

Eucharist
Scapular
Trinity
Archimandrite
Holy Orders
Evangelical
Antidisestablishmentarianism
Hypostatic Union
Parish
Lent
Iconostasis
Vespers

Do we know what any of these words mean? Anyone who has not been born and brought up in an environment where words such as these are regularly used, cannot possibly know what is going on. The churches are essentially speaking a foreign language to outsiders. But those entrenched in such organisations are quite happy there, knowing the vocabulary, and going along with it all.

So much of what passes as Christianity today is nothing like what Jesus Christ came to give the world. It is what men have developed over the centuries as to what they **want** Christianity to be like.

And many people born and brought up in one of these churches, would never go anywhere else, assuming without thinking that “their” church, the one to which their family belongs, must be the one true church, and that simply by being associated with it, they must be true Christians. But it doesn’t make sense to think like that. We should think through everything we are taught and compare it with Scripture, before embracing it, not blindly follow anything or anybody.

None of this is **real** Christianity. Jesus Christ came to give us something altogether different. And the only way we can find out what Jesus was really like and what He taught, is not to listen to men who have never met or experienced Him, but to read our Bibles. The Bible only. No extra misinformation about Him, just the Bible.

This dreadful situation in the churches can be reduced down to the one major problem of not having a correct understanding of human nature. Nobody wanting to see the depth of their own sin. We exalt ourselves far too highly. We don’t see our desperate need of Jesus Christ, but rather, we worship men. We think the “church fathers” and great “saints” of the past were so holy. We think our church leaders are such godly men. We follow our minister, priest, pastor, or whatever we call him, because, after all, he’s been to theology college and we haven’t. He must know what’s right.

But he doesn’t. All theology colleges have an agenda, and only teach what their associated church believes. We should rather listen to Jesus Christ as He speaks to each of us through the Scriptures.

Look in people’s faces. And our own in a mirror. What do we see? So proud. So smug. So arrogant. People’s faces say to us: “I’ve got all the right answers, listen to me.” Cocky. Confident. That’s what we’re all like by nature. We think we’re God’s gift to the world. Then we look at photographs of church leaders on the back of their best-selling books or see their faces in their YouTube videos, and they all look so smug too. No humility on any of their faces. For a start, a truly humble person would never want a photograph or video to be taken of them at all. They would rather want to hide away from people.

“But we’re made in the image of God,” we may say. Yes, but we’ve fallen from that position. We’ve lost it. We’re only evil continually now. We are vile. We always will be vile. We can never be anything else. But we can be saved from our sins if we embrace Jesus Christ. Then, when we die, we will be given new bodies which will be sinless. That’s the blessed hope of the Christian.

We need to pray to Jesus Christ. speak to Him. Ask His forgiveness for our many sins. Daily. And, if we are genuine, He will respond. We don’t need to go to church to receive His forgiveness. “Church” is, in fact, irrelevant. It teaches all sorts of irrelevant nonsense. However, once we have become a Christian, it is always good to meet with other real Christians, who will be mainly found scattered in one or other of the churches. So it’s not wrong to go to church, it’s good to meet these people. Rather we should never put our whole hope and trust in a church, any church, and especially in those who run them. We must put our trust only ever in Jesus Christ alone.

Christianity versus the Church

Christianity

I am not from a church-going family. I am just like everybody else. One day, I picked up a Bible and started reading Matthew’s gospel. It was wonderful. I couldn’t put it down. It was so refreshing, describing a completely different way of life from everything I had ever known. So I did something I had never done before. I prayed to God, saying, “If this is real, let me know.” That’s the prayer we all need to offer. A cry for mercy to, at this point, an unknown God.

From that moment onwards I was changed completely. I stopped biting my nails. I stopped drinking alcohol. I started reading the Bible every day. I wanted more than anything else to live this new life. I couldn’t explain what had happened to me, but knew that it hadn’t come from within me. I couldn’t have changed myself like that. It must have come from God Himself. And that, dear friend, is Christianity. Nothing more. A complete, internal change of life, which can only come from God. This change can happen to any of us, simply by reaching out to Him. The only thing we have to do on our part is to be absolutely genuine with Him.

I now had that most precious of things – a real relationship with the One True Living God, Lord of Heaven and Earth, who created us and upholds all things in His providence. I can communicate directly with Him. Tell Him everything. And the most wonderful thing is that God keeps and looks after His people. What a privilege! The world knows nothing of this. We should never take such a privilege lightly, but always take Him deadly seriously.

As I grew in this new faith, I began to learn more about God, and more about myself. Like most people, I knew I wasn’t perfect, but I thought I wasn’t too bad. But as I grew in the faith, the Lord slowly revealed to me how selfish and self-centred a person I really was. He shewed me that, underneath everything, I am a vile, stinking cesspit of iniquity deserving of hell-fire forever. And I can’t get out of this mess. Everything I do is wrong. I don’t want to be like this, but I am. I quite rightly hate this situation. And I suggest most strongly that, although few of us will ever admit it, we are all in this very same condition. This is the fundamental problem with human nature. The more I understood this, the more I realised that if any good did come out of me, it would have to come directly from God, through the new life He had given to me. I couldn’t possibly produce it myself.

There is only one place where we can find teaching and help to understand ourselves properly in this way, and that is in the Bible. Here is what it says about human nature:

Genesis 6:5

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 8:21

....the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth....

Job 40:4

Behold, I am vile....

Job 42:6

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Psalms 5:9

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Ecclesiastes 7:29

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Matthew 15:19

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies

Mark 7:21-23

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Romans 3:10-18 (quoting from various Psalms)

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.

What a breath of fresh air! A historical collection of documents telling the truth about human nature! I'm not going mad after all! Not only does our experience shew our own vileness, but the Bible confirms it to us.

The more we realise this about ourselves, the more we realise our desperate need of a Saviour. A Saviour who doesn't just lightly forgive sin and then forget about it. So many religions have that idea. A forgiveness of sin that is so easy. Sin is far, far more serious than that. It needs atoning for. We need One to die in our place, as the only way to placate the wrath of God. That is exactly what Jesus Christ came into the world to do. And not only that, but He comes into the hearts of His people and changes them permanently from the inside. Not that we become any better in ourselves, but rather we see more and more the truth about ourselves, and more and more our need of Him to do any good at all:

Matthew 1:21

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

This is Christianity.

The Church

With this in mind, we ought to think that there will be some help in the church for wretched sinners such as ourselves. But we would be wrong.

The Bible is full of the subject of sin. The Old Testament is mainly the history of men rebelling against God time and time again. And the New Testament teaches us how God deals with sin and reconciles such rebels to Himself in Jesus Christ.

But, what have we throughout "church history"? Shockingly, to start with, many churches don't even believe that human

nature is inherently sinful at all. All of the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Churches of the East simply don't believe any of this. They believe we are all born neutral. So huge swathes of Christendom have absolutely no idea about our fundamental problem, and so their solution will not be of any help to anyone.

Theologians prefer to invent many lighter "theories of the atonement" rather than accepting the plain teaching of the Bible. And it is obvious why this is. They don't **want** to accept the depth of how sinful they really are.

"Church history" has changed the real fundamental understanding of human nature to make it appear far more palatable. Sin needs to be dealt with, but then the excuses would come to lighten the problem:

- We can get rid of "original sin" simply by a priest splashing water in baptism.
- We don't have to think about sin any more because Jesus Christ has taken it all away.
- We don't deserve hell-fire forever, just a limited time in purgatory.
- Unbelievers are just annihilated after death.
- God will save everybody in the end.

And so on. Anything and everything except acknowledging how vile and deserving of hell-fire forever we really are.

Church leaders throughout history thought it far more important to be able to formulate fine descriptions of God in human language. So, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity is regarded as far, far more important than any doctrine about sin. So important in fact, that people were cast out of the church as heretics if they didn't believe it.

The only two well-known names in "church history" who understood this truth about human nature were Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century, and John Calvin of Geneva in the sixteenth. There were others, but any who really saw the truth about human nature are nearly all unknown to us. Simply because the "great" theologians of history didn't **want** to think about how bad they really are.

How can we trust the church, if it doesn't even **want** to believe the most important things about life, such as the true depth of depravity of the human soul?

Churches instead have developed for themselves whole new systems, with whole new vocabularies, which not only have nothing to do with Scripture, but are very confusing to anyone from outside. Here are some random words from various different traditions: