

Basic Discipling

Introduction

I have long realised that many people in churches today have a very poor grasp of the Gospel and of doctrine. In fact, numerous people who have been Christians for many years find it difficult to articulate the Gospel message because true discipleship is so neglected these days. This paper is constructed with such people in mind.

I have written on discipling many times and have a thorough discipleship course, of which I have only completed the first volume of 80 pages. This paper seeks to be much more simple, concise breakdown of the chief points that must be covered, in my opinion. I will not develop these points or the paper will become huge, but I will try to point to resources that may help. It should form a useful tool for leaders to work with disciples in that important first year.

It is my belief that young converts should have a thorough training in the first year. It is just not enough to explain the Gospel and basic follow up. Converts should be trained in fundamental doctrines, practical issues and even given a simple understanding of church history. In the past, catechisms were used for this purpose but these went out of fashion in the mid-20th century; that was a mistake. While historical catechisms have much value, we need an up-to-date schedule of issues to train disciples (my own catechism had this in mind, q.v.).

This paper is not a catechism, but it is a basic training aid. I believe that it will give young converts a good foundation on which to build their faith.

I have provided lists of resources to follow up in further study. Many of these are my own papers because they are freely available on my website, not because I consider them better works than others. I have given a few book suggestions but have tried to keep these to more approachable works and not long treatises.

Establishing basic issues immediately after conversion

The Gospel

It is important to go over the Gospel message for two reasons.

Firstly, you need to check that they understood their commitment and what it entails. Secondly you need to get them able to present the Gospel message cogently so that they can be a good witness immediately.

What this must cover

- Man in sin: total depravity, total inability to please God, total inability to save oneself. Man is dead in sins not just sick. Eph 2:1, 5.
- Man is separated from God and under his curse needing salvation. Eph 4:18.
- Eternal judgment: At the end of the age God will judge every man for his sins. Those who are Christians will join God in fellowship. Non-Christians will be condemned and punished in hell. Rm 2:5; 2 Tim 4:1; Heb 9:27.
- Explain conviction of sin. You must cry to God for salvation from sin in earnest.
- Jesus the Saviour: there is no other saviour, no other mediator between God and sinners. Jesus is the only salvation. Jesus saves by being a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. He carried all our sins to the cross and died for them. Isa 53:5; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 9:15; 1 Pt 2:24.
- Jesus is God: Jesus is not a great prophet or a specially righteous man – he is the Son of God. God the Father sent him to Earth in order to provide atonement for sin and give eternal life. Jn 3:16, 5:21.
- Regeneration: To be saved you must be born again. This is what happens when you yield to Jesus and trust him for salvation. You become dead to your old life and alive in the Spirit. You are given a new heart and a new spirit. Jn 3:3-5.
- Conversion is:
 - A] Faith towards God. This is not just human assent but experiencing the faith that God gives. It is complete trust that Jesus will save those who come to him. Jn 1:12-13.
 - B] Repentance. This is changing one's mind and starting a new way of life based on a new way of thinking. It results in turning away from sin and following Jesus. Matt 8:22; Acts 17:30.
- Assurance: those that call on God, that believe in Jesus Christ, are definitely saved and cannot be lost. However, those whose faith is superficial are not saved.
- Baptism: Converts to Christ must be baptised as soon as possible. Acts 2:38.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'The Gospel for Christians'.
- D Martyn-Lloyd-Jones, 'The heart of the Gospel'.
- John Murray, 'Redemption: accomplished and applied'.
- EF Kevan, 'Salvation'.
- Herman Hoeksema, 'Whosoever will'.
- John Cheeseman et. al. 'The grace of God in the Gospel'.
- H E Guillebaud, 'Why the cross?'
- John Blanchard, 'Right with God'.

- John Stott, 'Basic Christianity'.
- John Bunyan, 'The water of life'.
- John Bunyan, 'Come and welcome to Jesus Christ'.

Follow up advice

- Fellowship: Converts need to get into fellowship with other Christians in a church. This is vital in order to grow spiritually and to worship God. Sadly many modern churches are apostate or compromised. Talk to a trusted mature believer for the best advice in your area.
- Buy yourself a good quality Bible for home and a smaller version for travel. A New Testament is useful to carry to work. See later.
- Bible reading: Reading the Bible is vital to spiritual development; it is like food for the soul. Reading a portion before prayer is essential to set your mind on heavenly things.
- Bible study: as one has time, detailed study of the Bible is also essential. This is not just to gain ordinary data but also to develop in understanding and get hold of doctrine. The truth sets us free; you must know the truth or you won't be free.
- Meditation: as God gives you understanding of something, such as a verse of Scripture., meditate on it (chew it over in your mind).
- Prayer: after reading the Bible, daily prayer (preferably first thing in the morning) is essential. You cannot survive as a Christian without prayer. The Lord's Prayer should be used as a template for initial praying. That is: begin with worshipping God and praying for God's glory on the earth. Then ask God to meet your needs. Then pray for your sins to be forgiven. Then pray not to be led into temptation. Then pray to be delivered from the Devil. In addition, pray every day to be filled with the Spirit and to abide in Christ.
- Worship God: this is committed love and submission to God. Worship should be occurring all the time, in private and in meetings.
- Intercession: in your daily prayer make room to intercede for those that God gives you contact with or knowledge of; especially for the needs of the saints near and far.
- Some people call daily devotions a 'Quiet Time', though this is now old fashioned. Devotions should include Bible reading, meditation, prayer and intercession. Even if your time is short in the morning due to many responsibilities, make time for a short devotional time; then have a longer period later in the day when you can withdraw from duties and retire with God alone.
- Spiritual warfare: now you are a Christian you are enrolled in the fight against Satan and his angels (called demons, or unclean spirits). This is not mystical or anything like movies. It chiefly involves avoiding deception (which surrounds us) and resisting temptation. Eph 6.
- Doing good: seek to do good to all in everything you do. Lk 6:27.
- Deal with sin: if you fall into sin, immediately confess the sin to God; do not waste time in doing this. Say that you are sorry and ask God to cleanse you by the blood of Christ. Then believe that you are cleansed and carry on doing good. If you repeatedly fall into sin and cannot control it, you must speak to a more mature Christian. 1 Jn 1:9. Sin involves small things, thoughts, words and deeds as well as big issues.
- Be a testimony:
 - Teach yourself to witness to others about the salvation of Jesus Christ.
 - Pray for your friends and relations to get saved.
 - Do good works as unto Christ, especially at work and to those you love.
 - Never return evil with evil, always return evil with good. Rm 12:21; 1 Pt 3:9.

- Show others that you know your Bible; seek to encourage them with a Biblical word.
- Honour God in private; he sees all that you do.
- Seek to please God. By obeying all his word.
- Look after your body: it belongs to God. Eat well. Get enough sleep. Drink sensibly. Get sufficient exercise.

Preaching the Gospel

All Christians are called to be witnesses and should begin evangelism as soon as possible. The only safe method of presenting the Gospel is to be as Biblical as possible and not follow the methodologies of men. This means using Bible texts to explain your simple points.

There are huge numbers of texts that could be used but here is a very short and simple selection.

- All people are in sin. Jn 8:34, 16:8; Rm 3:9, 12, 5:12; Jm 2:9, 4:17; 1 Jn 1:8.
- Sin has separated everyone from God. Isa 59:2.
- This sin will result in death followed by God's judgment and hell. Ezek 18:4; Matt 10:28; Lk 12:5; Rm 5:12, 6:23; Heb 9:27; Jm 1:15.
- There is no escape from God's judgment; mankind can do nothing to avoid condemnation. Jn 3:36; Rm 1:18.
- But God is merciful. Exod 20:6; Ps 13:5, 25:10, 31:7, 33:18, 36:5; Eph 2:4; Titus 3:5; 1 Pt 1:3, 2:10; Jude 1:21.
- The merciful God has provided a way of escape from sin and judgment in his Son Jesus Christ. Jn 3:16; Rm 8:32; Heb 9:26, 28; 1 Jn 1:7, 3:5.
- Only Jesus can provide salvation; there is no other way. 1 Thess 1:10; 1 Tim 2:5.
- Jesus was sent from heaven to be man's Saviour. He lived a perfect life and was killed on the cross to pay for man's sins. His blood cleanses us from sin. Jn 1:29; Rm 5:21; 1 Cor 1:18; Eph 1:7, 2:16; Col 1:20; Heb 9:14; 1 Pt 1:18-19; 1 Jn 1:7; Rev 1:5.
- Having paid the price of sin, Jesus was resurrected and then ascended back to God as Lord and King of the universe. Matt 28:17-18; Rm 1:4, 14:9; 1 Cor 15:20; Eph 1:20-22; Phil 2:9-11; Heb 1:2; 1 Pt 1:3.
- God now requires all men to repent of their sin and follow Christ. You must believe in Christ as Saviour. Matt 3:2; Lk 13:5, 24:47; Jn 1:12, 3:18, 36, 6:29, 8:24; Acts 3:19, 17:30, 20:17; Rm 10:9; 1 Cor 1:21; 2 Cor 5:21, 7:10; Gal 3:22; Eph 1:19.
- This necessitates: praying (calling on God) and admitting your sinfulness to God; asking God for forgiveness by his grace and submitting to Jesus Christ as your Lord and King. Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rm 10:13.
- Prayer must be followed by repentance: a true turning away from your sins and choosing to follow Christ, obeying his commands. Jn 14:15, 21, 15:10; 1 Cor 7:19; 1 Jn 2:5, 5:3.
- When you genuinely do this you will be a changed person; you will be born again and receive eternal life. Matt 19:29, 25:46; Jn 1:13, 3:3, 5, 6, 15; Eph 2:1; Titus 3:5.
- You must be baptised in water to demonstrate your commitment to Christ. Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41, 8:36, 16:15, 33, 22:16.

A simplified chain of texts in Romans

If you remember the first one, you can mark your Bible with the next verse and take a seeker through them, explaining what they mean.

Rm 3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. [Marginal note: 6:23]

Explain that all men are sinners.

Rm 6:23: For the wages of sin /s death, but the gift of God /s eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
[Marginal note: 5:8]

Explain that the guilt of this sin results in death and eternal punishment. Explain that there is hope only in the provision of a Saviour who is Jesus Christ.

Rm 5:8: But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [Marginal note: 4:5]

Explain that the death of Christ pays for sin.

Rm 4:5: But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. [Marginal note: 10:9-13]

Explain that the Gospel must be accepted by faith.

Rm 10:9-13: If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'

Explain that they must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and confess him before men.

It only takes one text to strike home by the power of the Spirit for a person to be convicted of sin and flee to Christ. However, all evangelism that ignores using God's word is doomed to failure.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'Basic Gospel texts'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Receiving the Gospel'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Simple evangelistic aids'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The presentation of the Gospel'.
- Kenneth H Good, 'Christ's teaching on the theology of evangelism'.
- Herman Hoeksema, 'Whosoever will'.
- John Bunyan, 'The water of life'.
- John Bunyan, 'Come and welcome Jesus Christ'.
- John Stott, 'Basic Christianity'.

Bible study

Construction of the Bible

66 books in all.

Old Testament

39 books.

The Pentateuch

I.e. the five books of Moses (*Torah* for Jews):

- *Genesis* (beginnings): man ruined by sin.
- *Exodus* (lit. 'departure' or 'going out'): man redeemed by God.
- *Leviticus* (refers to the tribe of Levi that organised the worship system): man restored to communion with God by blood sacrifice.
- *Numbers*: man ruled and guided by God in his walk.
- *Deuteronomy* (lit. 'second law', i.e. the second exposition of God's law after Sinai): man included in God's great purpose and prepared for the future.

The historical books

- Joshua: entrance into Canaan.
- Judges: period before Israel had a king; a time of rebellions followed by deliverance.
- Ruth: story of faithfulness.
- 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles: history of Israel and Judah. There was only a united kingdom under David and Solomon; then the nation split into Israel (Northern Kingdom or Samaria) which went into exile under Assyria in 721 BC, and Judah (Southern Kingdom that actually included Benjamin) which went into exile in 586 BC under Babylon.
- Ezra, Nehemiah: the return of the exiles from Babylon under Ezra the priest and Nehemiah the governor.
- Esther: story of deliverance from planned genocide in Babylon. The only book with no mention of God.

The wisdom and poetry literature

- Job: the purpose of suffering – a testimony to God.
- Psalms: the hymnbook of Israel, which summarises Biblical theology and history.
- Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon, or Canticles): the books of Solomon. Ecclesiastes is observations about life – all is futile without God. 'Song' is a symbolic picture of the union of Christ and the church.

Prophetic books: Major prophets

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.

Prophetic books: Minor prophets

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. The last three are the prophets of restoration after the return of the exiles.

New Testament

27 books.

- The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
- History: The Acts of the Apostles.
- The Letters of Paul: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthian, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews (we cannot be certain who wrote Hebrews).
- The General [Catholic] Letters]: James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude.
- The Writings of John: 1, 2 and 3 John, Revelation (or the Apocalypse).

Bible reading

Seek to read through the entire Bible in one year. You can use various schemes to follow or you can just read through from cover to cover. Once you are familiar with the Bible, you must choose your own way to read; but make sure that you do not ignore books of the Bible because they are difficult for you.

You need to centre upon the NT since this explains the OT.

Use whatever resources you can find in order to get a good grasp of the contents of the Bible. There are many of these in book form and also on-line (see later for suggestions). Get a rough idea of what every book is about and what its main message is.

Bible composition

The Bible contains various sorts of literature, which must be interpreted according to that type. These types include:

- Historical narrative; e.g. I Kings.
- Poetry; e.g. Psalms.
- Proverbs (wisdom); e.g. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes.
- Law; e.g. Deuteronomy.
- Prophecy; e.g. Isaiah.
- Doctrinal: e.g. Romans.
- Apocalyptic; e.g. Revelation.
- Typology; e.g. Exodus on the Tabernacle, priesthood and offerings.
- Allegorical; e.g. some of Jesus' parables.

For example, you would not interpret apocalyptic literature literally because it is full of symbolism. For example, Jesus, the slain lamb, does not have seven horns and seven eyes; neither are there seven spirits (Rev 5:6). Prophecy is often fulfilled in unexpected manners; it also has levels of fulfilment (the immediate in history, a general principle and fulfilment in the church). Interpret prophecy carefully and beware the crazy ideas of men.

Bible interpretation

There are various rules of Bible interpretation but these can wait for now. What is essential to understand is that the Bible interprets itself. This means that difficult things to understand in one passage are explained in another. You don't have to resort to guesswork or men's' ideas; God interprets his own word.

The absolute crucial rule of interpretation is to read verses in context. You must never twist a verse out of context to mean something that the Bible does not teach. Context is:

- Immediate context: the context of the surrounding verses.
- Greater context: the context of the particular book.

- Larger Context: the context of the author's doctrinal position.
- Supreme context: the doctrinal teaching of the Bible.

For example: verses in Paul's letters which appear at first glance to teach that all men are saved cannot mean that. This is because a) the immediate context denies it; b) the book as a whole denies it; c) Paul teaches the opposite (election); d) the Bible denies it, teaching reprobation of the wicked. Thus 'God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:4) does not teach universalism. It teaches that God wishes to save all types of people, including the repressive kings and authorities (v2) that some believers did not want to pray for since they persecuted Christians. The Greek word for 'all' often means 'some of a large group' or 'all of a small group'. Just as the word 'world' in other places does not mean every person on the earth.

In all interpretation be careful and when confused seek the advice of mature believers or sound commentaries.

Bible languages

The OT was written almost entirely in Hebrew. Small portions, e.g. in Daniel, were written in Aramaic (a sort of Syrian dialect).¹ Aramaic is the tongue that Jesus spoke which was the common language in the area at that time.

The NT is written entirely in Greek. Claims that the Gospels were written in Hebrew are false, none have ever been found but thousands of Greek manuscripts have been found. The Greek is not the classical Greek of the poet Homer but the more common everyday type called Koine, used in business transactions.

To fully understand Bible texts one needs to consult lexicons and other aids to find out what the original words mean. Good commentaries and concordances will also do this. One can also purchase interlinear translations where the Greek or Hebrew text has English words underneath. There are also computer programmes that enable you to find the meanings of the original words at the click of a mouse. A single English word often has many Greek meanings, to be determined by the context.

Bible versions

There are scores of Bibles today with new ones appearing every year. Most of them are not worth having; some are appalling.

There are two issues here.

Translation method

The first is the type of translation method used. There are several types;

- Literal translation: i.e. word for word translation. This is the only type that is any use for Bible study. Though even this does not guarantee that the word choices are correct. Examples: KJV, NKJV, NAB, NASB, RSV.
- Dynamic equivalence translation: this is thought for thought. It is a semi-paraphrase where someone summarises what a verse says. It is not a literal translation and may be good for readability but it is bad for study. Example NIV, New Translation in Modern Speech (Weymouth Translation).

¹ In earlier days this was called Chaldee (from Chaldea in southern Babylonia).

- Paraphrase: A paraphrase expresses the meaning of something using different words to achieve greater clarity. This gives great readability but is hopeless for Bible study. Examples: The Living Bible. TEV.

I strongly recommend a literal translation for Bible study and only using a less literal translation for getting an overall understanding of a book. Weymouth is a very good semi-paraphrase of the NT since it was based on the Greek trying to get the true gist of Greek tenses.

Textual family

The second issue is the textual family that the translation was made from. This is quite important, although very technical.

In short, there are essentially two manuscript streams used in Bible translations. The first is the Byzantine or Traditional Text (sometimes called the Textus Receptus or 'Received Text'). This is the type of text used for nearly 2,000 years by all translators, although some of these had fewer manuscripts than later translators. These texts tend to be younger than others but are more accurate and trustworthy for various reasons. This text was more or less settled by 1598. The Majority Text is a recent production based on assessing all the Byzantine manuscripts discovered up to date and is very close to the Traditional Text. Examples: KJV, NKJV.

The second stream is the Alexandrian or Eclectic Text. After 1881 with the Revised Version, some scholars believed that certain younger manuscripts recently discovered were better to use as the basis for Bible translation. This turned out to be false and indeed, some of these are now known to be forgeries.² Despite this, academics in the main prefer the older manuscripts and compare these (though they disagree in thousands of places) by arbitrary decisions to make an Eclectic³ Text. Examples: every Bible except the KJV, NKJV and World Bible (online).

Thus my recommendation is to use the NKJV. The KJV is good and poetic, but it is hard to understand in places since words have changed meaning. It also has some errors (in truth every Bible has some; the question is how many?). The NKJV is a revision of the KJV that began in about 1980.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'The Books of the Bible: Graphically Outlined'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Translations of the Bible For English Readers'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The Textual Roots of Modern Bibles'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Transmission of the Bible'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A simple explanation of Bible texts'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Bible Study Techniques'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Tools of Bible study'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Bible Language Resources'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Choosing commentaries'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A basic list of important principles of interpretation'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Principles of interpretation'.

² E.g. Codex Sinaiticus.

³ Deriving ideas, style, or taste from a broad and diverse range of sources.

- W Graham Scroggie, 'Know your Bible'.
- W Graham Scroggie, 'The NT unfolded'.
- Donald Guthrie, 'The teaching of the NT'.
- GR Harding Wood, 'A bird's eye view of the Bible'.
- GT Manley, 'The new Bible handbook'.
- Henry H Halley, 'Pocket Bible handbook'.
- John W Halley, 'Alleged discrepancies of the Bible'.
- Stephen Motyer, 'Unlock the Bible'.
- Young's or Strong's Bible Concordance.
- A Bible Dictionary, e.g. Easton's, Fausset's, Smith's, The Westminster, etc.
- The free E-Sword Bible Study programme or app.
- Vine's expository dictionary of NT words.
- Matthew Henry, 'Great themes of the Bible'.
- AW Pink, 'Interpretation of the Scriptures'.

Doctrinal study

There is nothing difficult or stuffy about theology (study of God). All believers are called to be theologians. However, you must find your own level; not everyone is an academic. As long as you are learning about doctrine in some way continually, all will be well. Those who do not understand doctrine will fall into deception and be snared by the Devil.

Now this is not the place for a complete analysis of systematic theology; I can merely point to basic essentials.

Knowing God

The Trinity

God is three in one. This concept is difficult to understand but must be simply accepted since it is the Biblical revelation.

The Godhead (divine being) comprises of three individual Persons: The Father, The Son (the Second Person of the Trinity) and the Holy Spirit. These all share the same divine essence but are separate persons. They are all equally God but have different functions in salvation.

God is infinite, eternal and unchanging in his being and character. Everything he does is infinite, eternal and unchanging.⁴ 'Whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it' (Eccles 3:14).

The Father

The Father is the initiator in the plan of salvation. He issues the decree and sends the Son and the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26; 1 Jn 4:10). He chooses and calls the elect from eternity (Eph 1:3-5).

The Son in salvation

The Son is sent by the Father to accomplish the work of salvation by being incarnated as a man on Earth and dying as a sacrificial substitute for the elect (Jn 3:16-17). In this he submits to the Father, only doing what the Father says (Jn 12:49).

The eternal generation of the Son

The Second Person of the Trinity is always the Son. He is said to be eternally generated (begotten) by the Father in Scripture. This does not mean that he is created, it is just the role that he has in the Trinity. Jesus did not become God's Son at the incarnation; he was always God's Son from eternity. Heb 1:2, 5, 8; 2 Pt 1:17; 1 Jn 4:9, 5:11, 20; 2 Jn 1:3.

The two natures of Jesus

When the Son was incarnated as a human being on Earth, the Son had two natures, one human and one divine. This is not two persons but two natures in one person. This was necessary in order to save mankind. The Saviour had to be a man in order to suffer and die as a man and take the sin of men upon himself. But the Saviour also had to be God with an infinite personality in order to save millions of people. Thus Jesus the Son of God often called himself the Son of Man. Rm 5:12; 1 Tim 2:5. He also suffered as men, e.g. becoming thirsty, tired, hungry etc.

⁴ Thus God cannot love someone and then later put them under his hate, wrath and condemnation in hell.

There are many heresies regarding this doctrine. However, if Jesus was not a real man, he could not die as a man, as a sacrificial substitute for men. If he wasn't God, his death would not be of infinite value.

Thus Jesus is the God-man.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit applies the work of the Son in salvation to individuals, bringing them to glory. He is sent by both the Father and the Son (Jn 14:26, 15:26, 16:7; the Eastern Orthodox Church denies this). It is the Spirit that regenerates the elect in time (Jn 3:5). It is the Spirit that baptises and unites the elect into the body of Christ creating a mystical unity (1 Cor 12:13). It is the Spirit that gives gifts to the church to enable it to function (1 Cor 12:4, 9, 11). It is the Spirit that brings the things of Christ to us and leads us into all truth (Jn 16:13-14). It is the Spirit that gives us power to put off the old nature and live right (Rm 8:10-11, 13).

The names of God

The many names of God in the Bible give us an indication of his nature and character. I will mention just a few.

- God: There are various Hebrew and Greek words translated as God. The Hebrew *el* means 'mighty one' or 'elevated one'; it appears 217 times. The Hebrew *eloah* means 'revered one' and appears 57 times. The Hebrew *elohim* means 'one who is to be feared' or 'mighty one'; it appears 2570 times. In Greek the word is *theos* as a translation of *el*, *eloah* and *elohim*. It usually refers to God the Father but occasionally to the Son, perhaps eight times.
- Lord: The Hebrew *adon* / *adonai* means 'Lord', 'Master', 'Ruler'. The Greek *kurios* ('Lord') was originally used to translate *Yahweh*. The NT commonly uses *theos* for the Father and *kurios* for the Son.
- Yahweh: Often translated as 'LORD' in capitals or in some Bibles as 'Jehovah' ('Jehovah' is an artificial construct that is false). This is called the proper name of God since he revealed it as such to Moses (Exod 6:3), though it had appeared before (Gen 9:26, 15:2). It occurs about 6000 times in the Hebrew text. It is actually written in the text without vowels as *YHWH* and '*Yahweh*' is the best approximation of the sound. It is sometimes contracted to *Yah* (50 times). It is derived from the verb 'to be', hence 'I am who I am' (Exod 3:14-15). It could also mean 'He is'. This refers to the self-existence of God, a key attribute of God's being. It is applied to the Trinity not just the Father.
- Almighty God: *El Shaddai*, actually 'God Almighty'. This title is particularly identified with the age of the Patriarchs in Genesis. The actual meaning of *Shaddai* (or *Shadday*) is disputed. Many today suggest it means 'all sufficient'; i.e. the one who nourishes and provides.
- God Most High: Hebrew *El Elyon*, i.e. exalted one.
- Lord of hosts: Actually 'Yahweh of Hosts' (*Sabaot* or *Sabaoth*). This is a prophetic name that does not appear in the Pentateuch (books of Moses), Joshua or Judges. After Israel had kings, God reveals himself as a monarch, the true king of Israel. 'Hosts' is generally taken to refer to the legions of angels at God's command, but it could also refer to all creation, especially the stars ('starry host'), or possibly the armies of Israel.

The attributes of God's being

- Self-existence: only God has life in himself. All other natural life is derived from God.

- Spirit: God is spirit (not 'a spirit') and not material.
- Infinity: God is without termination and finitude.
- Eternity: God is not subject to time.
- Immutability: God does not change in his being.
- Omniscience: God knows everything.
- Omnipotence. God is all-powerful.
- Omnipresence: God is present everywhere. Also called 'immanence' (God permanently pervading and sustaining the universe).
- Transcendence: God is above all things; beyond or above the range of physical human experience.
- Simplicity: God is a non-complex, indivisible, unique spirit (Jn 1:18, 4:24; 1 Tim 1:17, 6:15-16).
- Unity: God is one.

The attributes of God's character

- Sovereignty: God is the supreme authority.
- Justice: God is righteous and just, he does not show partiality (favouritism).
- Goodness: God is good, he does what is right; his character shows benevolence, love, grace and mercy.
- Love (1 Jn 4:8-10): A] Benevolence - loving disposition, God's care towards those loved. B] Complacency -approval of good, (e.g. God's delight in Jesus).
- Grace: God gives those he loves undeserved favour of all they need.
- Mercy: God is tenderhearted, showing compassion and pity towards those he loves who are in need.
- Freedom: God is independent from his creatures.
- Holiness: God is righteous, perfect and separate from all evil.
- Righteousness: God's holiness applied to relationships, God's will is right.
- Truth: God is consistent in himself. There is no contradiction in him.
- Faithfulness: God keeps his promises.

There are many more characteristics, classified in various ways, but these are sufficient.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'A summary of the attributes of God'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The attributes of God'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Ancient diagram of the Trinity'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The names of God'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A Simple Examination of the Two Natures of Christ'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Concise Notes on Christ's Two Natures'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The Eternal Sonship of Christ'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The divine focus'.
- JI Packer, 'Knowing God'.
- Peter Jeffrey, 'Great God of wonders'.
- John Sanderson, 'Mirrors of his glory'.
- RC Sproul, 'The holiness of God'.

- Andrew Jukes, 'The names of God'.
- Edward Bickersteth, 'The Trinity'.
- Edward Bickersteth, 'The Holy Spirit'.
- William S Plumer, 'The Rock of our salvation'.
- John H Paterson, 'The greatness of Christ'.

Angels

Angels are invisible spirit beings (Ps 104:4; Heb 1:14) created by God to be his servants and messengers. The word in Hebrew and Greek means 'messenger'. The word 'angel' does not refer to their character but to their office. Their numbers are described as thousands of thousands (Dan 7:10; Matt 26:53).

It should be noted that sometimes 'angel' is used of men sent on some mission (Job 1:14; 1 Sam 11:3; Lk 7:24) or a prophet (Isa 42:19; Hag 1:13) or a priest (Mal 2:7) or elders of the churches (Rev 1:20).

Angels only appeared after Abraham and after Samuel they only appeared to prophets until the time of Jesus.

Since they are invisible spirits, you cannot see an angel unless God gives you special permission and vision (2 Kg 6:16-17).

There is a rank of angels called 'archangels' (1 Thess 4:16; Jude 1:9) or 'princes' (Dan 10:13, 12:1; Eph 1:21; Col 1:16). Two angels are named as Michael and Gabriel.

Seraphim are heavenly beings that we know little about (Isa 6:2, 6). The Hebrew word *saraph* normally means 'fiery serpent' but *seraphim* are usually named as fiery servants.

Cherubim are also heavenly beings closely associated with God's throne. They are not angels but 'living beings' that represent the redeemed. (Gen 3:24; 1 Sam 4:4; Ps 80:1)

Angels can err (Job 4:18) and they are not omniscient (Matt 24:36). There was a rebellion in heaven led by an angel the Bible calls 'Satan' or 'the Devil'. He gathered a third of the angelic host in his war against God but was thrown out of heaven and cast to the aerial regions above the earth (Rev 12:9).

The elect angels

God protected two thirds of the angelic host to remain faithful to him; thus they are called 'elect angels' (1 Tim 5:21), chosen angels, and 'holy' (Lk 9:26). Although holy, angels must not be worshipped (Col 2:18; Rev 19:10).

Angels were particularly employed in the Old Covenant to safeguard saints (Ps 34:7). They are shown rescuing saints, warning saints and also killing the enemies of God's people (Ps 78:49).

On occasion, God gave an angel the appearance of a man in order to converse with a saint, such as Abraham (Gen 18:2, 22), Jacob (Gen 32:24, 30), Joshua (Jos 5:13, 15). These appearances are of 'the angel of the Lord' and really refer to the pre-incarnation appearances of Christ. Other examples are: Gen 18:2, 19:1; Lk 24:4; Acts 1:10.

After the New Covenant in Christ appeared, angelic ministry is rarely necessary for saints because they have God dwelling within them. They have been only occasionally reported in church history when the needs of persecuted saints was very great and the angelic host

provided support, defence and encouragement. A case occurred recently in Nigeria. Another example involved the missionary John Paton in the South Seas. In cases like these angels appeared to be like a holy army.

Unbelievers are fascinated by angels and fabricate stories about them. However, believers must not focus on angels at all but always on God. The centre of our attention is Christ, not one of his servant messengers.

Satan

Satan ('adversary') is the leader of the fallen angels or demons. He is the enemy and accuser of the brethren. His other names include: the Devil ('slanderer, accuser'), Beelzebub ('lord of the flies' or 'lord of the house'), or *Apollyon* ('destroyer', in Hebrew *Abaddon*).

It is implied that his chief sin was pride and his character includes lying and murder (Jn 8:44).

His chief weapon is deception.

Christians must resist the Devil and when they do he will flee (Jm 4:7).

The end of the Devil and his angels is to be cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity, i.e. hell (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10).

Demons

Demons are unclean spirits, fallen angels, the host of the Devil. The presence of Jesus in his purity on the Earth exposed demons, which he cast out of many people.

As spirit beings they are immaterial; they are nothing like the characters in Hollywood movies which have bodies and affect people physically. You cannot see a demon (unless God gives you special vision) and they cannot touch you physically.

Demons cannot 'possess' Christians. How can the Holy Spirit abiding within a Christian permit a demon to live with him? There is no mention of exorcism of Christians in the NT; only non-Christians are delivered from evil spirits before their conversion. Neither is there any deliverance ministry ever mentioned by the apostles.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'Cherubim'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Demon Possession and the Believer'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Rumours of angels'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Territorial Spirits: Are angels restricted to geographical boundaries?'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Nephilim, Anunnaki and other tall stories'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Can demons mate with humans'.

Understanding sin

The Fall

God created Adam holy, with all the blessings of the Garden of Eden and fellowship with God. He gave man wisdom so that he could steward the Earth and name all the animals. He gave man a helper, a woman called Eve to be his wife. Gen 1-3.

Despite all God's blessings, Eve allowed herself to be deceived by Satan, God's angelic adversary, and Eve tempted Adam to disobey God (1 Tim 2:13-14). Both ate the forbidden fruit and judgment had to follow.

This rebellion against God was the entrance of sin into the world. Instead of being like God (as Satan had tempted) Adam and Eve became like Satan – rebellious and sinful. The whole progeny of Adam and Eve was now corrupted by sin so that all people born into the world are tainted with this depravity in their nature. All people are born in sin as a result of the Fall and death follows sin (Rm 5:12).

This temptation 'to be like God' is called THE lie in Rm 1:25 (the definite article is used) and is the basis of many temptations to this day and the root of many sinful and cultic works.

Sin

There are many words for sin in Hebrew and Greek. Essentially, these mean such things as: missing the mark (like an arrow missing the target), this is the most common word used; transgression (breaking God's law) and iniquity (immorality, unrighteousness). There are also other words used occasionally.

God hates sin and must retaliate with justice and wrath. Sin always results in death (Ezek 18:4, 20; Rm 5:12, 6:23). However, because God is also merciful he has chosen the elect to escape his wrath by providing his only Son to be the Saviour of mankind. This is why Jesus had to die.

Jesus had to be a man, a real man, in order to die for the sins of men. However, the Person of Jesus had to be God, and thus of infinite quality of life, to die for an infinite number of men.

Christians must never trivialise sin because they experience grace. Sin must be conquered by applying Romans 6 doctrine. Always flee temptation. If you don't you will get entangled and it always leads to more problems. Sin always promises self-satisfaction but it never delivers; it only brings bondage.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'The problem of sin'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The results of sin'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The sin unto death'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The sinfulness of schism'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Words for sin'.
- Paul Fahy, 'How Serious is it to Stray From God's Directions?'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Sins of the fathers'.

Man

Man is a material being, being flesh, blood and bone. Yet man has an outer life and an invisible inner life. The Bible teaches that man is tripartite; that is, he has three compartments: body (outer life), soul (inner life) and spirit (innermost life). These comply with the construction of the Tabernacle: outer court, holy place, and Holy of Holies.

Another type (figure) is that God lives in Israel, resides in Jerusalem but properly dwells in Zion (Ps 76:1-2).⁵

All three are created as neutral vessels to be occupied by God. However, sin has perverted these and only Christians can be cleansed.

Many teachers deny trichotomy (division into three parts) and teach dichotomy (division into two parts) but they are hopelessly confused. While claiming that man is only body and soul they are frequently forced to teach that man is also body and spirit. Scripture is clearly tripartite since the spirit and the soul are separated (1 Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12).

Body

This needs little explanation. Man is a physical being that can be touched. It was created to be the expression of God in the world.

Soul

The soul is the executive of the body; the seat of the personality. It is made up of the volition (will), emotions and the intellect (mind). The soul is intended by God to be the servant of the spirit but in most people the soul dominates the spirit (hence called 'soulish', 1 Cor 2:14 trans. 'natural man'; Jude 1:19 and Jm 3:16 trans. 'sensual').

The soul is a neutral vessel to be occupied by spiritual decisions; however, when the person sins and puts on the old nature, the soul becomes flesh and the heart is corrupted.

Spirit

The spirit is the deepest part of man. In sinful men this is dead towards God. It died when Adam fell. This is regenerated (born again) by the Spirit in his ministry to the elect. This is where the new man resides.

The spirit contains the facilities of spiritual intuition, spiritual communion and conscience.

Heart

The heart is the absolute root of the character. It forms a bridge between the Spirit and the soul containing the higher mind (*Gk nous*) and the conscience. It is vital to keep the heart guarded and safe from contamination (Prov 4:23).

Diagram of a good testimony

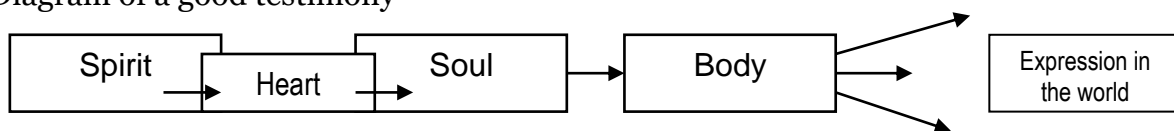
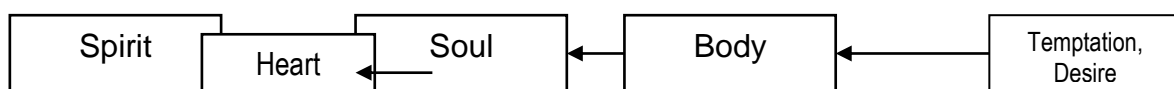


Diagram of a bad testimony



Here external temptation stimulates the body, the soul chooses to accept the temptation and then the heart is contaminated and sin is born.

⁵ Typology involves the study of Bible types, or figures. These are Biblical items that are symbolic of spiritual truths. For example: the Tabernacle, the priesthood, the feasts and the sacrificial offerings. The first thing they symbolise (the antitype) is Jesus. But since the elect are united with Christ they have symbolic references to humans as well.

See sanctification later.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'The nature of man'.

Understanding God's decree

The decree of God is also known as the divine counsel or the eternal purpose of God. It is the divine counsel in eternity that devised the plan of salvation and all the corresponding aspects of it. The decree explains why God did all this – to glorify his holy name.

Election

The centre of God's decree is election. This is first the choosing of Christ to be the Saviour of mankind followed by the selection of the elect that would be placed into Christ. These elect are chosen to be the representatives of the testimony of God in the material world so that God has a witness to his glory on the Earth (Eph 1:5-6, 3:9-11). The testimony of God is centred in glorifying Christ, 'He is before all things, and in Him all things consist' Col 1:17.

Lk 20:38; Col 1:16; Prov 16:4; Rm 11:36; Heb 2:10; Rm 9:11-18, 21-22.

The plan of salvation

Thus follows the plan of salvation to remove the sins of the elect through the redemption that is in Christ. This required sending the Second Person of the Trinity to Earth to live as a man, die for sins and be raised from the dead to glory. The elect would thus be placed into Christ by mystical union forming the body of Christ (Rm 8:29-30). The purpose of Christ's life was to glorify the Father in the accomplishment of redemption.

Jn 13:31, 14:13, 17:4; Lk 22:22; Acts 2:23.

Creation

In order to bring forth sons, God first needed to perform the work of creation. The world and men had to be created in order to fulfil God's purposes.

Col 1:16; Prov 16:4; Rm 11:36; Heb 2:10; m Isa 43:7, 21.

Providence

The elect need to be protected, brought to hear the Gospel, brought into fellowship with Christ and preserved until death to secure them for glory. To do this God has to control all history. Thus God is sovereign over all human affairs; nothing occurs without his consent.

Job 12:9-10; Acts 17:28; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3; Rev 4:11; Deut 32:8; Job 12:10, 14:5; Ps 31:15, 139:16; Isa 44:28; Acts 17:26.

Predestination

This in turn requires the predestination of all things from eternity. God predestined all the affairs of men and nature so that all works according to his plan and purpose. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God's foreknowledge and permission.

Job 14:5; Ps 139:16; Isa 46:10; Acts 2:23, 4:27-28, 15:18, 17:26.

Part of providence is caring for the natural world so that life continues. God has provided everything that man needs on the earth; imbalance today is due to rich men stealing unnecessary resources and depriving the poor.

Gen 8:22; Ps 74:16-17; Jer 5:24, Jer 31:35; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17.

This also means that God is totally sovereign over all natural events.

Exod 10:19; Job 26:12; Ps 107:25; Ps 135:7; Ps 147:15-18; Ps 148:8; Amos 4:13; Jon 1:4.

This means that God is in control over bad things as well as good things.

Gen 50:20; Job 2:10; Isa 45:7; Lam 3:38; Amos 3:6; Acts 2:23.

Glorification

This is the end of the plan of salvation – the glorification of resurrected saints in fellowship with Christ on a renewed and restored earth magnifying God in harmony and perfection.

Col 3:1; Rm 8:30; 1 Cor 2:9; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18, 4:17; Phil 3:21; 1 Pt 5:1; 2 Pt 1:4; 1 Jn 3:2; 2 Pt 3:10-13; Rev 21:1; Isa 65:17, 66:22.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, ‘An Aid To Understanding God’s Purpose In Predestination’.
- Paul Fahy, ‘The Order of the Decrees’.
- Paul Fahy, ‘The Vital Importance of Understanding God’s Plan & Purpose’.

Understanding salvation and grace

Words used in this doctrine

- **Atonement:** mostly found in the OT where it means a covering for sins. The essential thought is the satisfaction of God by putting away sin to enable sinners to meet with him. It does not mean ‘at-one-ment’ (reconciliation).
- **Redemption:** literally ‘buying back’. It refers to the payment Christ made on the cross to God’s law and justice that enables sinners to be saved.
- **Ransom:** the price paid to God in redemption.
- **Reconciliation:** the reconciling of man to God by the payment of the cross in redemption.
- **Propitiation:** this means turning away wrath. It is the satisfaction of God by the blood of Christ so that God’s anger was quenched.
- **The blood of Christ:** this is the pure life of Christ given up in sacrifice on the cross to pay the price of man’s sin.
- **Justification:** being made legally righteous before God.
- **Grace:** the unmerited kindness and gifts of God towards elect sinners.
- **The elect:** those chosen by God in eternity for salvation as a gift to Christ.
- **The reprobate:** those not chosen by God for salvation but left in their own choices and sin.

RESOURCES

- Leon Morris, ‘The cross of Jesus’.
- John Murray, ‘Redemption accomplished and applied’.
- John Murray, ‘The Atonement’.
- Anthony A Hoekema, ‘Saved by Grace’.

The doctrines of Grace

It is essential to understand the Doctrines of Grace; this is not a technical subject to be ignored or avoided. It is vital and not difficult to follow. It is based upon five principles sometime identified by the mnemonic 'TULIP' or called 'The Five Points of Calvinism'.

- **Total Depravity:** Man is dead in sins, cannot please God in any way and cannot save himself.
- **Unconditional Election:** God chose the elect in eternity based on nothing they would do but only on his own good pleasure. Those not called in eternity are the reprobate that are doomed. [Note: after the Fall of Adam God could have left all mankind in their sins to face judgment. Instead he chose a portion of the human race to be saved to reveal his mercy. The fact of sin required judgment, thus the reprobate are left to face condemnation to reveal God's justice.]
- **Irresistible Grace (or Effectual Calling):** God calls everyone universally in the Gospel but calls the elect effectually. The elect that hear the Gospel are saved by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption):** Jesus died for the elect alone; he did not die for everyone. The cross was a sacrifice for a specific number.
- **Perseverance of the Saints (Sometimes called 'Eternal Security'):** God preserves the elect for salvation to the very end; no elect person will be lost. This does not apply to all churchgoers or all that call themselves 'Christian'. Many of these are superficial and do fall away.

Total Depravity	Unconditional Election	Limited Atonement	Irresistible Grace	Final Perseverance
Gen 6:5 Gen 8:21 Ps 51:5 Ps 58:3 Ps 143:2 Ecc 9:3 Isa 64:6 Jer 17:9 Mk 7:21+ Jn 3:5-7 Jn 8:44 Rm 3:9+ Rm 8:7-8 Eph 2:1 Col 2:13 Tit 1:15 1 Jn 1:8+ 1 Jn 3:10	Deut 10:14+ Ps 65:4 Mt 11:27 Mt 22:14 Mt 24:22+ Lk 18:7 Jn 5:21 Acts 13:48 Rm 8:28-33 Rm 9:10+ Rm 11:28 Eph 1:4-5 2 Thess 2:13 2 Tim 1:9	Isa 22:14 Isa 53:11 Mt 1:21 Mt 20:28 Mt 26:28 Lk 1:68 Jn 6:35+ Jn 10:14+ Jn 17:1-11 Jn 17:20+ Acts 11:18 Acts 16:14 Acts 20:28 Rm 1:6+ Rm 8:30 Rm 9:22-5 Heb 9:28	Jn 1:13 Jn 3:27 Jn 5:21 Jn 6:44, 65 Jn 17:2 Rm 8:14 Rm 9:16, 22-25 1 Cor 4:7 1 Cor 12:3 Eph 2:1+ Eph 4:4 2 Tim 1:9 Heb 9:15 Jm 1:18 1 Pt 1:15 1 Pt 2:9 1 Pt 5:10 2 Pt 1:3 1 Jn 5:4 Jude 1 Rev 17:14	Ps 30:5 Isa 43:1-3 Isa 54:10 Jer 32:40 Mt 18:12+ Jn 3:16 Jn 3:36 Jn 5:24 Jn 6:35+ Jn 10:27+ Rm 5:8+ Rm 8:1 Rm 8:29-39 1 Cor 1:7-9, 10:13 Jud 1

The Gift of faith	The Gift of Repentance
Jn 6:29 Acts 14:27 Acts 18:27 Eph 2:8-9 Phil 1:29 Heb 12:2	Acts 5:31 Acts 11:18 Rm 2:4 2 Tim 2:25-26 Heb 12:17

RESOURCES

- Paul Fahy, ‘Why common grace is heresy’.
- Paul Fahy, ‘A simplified explanation of the true Gospel’.
- Paul Fahy, ‘An Analysis Of The Key Disputed Universalistic Texts’.
- Paul Fahy, ‘The Five Points of the Doctrines of Grace: The Work of God in Salvation - A Diagram’.
- Paul Fahy, ‘The doctrines of grace’.
- Paul Fahy, ‘The Doctrines of Grace: a summary’.
- Paul Fahy, ‘The nub of Calvinism’.
- Paul Fahy, ‘The Need For Solid Doctrinal Foundations: Having a Biblical Gospel’. [Diagram]
- Loraine Boettner, ‘The Reformed Faith’. [Very slim paperback.]
- William Parks, ‘The five points of Calvinism’. [Excellent and easy to read.]
- Martin Luther, ‘Born slaves’. [A summary of ‘Bondage of the will’]
- Peter Lewis et. al, ‘Chosen for good’.
- David Steele and Curtis Thomas, ‘The five points of Calvinism’.
- Herman Hoeksema, ‘The wonder of grace’.
- RC Sproul, ‘Chosen by God’.
- Ron Cammenga & Ron Hanko, ‘Saved by Grace’.

The types of salvation on offer in the world

- Pelagianism: this affirms that man is capable of keeping God’s law by his own efforts, inspired by Jesus’ cross. It is ‘works’ salvation (meritorious works). It denies all the doctrines of grace, especially total depravity and election.
- Arminianism (Semi-Pelagianism): There are two forms of this. A] The original Arminianism of the Remonstrants (Dutch sectarians following James Arminius around 1600). It denies and reverses all the doctrines of grace including teaching that man is not dead in sins and chooses to be saved by free will. B] Wesleyanism (after John Wesley). This also denies the doctrines of grace but does affirm man’s depravity. However, it teaches a false universal prevenient⁶ grace available to all people who choose to use it by free will to overcome the depravity. God loves everybody and Jesus died for everybody.
- Calvinism: This affirms the doctrines of grace. It stresses God’s sovereignty in salvation. It denies that God loves everybody or that Jesus died for all men. The truth is that God loves the elect from eternity and Jesus died for these alone.
- Amyraldism:⁷ This is a sort of halfway house between Calvinism and Arminianism. It affirms election but avers that God loves everyone and that Jesus died for everyone. Since men do not believe only the elect are saved. It supposedly upholds election but allows men to preach an Arminian Gospel. This is found today in Four-Point Calvinists.⁸

⁶ Coming before, preceding in time or order.

⁷ Named after Moses Amyraut.

⁸ Supposed Calvinists that deny Limited Atonement. Amyraldism is also found in the puritans Richard Baxter and John Davenant plus the Baptist Andrew Fuller.

- Universalism: There are many forms of this but all teach that there is no hell and all people eventually get to heaven.
- Roman Catholicism (a type of Semi-Pelagianism): man is not dead in sins but only sick. He needs to find prevenient grace in the Roman Church where salvation comes from the sacraments and priesthood.

Justification by faith

This is the action whereby God transfers the sin of the sinner to Christ, who pays for it by his blood, and then transfers the righteousness of Christ to the sinner. This enables the Christian to sit with Christ in the heavenlies and to stand before God declared legally righteous. It does not mean that a Christian is now holy in his life on Earth (see sanctification). Rm 3:24, 28, 4:25, 5:1, 9, 16, 18, 8:30, 33; Gal 2:16, 3:11.

The process of this transfer is called imputation (to ascribe to, to reckon as). Your guilt is imputed to Christ and the righteousness he gained by his perfect human obedience is imputed to you. Rm 4:6, 11, 23-24.

Justification is by faith alone. There are no works that a man can do to enable justification. Neither can any man aid Christ in securing it.

The faith that secures justification is the gift of God to the elect alone. It is not a faith that is worked up by men it is a gift from heaven (Eph 2:8). When it is exercised, it secures justification and is thus called 'saving faith'. Saving faith is not mere assent but the apprehension of grace. Anyone can believe in God; demons can believe in God; this is not saving faith. God regenerates men by the Spirit and then gives the gift of faith which, transforms the person receiving it and enables justification, which results in conversion.

Adoption

This is the corollary of justification. Along with being declared legally righteous, the elect person is also adopted into God's family as a son. This is not just sonship, but also heirship. Adoption secures an inheritance for the elect person, shared with Christ. Rm 8:15; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5.

As a result of adoption God is not only our justifier but also our Father. Adoption is the result of union with Christ, the Son of God, which occurs when the Spirit baptises us into Christ (1 Cor 12:13).

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'Expression of the Gospel message'. [Table.]
- Paul Fahy, 'The End-Time Erosion of Justification by Faith'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The means of justification'.
- Charles Hodge, 'The way of life'.
- RC Sproul, 'Faith alone'.
- RC Sproul, 'Willing to believe'.
- Abraham Booth, 'By God's grace alone'.
- John Owen, 'Life by his death'.
- Michael Horton, 'Putting amazing back into grace'.
- John MacArthur et. al., 'Justification by faith alone'.
- John Murray, 'The Atonement' (Tract).

Sanctification

This is another much disputed doctrine with many heresies surrounding it – beware. This is because there is a seeming paradox in Scripture; the Christian is sanctified but also is not yet sanctified.

There are two keys to understanding sanctification: understanding the tenses of sanctification and understanding the war between the old nature and the new nature..

The tenses of sanctification

- Past tense: as well as being justified, the believer is also definitively sanctified. He is washed clean and made fit to stand in heaven (1 Cor 6:11). Thus a believer can be called a saint even if he is not perfectly holy (as in the case of the Corinthians, 1 Cor 1:2). Without this we could not sit with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph 2:6).
- Future tense: at the Second Coming all believers are changed; they are perfectly sanctified in body, soul and spirit and given a new body. The death sentence on the old man is consummated. Phil 2:15; Col 1:22; 1 Thess 5:23; 1 Jn 3:2; Jude 1:24.
- Present tense: This is progressive sanctification. It is the gradual conquering of practical sin as the soul is progressively changed by the renewing of the will, obeying the conscience, and walking in the Spirit. This involves mortification (see next).

So, you have been sanctified in the heavenlies; you will be physically sanctified when given a new body at the return of Christ, but currently you are being progressively sanctified as you learn how to mortify sin and live in resurrection life.

The war between the old and new nature (mortification and resurrection life)

The development of the Christian in progressive sanctification involves the will. He must choose to flee sin, resist temptation, resist the Devil, conquer sin etc (1 Cor 6:18, 10:14; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; Jm 4:7). This is because there is a war in our bodies (Rm 7:23; Gal 5:17; Jm 4:1).

After conversion a believer is a new creature (2 Cor 5:17). His spirit and heart have been regenerated and he therefore has a new nature, which is in the likeness of Christ and is the home of the Spirit who has sealed him. This means that believers have two natures not one: an old, Adamic nature that is prone to sin and a new, heavenly nature that is holy. The believer faces choices every day which nature to put on. If he walks in the new man, abides in Christ, is filled with the Spirit – he will obey God’s law and be righteous. If he puts on the old nature he will immediately be corrupted and will sin and succumb to devilish temptation. When your soul puts on the old nature, it becomes flesh and is opposed to the Spirit.

Thus believers are commanded to put off the old man and put on the new man (Eph 4:22-24). To obey the commandments of Christ (Jn 15:10). To abide in Christ (Jn 15:4). To be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18). Be renewed in the spirit of your mind (Rm 12:2). Present your body as a living sacrifice (Rm 12:1) etc.

The basis of victory is due to the identification of the believer with Christ’s death and resurrection (Rm 6). But this death must be continued in faith, thus dying to the old man. Hence Jesus commanded us to take up our cross (i.e. die) and deny ourselves (Matt 10:38, 16:24; Mk 8:34, 10:21, Lk 9:23). This is mortification. As we accept that we have died to the old man by faith, we can then walk in resurrection life. This is just another way of saying put off the old nature and put on the new nature.

Conquering sin is not by a single act of faith in Romans 6 (which Higher Life teachers claim). Neither is it an experience of divine love after a spiritual crisis (as Wesleyan perfectionists claim). Nor is it by an emotional baptism in the Spirit mystical experience (as some Charismatics claim). This is the true discipline:

- Revelation of Rm 6 (Identification): First you must understand that God has given the sentence of death to the old man (but has not consummated it yet, the old man is not annihilated, as some claim, see Eph 4:22-24).⁹ You have also been given resurrection life in the new man. You can now choose between a life of death or a life of resurrection power.
- Faith in Rm 6: This revelation must be fully accepted and believed; otherwise you will simply try to patch up the old man with good works instead of living a resurrection life in Christ. This is fleshly legalism; trying to be holy in your own strength. You don't just read and understand Rm 6, you must apply it by faith in your life.
- War: the process so far does not give automatic victory over sin; it gives you the ability to conquer by the Spirit. What it does do is make you aware of the war in your members; that is, the war between the old nature and the new nature, between the flesh and the Spirit.
- Action: based on faith that God has enabled you to deactivate the old man, you now choose every day to put off the old nature and put on Christ, the new nature. This involves fleeing sin, resisting temptation, striving against inner desires, walking in the Spirit, abiding in Christ, putting on the armour of God, renewing your mind etc. As you fellowship with Jesus in the light you will not sin.
- Deal with failure immediately: if you sin and put on the old nature, you must immediately confess your sin to God, ask him to cleanse you by the blood of Christ, and repent, determining to follow Christ. Thus those who teach that Christians are never guilty are wrong (this is antinomianism, see next). When you sin, you are in the old nature which grows in corruption and is always guilty. You are only not guilty in Christ, in the new man.

RESOURCES

- Paul Fahy, 'A simple paper on sanctification'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Parallel Biblical Metaphors On Sanctification'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Reflections of sanctification'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The Salvation of the Soul'.
- Jerry Bridges, 'The pursuit of holiness'.
- Walter Marshall, 'Gospel mystery of sanctification'.
- JC Ryle, 'Holiness'.
- AW Pink, 'The doctrine of sanctification'.

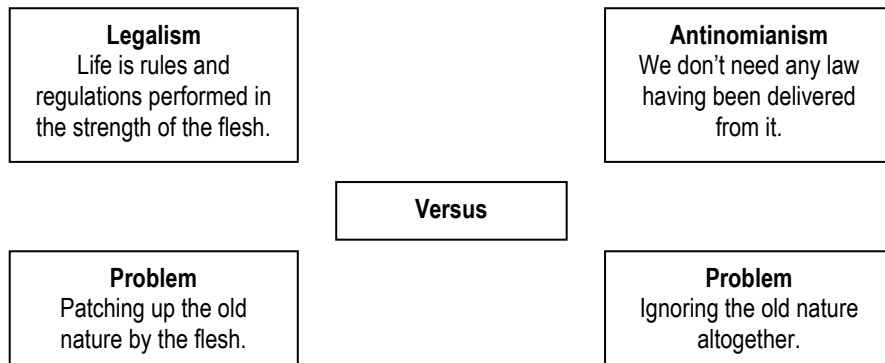
Many older books on sanctification fail to understand the teaching above and result in legalism; beware.

The place of the law of God

There is much confusion about this.

⁹ In Romans 6: the body of sin is said to be 'destroyed' (KJV) or 'done away with' (NKJV). Clearly, the body is not destroyed and sin is not yet eradicated. *Katergeo* actually means, made unemployed, made redundant, rendered idle, inactivated. God has given us the key to stop activating sin in our bodies.

Those who concentrate on written rules and regulations (whether Scriptural or not) become legalistic. This is not conducive to life in the Spirit. Those who deny the validity of the moral law are antinomians (see later).



The moral law came from God and was transmitted orally to Adam and then orally through generations until Moses. It is the will of God for man's behaviour. Are there moral absolutes for mankind? Yes – the moral law of God, which never changes and is never deleted.

When the Mosaic Law appeared (the Old Covenant) the moral law was subsumed into the Mosaic statutes in writing, chiefly as the Ten Commandments. It is paraphrased as,

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind". This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' Matt 22:37-40 [See also Mk 12:30-31; Lk 10:27; Rm 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jm 2:9.]

Although the Mosaic Law (Old Covenant) has been cancelled as a result of the cross, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus (Heb 8:13), the moral law is still a part of the New Covenant; hence the multiple commands of the Lord and his apostles and the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2).

Christians have died to the Mosaic Law, the Old Covenant, but must obey the moral law (do not kill, do not steal etc.). We are not under the Old Covenant but do keep the law in Christ. This is why the apostolic writings restate all the moral laws of the OT as commands to believers (e.g. Rm 13:8-9).

Errors

- **Perfectionism:** this is overemphasising legal definitive sanctification and ignoring future and progressive sanctification. An example is Wesleyan sinless perfection (after a crisis experience one gains perfect love and is fully sanctified and no longer sins). Another example is Higher Life teachings: after receiving revelation about Rm 6 teaching one conquers sin by faith and thus sin is suppressed. This denies mortification and the need to flee sin, strive against sin, resist temptation etc.
- **Morbid introspection:** this is a denial of grace and forgiveness. It involves constantly looking inwards at how awful you are and bewailing your sin.

- Antinomianism¹⁰: this is the teaching that the law is dead to Christians so they can live how they like without any guilt. It ignores the fact that Christians are commanded to obey the moral law, the Law of Christ, and that in the old nature you are always guilty. Those who teach that Christians are never guilty are liars and antinomians.¹¹
- Legalism: the opposite of antinomianism. It is living by a set of rules and regulations alone and striving in your flesh to keep them. It denies resurrection life in Christ.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'The believer's relationship to the law'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A really simple look at law'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A simple paper on law'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A very simple essay on God's law'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Further thoughts on law'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Law and the believer – just Scripture'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The law or the Holy Spirit'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The purpose of the law'. [Chart.]
- EF Kevan, 'The grace of law'.
- Robert C Beasley, 'The commandments of Christ'.

The church

Ekklesia

'Church' is the translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means 'a body of people called out'. It was used of the representative citizens in a Greek city-state that were called upon to make civic decisions.

Body of Christ

The whole church comprises the elect, the body of Christ on Earth and also the dead saints in heaven. Sometimes people divide this into: the visible church (Christians alive today); the invisible church (dead saints) and the local church (the church in a given area of local believers).

The body of Christ is the representative of Christ on Earth. Christ is the head, the church is his body (Eph 1:22-23). This is because the elect, the church, have been united with Christ in a mystical union by the Spirit.

This is a spiritual body; it is not any kind of earthly grouping. Thus 'Christian' denominations are not the body of Christ. No church can claim that it alone is the body of Christ (this is elitism). Any denomination that says that there is only salvation in that group is a liar and it is a cult. The body of Christ is all the elect.

The bride of Christ

The church is also called the bride of Christ (Rev 21:2, 9; Eph 5:25-27, 30-32). In this metaphor the church is seen as a gift given by the Father to the Son to be united with him.

The household of God

The church is God's household, God's family (Eph 2:19; Gal 6:10).

¹⁰ *Anti* (against) *nomos* (law).

¹¹ Note that Peter was stated to be guilty of condemnation in Gal 2:11 ('blamed' is 'condemned').

Children of God

The members of the church are seen as God's children, part of his family (1 Jn 3:1; Rm 8:14, 21, 9:26; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26, 4:6; Rev 21:7).

The people of God

The church is the people of God, a holy nation set apart for God on the earth (1 Pt 2:9). There is no other people of God, no other chosen people. Israel is no longer the chosen people having rejected Christ and received God's condemnation (Matt 21:43-44; 1 Thess 2:15). Judaism is the enemy of the Gospel (Rm 11:28).

There are only local churches meeting on Earth. The gathering of churches into a denomination controlled by a man is unbiblical.

The temple of God

There is no earthly temple necessary after the cross; God's temple is made of flesh and blood, the church (1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21).

Offices

The leadership of a local church is by a team of equal elders alone. There is no other leadership of any sort; neither is there any senior pastor. Elders have various names in the NT: elder (more Hebraic; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5), bishop or overseer¹² (more Greek; Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-2), pastor (i.e. shepherd; Eph 4:11), and leader or ruler (1 Tim 5:17; Heb 13:7, 17, 24).¹³

The church appoints deacons to help the elders with practical administration, such as dealing with money to distribute to the poor. However, these are not leaders; a deacon is not a spiritual office.

Meetings

All Biblical churches met in a house; no building was ever rented, purchased or built to gather a large company of people to worship God and fellowship (Acts 8:3; Rm 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phm 1:2).¹⁴ Jesus has a little flock (Lk 12:32). This is to enable the small number of people present to fellowship, share with each other and be a family of love. The centre of ministry is not a sermon but mutual edification (Rm 14:19, 15:2; 1 Cor 14:5, 12, 26; Eph 4:16, 29; 1 Thess 5:11). The Spirit gives various gifts to the elect to share in the body to edify saints (1 Cor 12). [Sermons were a means of reaching the lost in evangelism.]

The centre of Sunday meetings is the breaking of bread or the Lord's Supper. This must be performed every Sunday to be a memorial to the death of Christ (Acts 20:7). In the early church this was set in the context of a community meal called an *agape* (or love feast). The church met to fellowship over food and then gathered to fellowship in the Spirit (1 Cor 11:33).

When the church meets properly locally, angels gather over the meeting to celebrate God's decree (Eph 3:10).

It has to be said that today there are very few such churches that obey God in this matter.

¹² *Episkopos* is translated as 'bishop' and 'overseer'.

¹³ *Proistemi*: one who goes before, a guardian. *Hegeomai*: leader, chief spokesman.

¹⁴ The Hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus (Acts 19:9) was not a worshipping gathering but an evangelistic outreach for debate.

The church and the kingdom

Some Charismatics talk much about the kingdom of God, representing it as a place of power gifts exclusive to them. Dispensationalists and Christian Zionists talk about the kingdom as being a Jewish state ruling the earth in the millennium. For Catholics the kingdom is the papacy. Essentially the idea of the kingdom can be twisted by men to suit any purpose.

In reality the kingdom is the rule of Christ under God; it is the sphere of the reign of Christ. This reign is called both the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God; the phrases are used interchangeably (note Matt 19:23-24).

In pure terms the kingdom is Christ, the only true obedient servant of God. But it also includes all those things united in Christ, specifically the elect. The elect being united to Christ are transferred into the kingdom:

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Col 1:13

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Jn 3:3

When you are regenerated you become part of the kingdom of God.

But there is also a sense of the creation order being a servant of God and saved by the redemption of Christ from its bondage to sin.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. Rm 8:20-23

The liberty of being released from the evil of this world applies to the natural order as well as the elect. So the kingdom is wider than the church but includes the church of the elect.

The kingdom also includes the family. Thus a Christian family at home represents the kingdom, though this is not a church meeting. Raising children is bringing up covenant children in the kingdom.

So, the kingdom is the sovereign rule of God seen first in Christ, then in the church, then in the Christian family and finally in redeemed nature. This is what the Cherubim in heaven represent – the rule of God in material terms.

The kingdom is the sovereign government of God seen in the recipients of salvation.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'Some forgotten New Testament Truths about the Church'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A concise summary of crucial church principles'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A Biblical Challenge To Current Unbiblical Church Practices'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Descriptions of the Church'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Eldership – A spiritual office'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Essential principles of church leadership'.

- Paul Fahy, 'How Biblical Is the Modern Church?'. [Table.]
- Paul Fahy, 'The church in the house'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The Local Biblical Church Is A Family'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Why the local church is small'.

Eschatology

This word simply means the doctrines regarding the end times, what happens at the Final Judgment and just before the Coming of Christ.

There is much debate about this. The three basic types of approach are as follows:

- **Premillennialism:** This teaches that there is a 1,000 years golden age of Christianity on the Earth as it is now and that Christ will return before this period (hence 'pre-millennium') to rule over sinners. A few preachers taught this in early church history then it was dismissed by most for centuries. It regained some popularity in the 19th century and is now the dominant view. Dispensationalism is a type of Premillennialism though quite different from Historic Premillennialism. This form only emerged in heretical circumstances after 1830. Its chief features are a separation in God's purpose between Israel and the church, with the focus on Israel, and the division of history into multiple dispensations (administrations) where different things were centred on (e.g. law, grace).
- **Postmillennialism:** This also teaches that there is a golden age of Christianity but that Christ comes after this 1,000 years. A few people held this view in Puritan England, many also focused on a revival amongst Jews. Most held that the Gospel would elevate mankind slowly so that a golden age of morals would evolve. Today there are new forms of Postmillennialism. There is a dominionist, triumphalist view held by Charismatics, often featuring a global revival and rule of the earth by apostles. There is another form amongst certain Reformed churches called Theonomy or Reconstructionism. This teaches that the church will gradually reconstruct the world to be ruled by the Mosaic Law (Theonomy, 'God's Law').
- **Amillennialism:** this is the view held by most sound churches throughout history and also by the Roman Church. It claims that there is no millennium at all and the reference to a 1,000 years in Revelation 20 is symbolic for the Gospel Age. History after the cross is: preaching of the Gospel throughout the whole world; persecution of the church that increases over time, the falling away, the end time antichristian kingdom, followed immediately by the return of Christ – no millennium on Earth.

Without further ado, my position (and the position of the church for centuries) is Amillennialism. If there were any doctrine of a millennium it would have been taught by the apostles. Millennialism is common in cultic heretical groups throughout history, especially just before a century closes.

However, what is vital to know is this:

- Christ is coming back in glory to end the world as it stands today. This is called the Second Coming. This return is not in secret (some Dispensationalists teach that it is) but with the shout of an angel, the trumpet of God and the cracking up of the Earth. 1 Thess 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7; 2 Pt 3:10.
- Christ captures up all the saints alive on the Earth when he returns and meets them in the air with the saints that have already died. 1 Thess 4:17.
- Christ ushers in the Final Judgment (2 Pt 3:7; Jude 1:14-15). This requires the instant death of everyone alive at that time as the earth is destroyed (2 Thess 1:7-8). These are resurrected to face God in the judgment (Jn 5:28-29; 2 Tim 4:1; Heb 9:27; Rev 1:7).

Every person is required to give an account of their lives and every tiny detail is brought up by God and either condemned or approved (Matt 12:36; Rm 2:5-10, 14:12; 1 Pt 4:5). Sinners who do not know Christ will be punished with everlasting condemnation in hell along with the Devil and his demons (Matt 10:28). This is called the Lake of Fire in Revelation (Rev 20:15, 21:8). Saints are judged at the Tribunal Seat of Christ to be accounted for their works (2 Cor 5:10). Those that were faithful are rewarded with position of responsibility in the new world (1 Cor 3:14; 2 Jn 1:8; Rev 11:18, 22:12).

- God restores the Earth to its original beauty as in the Garden of Eden. Saints live there forever in glory with Christ at the centre. This is the meeting place of heaven (God's dwelling) and Earth. For saints all is bliss; there are no tears, no hunger, no sin, no want. 2 Pt 3:13; Rev 21:1, 4, 27.

Before the end

- Death: Dead sinners go to Hades, the place of departed spirits, to await judgment in terror (Lk 16:19-31; Rev 20:13). Dead saints go immediately to heaven to sit with Christ and worship him (Jn 14:3; Acts 7:59; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23). Christ himself comes to meet saints at their death (Jn 14:3, 18).
- The end times prior to the return of Christ is an evil time (2 Tim 3:1-4). It is filled with deception of all sorts (Matt 24:5, 11, 24). Many churches will fall away (apostatise) because of this deception (2 Thess 2:1-3). Evil will grow rampant and the times are called the 'great tribulation' as sin comes to fulness on the Earth (Matt 24:21).
- The chief features of the end times are: 1) the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world. 2) Massive deception, apostasy of the churches, a hidden testimony of the suffering elect. 3) Persecution of Christians worldwide. 4) The development of a global empire ruled by Satan through proxies. This is the demonstration of Antichrist who rules through a political empire and also an idolatrous religious worship system.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'A simple introduction to eschatology'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A Very Simple Summary of the Main Eschatological Positions'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A Concise and Very Simple Breakdown of the Different Views on the End'. [Flow charts.]
- Paul Fahy, 'Introduction to Eschatology'.
- L. Berkhof, 'Systematic Theology', p708 ff.
- W. Grier, 'The Momentous Event'.
- W. Hendriksen: 'Lectures on the last things'.

Doctrinal resources in general

- Paul Fahy, 'Scriptural Compendium of Doctrine'.
- Walter Elwell, 'The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology'.
- Everett A Harrison, 'Baker's theological dictionary'.
- 'Buck's theological dictionary'. [Available on line. Old fashioned but useful]

Elementary works

- Louis Berkhof, 'Summary of Christian doctrine'.
- EF Kevan, 'What the Scriptures teach'.
- RB Kuiper, 'The Bible tells us so'.

- John Calvin, 'Biblical Christianity'. [An abridgement of 'The Institutes of the Christian Religion'.]
- John Calvin, 'Truth for all time'. [An abridgement of the tract, 'A brief outline of the Christian Faith', itself being an abridgement of the first edition of his 'Institutes'.]
- Ron Hanko, 'Doctrine according to godliness'.

Intermediate works

- Louis Berkhof, 'Manual of Christian Doctrine'.
- RC Sproul, 'Essentials of the Christian faith'.
- Abraham Booth, 'The reign of grace'.
- Bruce Milne, 'Know the truth'.
- JI Packer, 'Concise Theology'.
- Robert P Lightner, 'Handbook of evangelical theology'.
- Millard Erickson, 'Introducing Christian doctrine'.
- AW Pink, 'Gleanings in the Godhead'.

Mature works

- Louis Berkhof (Presbyterian), 'Systematic Theology'.
- TC Hammond (Anglican), 'In understanding be men'.
- RL Reymond (Presbyterian), 'A new systematic theology of the Christian faith'.
- AA Hodge (Presbyterian), 'Outlines of theology'.
- JL Dagg (Baptist), 'Manual of Theology'.

Note: I recommend these dogmatics with caution. While the vast majority of what they write is excellent, there are some aspects that I disagree with. However, these are relatively minor overall.

Contemporary secular heresies

Explaining all the heresies would take a whole book, I can only point to some basic truths here regarding some key issues of the day.

World monotheistic religions

Islam

Islam means ‘submission’ and it is the mission of Muslims (jihad) to enforce Islam on the whole world by force if necessary. As such, in its initial expansion it waged war across the Middle East, Africa, India and Eastern Europe (at one point getting as far as Vienna). In 1400 years it killed over 700 million people, and enslaved even more. The core of Islam is the teaching and example of Muhammad the prophet, enshrined in the Qur’an and the Hadith. The one god of Islam is Allah, originally a pagan Arabic moon god. Muhammad mixed Arabic paganism with bits of Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism to produce his convoluted, contradictory system. There are many sub-divisions but the two chief groups are Sunnis (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Gulf States) and Shi’ites (e.g. Syria, Iran). These two groups are at war.

Judaism

There is a small minority of Jews today that obey the Torah (Books of Moses) but most Jews do not and follow the Babylonian Talmud, composed after the Fall of Jerusalem (70 AD) over many years. It was the product of the Pharisees the enemies of Jesus and comprises many volumes of foul, apostate teachings and morals. It constantly blasphemes Christ and advocates malice against Gentiles. The basis is the thesis that Jews are God’s divine people and Gentiles are sub-human animals like dogs to be killed or enslaved.

Sikhism

A monotheistic religion founded in the Punjab in the 15th century by Guru Nanak combining elements of Hinduism and Islam. It holds the Hindu concepts of karma and reincarnation but rejects the caste system, and has one sacred scripture, the Adi Granth. The tenth and last of a series of gurus (teachers), Gobind Singh, prescribed the outward forms (the five Ks) – long hair (to be covered by a turban) and uncut beard (*kesh*), comb (*kangha*), short sword (*kirpan*), steel bangle (*kara*), and short trousers for horse-riding (*kaccha*). There are about 18 million Sikhs in the Punjab. [Sic. Oxford Encyclopaedia.]

World polytheistic religions

Hinduism

Hinduism has 300 million gods, including Jesus, and adds new ones as it sees fit. It is highly complex and has several sub-divisions teaching very different things, some are polytheistic, some are monotheistic. It is very ancient. It generated the caste system (*varna*) whereby society is divided into four classes. If you are the lowest class (‘untouchables’) your destiny is poor. Its chief concepts are: 1) the law of *karma* (cause and effect); 2) *dharma*: the law undergirding existence, religious duty; 3) reincarnation; 4) *moshka*: liberation from reincarnation. The aim is to be absorbed into the universal soul. It is mostly prevalent in India.

Animism

This is a primitive form of religion where all creatures, objects, and natural phenomena are thought to have a living soul; thus the world is inhabited by spirits that are good or evil. E.g. Melanesian societies believed in a spirit called *mana*, which was capable of both good and evil. This led to a number of ways whereby the spirits may be propitiated, including taboos, magic charms, amulets, sacrifices and shamanistic activities. Although Native

American Indians generally (e.g. the Algonquin tribe) believed in a supreme spirit called Manitou, they also believed in numerous lesser gods, such as Trickster. However, different tribes had differing beliefs.

World non-theistic religions

These are religions that have no concept of a personal god.

Buddhism

This has no personal deity and emerged out of Hinduism by the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha). There are several sub-divisions but two chief ones. The foundational doctrines are the Four Noble Truths: 1) all existence is suffering; 2) the cause of suffering is desire; 3) freedom from suffering is nirvana; 4) and the means of attaining nirvana is prescribed in the 'eightfold path' that combines ethical conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom. Central to this religious path are the doctrine of 'no self' (*anatta*) and the practice of meditation. It is common in Asia and was once so in India.

Shinto

('The Way of the Spirits') A Japanese religion dating from prehistoric times, based on the worship of ancestors and nature-spirits inhabiting trees, rocks or dead warriors. Some forms worship a Sun-goddess, Amaterasu. Shinto lays emphasis on high standards of behaviour and on daily rituals, rather than on doctrine. There is no official Shinto scripture but there are oral traditions and myths that have been written down. After Confucianism had an influence, it introduced ancestor-worship and then later some Buddhist beliefs. During the 19th century state Shinto developed: the emperor came to be worshipped as a descendant of the Sun-goddess Amaterasu. State Shinto was not classed as a religion but as a code of conduct requiring loyalty and obedience to the divine emperor but this was rescinded by the emperor (under US pressure) in 1945. The older shrine Shinto replaced it.

Confucianism

Less of a religion and more a system of philosophical and ethical teachings founded by Confucius in the 6th century BC China and developed by Mencius (Meng-tzu) in the 4th century BC. The basic concepts are ethical: love for one's fellows, filial piety, decorum, virtue, and the ideal of the superior man. Texts, include the *I Ching* used for divination.

Taoism (Daoism)

This has a philosophical and a religious, or ritualistic, aspect. It emphasises inner contemplation, mystical forms of knowledge and spontaneous, non-active union with the nature of being (*Tao* or *Dao*). Philosophical Daoism developed from the 5th to the 3rd centuries BC in China and its tenets are found in the *Tao-Te-Ching (Daodejing)*. The ultimate reality is the *dao*, in which being and not-being, life and death, are merely aspects of the same reality. Through silence, stillness, and actionless action (*wu wei*) the Daoist aims to achieve unity with the *Dao*. Religious Daoism developed in the 3rd century AD incorporating Buddhist features and its own monastic system. Popular Daoism borrowed the concept of reincarnation from the Buddhists, but the final goal was not *nirvana* but becoming an immortal.

Jainism

A non-theistic religion founded in India in the 6th century bc by Vardhamana Mahavira as a reaction against the teachings of Brahminist Hinduism. Its central doctrine is non-injury to living creatures. Salvation is attained by perfection of the soul through successive lives. There are 3.6 million adherents mostly found in Gujarat and Maharashtra states. There are two major sects: the white-robed *Svetambaras* and the naked *Digambaras*. [Sic. Oxford Encyclopaedia.]

Occultism

There are three aspects to occultism ('hidden').

- Magic. This is the casting of spells to gain power over nature. There are many disciplines in achieving this using a variety of objects in a number of cults. People involved in magic are often called witches or shaman. A modern form of witchcraft is called Wicca that is becoming very popular with younger mystical people. Many forms of magic involve rituals performed at night, sometimes including sacrifices.
- Spiritualism ('spiritism' in America). This is communication with spirits. In many cases it involves supposedly communicating with dead people but these cannot make contact with Earth since they are in Hades (see Lk 16). A great deal of spiritualism is fraudulent, such as clairvoyancy. There are again many disciplines in making contact with spirit beings. These usually include a priest figure of some sort, called a shaman, witch, witch-doctor, and such like. Popular (and dangerous) is the use of a Ouija board.
- Divination. This is seeking knowledge of the future. There are again many avenues to do this such as augury, reading tea leaves, the I-Ching, astrology, numerology, Tarot card reading etc.

All occultism is a satanic deception used to get people more focused on antichristian ideas to their own detriment. Extreme forms of occult involve Satan-worship. The higher levels of Freemasonry involve Satan worship, but this is hidden from lower levels. All occultism is dangerous and many people involved in it end up mentally damaged or commit suicide.

New Age cults include many aspects of occultism in their various beliefs and rituals, often mixed with Eastern mysticism and Hinduism. Secret societies also include many aspects of occultism and even Satan worship through proxies (e.g. Freemasonry).

Occult groups include: Voodoo, Wicca, Santeria, Luciferianism, the Church of Satan etc.

Mysticism

This is the belief that a person can achieve unity with God by various personal disciplines. Mystical ideas, practices, and experiences are central to Buddhism, Hinduism and Daoism. Mysticism is also involved on the margins of some main religions such as Islam (Sufism), Judaism (Kabbalah) and Christianity (various sects).

Practices to engage with mysticism include: meditation, yoga, contemplative prayer, repetitive chanting, visualisation, altered states of conscience etc. In sects more radical methods include: hallucinatory drugs, alcohol, asceticism, and sexual activity.

In many cases there is a progression of discipline involved (rising a spiritual ladder to God), a spiritual crisis (dark night of the soul), passivity and subjectivity. In extreme cases individuals behave erratically, such as: falling over backward, screaming, shouting, making animal noises and such like.

In every case no one finds God inside them by personal discipline. Such subjectivity only finds the old nature.

Many occult sects use various forms of mysticism in their practices.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'Comparison of religions'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Islam: theology and history'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Islam in five minutes'.

- Paul Fahy, 'The Pharisees'.
- Paul Fahy, 'What Supporters of the Jewish Root Movement Need To Know About Dispensationalism and Judaism'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A Concise Evaluation of Freemasonry: It's Claims and History'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A Summary of Occult Inroads into the Charismatic Movement'.
- John Hinnells, 'A handbook of living religions'.

Christian contemporary heresies

Christian church sects

- Christadelphians. Deny that Jesus is God.
- Jehovah's Witnesses. Deny that Jesus is God. Many other heresies.
- Mormons. Deny that the Bible alone is God's word; multiple other heresies.
- Christian Science. Deny sin, death; mix occultism with Christianity.
- Seventh Day Adventists. False eschatology. Denial of Biblical atonement. Denial of hell. False prophetess in EG White.
- Children of God. Licentious cult. Multiple heresies.
- Oneness Pentecostals. Deny the Trinity.
- Unification Church (Moonies). Deny Christ as the only Messiah. Many heresies. Cultic.
- Unitarian Church. Denies the Trinity.

Christian church heresies

God

- Denial of the Trinity. E.g. Branhamism, Oneness Pentecostals, Children of God, Christian Science, Christadelphianism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unification Church etc.
- Modalism: God expresses himself in modes; denial of the personality of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Many historic forms. E.g. Oneness Pentecostalism, Swedenborgianism.
- Denial of God as pre-existent and eternal. E.g. Mormonism.
- Denial of God's personality. E.g. Christian Science, Unity School.

Jesus

- Denial that Jesus is God. E.g. Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, Christian Science.
- Denial of the two natures of Christ. Many historic forms. E.g. Children of God, Christadelphianism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Worldwide Church of God, Mormonism.

Holy Spirit

- Denial of the Holy Spirit as a person. E.g. Christian Science, Children of God, Jehovah's Witnesses.

Salvation

- Arminianism. E.g. Wesleyans, Pentecostals, Many Charismatics.
- Amyraldism E.g. New Calvinists, Four Point Calvinists.
- Meritorious works. E.g. Roman Catholicism. Swedenborgianism, Wesleyanism, Mormonism.
- Universalism. E.g. Unitarians, Wesleyanism, The Emerging Church, Mormonism.

Mixing of occultism with Christianity

- E.g. Swedenborgianism, Unity School, New Thought, Christian Science, Religious Science, Shakers, Pentecostalism, Charismatic Movement, Branhamism.

Mixing of mysticism with Christianity

- E.g. Swedenborgianism. Quakers, Charismatic Movement, New Calvinism.

Sanctification

- Antinomianism. E.g. Children of God, Many dubious revivalists, Wesleyan perfectionists, Wesleyan Camp Meetings. Some Charismatic churches and individuals, especially those that teach antinomianism (e.g. Terry Virgo, Gerald Coates). Some Pentecostal churches and individuals. Some Kansas City Prophets (e.g. Paul Cain, Bob Jones).
- Mystical sanctification. E.g. Sects influenced by Higher Life doctrines. Sects influenced by Postmodernism. Wesleyanism. Modern Pentecostalism. Holiness Movement.

Perfectionism (sinless perfection, instant sanctification)

- E.g. Wesleyanism. Methodism. The Holiness Movement. Some Higher Life sects. Some Quakers.

Eschatology

- Christ has already come. E.g. Christian Science. Jehovah's Witnesses.
- Another messiah is to come. E.g. Unification Church.
- Denial of hell. E. g. Children of God. Christian Science. Christadelphians. Unification Church (reincarnation proposed). Branhamism. Unitarians. Some Pentecostals (e.g. Charles Parham). The Emerging Church. Mormonism.
- Rejection of the Bible for something else or adding a new revelation to the Bible. E.g. Mormonism (*Book of Mormon / Pearl of Great Price / Doctrine and Covenants* plus the revelations of prophets). Christian Science (*Science & Health with a key to the Scriptures*). Seventh Day Adventists (works of 'prophet' EG White). Branhamism (accepting the pyramids and astrology as divine revelation). Children of God (accepting the words of Moses Dave Berg). Unification Church (words of Moon, especially in *Divine Principle*). Roman Catholics (the Bible plus the Apocrypha, church tradition, and church authorities).

The people of God

- Denial of election. E.g. many historic groups. Arminians, Wesleyans.
- Proposing a dichotomy between the church and Jews (or proposing that Jews are the 'special' people of God and that modern Israel is favoured by God). E.g. Dispensationalism. The Jewish Roots Movement, Messianic Christianity. Christian Zionism.

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'Christian cults and sects'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The divine focus'.
- Paul Fahy, 'The veil of Moses'. [Against Jewish Roots and Messianic Christianity.]
- Paul Fahy, 'A simple catechism on the Jewish Root error'.
- Paul Fahy, 'What Supporters of the Jewish Root Movement Need To Know About Dispensationalism and Judaism'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Jewish Root Theology – What Scripture Says'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Jewish Root Theology: An even simpler Biblical rebuttal'.

An outline of church history

This is a very simplified explanation of a very complex and huge subject.

The early church

The theologians of the early church are called the 'church fathers'. These were a number of men who fought against a variety of heresies that plagued the early church in the first 400 years. Most of these heresies denied the Trinity or denied the two natures of Christ, or even that Christ was God.

A number of councils were called representing churches from all over the Mediterranean, and even Britain, called ecumenical councils (i.e. councils representing all the different churches). These councils made formal decisions regarding the debated issues. Some of them resulted in certain creeds representing the council's view, such as the Nicene Creed. The early creeds (not all from councils) are very helpful and also include the Chalcedonian Creed, the Apostles Creed and the Athanasian Creed. Christians should read them.

In the mid-4th century a debate arose regarding salvation. The chief protagonists were Pelagius (a British Celtic monk) and Augustine of Hippo (not the later Augustine of Canterbury). This was the fight between Pelagianism (see earlier) and God's sovereignty in salvation represented by Augustine (later by Calvin).

Gradually church bishops assumed more and more power becoming monarchical bishops. Instead of a bishop being a local elder, as in the NT, bishops began to have authority over many churches in a diocese. The churches thus became more and more formal and authoritarian with a clergy / laity split. Key Christian centres (Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople) had bishops with greater than usual authority. Over time the bishop of Rome became known as the Pope (father) and became the supreme church authority. Eventually, the east and western churches separated over politics, control and doctrine. Separation from the Western Church came in the 4th century, originally through cultural and political factors, focused from the 5th century onwards on differences of doctrine and ritual, and took formal effect in 1054 when the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated each other.

In Britain the original church was the Celtic church and there are many legends of apostolic workers ministering in Britain in the first century. Nevertheless a genuine work did build up, starting in the Roman period, and the Celtic missionaries from Ireland, Iona and elsewhere had a huge effect on the Mediterranean world, evangelising as far as Italy.

Then the pope sent Augustine to convert rebellious Britain into the Roman Church. Gradually he influenced key chiefs and tribal kings until the Roman Church took over after the Synod of Whitby in 664, initially regarding the date of Easter and the type of tonsure (haircut) of monks. Augustine became the first archbishop of Canterbury.

The Dark Ages, 476 - 1066

The period between the end of the Roman Empire (476) in Britain and the Renaissance (14th-15th centuries) is called the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages (or medieval period). I will separate these out.

The Dark Ages are usually limited from 476 to the 8th century but I will extend it to the Norman invasion. This is when barbaric Germanic (Teutonic) tribes migrated to Britain and settled, driving the Celts westwards into Wales, Ireland and Cornwall. These tribes

attacked everywhere forming new kingdoms (e.g. Vandals in North Africa; Visigoths in Spain; Ostrogoths and Lombards in northern Italy; Franks in France and western Germany and the Angles, Saxons and Jutes in England).

It was a period of cultural and economic decline, In religion it was a period of superstition as people had no Bible (hence 'Dark Ages'). However, the period saw the foundation of Christian monasteries, which kept scholarship alive. The 7th and 8th centuries saw relative stability and during the 9th century witnessed the encouragement of learning at the courts of Charlemagne and Alfred the Great (who translated parts of the Bible and set up laws based on God's law).

Some of the Saxon kings were very pious and the first national king was Athelstan [895–939] king of England from 925–39. From Alfred onwards Britons had to fight the Viking Norsemen who gradually settled in East Anglia and the North East of England. Some of these Norsemen were converted to Christ.

The Middle Ages, 1066 - 1517

In 1066 Britain was invaded successfully by William the Conqueror; although a Duke of Normandy, his ancestral line was Norse. This was the last invasion of Britain to date. William bolstered up the existing Roman Catholicism, which would prevail until the Reformation.

The chief religious activity in this period is the development of scholasticism, headed up by Thomas Aquinas [1225–74]. He formulated the official Catholic tenets, authorised by Pope Leo XIII. The early church had used a Neo-Platonist framework to develop doctrinal theology but the scholastics centred upon Aristotelianism. Thus their works, in the main, and especially Aquinas, were a blending of the Bible and human reason founded upon Aristotle. This resulted in a very dry, dusty, rational, legalistic theology which involved much convoluted, obfuscation and contradiction. It is famous for debating how many angels could dance on the head of a pin.

The Reformation, 1517 – late 17th century

The Reformation began in Germany in 1517 when the monk Martin Luther nailed a list of 95 theses (doctrinal points) to the church door. This sparked an earthquake in the Roman church which progressed until there was a split in Europe between Protestantism (those protesting against the errors of the Roman Church) and Romanism.

After battles and wars eventually the Holy Roman Emperor established a peace assigning each territory its choice of religion. The chief centres of Protestantism were Britain, Germany, much of Switzerland, The Netherlands and Sweden. The initial Protestant religion was Lutheranism but this gradually altered as Britain developed its own form of Protestantism (Church of England). Germany and Sweden remained Lutheran but the Lutheranism of Martin Luther was compromised after his death and watered down. Reformed Presbyterianism (i.e. Calvinism) became strong in Switzerland, especially Geneva, The Netherlands and Britain (the Puritans).

Martin Luther was the hammer that broke open Romanism but the builder and systematiser of Protestantism was John Calvin, a Frenchman who chiefly ministered in Geneva. His Calvinism, centred upon the sovereignty of God and grace, led to principles of liberty and the Protestant work ethic in the West, which opened the way for dramatic economic and cultural development. While the world under the sway of Islam remained barbaric and primitive, the West prospered and grew. In the 1600s Calvinists set up a new nation in America.

The British church had many religious heroes, some unsung, some surprising (such as Anne Boleyn). Henry VIII had split from the Pope to suit his own agenda, especially dissolving all monasteries by 1540, but Elizabeth I sought to bring peace and toleration to the nation and establish the Anglican church after the terrible Roman persecutions initiated by Bloody Mary Tudor (who thankfully did not live long). The Puritans wanted further reforms but Elizabeth resisted going too far too fast. Edward VI, the boy king, was an excellent Christian but sadly died very young. It was left to James I to establish the church (despite some Roman sympathies) after the Hampton Court Conference, which led to the important Westminster Assembly and the KJV Bible (Authorised Bible).

Charles I tried to slowly reintroduce Romanism by stealth and despised Parliament. This led to the Civil War where the Puritan Christian Oliver Cromwell defeated the king and Parliament executed him. Cromwell then set up a Protectorate under his governorship (Lord Protector) and made Britain, weakened by Charles, great again with the strongest army and navy in the world.

After his death Charles II wasted the economy and tried to reintroduce Romanism. Thousands of Christian pastors were removed from their churches. In this period many believers fled to America (the Pilgrim Fathers) to set up a new Christian state. This became the 13 Colonies that later rebelled against George III in 1776–83.

When James II tried to actively restore Catholicism, Parliament intervened and forced his abdication and invited Dutch Protestant William III of Orange [1650–1702] (son of the Prince of Orange and Mary, daughter of Charles I) and Mary (daughter of James II) to be king and Queen in 1688, called 'the glorious revolution'. From this time forth the British monarchy is legally responsible to defend Protestantism in Britain and serve God according to the Bill of Rights and the Coronation Oath and must be submitted to law and Parliament.

The evangelical churches and missions, 18th – mid-19th centuries

After the Reformation there were a number of church and missionary movements, as well as a number of religious revivals.

The Reformation freed people from the trappings of superstition, mysticism and legalism and as a result the work of God prospered in multiple ways for the next few hundred years, even surviving the Enlightenment (which sought to dismiss God and elevate human reason).

Missions began abroad from the time of Calvin who supported missionaries in Brazil, but Protestant missionary activity began in earnest with the Baptist William Carey [1761-1834] who established missions in India and published the Bible in various Indian dialects after years of struggle. Hundreds of courageous, resilient men and women went into foreign lands as pioneer missionaries, often giving up their entire lives, with many also being killed. These include James Hudson Taylor of China [1832-1905], CT Studd of China and Africa [1862-1931], Mary Slessor of Calabar [West Africa, 1848-1915], John G Paton of the South Seas [New Hebrides, 1824-1907], Robert Morrison of China [1782-1834], Adoniram Judson of Burma [1788-1850] and many others. Often a pioneer missionary would open up an area for British colonial interests that always elevated the local primitive society (contrary to what people think today). For instance, former cannibals became peaceful villagers with access to medicines and modern tools.

Young converts used to read the thrilling biographies of such heroes of the faith, but sadly most modern churchgoers know little about them. I recommend them.

The Reformation was the first of series of revivals but some of these produced fraudulent emotionalism, mysticism and errors. However, the true revivals opened up vast new works for God. The biggest was the Great Awakening, which overtook both Britain and America. The chief evangelist of this period was the Calvinist George Whitefield [1714-1770] who produced converts by the thousands. In reality the Great Awakening was a series of revivals beginning in America between 1725 and 1760. The Great preachers in America included TJ Frelinghuysen, Gilbert Tennent, David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards and others as well as Whitefield.

In Britain Whitefield's Calvinistic preaching was contrasted by the itinerant ministry of John Wesley [1703–91] who formed a large company due to his rigorous methodical working. However, Wesley was an Arminian and the rise of Methodism led to friction and eventually apostasy. In Wales there were the Calvinistic Methodists who did great work producing many fine preachers and were called Methodists two years before Wesley's group. Leaders included Griffith Jones [1683-1761], Howel Harris, Daniel Rowland, Howell Davies and William Williams.

In this period some men built up large churches, such as John Gill followed by Charles Spurgeon in London. There were also Christians very involved in benevolent works, such as the abolition of slavery, prison reform, orphanages (e.g. George Muller and CH Spurgeon), schools (e.g. Robert Raikes) and many more.

But there were also worrying signs. Charles Finney developed emotional revivals in America and spawned a near Pelagian theology. A proto-Charismatic prophetic apostolic church opened up in London before collapsing in scandal (the Catholic Apostolic Church) and initiating Dispensationalism. After the false Cane Ridge revival in 1801, Methodists established many camp meetings where exuberant emotional behaviour and sin was rampant. Eventually this led to the Holiness Movement where the beginnings of Pentecostalism began to be seen.

In Britain Spurgeon's church fell into the 'Downgrade Movement' (liberalism) which broke his heart and he had to resign. This was a sign of the collapse of many churches into modernism and liberalism.

In Britain and America there was not just a focus on the prophetic (e.g in the Brethren movement) but also in society there was a fascination with the occult, which led to new churches mixing occultism with Christianity (e.g. New Thought, Christian Science). In general many new cults and sects appeared by the 1880s, e.g. Mormonism (1830), Jehovah's Witnesses (1879), and the Holiness Movement (mid 1800s).

The modern church, the late 19th century onwards

This period is largely the story of doctrinal collapse, the introduction of multiple errors, the proliferation of questionable Bibles and church denominations and the growth of sects and cults. It is a period of degeneration.

The Holiness Movement in America, already showing signs of occultism, spawned the Pentecostal Movement where occultism gained full sway, with its first expressions in the Topeka Revival of Charles Parham and the Azusa Street Church of William Seymour.

In Britain the 1904 Welsh Revival also spurred an interest in emotionalism and helped promote the Higher Life movement centred in Keswick, which had some good preachers but also many that centred in a mystical antinomianism. In general, liberalism and modernism took over many denominations and evolutionary theory affected many more. After 1881 multiple Bible versions began to appear, many being pretty appalling.

WWI and WWII smashed the utopian ideas of the 19th century and led to a malaise and demoralisation in the church. In Russia after 1917 the Russian Orthodox Church was decimated in brutal fashion by the Bolshevik Revolution led and financed by Jews; millions were killed but this rarely gets a mention in western histories. Evolutionary ideas began to permeate the churches and change doctrines and Bible interpretation (especially of Genesis 1-3). Multiple church movements appeared, such as Neo-Orthodoxy, New Evangelicalism, Faith-Healing, Theistic Evolution, Postmodernism, Emerging Church, New Calvinism and so on; all of which brought their own type of problems.

After 1960 the Charismatic Movement took the mystical occultism of Pentecostalism and began to infiltrate it into mainstream churches. Gradually, Charismatic churches became the majority and conservative churches collapsed. After 1975 the various strands of Heavy Shepherding (chiefly Restorationism in UK) sects began to prevail due to emotional worship meetings with rock bands and good administration as well as sheep-stealing projects. After 1985 the Signs and Wonders Movement (John Wimber) and Word Faith (Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn) took occultism even further and added eastern mysticism. This resulted in the demonic Toronto Blessing movement, the Pensacola Revival, the Kansas City Prophets, the Lakeland Revival and the New Apostolic Reformation.

An evangelistic tool appeared called the Alpha Course based on community ideas and was very successful in promoting superficial converts. It was based on Charismatic ideas and a mystical idea about conversion (get people to fall over backwards in a trance and they are saved!). The idea of an altered state of consciousness being acceptable prevailed. In fact this is merely old-fashioned mystical passivity and suggestibility, common in all occult religions. The Bible denies this, demanding self-control.

Today there is a huge variety of different church types, most of which are either fully apostate or are severely compromised.

Key church history dates

This is fairly arbitrary and very abridged, but it gives some idea of the time of key developments.

43	Emperor Claudius conquers Britain (41-54).
45-49	Mission of Barnabas and Paul, (Acts 13:1-14:28), to Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe then back to Syrian Antioch.
49-50	Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15).
50-53	Paul's second missionary journey began (Acts 15:40).
53-57	Paul's 3rd mission, (Acts 18:23-22:30), to Galatia, Phrygia, Corinth, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece, and Jerusalem.
64	First persecution of church by Nero. Peter crucified upside down at some point.
67-68	Paul martyred (beheaded by sword) on Ostia road.
70	Jerusalem (and temple) destroyed.
90	Jewish Synod of Jamnia established Hebrew canon.
93	John banished to Patmos.
312	Constantine converted. Constantine becomes Emperor in the West. Church sponsored by state.
325	First ecumenical council of Nicea.
367	Athanasius writes his Easter Letter listing the NT canon as it is today.
393	The canon was established by a council at Hippo along the lines suggested by Augustine.
411+	Augustine of Hippo entered into vehement conflict with Pelagius.
451	Fourth ecumenical council of Chalcedon. settles the two natures of christ. Creed of the council of Chalcedon composed.
476	The end of the Western Roman Empire.
563	Columba [520-97] established Iona missionary centre. Evangelises Scots.
601	Augustine (not of Hippo) became first Archbishop of Canterbury.

635	Aidan, a monk of Iona, established his see on the island of Lindisfarne ('Holy Isle').
664	Synod of Whitby settles papal authority in Britain over original Celtic customs.
731	Bede completes <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> .
871	Alfred the Great, a warrior and scholar, became king of the West Saxons.
988-989	Vladimir, Prince of Kiev (son of Svyatoslav), establishes Orthodox Church for Russia. Conversion of Russia..
1054	Separation between east and west church.
1095-1291	10 Crusades, first called by Pope Urban II at Council of Clermont, to reconquer the Holy Land from Islam.
1250	Dominican Thomas Aquinas (1225-72) integrates Aristotle into his theological system. completes <i>Summa Theologica</i> in 1272.
1380-82	<i>Wycliffe's Bible</i> ; NT in 1380, OT (with Nicholas of Hereford) in 1382, translation into Middle English.
c.1443	Invention of the moveable type printing press.
1478	The Spanish Inquisition established.
1517	Martin Luther nails <i>95 Theses</i> on Wittenberg Church door. Starts Reformation.
1522	Luther's <i>German NT</i> translation.
1536	Calvin publishes <i>The Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> (1st edition).
1526	<i>Tyndale's NT</i> published at Worms.
1553-1558	Queen Mary persecutes reformers: including John Rogers, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, Thomas Cranmer; 238 burned at the stake.
1559	John Knox begins the Reformation in Scotland.
1611	<i>Authorised Version</i> (KJV) published.
1619	Synod of Dort condemns Remonstrants (Arminians).
1620	Mayflower Pilgrims.
1643	Parliament calls assembly of Puritan leaders, who produce Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and Directory of Worship.
1660-1662	Persecution of English Puritans; results in many emigrating to New England.
1675	John Bunyan wrote <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i> in prison.
1688	'Glorious Revolution'; William III of Orange is invited to save England from Roman Catholicism, lands in England, James II flees to France.
1689	Convention Parliament issues Bill of Rights; establishes a constitutional monarchy in Britain; bars Roman Catholics from the throne. William III and Mary II become joint monarchs of England and Scotland (to 1694), Toleration Act grants freedom of worship to dissenters in England.
1730-1749	The Great Awakening begins in the American Colonies. In broad strokes, it lasted from 1725-1760 in a series of awakenings; earliest under TJ Frelinghuysen & Gilbert Tennent.
1738	John Wesley's supposed conversion. Beginnings of Methodist Movement.
1793	William Carey sails to India.
1801	Methodist Cane Ridge 'revival'; start of US frontier camp meetings. Many exhibited wild behaviour and sin.
1807	Slave trade abolished in England, due partly to William Wilberforce.
1827	Development of the Plymouth Brethren.
1854	Hudson Taylor starts China Inland Mission.
1854	CH Spurgeon becomes a pastor in New Park St Baptist Chapel, London.
1850	Holiness Movement developing in America.
1873	DL Moody (with Ira Sankey, singer) begin two year evangelistic tour of UK. Attendance at the London meetings was over 2.5 million. Promotion of Arminianism.
1875	Higher Life teachings centre in Keswick Conference annually.
Late 1800s	Liberalism and modernism plague the church. E.g. evolutionary theory, Higher Criticism (denigrates Biblical authority and inspiration), denial of miracles etc.
1901+	Topeka 'revival' under Charles Parham; first popularised tongue speaking (Agnes Ozman).
1904	The Welsh Revival. Good and bad effects.
1906-09	Azusa Street 'revival' initiates Pentecost revivalism. Led by William Seymour. Totally chaotic, fleshly, sinful meetings that even had witches and mediums present without control.
1910-1915	<i>The Fundamentals</i> are published to counter Modernism in USA.
1960	Charismatic Movement begins in America. Dennis and Rita Bennett. Pentecostalism in evangelical churches.
1970+	House church movement; an ad hoc explosion of UK house churches; some orthodox some not.
1986+	John Wimber brings Signs & Wonders conferences to Britain.
1994	By this point it becomes apparent that the Charismatic Movement has been a Trojan Horse to let all sorts of paganism, occultism and mysticism into the church.

Very simplified summary

<p>Early church Church fathers confront heresies. Formal church institutions develop. Clergy/laity split. Church councils.</p>	<p>Dark Ages Celtic church in Britain. Rise of Roman Church. Superstition, mysticism, monks, no Bible.</p>	<p>Medieval Church Scholasticism, legalism, rationalism. Rise of monasteries. Roman Church has political power.</p>	<p>Reformation Initiated by Luther, developed by Calvin. Publication of printed Bibles, commentaries, sermons. Rise of liberty and prosperity.</p>
<p>Evangelical expansion Rise of foreign missions. Development of large UK churches. Revivals. Social reforms.</p>	<p>Modern Age Degeneration. Rise of multiple sects, cults and heresies. Rise of paganism & occultism in society and the church. Mysticism. Publication of multiple Bible versions based on poor foundations. Licentiousness in society and the church. Ignorance of doctrine.</p>		

A few key people

- Irenaeus [c.130–c.200 AD]. Greek theologian. The author of *Against Heresies* (c.180), a detailed attack on Gnosticism.
- Perpetua [d. 203]: Carthaginian noblewoman and martyr. An example of faithfulness.
- Cappadocian¹⁵ Fathers: Basil the Great [c.330–79], Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa. Helped develop sound theology and especially the doctrine of the Trinity in the fight against Arianism.
- Augustine of Hippo [354–430 AD]: African theologian who defeated Pelagianism; wrote many doctrinal books, such as ‘*City of God*’.
- Columba [c.521–97]: Irish abbot and missionary. After founding several churches and monasteries, he established the important monastery at Iona in c.563 and converted the Picts to Christianity. He is one of the leading figures of the British Celtic missionary movement.
- Alfred the Great [849–99]: King of Wessex 871–99. His military resistance saved SW England from Viking occupation. He negotiated the treaty giving the Danelaw to the Norsemen (886). A great reformer, he reorganised his land-based garrisons, founded the English navy, issued a new code of laws, introduced administrative and financial changes, revived learning, produced some Bible book translations and promoted the use of English for literature and education.
- Edward the Confessor [c.1003–66] Son of Ethelred the Unready, king of England 1042–66. Famed for his piety, founded Westminster Abbey.
- Thomas Aquinas [1225–74]: Italian philosopher, theologian, and Dominican friar. Regarded as the greatest figure of scholasticism.
- John Wycliffe [c.1330–84]: English theologian, reformer and Oxford scholar; the precursor of the English Reformation. He instituted the first English translation of the complete Bible
- Jan Hus [1373–1415]: Bohemian reformer, pastor and martyr. A precursor of the Reformation.

¹⁵ A region in central Turkey.

- Martin Luther [1483–1546]: German theologian who initiated the Reformation and started Lutheranism. Produced the first printed vernacular translation of the Bible (in German).
- Thomas Cranmer [1489–1556]: a founding father of the English Protestant Church. Archbishop of Canterbury in 1532. During Edward VI's reign, he was responsible for liturgical reform including the First and Second English Prayer Books (1549 and 1552) and the Forty-Two Articles (1553). He was burned at the stake in Oxford for treason and heresy by Bloody Mary.
- Martin Bucer [1491-1551]: influential leader of the Reformation in Strasbourg.
- William Tyndale [c.1494–1536]: the great English Bible translator and Protestant martyr. Forced to permanently flee England in 1524. His translation of the New Testament (c.1525–26) was published in Germany. He then translated the Pentateuch (1530) and Jonah (1531), printed in Antwerp. Tyndale's translations formed the basis of the Authorised Version. In 1535 he was strangled and burnt at the stake in Antwerp.
- John Calvin [1509–64]: Frenchman who systematised the Reformation and wrote many doctrinal and pastoral works.
- John Foxe [1516-1587]: British Protestant historian and martyrologist. His 'Book of Martyrs' is inspiring reading and was once very popular.
- Oliver Cromwell [1599–1658]: English general and statesman. He was the driving force in the revolutionary opposition to Charles I in the English Civil War, and was the leader of the Parliamentary forces (Roundheads). He styled himself Lord Protector of the Commonwealth (1653–58) and refused Parliament's offer of the crown in 1657. His rule was notable for its Puritan reforms in the Church of England and for the establishment of the Commonwealth as the major Protestant power in the world.
- Thomas Goodwin [1600-1680]: Congregational Puritan pastor and theologian.
- John Owen [1616-1683]: Great Puritan pastor and theologian. Wrote extensive theological works.
- John Bunyan [1628–88]: English Puritan writer and pastor. Wrote: *Grace Abounding* (1666), *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678–84) an allegory recounting the spiritual journey of its hero Christian (the second most popular book after the Bible), and the allegory *The Holy War* (1682).
- John Gill [1697-1771]: High Calvinist Baptist pastor, theologian and commentator. Wrote extensive works including a systematic theology and a whole Bible commentary..
- Jonathan Edwards [1703-1758]: Great American philosopher and preacher. Key revival leader.
- George Whitefield [1714-1770]: Calvinistic British evangelist.
- David Brainerd [1718-1747]: American missionary to the Native Indians.
- Augustus Montague Toplady [1740–1778]: English pastor, theologian and hymn-writer. Wrote 'Rock of Ages'. Opponent of John Wesley.
- Elizabeth Fry [1780-1845]: British Quaker prison reformer.
- David Livingstone [1813–1873]: Scottish missionary and explorer. He first went to Bechuanaland [Botswana] as a missionary in 1841; on his extensive travels in the interior he discovered Lake Ngami (1849), the Zambezi River (1851), and the Victoria Falls (1855).
- James Hudson Taylor [1832-1905]: Great Yorkshire pioneer missionary to China, founder of the China Inland Mission.
- Charles Spurgeon [1834–1892]: Calvinistic British Baptist pastor who developed the largest British church in London. Writer of many books.

- Mary Slessor [1848-1915]: Scottish pioneer missionary to West Africa.
- David Martyn Lloyd-Jones [1899-1981]: Congregational Welsh pastor of Westminster Chapel after Campbell Morgan in 1943. Famed for his expository preaching.

Church standards

Standards are the official church documents to summarise a denomination's position on theology. Each generation formulates its standards according to its current needs. In the welter of many documents, some are very worthwhile and worth studying. I will merely mention a few.

Creeds

These are very short summaries of what we believe.

- The Nicene Creed.
- The Apostle's Creed.
- The Athanasian Creed.
- The Chalcedonian Creed.

Catechisms

Catechisms are theological summaries set in a question and answer format. They have always been used to help young Christians understand their faith until the last few decades.

- The Westminster Longer and Shorter Catechisms. [Presbyterian. The shorter was meant for young people and children but most modern adults would struggle with it.]
- The Heidelberg Catechism (Presbyterian).

Confessions of faith

These are longer works.

- The Westminster Confession (Presbyterian).
- The London Baptist Confession of 1644.
- The 1689 Baptist Confession.
- The Savoy Declaration (Congregational).
- The Belgic Confession (Presbyterian).
- The Canons of the Synod of Dort (The Presbyterian answer to the Arminians).
- The Irish Articles (Church of Ireland).
- The 39 Articles (Anglican).

Resources

- Paul Fahy, 'A new epitome of church history'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Was the Reformation good news?'
- Paul Fahy, 'Church history resources'.
- Paul Fahy, 'A Complete Catechism'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Relationships of the Key Reformed Confessions'.

Final resources

- Paul Fahy, 'Vital Books for the Serious Bible Student'.

- Paul Fahy, 'Essential Book List for Bible Students'.
- Paul Fahy, 'Straightforward Books of Teaching and Encouragement'.
- Paul Fahy – see my Question Cards, one A-5 page analysis of certain subjects, and my Truth Bombs, one A-4 page analysis for very succinct analysis of specific issues and doctrines.

Even if you are not academically inclined, I believe that every believer ought to have the following:

- A good concordance: either Strong's or Young's – or use of a good computer version.
- A good Bible dictionary.
- A decent Bible commentary in one volume. My favourite is Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, but Matthew Henry's is good (but more devotional) as is Matthew Poole's. John Trapp produced a fine concise volume as well. Barnes' Notes, available from many sources and online, is excellent but does not cover every Bible book.
- A good theological dictionary.
- A good church history dictionary.
- Some means of identifying the Hebrew and Greek texts; such as interlinear translations or computer programmes.
- A good Greek lexicon.

Even if you don't use these often, having access to them to solve problems when they arise is necessary. For people with little money there are cheap opportunities at second-hand bookstores for older copies. There are also free Bible study programmes and apps; I recommend E-Sword. Most of the items mentioned above (and many more) are found free in this programme.

Conclusion

This is a longer work than I anticipated but I believe it is still a very useful aid. It does not need to be read all in one go and can be used as the basis for study over a long period, especially with a more mature believer to help you.

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