obviously was disillusioned when he said on the cross "My God! My God! why have you forsaken me?" Then again, there are those who suggest that the whole story of Jesus is a fabrication by religious zealots. Many scholars have tried to find the historical Jesus without success.

The idea that resurrection could happen to divine beings was widespread. For those who believed, the sight of the empty tomb would turn the disciples' desire and expectation into a fact. They immediately pro-claimed to the other disciples "The Lord is risen". Science has not yet succeeded in bringing a truly dead person back to life although many have been revived who first appear to be dead. While it would appear to the believers that Jesus had been raised from the dead, in fact it could have been otherwise. There are only two alternatives, Jesus died and was secretly buried or Jesus survived and was taken out of the country. Only life can create new life. The truly dead stay dead. Again we are dealing with immutable natural laws.

Chapter eleven

The Gospel of John

The gospel of John was the last to be written about 110-130 A.D. By then the church had established a hierarchy of elders, deacons, and bishops. It was a powerful body with a doctrine and authority of its own. No church dignitary would willingly give up his position and power.

No longer was the Messiah to rescue the Jewish nation from their enemies and all those who hated them. Paul had changed the purpose of the Hebrew Messiah to a spiritual Messiah. John tells us that Jesus is the saviour of all those who believe in him, both Jews and Gentiles. No need for repentance or the keeping of the laws of Moses, just believe. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." John, 3:16.

No longer is Jesus the Son of Man he is now co-equal with God the creator of the world. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God He was in the world and the world came into being through him And the Word became flesh and lived among us." John 1:1-14. Here we see the influence of Paul. The gospel of John is full of Paul's teaching and new ideas. Gone are all the Mosaic rituals and ordinances which Jesus observed and promoted. The 'gospel' of Paul has taken over completely. In the synoptic Gospels, Jesus repeatedly calls himself the Son of Man and never claims divinity. Yet in John's gospel there are twenty three references to Jesus as the Son of God.

Jesus has been promoted to the Godhead, a person to be worshipped directly. "The Father judges no one but has given all judgement to the Son so that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father." John 5:22. No longer is this the teaching of Jesus the Christ. The writer of John's Gospel is not a follower of Jesus or Judaism. John's gospel is pure Paulism mixed up with symbolic paganism. We will look at paganism later.

According to both Mark and Matthew the last words of Jesus on the cross were "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me!" Luke tells us the last words of Jesus were "Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing." John's story is different, he tells us Jesus said "It is finished and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." They cannot all be right. I regard Luke and John's stories on this occasion as fanciful and unreal. But this shows us how unreliable sacred texts can be.

The 'Just believe' doctrine was heading for trouble. The question is, what is the correct belief. Which will ensure the favour of God. Should

it be righteous living and loving one's neighbour as oneself as taught by Jesus or faith alone as taught by Paul?

From the time of his ascension to full power the Roman emperor Constantine was friendly and established a positive relationship with the Catholic Church. He ended the persecution of Christians, and restored their property to them. Later he made Christianity one of the state religions, thus placing it under state control. Having lost the need to unite against their former persecutors, the Christians soon became deeply divided on matters of doctrine. Was Jesus a human person in touch with God as were the prophets or was he divine in his own right, equal with God as suggested by Paul and the Gospel of John? The Arians thought "the

Son, however exalted he may be, is not equal to the immutable Father, beyond pain and death." The other side thought that "the Son is of one substance with the Father," and therefore is divine.

To deal with the so-called heresies and maintain peace in the empire, Constantine called 220 bishops together to resolve their differences. He convened and chaired the council at Nicaea. At this gathering the doctrine of the trinity was established as official church dogma. Jesus was part of the Godhead. This doctrine became part of the "Nicene Creed."

Constantine was determined to assert his authority in all things and exercised supreme control of religion throughout his empire. Like preceding emperors Constantine also remained the Pontifex Maximus, head of the twelve-man college of pagan priests. Soon after settling the Council at Nicaea Constantine had his oldest son Crispus and his second wife Fausta murdered. Was his Christian belief real or was his main object absolute power? It was only on his deathbed years later that he was baptised a Christian by a pro-Arian bishop.

Except for nineteen months when Julian was Emperor, the church stayed under state control until 787 A.D. The emperor of the day or his lay deputies presided over each Church Council. Soon Emperors in their capacity as heads of the church began to issue edicts dealing with theology on their own authority. One wonders how much the emperors contributed to the dark ages which started during their reign.

It was not long before some of the most cruel and intolerant bigotry the world has ever known appeared and lasted over a thousand years- Thousands of people were burnt to death at the stake for disagreeing with church doctrine. What one believed became much more important than honesty, integrity and good works. What became of the teaching of Jesus; "love your neighbour as yourself?" The dark ages; a period of intellectual darkness lasted for over a thousand years from the fifth century until the renaissance.

Part two

Chapter twelve

Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles

Paul tells us "A thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated." 2 Cor. 12:7. Paul recorded in his second letter to the Corinthians what others were saying about him. "For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible.'" We do not know what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. It could have been cataracts causing progressive blindness. Writing to the Galatians 4:13-15 he says, "You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I first announced the gospel to youhad it been

possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me." Paul usually dictated his letters to one of his helpers. At the end of Galatians he says, "see what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand." And at the last paragraph of 2 Thes-salonians he writes "I Paul write this greeting in my own hand." The above could indicate blindness. Some think he was suffering from epilepsy.

Paul, a Jew, was born and educated among a Greek community in Tarsus in Cilicia. He went to Jerusalem and studied under a renowned Pharisee Gamaliel. He was a well educated man who wrote beautiful Greek. We first hear of him by his given name of Saul attending the stoning of Stephen. Saul minded the coats of those who stoned the first martyr of the early church. Stephen was a leader among the believers. We read that Saul approved of the killing of Stephen. Acts 8:1. Saul then went to the high priest and asked for letters to the synagogue at Damascus so that if he found believers in Jesus, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. On the way he had an experience which he regarded as his conversion. "Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'" Acts 9:5.

The story is told on three occasions in Acts 9:7; 22:9 and 26:14. The first says that those with him "stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one." The second time he tells it "Those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me." The third version is different again. "When we had all fallen to the ground I heard a Voice." **All** stood; **all** fallen to the ground; **all** heard the voice; **all** did not hear the voice. There also are inconsistencies in the message Saul is reported to have received from God.

If that was such a profound experience as Paul suggests, surely the facts would be indelibly fixed in his mind. Did Saul have a trance, was he suffering from a seizure, an epileptic fit, a faint, an hallucination or

sunstroke? Why was he so confused about what happened? Perhaps he realised that the new religion could be a powerful movement that he should promote with his own ideas, We will never know.

We first see Saul among a fanatical group approving the killing of Stephen. Next he expresses the same fanaticism in trying to destroy the new Jewish sect who believe Jesus to be their longed for Messiah. Then he uses that same fanaticism to build the religion he so recently sought to destroy. From now on, Saul becomes Paul, the apostle to the gentiles. But there is a fundamental change in his thinking and loyalty. He forsakes the Jews and their aspirations to see a Messiah. For Paul, Jesus is no longer the Hebrew political Messiah to restore power and self-rule to Israel. Now Paul makes Jesus the sacrificial object for the gentiles in spite of the fact that Jesus never showed interest in the gentiles. Jesus never made one a disciple. His disciples were expressly told not to go to the gentiles. Jesus was wholly taken up with the prophecy of the political Messiah and the Kingdom of God. The Messiah was expected to be a political saviour of the Hebrew nation.

The Jews sacrificed animals for the sins of the people. Paul uses the death of Jesus as an atonement for the sins of both Jews and gentiles without a hint of approval by Jesus. Was he expecting or hoping to change the age old Jewish beliefs and traditions of Israel? When he did not succeed among the Jews, he turned to the gentiles who were ready to accept a new and easy religion. No more expensive cost of animal sacrifices, no more keeping the Jewish laws and ordinances, just believe.

Paul does not seem to have been appointed an Apostle to the gentiles by the other Apostles, except that he tells us he was offered 'the right hand of fellowship' by Peter. Gal. 2:6-9. When Matthias was appointed an apostle instead of Judas, there was group prayer, discussion and finally they cast lots before his appointment to see who should be chosen. None of this happened with Paul. Was the 'right hand of fellowship' claimed to be given by Peter alone and without general approval equal to a full appointment? Acts 1:12-26. Paul is, however, very insistent on calling himself an Apostle.

On five occasions we are told that Paul heard God speaking directly to him in dreams, in visions and a trance telling him what to do. In a state of religious ecstasy he often spoke in an unknown tongue, known as glossolalia, (a self constructed, garbled speech). This, he said, was speaking to God. Under normal circumstances each of these phenomena could be considered an hallucinatory experience. It is also claimed that Paul performed miracles on six occasions. One time, we are told, he cured a man who had been born a cripple and had never walked. Paul commanded the man to stand on his feet and the cripple leaped and walked! Acts 14:8-10. This is an exact copy of Peter's miracle where it was said that he cured a man who had never walked before. Acts 3:2-7. On another occasion, Paul was resisted by a

healthy person. Paul commanded in the name of the Lord that he be blind, not seeing the sun for a season, and immediately darkness fell upon him. Acts 13:10-11. This could have been an act of hypnosis.

Of course you may not believe in magic or that a cripple with withered, undeveloped muscles could be healed instantly like that. The medical fraternity would agree with you. Why was this story recorded in the Bible as a fact? Was this a fictitious or mythical story or is something seriously wrong with the record?

Who is this unusual man Paul, who believes that God speaks to him in the night; sees visions; goes into trances; speaks in an unknown garbled language; has the power to heal the sick; but also, if displeased, can at a word, cause a healthy man to instantly become blind? Who witnessed this or were the stories about him presented to convince unsuspecting church members that God had appointed him as his special apostle? I am suspicious of Paul. How authentic is he? There is something about the story of Paul that does not ring true. We are reading what he said about himself not something written by an unbiased observer.

Chapter thirteen

Paul's Gospel

Paul claims to have received his gospel direct from God. A divine revelation "The gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ..... When God was pleased to reveal his Son to me. so that I might proclaim him among the gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me but I went away at once into Arabia and afterwards I returned to Damascus- Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas (Peter) and stayed with him fifteen days." Gal. 1:11-12. And again, "How the mystery was made known to me by revelation." Eph. 3:3. "I know a person in Christ..... was caught up to heaven; whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person, whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, was caught up into paradise and heard things that are not to be told. that no mortal is permitted to repeat". 2 Corin. 12:2-4. I am immediately suspicious. What is Paul hiding? Paul is talking about himself but for some reason he uses the third person. This experience could only have happened in a dream or in his own imagination. Again he is hiding something.

Several times Paul talks about my Gospel. "According to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ according to the revelation." Rom. 16:25. Paul makes a distinction between HIS gospel and the gospel taught by the disciples of Jesus. He claims to have received instructions by revelation direct from God. When, how or in what circumstances he does not say. "I did not receive it from human source, nor was taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." Gal. 1:12. So did Mohammed, Joseph Smith and others also claim to have received their sacred texts direct from God by revelation. Why should Paul's revelation be more acceptable than the others?

Paul's gospel is not the same as the gospel proclaimed by the disciples of Jesus after the crucifixion. Jesus was to be the Messiah of the Jewish nation, a political Messiah, the son of King David who was to restore David's kingdom, rescue the nation

from their enemies and set up a just and righteous government, just as the prophets had foretold. The Jews saw the Messiah as someone specially relating only to the Jewish nation. Remember Jesus had said "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. 15:24. and "Go nowhere among the gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. 10:5. Paul's gospel is something completely different. It is not concerned with the Jewish nation at all. Paul is not interested in the life of Jesus. He says to the Corinthians "I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Cor. 2 : 2. Gentiles who became proselytes to the Jewish faith were always welcomed- They would be expected to keep the Ten Commandments and the ordinances of Moses. Paul does not invite the gentiles to embrace Judaism but a new and different religion, **his** gospel.

Chapter fourteen

Paul Requires Loyalty and obedient Churches

Paul will brook no doctrine other than what he has taught. "I wrote for this reason to test you and to know whether you are obedient in everything." 2 Cor.2:9. "Just as you have always obeyed me not only in my presence." Phil.2:12. "Work with your own hands as we directed you." 1 Thess.4:11. "Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us." 2 Thess.3:6. "Take note of those who do not obey what we say have nothing to do with them." 2 Thess. 3:14. Other verses on the same subject are; Rom. 16:9; 2 Cor. 7:15; 2 Cor. 13:10; Eph.3:2-8; 1 Thess.5:27; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Thess.5:27; 1 Tim.1:3; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Cor.7:17. Paul does not want those who will question his teaching. All he wants is obedient followers.

On occasions Paul gets quite emphatic and demanding in his language. "What I am writing to you is a commandment of the Lord."

Anyone who does not recognise this is not to be recognised." 1 Cor. 14:37-38. Here he regards himself as the voice of God. 2 Cor. 13:10- He even becomes cynical about "Those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders;" obviously he refers to Peter and John, "what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality, those leaders contributed nothing to me." Gal. 2:6. Paul never met Jesus in the flesh nor did he show any interest in his life or teaching except for his death. All he knew were the stories about Jesus told by others. Paul's quarrels were with the Apostles appointed by Jesus himself, Peter, James, John and the others. He sets himself up as superior and more authoritative than the genuine apostles of Jesus. Is not this gross arrogance? Again we see the power complex of Paul.

Chapter fifteen

Paul Changes the Purpose of the Messiah

Paul plunders the Jewish sacred laws and traditions. The Mosaic laws and the ordinances are discarded. Faith is now the only requirement for acceptance into the elected family of God. The traditional animal sacrifices and feasts are abolished. In their place Jesus becomes the only acceptable sacrifice to take away the sins of the world. But that did not mean the whole world, it only applied to those who believed- The Jewish feast is now changed to the Christian mass, the Lord's supper or whatever you wish to call it. The prophets are now interpreted by Paul specifically to give authority to the new doctrine. The Hebrew tribal god becomes the world wide supreme almighty God. Paul said; "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin." Heb. 9:22. Under whose authority did he say that? Why does God demand such a price for his forgiveness? Was he not able to forgive freely and for nothing? Why was repentance not sufficient? Is it really forgiveness if there is a price to pay or is it just appeasement?

Paul changed the purpose of the Messiah from someone who was to save the Jewish nation from their enemies and restore the throne of David, to a spiritual saviour who would save any person from any nation from eternal punishment in the next world. Paul has done this without the authority of Jesus the prime ingredient of his philosophy.

Paul says that Jesus "Was the end of the law." Rom. 10:4. Jesus did not say that!

Paul says that Jesus "has abolished the law with the commandments and ordinances." Eph. 2:15. Jesus did not say that!

Paul says "You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourself off from Christ." Gal. 5:4. Jesus did not say that!

Paul says "A person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ." Gala.2:16- Jesus did not say that!

Paul says "A person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law." Rom. 3:28. Jesus did not say that!

Paul says "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." Gal. 3:13.
Jesus did not say that!

Paul says "If you let yourself be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you." Gal.5:2. Jesus did not say that!

Paul says of Jesus "Whom God appointed heir of all things. Through whom he also created the worlds." Heb.1:2.

Jesus never said any of those things!

This is pure Paulism. What Jesus **did say** was, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil." Matt. 5:17-18. He always said that people should keep the laws and ordinances as given by Moses. He never claimed that faith alone would ensure eternal life.

Did Paul dream up his new religion during the three years after his conversion, before he went up to Jerusalem or was it during his stay in Arabia? By discarding Judaism and substituting it with faith, Paul puts himself in direct opposition to the teachings of Jesus. He turns the Israeli tribal god Yahweh into a universal God. Paul hijacks the Jewish national Messiah and the prophets of the Jewish sacred text to support his new convoluted religion. Instead of keeping the Mosaic commandments, Paul does not even make repentance a condition of salvation. I say convoluted religion, because he has rolled together the sayings of the prophets, the pagan idea of blood sacrifices and the death of Jesus to make a new religion which is contrary to the purpose and extent of the Messianic concept and the Jewish religion.

Salvation by faith is the biggest of deception the world has ever seen. The Church as agent for the allmighty God, froze the growth of the developing Greek philosophies and sciences and brought in the Dark Ages. The Church grew and developed tremendous power and wealth. From kings to the common people all sought divine blessing on marriages and almost every adventure. Such was the growth and power of the Pope. Belief contrary to the Catholic Church could mean loss of liberty and property or death by burning at the stake, All in the name of God. What happened to loving one's neighbours as taught by Jesus?

Chapter sixteen

Paul's Conflict with Peter

When Paul and Barnabas returned to the church which they had established in Antioch they found that "Certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers 'Unless you are circumcised according to the customs of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" Acts 15:1. Paul tells us later that the person concerned was Peter. "But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch I opposed him face to face, because he stood self condemned for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Banabas was led astray by their hypocrisy ...- I said to Cephas before them all 'If you, though a Jew live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like a Jew.'" Gala.2 11:14.

Note the words 'circumcision faction.' Already there is a division between the apostles appointed by Jesus and Paul over doctrine. Those divisions have continued. until today. There are many hundreds of religious groups all claiming to have the truth according to Paul. All others are reckoned to be wrong in their opinions and doctrine- In fact Paul was not interested in the life and words of Jesus. He hardly promotes Jesus except for his fixation with the death of Jesus as the blood sacrifice for the sins of the world. It is as if Paul saw an opportunity to promote himself into a place of honour and power. He was an intelligent man, able to manipulate others with his preaching and letters. He certainly prepared himself well and set about to outwit Peter, James, John and the early church elders.

It was in Antioch that the believers in Jesus were first called Christians. The Church was made up of Jews and pagans who had converted to Christianity. "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with those certain individuals." Acts.15: 1-2. Someone went up to Jerusalem and received a letter from the Jewish apostles giving the Gentiles exemption from being circumcised. But they were also required to observe minimal food restrictions. They were not exempted from keeping the Mosaic laws and ordinances. For a while there seemed to be some co-operation but increasingly there was friction. Soon Paul and Barnabas parted in anger and Paul took Silas with him. Paul now wavers in his actions and doctrine toward circumcision. He had told the people to forsake Moses and not to circumcise their children. Now he took Timothy "and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew his father was a Greek." Acts 16:3. So Paul is just as hypocritical as Peter.

After fourteen years Paul goes up to Jerusalem again in "response to a revelation and laid before them, though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders, the gospel that I proclaimed among the

Gentiles.....But because of false believers secretly brought in who slipped in to spy on our freedom we have in Christ Jesus so that they might enslave us; we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the Gospel (Paul's gospel) might always remain with you. And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged, leaders, what they actually were makes no difference to me;

"I God shows no partiality, those leaders I contributed nothing to me," Gal.2:1-6. We note how Paul claims to have direct contact with God. Paul has rejected his Jewish heritage and the Hebrew faith substituting it with his own beliefs. He is now growing in confidence and arrogance. He has a following of gentiles who regard him as their leader and accept the new religion as presented by him. Paul feels strong and able to disregard, his former compatriots. He does not need the support of those who were "supposed to be acknowledged leaders".

Paul, now in Jerusalem, went to visit James the brother of Jesus who has become the church leader and all the elders were present. They said to Paul, "You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews and they are all zealous for the law. They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living amongst the Gentiles to forsake Moses and you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come so do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. Join these men, go through the rite of purification with them and pay for the shaving of their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself observe and guard the law." Acts 21: 20-24. Paul has been telling his followers that they should disregard the laws and ordinances of Moses. Paul complies with the suggestion and pretends to the Christian Jews that he is a keen observer of Mosaic laws. So who, but Paul, is the hypocrite now?

It seems to me that Paul and all the elders went through this purification charade with the sole intention of deceiving the Jewish believers of Jerusalem. The division between the Jewish Christians and Paulism increases to the extent that Paul gets bitter with them. He says to the Galatians, "If anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received let that one be accursed!" Gal. 1:8-9. "I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves." Gal.5:12. "Let anyone be accursed who has no love for the Lord, our Lord." 2 Cor. 16:21. Paul admits that formerly he was a man of violence. 1 Tim. 1:13- Paul now shows his hidden anger in his desire to bring curses on those who preach a different Gospel to his gospel. Paul gets skeptical of the Jerusalem apostles, he says "I am not in the least inferior to those super apostles. I may be untrained in speech but not in knowledge." 2 Corin. 11:5-6. I cannot see any influence of the love of Jesus in Paul's attitude, he shows no love for his neighbours or the

Christians.

Paul tells us, "To the Jews I become as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law, I become as one under the law, though I myself am not under the law. To those outside the law I become as one outside the law, though I am not free from God's law, so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I become weak so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so I might share in its blessings." 1 Corin. 9:20-23. Which law is he not free from, Moses' law, the one he has abandoned or his own law which he invented and now calls God's law? Here we see a shrewd Paul willing to use any method to get his way. By constantly claiming to be in direct contact with God through dreams and visions, Paul places himself in a powerful position. The people also believed in visions and God speaking to humans. They had no means of denying or testing Paul's statements. They had no court of appeal. Today many would think Paul was hallucinating, was playing a game or was he suffering from emotional or mental sickness?

Chapter seventeen

The Spirit and the Flesh Paul's Confession

Paul tells us "While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death." What sinful passions and what members is he talking about? Paul has a very narrow and confused view of life. He goes on, "But now we are discharged from the law, (the Mosaic law) dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but the new life of the spirit." Rom.7:5-6. Paul exchanges one slavery for another, then he puts it another way, "Clothe yourself with a new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." Eph.4:24. and "Put on the whole armour of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Eph.6:11. This sums up Paul's division within himself. Instead of being an honest and open person, he hides under an assumed virtue of something he thinks is divine "For what the flesh desires is opposed to the spirit and what the spirit desires is opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other." Gal. 5:17. In seeking to divide his inner self into the flesh and the spirit, and in covering the old self with a new self, Paul is treading a dangerous path of inner conflict and lack of personal unity. This is internal war, a serious schizoid-typic condition. This results in the state of conflict clearly shown in the following statement by Paul written about himself.

He tells us, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. But in fact it is no longer I that do it but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is in my flesh. I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good that I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind." Rom. 7:15-23. His members again, what is he referring to? Paul shows very low self esteem.

Every modern day skilled counsellor and psychotherapist knows that their unhappy clients who suffer from such deep inner conflict and lack of unity are in real

trouble. Paul disowns responsibility for his action, almost as if he were an innocent victim. He is saying "I am not to blame, but this other thing 'sin' dwelling in me is to blame!" To make totally sure there is no mistake, he repeats his contention of war within himself. Paul paints himself as a weak victim, unable to chose and do what is right.

Paul goes still further into unreality by assuming he can pass his inner conflict over to Jesus. It is such an irrational yet simplistic escape attempt to first personify 'sin' and then treat it as something unattached and separate from the one who is doing the sinning. Paul seems to think that sin can then be passed over to someone else as though it were a package. Here we see how the very dogma of Paulism becomes schizoid-typic. Can you imagine a modern judge's response to a person standing up in court and saying "Yes Sir, I freely admit I did that crime but my friend Jesus who died two thousand years ago has taken responsibility for it, so I now should be regarded as innocent." The judge would regard that as a guilty plea and call for a psychiatrist's report. Sadly this is the basis of Pauline teaching of forgiveness. We see Paul in an unstable

mental state. He has irrational and fanciful concepts- Jesus never showed himself as a divided person in the way Paul does. You will have noticed that I **do not call** this doctrine Christianity.

We first heard of Paul, then called Saul, when he took a fanatical stand in opposition to the Christian movement. Then we see him in heated opposition to the original apostles of Jesus and finally he became fully opposed to all the Jewish customs and traditions. This is not at all what Jesus taught. He taught obedience to a moral code and loving one's neighbours as oneself. What Jesus taught was social and ethical behaviour, which is the basis of social and national harmony. The foundation of personal and community goodwill is to abide by the laws of the land and love your neighbour. Nothing could be more simple yet profound. Paul's doctrine has led the people into division, intolerance, sorrow and finally war.

Chapter eighteen

The Justice of God

According to Paul

Paul quotes God as saying in the Old Testament, Malachi 1:3, "I have loved Jacob but I have hated Esau." Paul asks, "Is there injustice on God's part? By no means, for the scripture says of Pharaoh, 'I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. So then he has mercy on whom he chooses and he hardens the heart of whomsoever he chooses." Rom. 9:17. Here Paul has God exploiting people for his own gratification. This is not justice. Paul goes on "You will say to me then, 'Why then does he still find fault?'" Instead of answering his own question, Paul becomes irrationally defensive of God by asking, "Who indeed are you, a human being to argue with God? Will what is moulded say to the one who moulds it 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use?" Rom. 9:13-22.

Paul's argument is no argument at all, nor is it justice. We are not lumps of clay. We are all born equal human beings deserving of justice. I say to make one person for special use and another for destruction and eternal punishment is unjust- This constitutes mercy by favouritism not something deserved. Justice by convulsion is injustice. It is the old and unjust story of election or predestination which Christians still argue about.

Here is something to think about. Paul tells us, "God gave them a sluggish spirit, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear. down to this day." Rom. 11:8 and "God sends them a powerful delusion. leading them to believe what is false." 2 Thes. 2:11. What kind of God is this who deceives people and then condemns them?

If you believe that the tribal god of the Hebrew nation (page 95) is also the one eternal God of all people, why was Moses given one set of laws which were for all time and not to be added to or taken away from? And if Paul was given a different set of rules which abolished the rules given to Moses, did God change his mind or was Paul in error?

Chapter nineteen

Paul's Attitude to Women

Paul tells us "Woman is the reflection of a man, indeed man was not made from woman but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman but woman for the man." 1 Cor. 11:7-10. This utter nonsense was believed in those times. But it is Paul's excuse for his negative and unjust attitude toward women. How wrong he was! Of course it was not known at that time that the male sperm was needed to fertilise the female ovum. The woman was thought to be merely the incubator for the male sperm. Paul did not know that both would equally contribute to the genes of the new child.

The Mosaic law was very unjust in its demands on women. In Genesis 3:16 it says, "Your desire shall be toward your husband and he shall rule over you." There is no sense of equality or personal dignity for women but rather they are regarded as chattels or slaves. Even in childbearing she was regarded as unclean for thirty three days if the child was a boy and sixty six days if it was a girl. Lev. 12:1-7. Why the difference? Paul is equally unjust, brought up as an orthodox Jew. He states, "and the husband is the head of the wife." 1 Cor. 11:3. -For they are not permitted to speak (in the church) but should be subordinate as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home." 1 Cor. 14:34-35. There are a number of verses in Paul's writings along the same idea. Well, what would he know, he never married and advised others not to marry. He never knew the love, harmony and strength that a good woman brings to a relationship. A wife and her husband can and should become best friend to each other.

Chapter twenty

Paul's Ethical Teaching

We have taken a close look at the difference between the teaching of Jesus and how Paul turned the person of Jesus and his teaching into a new and different religion. It had nothing to do with what Jesus said about the Kingdom of God and the Jewish nation. Paul elevated Christ to be equal with God. For the Christians, Jesus became a supreme and a separate object of worship.

Paul repeatedly requires honourable behaviour from the members of his churches, even though he was ready to curse those who taught a different doctrine to that which he taught. He tells the church in Rome, "Let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in quarrelling and jealousy." Rom.13:13. "The commandments, you shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet; and any other commandment are summed up in this word, love your neighbour as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13:9-10. How right Paul was in this. Yet previously we saw that he ejected the need to keep the Mosaic law, here he endorses it. And again, "Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another." Rom. 14:13. Regarding sexual immorality by a church member, Paul said "Do not even eat with such a one." 1 Cor. 5:11.

Concerning love, Paul writes the most beautiful passages in the Bible. "If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal..... Love is patient, love is kind, love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends..... And now faith,

hope and love abide, these three, and the greatest of these is love." 1 Cor. 13. Was this chapter inserted by someone else?. It does not sound like the man who is willing to curse those who would not accept his dogma. But Paul is a confused and emotionally troubled man. His religious philosophy is mistaken. It grew out of his Jewish faith and myths and the times in which he lived. His philosophy is false and dangerous as our Christian history of conflict has shown.

Chapter twenty one

Paganism within Christianity

Pagans used a ritual of human sacrifice to placate their gods and ensure a good harvest or other benefits. It was rife in Mexico and Peru on a huge scale when the Spanish arrived in 1519. Other examples are, King Athamas who had been called upon to sacrifice his firstborn by the Delphic oracle. Three Persian boys were offered up at the battle of Salamis. It was only in the time of Hadrian that the annual human sacrifice to Zeus was abolished. The same thing occurred in Hebrew, Greek and Roman times, except by then it had been substituted with animal sacrifices.

There is no doubt that human sacrifice had been prevalent among the Semitic people. James Frazer tells us in "The Golden Bough," page 673 "the custom of sacrificing the son for the father was common if not universal among Semitic peoples." The story in Genesis 22 of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac and the story in Judges 11:34-40. of Jephthah's daughter becoming a burnt-offering because of her father's vow, are pointers to the practice of human sacrifice among the early Hebrew people.

The offering of blood sacrifices started in ancient times among pagan people to placate their gods. Human or animal sacrifice is the taking of an innocent life to placate the gods for the benefit of someone else. This is paganism. It is illogical and unjust because the evil person goes free and the innocent person bears the punishment. If it was approved by our courts of law, there would be a public outcry against it- I regard all blood sacrifices for sin as a relic of paganism. Yet this is the foolish basis of Christian faith. Some intelligent people seem to believe it.

Let us look at one of the important rituals of the Christian churches, that of the holy sacrament. It is celebrated by Catholic and most other Christian churches. We read, "Jesus took a loaf of bread and after blessing it, he broke it and gave it to them and said, 'take; this is my body.' Then he took the cup and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many.'" Mark 14:22-24. I find it very difficult to accept that Jesus could have said those words. Each year the Jews celebrated the Passover feast in an orderly manner. Jesus had not yet been sentenced to death when he is supposed to have said those words. We have seen that on three occasions Jesus prophesied that those to whom he was talking, would not see death before the Kingdom of God had come. The last occasion was while being questioned by the high priest three or four hours before his crucifixion. The high priest asked "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the blessed one?" Jesus said "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power and coming with the clouds of

heaven." Jesus was not expecting to die but rather to witness a miraculous commencement of the Kingdom of God on earth. Then he would be acknowledged publicly as the Messiah. Jesus was not a willing sacrifice. I strongly suspect that these words in Mark 14:22-24, which are attributed to Jesus, have been inserted into Mark's record after the gospel of Mark was first written. It would have been an effort by a church member to comply with the teaching of Paul and the Gospel of John that Jesus was the sacrificial "lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." John 1:29.

The Catholic interpretation of the ritual mass is made dear in the statement of the Council of Trent in 1563 as follows; "If anyone shall say that in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist there remains together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the substance of the bread and wine and deny that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into (his) body and the wine into (his) blood, the species only of the bread and wine remaining which conversion the Catholic Church most fittingly calls transubstantiation let him be anathema." San.xlIII.Can2.

There is no difference in concept or in emotional response between a Christian taking the sacrament and the uneducated pagan warrior who, in times past, ate the heart of his defeated but respected enemy so that he could acquire the courage and skill of his foe. It is an act of sympathetic magic. The act comprises symbolic cannibalism and is typical of the thinking which prevailed in primitive pagan philosophies. Paul talked about Christ dwelling in us. Eph. 3:17.

The theory that the Christian religion is hostile to magic and quite separate from it is false. Belief in angels and evil spirits was common throughout the middle east and continues to be among many Christians to this day. The New Testament is full of magic and good and evil spirits. The ecstatic frenzies, which are mistaken for divine inspiration, the theory of being born again by the remission of sins through the shedding of blood, all have their origin in paganism. The authority I used for these convictions is almost entirely drawn from the New Testament itself.

If we kept to the teachings of Jesus we would have a basic code of social law and love in our hearts for mankind. That would have been far better than the confusion Paul has thrown into the mix. Paul's doctrine divides the human person into two halves, the spiritual and the natural which he tells us from his personal experience, are at enmity with each other. He says "I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind." Rom. 7:23. As Jesus said "By their fruits you shall know them." Matt. 7:15-16. The long history of conflict arising from the Christian religion is appalling, partly due to Paul's emphasis on belief at the expense of good works. Paul was a deeply divided and troubled man. I see him as a very sick person overcome by a wish for power. There has been discord and war over religion

from the day of Paul's conflict with Peter until today.

Chapter twenty two

The Concept of God

The Hebrew God Yahweh was a very private god, indeed he was a tribal god who had no concern or kindly interest in any nation except the Hebrews. Here is God's promise to the Israel nation. Deut. 7:12-15. "The Lord your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; he will love you, bless you and multiply you. You shall be the most blessed of peoples, with neither sterility nor barrenness among you or your livestock. The Lord will turn away from you; every illness; all the dread diseases of Egypt that you experienced, he will not inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you. You shall devour all the peoples that the Lord your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity; you shall not serve their gods for that would be a snare to you." No barren people or cattle and no sickness! And ruthless domination to take the land!!

Look carefully at this promise. Their god promises the Israelites that they shall be a favoured people. The dread diseases of Egypt he will lay on those who hate the Jews. He tells them to devour all the people given over to them. The Jews are to show no pity. This is not a universal God who would love all nations equally and justly. Here we have a tribal god, a partisan god, in opposition to the tribal gods of other nations. All of these gods were political gods who arose from the imagination of the leaders. It was the popular practice of all the surrounding nations to have their own special god. The Hebrew idea of a powerful god grew and grew. It was encouraged by the religious leaders who gained their own power as agent of the supposed supreme power of a god.

A few years of history passed and the god who promised to love the Israelites, now threatens them. The Hebrew prophets were constantly threatening the people with the anger and punishment of their god for disobedience. Here are a few examples. "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe." Deut. 10:17. "The Lord your God who is present with you, is a jealous God: the anger of the Lord your God would be kindled against you and he would destroy you from off the face of the earth." Deut. 6:15. "The anger of the Lord was kindled against that

land bringing on it every curse written in this book: and the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger, fury and great wrath and cast them into another land." Deut. 29:27. "I will send a curse upon you and I will curse your blessings." Mal. 2:2. "Wait continually for your God, a trader in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress." Hosea 12:7. Obedience to their God far outweighed the promised love and blessing they expected. The Old Testament is a cruel book full of the tyranny and injustice of their god.

The story of the conquest of the land of Canaan by the Israelites is full of brutal massacres of men, women and children as the text shows. "They did battle against the Midian, as the Lord had commanded Moses and they killed every male ...The Israelites took the women of Midian, and their little ones captive and they took all the cattle, their flocks and all their goods as booty. All the towns where they had settled and all their encampments they burned, but they took all the spoil and all the booty both people and animals ... Moses said to them have you allowed all the women to live?... .Now therefore kill every male among the little ones and kill every woman who has known a man by sleeping with him. But all the young irls who have not known a man by sleeping with him, keep alive for yourselves.'" Num. Ch. 31. Here we have both a scorched earth policy and heartless ethnic cleansing ordered by the same God who said "You shall not kill and you shall not covert." The above story of conquest without warning, was genocide of the worst kind to be repeated many times by the Hebrews as their God commanded them. Think of the women whose sons are taken and killed. The rest of the women become slaves or worse to the murderers of their families. The lame excuse was that the surrounding people worshipped their own tribal gods who were opposed to the Israelite tribal god. "Israel put him to the sword and took possession of his land from Arnon to the Jabbok." Num. 21:24.

The Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths all worship the same God. Indeed the Christians adopted the Jewish God but abandoned the requirements of the Jewish laws. Islam followed the Jewish idea of monotheism and took from the Jewish and Christian faiths to compile their own doctrines. Islam claims that Muhammad is the last prophet of God and therefore supersedes the earlier ones. Each group has an entirely different idea of the function, character and requirements of their God. Each structured their God in accordance with their own desires and doctrine.

No one can prove that God does exist. Equally no one can prove that he does not exist- The reason is that no one can prove a negative. What can be proved are the contradictions within the God concept. Is God almighty and good? If he is, then why does he allow the innocent to suffer in the stead of the evil? Why does he withhold rain, resulting in thousands of innocent people perishing from hunger and thirst as in Somalia? Where is the justice and mercy of God? Does he not care about the masses?

The ethics and justice of the Hebrew God of the Bible is appalling. But the Hebrew God is the basis and origin of the Christian God. Think carefully about this. Can you really trust this God or the uncertain manuscripts of the Christian faith. The ethics and lack of compassion of God deeply offend me. I cannot believe in him much less worship, love or serve him. But I do believe in human potential, human dignity, compassion and love. I cannot leave this essay without presenting a positive human answer to our social problems.

Chapter twenty three

The Dependency Factor

There is a dependency factor, a deviant need to sacrifice and an element of self-abnegation running through all theistic religions. Because God cannot be observed but nevertheless is conceived as always present, ageless and powerful, he becomes a static object of hope or fear. It is therefore reasoned that God may be influenced by worship, prayer or service to assist in matters normally beyond the control of human endeavour. The monotheistic religious person will build up sacred rituals identical in purpose and parallel in practice to those of the polytheistic savage.

The death of Jesus does not relieve the Christians of the need to surrender part of themselves, so that they may maintain the continued sense of closeness and favour of their God. Subtle elements of subjugation, self denying humility and mild masochism become evident. Christians kneel to pray, bow their heads and give of their time and substance. Some churches require their followers to withhold association with non-believers including members of their own families. Some demand a set percentage of their earnings to be given to the church. All true believers become subservient to their faith and accept its authority in the false hope of a blissful life in an after world.

The position of dependency on a God or church strongly resembles a pre-adolescent experience, seeking comfort from a mother church and the approval of a father God. If by chance an answer to a prayer occurs, it will be considered proof of the reality of God and his caring for human welfare. If the request is not forthcoming, the failure is excused and accepted because God knows best. The 'Yes' and the 'No' mean the same thing, therefore it is meaningless as the Christian takes what he/she wants from it. This is no proof at all. The expectation of a religious person is similar to a shaman who seeks to manipulate the unseen forces by ritualised magic. It strongly suggests a childhood mentality; a dependency on someone else to provide or approve. Surely mature people do not need this kind of nurturing. It is time we broke away from mythological gods of our ancient past and stand tall on our own feet, being independent and strong.

Chapter twenty four

Life after Death

The notion of a heaven for good people and divine judgement for evil people in an after-life goes back at least to the ancient era of the Mesopotamian religion of Mithraism, and probably much earlier. The Old Testament does not say much about the notion of a heaven except a place where God and angels dwell. Neither does it mention a place of retribution where humans could suffer for their sins for all eternity. The Hebrew word 'schoel' meaning the unseen state has been translated 'hell' in the Old Testament on 31 occasions.

The Christian belief in a hereafter necessitates that the embodiment of this lifetime experience be consciously carried forward into the afterlife. The 'soul' complete with the memory of the past life, is held responsible for actions and beliefs during that life. Sir James Frazer O.M. in his excellent book, "The Golden Bough" (page 153) tells us "the savage commonly explains the processes of inanimate nature by supposing that they are produced by living beings working in or behind the phenomena, similarly if a man or animal lives and moves, it can only be because he has a little man or animal inside who moves him. The animal inside the animal, the man inside the man is the soul". The Christian notion of the soul is extended, not only to give it a mind and responsibility of its own for which it can be punished at the supposed Judgement seat of God, but eternal life as well. As an ordinary human being, I reject the Christian religion, including heaven, hell and all kinds of devils or angels, as religious superstition. There is no supernatural being outside earthly experience. Society would do well to be rid of Paul's divisive and unhelpful doctrines.

Rational people must agree that the human brain is the storehouse of all our knowledge, attitudes, emotions and beliefs. Our brain is our only mental repository from which we draw all our reactions to the passing parade of life. It is the power house which gives us the ability to think, react, decide or choose. When we die, our mortal mental repository with its vast records of experience, knowledge, beliefs and memories must be lost and decay with the rest of our mortal bodies. The soul is not a separate entity with a mind and will of its own. There is no 'little person inside the person' who cannot die.

Surely this thing we call life is like a candle, lit at conception and extinguished at death. It is futile and irrational to imagine that the energy of the whole mind and body cannot be extinguished. I cannot see any evidence of an eternal flame of life applying to any other thing of nature. We cannot separate ourselves from nature as though we were governed by different laws- There is no reason why we should expect something special to happen to mankind which does not happen to all other occupants of nature. Nothing, yes, absolutely

nothing lives forever. Every living thing dies and is returned to the earth to re-fertilise the soil for the nourishment of new and different life. For the human being, death is an eternal sleep, a state of oblivion and decay. I do not find this at all frightening but rather a peaceful conclusion to a completed life. The only thing that will continue after my death is my family and friends memory of what I have contributed to their lives.

Chapter twenty five

A Matter of Justice

"To unjustly cause suffering is the only possible crime" said Robert Ingersoll. I would like to see this statement printed bold in the minds and attitudes of all people. Crime is an offence against humanity, an individual, a group or the environment. Often our liberty and personal freedom is restricted by social conventions and confusion on what indeed constitutes a crime. There is no such thing as a victimless crime. Conversely, if there is no victim, there is no crime. To take drugs or neglect a child is a crime against society. Some person, the society or the environment always suffers from a crime. Our motto should be, 'firstly do no harm.' Sin is a religious word and a concept related to the non-observance of religious precepts or rituals. Many such 'sins' are victimless. They are not crimes, except in the imagination of those who are afraid of divine retribution. Religion creates guilts which are unrelated to social ethics. There is a conflict between our natural ethical senses and the imposed doctrines of religion.

The Christian religion has sown seeds of disunity, arrogance, injustice and even war, far beyond any other religious group. It was not the many inconsistencies and contradictions in the Bible that made me abandon my church after forty years. It was the matter of ethics which finally made me discard my religion. The quality of the justice and compassion of the God of the Bible offended my moral senses- If a brother or a mother of a convicted murderer offered to pay the penalty for the crime, would the law allow it or would anyone else regard it as justice? Of course not. Yet this is the basis of belief that Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of those who believe. Do you think it is just and acceptable for God to attribute the sins of the fathers to the children to the third and fourth generation or to withhold rain so that thousands die of thirst and hunger such as happened in Somalia and other places? If you believe in an almighty and good God you will have difficulty with the justice and compassion of your God.

Chapter twenty six

Do We Need a Religion?

The Christian religion is based on very shaky foundations. We have no certainty regarding the sayings of Jesus due firstly to the great gap in time between the crucifixion and the appearance of the first sacred text. Secondly, we do not know positively what has been added or taken away from the Gospels. We do know that they are not as they were originally written. Others have interfered with them. The Christian religion is built on unsubstantiated happenings two thousand years ago. The authenticity of the Bible manuscripts is in doubt and therefore they are not fully trustworthy.

What the Christian zealots have today, is unfortunately not the teaching of Jesus but the doctrine of a divided and deeply troubled man, without personal unity, who called himself Paul, the apostle to the gentiles.

The beliefs of the Christian churches are those of Paul. He was an unusual man who claimed to have received all his doctrine directly from God by revelation, through dreams, visions and trances. What he thought he had received by revelation was in reality nothing more than the echo of his own thoughts and emotions, as an echo in a cave reinforces verbal expressions.

Paul is said to have healed a man who had never walked before and "the man sprang up and began to walk." Acts 14:10. Do you think this is possible for someone with unused, undeveloped muscles to do? To believe in such miracles is to stretch credulity far beyond logical limits. Paul speaks to God in an unknown garbled language known as glossolalia. He has also given us an insight into the conflict within his own mind when he admits to war within himself. Rom. ch.7. Do you really think you can trust your life to Paul's fractured doctrine?

Belief in miracles; good or bad spiritual beings of all kinds occupying our world; the devil; the resurrection of the dead;

and the second coming of Jesus are all concepts born of fear of the unknown. None of these things can be scientifically proved.

Do you and I need a religion? No, we do not. Do we need to have good ethical standards of behaviour? Yes, we need to do this also. We already have all the tools or virtues we need to live a rewarding life in happy relationship with our fellow human beings. We each stand alone in this. This life is our one individual opportunity and responsibility to make the best we can of it. We will have no other chance.

The last census paper in New Zealand 1996, showed that the number of those who claim no religion has steadily grown to 26% of the 3.7 million population. Those who claim no religion now exceed the number of the largest religious denomination in New Zealand by 7.5%. If we include non-Christian religions, the number of people who have no allegiance to Christianity is over 33%. There are literally hundreds of thousands of honourable, law abiding, and good living intelligent, ethical people in my country who do not feel the need for a religion. Do you and I really need a religion? No we do not! Can we live honestly and beautifully without placing ourselves in the restrictive box of Paul's religion? Yes we certainly can.

A Positive Philosophy

Chapter twenty seven

Social Ethics

Social ethics are standards and customs established by the community, within a community and for the benefit of that community and individuals therein. Social behaviour is a learned behaviour but it is helped by our innate desire for co-operation and contact with others. Depending on the degree of seriousness, those who disregard social ethics automatically reap disapproval or loss of friendship of their fellows.

The Christian religion is a negative philosophy of people seeking to save themselves from the wrath of their God in another world. It is what they call 'being saved'. After forty years of church allegiance I found the Christian experience to be like living in a box with limits on all sides. It was a place to hide. Everything outside the small or larger box was regarded as a danger. People living in the box feel secure and protected by its walls. I found those walls to be paper thin and offered a delusion but no real protection. They blocked out the view and communication with reality. The reason most people enter the religious box is usually to do with fear of the supposed 'Judgement Seat of God' or as an insurance, just in case.

Let us discard the borrowed, second hand, supposed virtue offered by Paul with all its superstition and unreality. Let us embrace a positive philosophy toward life which offers far better protection and happiness. We can live virtuously, happily and fully in the knowledge that we are complete and responsible persons of worth. This is a quality you can recognise within yourself; something by which we can gain love and happiness for all of life.

If you put your hand in boiling water, you will get burned. If you run with bare feet over broken glass, most likely you will get cut feet. If you want a garden someone will need to dig the ground. Social ethics are exactly the same. The personal fulfilment we get during life will automatically be measured by what we give to society. We are all social beings, part of a social family. Each person is born with natural social needs and personal dignity. We all need to trust our fellows to communicate, to work and play together. No person is an island unto himself or herself.

My wife and I go for a walk in the morning. Most people will say good morning as we pass. We were in London on holiday and had to carry our suitcases up and down the stairs of the underground. Repeatedly young men would offer to carry our heavy bags up or down the stairs without reward. We never had to ask, they spontaneously and immediately offered to help. They were displaying social caring. The reason is that society functions best on honesty, co-operation, trust, friendliness and reconciliation. Without these human virtues society would fall apart. Both the need and the desire are part of human nature. We are born with an inner need and enjoyment of social contact. A strong adhesive of society is our natural inclination to co-operate with others.

Religion is an assumed relationship between a human being and a non-human God. A small child who believes in fairies and Father Christmas who brings presents to good little children, has the same kind of trust that a human can have in a non-human God. A child can have an emotional feeling and trust in the imagined fairies. But that does not make fairies real. This is similar to the Irish Logic of belief in leprechauns, the wee folk. (see story, page 41.). A religious person will also have feelings related to the object of their belief. It may feel real, even exciting but that does not mean that it is indeed real. What they are feeling is the echo of their own thoughts and emotions but that does not make imagined spiritual beings real. People create their own emotions.

Ethics is quite different, involving only people to people relationships- Ethics is not something newly dreamed up by philosophers. Buddha, Confucius, Plato, Jesus and very many others were ethical people. Throughout all the ages there have been people with good ethical standards. For our purpose we will define good ethics as an attitude of enlightened concern for the welfare of all human beings and nature.

Justice, trustworthiness, love, honesty, goodwill, loyalty and compassion are all natural social virtues or ethics. They are the social lubricants and necessary ingredients in all human concourse. Social ethics is the glue which binds family, friends and the wider community together. An attitude of goodwill is also a powerful helper. Goodwill has an expectation of friendship, trust, honesty and success. Goodwill is totally good in itself and needs no qualification. If we set

about it we can fill our homes with goodwill and peace between adults, between parents and children and our society. Antisocial behaviour and anger arise as a result of conceived injustices of all kinds including disrespect, poverty and much more. Both social and antisocial behaviour can be taught by instruction and example.

For the early pre-historic human race, social interaction would have been necessary for survival. Only by working together with their fellows could emerging humanity have achieved the huge steps toward

civilisation. There must have been codes of behaviour to resolve disagreements- or deal with family privileges, rights of possession and responsibilities. Indeed, all social animals, including chimpanzees, wild dogs and dolphins, have understood codes of behaviour. The prehistoric human animal would not have been an exception.

Perhaps the best known ethical rule of behaviour is the Golden Rule spoken by Jesus, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you." Matt. 7:12. This very same ethic, in various words, has its origin at least as far back as 600 B.C. and was recorded by Confucius as "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." The idea that religion is the author or indeed the chief propagator of ethical standards is totally erroneous. Good laws provide social order and security for its people. Good ethics provide the lubricant to make society work to everyone's satisfaction.

Ethical codes have been written into the laws of many countries for thousands of years. Hammurabi was the king of Babylon from 1792 to 1750 B.C. That is over 3[^]700 years ago. Hammurabi is most famous for the written legal code used throughout his kingdom. It is inscribed on a stone stele over two meters tall and now preserved in the Louvre in Paris. The top portion of one side, in bas-relief shows the king standing in an attitude of prayer before the seated sun god, Samash, the god of justice. The king is receiving the laws of the kingdom.

Hammurabi's laws constituted a remarkable framework of social order. They deal, among other things, with the administration of justice in matters such as murder, adultery, false witness and offences against persons and property- My Encyclopaedia Britannica tells as that the "Hammurabi code had advanced far beyond tribal custom and recognises no blood feud, private retribution or marriage by capture. There is a regular postal service. The position of women is free and dignified." What the code did. was to clarify social and individual rights. It established compensation and punishments for injustice and thereby made possible a secure and orderly community.

Confucius tells us that "All men are born good.....True goodness springs from a man's own heart... Only he who has the spirit of goodness within him is really able to love-.- Virtue cannot live in solitude, neighbours are sure to grow up around it." Speaking of a virtuous person he says. He should be circumspect but truthful. "He should have charity in his heart for all men.... Make conscientiousness and truth your guiding principle. We become less than good through the pressures and evil to which we become subjected."

Spinoza, 1632 to 1677, wrote on Ethics and was translated by Andrew Bogle. Here is one paragraph of note. "He who wishes to revenge injuries by reciprocal hatred will live in misery. But he who endeavours to drive away hatred by means of love, fights cheerfully and with confidence. He resists equally one or many men, and scarcely needs at all the help of fortune. Those whom he conquers yield

cheerfully, not from want of strength but increase thereof. All these things follow so clearly from the definitions alone of love and intellect that there is no need for me to prove them in detail."

Plato the Greek philosopher said "To live morally and justly is to live in spiritual health, to live immorally and unjustly is to be spiritually diseased." For Aristotle "All virtue is summed up in dealing justly."

Personal peace has its strength in self knowledge, self identity, a sense of personal worth and positive self esteem. The centre of maturity is always found in self awareness and inner strength. Shakespeare was right when he said,

"This above all; to thine own self be true and it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Our greatest achievement is to know the ethical beauty and strength of the self. We can become free of the dictates of religious and social restraints when we become fully committed to the human virtues of justice, compassion, honesty and social caring. Then the whole muddled concepts and restrictions of a God become totally unimportant and irrelevant. After all the idea of a God cannot be proved by science. It is a mental fantasy taught by brainwashed people who are frightened of a supposed hereafter. Take fear out of all religions and they would all fall apart and God and God talk no longer exist.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer had this to say: -"There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the life of Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the kingdom of God, who founded the kingdom of heaven upon earth, and died to give his work final consecration, never had any existence. The image has not been destroyed from within, it has fallen to pieces, cleft and disintegrated by the concrete historical problems which came to the surface one after another."

