



Thoughts on Christianity 1

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1 Thoughts on Life – How Might We Understand It?

Why do we have a universe when there needn't be anything? Why does time and space exist? In some way a positive decision must have been made to create the cosmic big bang. In Genesis, the source of that positive decision is called 'God'. That word 'God' has to be understood as the initial creator of everything and is therefore uncreated. But as aspects of God continue through created time and space, then the uncreated perhaps needs to be differentiated by being named as the Godhead.

In whatever way we try to understand why we have been created, we are struggling to express the inexpressible with human words and worldviews which have been formed within historic time. At best, many of these words are a metaphoric or symbolic expression of what we are feeling or thinking.

The cosmic big bang, like every other human or animal birth, was a seeming miracle. The changes that happened were so finely tuned to the millionth of a second that it enabled four principal scientific constants to guide the evolution of the universe, so that life as we know it now exists. If it had not been so, even by a millionth of a second, there would be no humankind. The Godhead, like science, is supremely rational.

Besides these constants, what we learn from quantum or sub-atomic physics is that the manner of the interaction of the ultimate units of physical reality (perhaps electrons) is, in part, unpredictable. This becomes the fifth 'constant'! Unpredictable freewill. This is entirely consonant with the Godhead being characterized anthropomorphically by what we call unconditional love. Love can only exist if it is given and received freely. It cannot be made to order as with the scientific constants. Although the personality of the Godhead reflects unconditional love, it cannot directly create love. We call this unconditional love of the Godhead 'God the Father' as portrayed in Luke's story of the prodigal son.

With any creative work, the creator inevitably puts much of himself into it; something of his skill or personality will show through; it will always be his creation. The same with the creation of the living universe; it is an incarnation of an aspect of the Godhead. The personality of the Godhead is embodied in the creation of the universe. Orthodoxy calls it 'God the Holy Spirit'. The Spirit effects continual creation, moving evolution forward within a scientific context that allows freewill (and therefore natural disasters, mosquitos, etc), which also causes God to suffer.

The cosmic big bang is an expression of the Godhead's unconditional love and continuing activity in producing something lovely, something divine. It is designed to produce, ultimately, self-consciousness in human beings. From our perspective we can only see that that 'something divine' is the potential outcome for the human being, insofar as we appear to be the present peak of evolution. This potential in the human being to realize perfection or divinity we have come to call 'God the Christ' (the Jewish Messiah or the

Quaker 'that of God in every human being'). This would be a consequence of the successful work of God the Holy Spirit which must be concerned to make all creation perfect and therefore divine.

If we look through this trinity of the Father, the Holy Spirit and the Christ, three aspects of the personality of the Godhead, we see that the Godhead appears to be continually replenishing or re-creating itself in a timespan way beyond our ability to comprehend. Somewhat like the human being which re-creates itself at the rate of ten million cells a second. Human self-consciousness has taken about 14 billion years to evolve.

The human being has evolved from a relationship between material elements (the physical) and that of God (the spiritual). Insofar as everything physical has a limited lifespan, we are essentially spiritual beings, though it takes most of us a lifetime to appreciate the implications of this and some never do. Essentially, the physical is immersed in the spiritual, but it is the physical sensory system which controls our lives. But when the physical expires, the spiritual sensory system takes over and continues life in a different plane of existence, as determined by the new sensory system. This new plane of existence is here now but our physical sensory system cannot access it, but almost touches it in near-death experiences.

The spiritual is the Holy Spirit of God whose work is enhanced or diminished by the human spirit (the personality) and it continues the journey of life after the physical has expired. From our human point of view this is called resurrection. All human beings are resurrected. The nature of the unconditional love of the Godhead is such that it cannot let us go. After physical death the journey of life continues in its search for wholeness or perfection, using as its base the life created in this seemingly physical universe.

2 Thoughts on To Be Or Not To Be – That Is The Question (Hamlet)

The verb 'to be' can be taken to mean 'to exist'. Therefore, 'I am' means 'I exist'. The noun that expresses the meaning of the verb 'to be' is 'being'. A being is something that exists. Theism is the belief in the existence of God. In other words, in terms of language, God is a being, even though it/he is spiritual. A being can be a physical being or a spiritual being and when we are talking about God we are talking about a spiritual being, something spiritual that exists.

Some religious faiths, including Christianity, are concerned to know why humankind and the universe exist. Whilst science seems to know a lot about **how** the universe and humankind came into being, it seems to be beyond our human comprehension to know **why** it has happened. Consequently, we posit the word 'God' as the answer to our unanswerable question.

Some people (atheists/nontheists) do not wish to posit God as the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists, and they start their thinking with the existence of the universe as a given fact. The English word 'atheist' dates from the sixteenth century and even by then the word 'God' was carrying an awful lot of baggage, so it's not surprising there were people who rejected him/it on account of that baggage. The continuing inadequate representation of God means that today we have an atheistic philosophy which rejects any concept of a divine Creator and Sustainer which is both beyond this world (transcendent) and in it (immanent). But then Christianity is quite happy to call it/him the divine Mystery, so one might almost ask what is the difference?

So, 'to be' is theism and its refinement panentheism, and 'not to be' is atheism and its refinement 'nontheism'. For Christianity, theism has Jesus of Nazareth as depicted in the Gospels as its mentor. What does atheism and nontheism have? Just the human being without the mentor? Sounds very risky.

I have described the concept of a God who is transcendent and therefore ultimately beyond our comprehension. But such a God would be useless to us except that he/it is also present in creation and therefore known to us. This aspect of God has been part of the experience of thousands of people over thousands of years. We marvel at how nature provides for our sustenance and how as a species we are always evolving. This God is both our Creator and Sustainer. The Spirit of this God is moving evolution onwards. As Moses felt impelled to worship this God by taking his sandals off because he realised that the very nature of the ground on which he was standing was in itself holy, so are we impelled to worship this God by seeking justice and peace for the human being and for the environment of which we are inseparably part. Everything is holy. The answer to our question is 'to be'.

3 Thoughts on The Sanctity Of Life?

I wrote down the heading, not previously knowing exactly what it would be, and then had to consider what the words meant. What is Life? I know what human physical life is, but do I know what spiritual afterlife is? There is so much discussion at the present time about whether there is a right to terminate one's life that one needs to be clear about what words mean.

Can the Gospels enlighten us? They record activities and sayings ascribed to Jesus of Nazareth which cumulatively appear to make this man perfect in the sense that he lived the life that God wishes us to live. Whether he did all those things as described or whether he said all those words is irrelevant. The important thing, we Christians say, is what is described is the life God wants us to live.

In the early centuries of the Common Era because of that life so described, the person Jesus was doctrinally given the title Son of God, the words conveying a theological point, not a biological one. There was little or no understanding in those days of human evolution or the possibility of life continuing after physical death, and the divinity of Jesus came to be seen as a consequence of his apparent physical resurrection after his unjust execution. Now we have a much greater sense that when physical life ceases, a form of spiritual life may continue; the human sensory system ceases but the spiritual sensory system embracing our personality continues, albeit in a different plane of existence.

It may be that Christianity has placed too much emphasis on the claimed uniqueness of the bodily resurrection of the human Jesus of Nazareth as the spiritual Jesus the Christ. Our birth into this human existence is an equally defining moment, crossing the threshold which allows us to respond to God's call in this physical life. Our death is another threshold allowing us to respond anew in another life which we describe as spiritual.

Why is the established church so unwilling to allow us to cross that next threshold when our physical life has become pointless? I understand the need to protect the vulnerable, but that is primarily an ethical point we all accept, not a theological one. Why can we not continue our journey when we are sure our physical condition means we have nothing left to offer in this life and we are ready to give service in the next life?

4 Thoughts on Why?

Why is there something when there need be nothing? Why does the universe exist when nothing need exist? Perhaps this is the ultimate question. Theists say it proves that there is a purpose behind creation otherwise creation would not happen. In attempting to elaborate on that purpose they have conceived the word God as creator and as the purpose which moves creation.

Atheists and non-theists deny purpose and God, and claim that there can be nothing beyond this physical universe that could have caused it. It was simply an involuntary act of self-creation. But I must take care not to put words into the mouths of atheists and non-theists as I do not understand their miracle of self-creation without a purpose.

There are many strands of Buddhism and Taoism, probably the majority, which do not concern themselves directly with a creator and creation because their emphasis is on how to live life within this existence, taking this existence as a given factor. We are now up against the problem of what words mean in different contexts. If we say that Buddhism is a non-theistic faith, we are defining it using words that are meaningful to another faith. It is a wrong road to follow.

It could equally be said that Christianity, when we peel away the theological encrustations of time, is also only, or at least primarily, concerned with how we live our lives. Certainly, Quakers have homed in very strongly on that aspect. So why do we bother about whether we are theists or non-theists? Why make an issue of it when it is, at root, such an artificial division?

Almost definitely the problem is those theological encrustations of time. Some of us are short-sighted by them whilst others can look through them and experience the spiritual Creator that Moses experienced when that creator God said to him 'Moses, take off your sandals, for this is holy ground'. For creation to exist there must have been an initial purpose; all of creation is holy; everyone and everything is capable of experiencing within itself, limited only by its degree of self-consciousness, the life force which the concept of God attempts to give expression to.

Let's forget about the theological terms theism and nontheism and get on with living our lives by following the promptings of love and truth in our souls. We can change the world by changing the worlds of our immediate experience, those tiny microcosms of the universe of which we are the centre. The gift of life has purpose. Our individual lives have purpose.

5 Thoughts on Early Jewish-Christian Relations

The dates of the Second Temple Period are from about 530 BCE (the return from Babylonian exile and the building of the Second Temple) to 70 CE (the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans). It is unlikely that the terms 'Rabbi' (Hebrew) and 'Rabboni' (Aramaic) were much in use before 70 CE when the Sadducean Order came to an end with the destruction of the Temple. After that catastrophe the movement to create the Hebrew canon was, of necessity, begun.

In 325 BCE Alexander the Great conquered the area and the process of Hellenisation was initiated. Rome was built on Greek culture and nothing changed after Pompey conquered for Rome in 63 BCE.

The upper classes, including the Romans, spoke Greek (Koiné); the locals spoke Aramaic. There is no linguistic relationship between the two languages. Aramaic represents an agrarian worldview and Greek has a more philosophical (Platonic) background. Hebrew was the religious language in which the Jewish scrolls were written. Circa 250 BCE the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) was translated from the Hebrew into Greek (the Septuagint) by the Jewish School in Alexandria (Egypt). Given the totally different origin of the languages, it must have been a tough job! The Greeks worshipped human reason; the Jews lived by divine revelation. Many important words in religious Hebrew would have no direct equivalent in Greek. The Septuagint introduced Greek philosophical ideas into Hebrew/Christian thought. It was the standard text for the Mediterranean Diaspora, rather than the Hebrew scrolls, and the Temple at Jerusalem did not carry the same overriding significance as it did for the Palestinian Jews. In the Diaspora, synagogues took the place of the Temple.

Paul was Greek-speaking and worked from the Septuagint (in Greek) and not the Hebrew scrolls (in Hebrew). For him the human body was distasteful, and the human being enmeshed in sinfulness was beyond self-redemption. He was obsessed with the resurrected Jesus as Christ Jesus whose sacrifice alone made atonement (forgiveness from those sins) possible. Hebraic Judaism was holistic and as the human body was created by God (who emphasised many times that creation was good), they had no problem with it. Also, they had two routes to forgiveness: The tax collector Zacchaeus' penalty for misdemeanour against individuals was as prescribed in Hebrew society; but when the misdemeanour is against society as a whole, only God could forgive, and this could only happen at the time of Yom Kippur commemorating when Israel was forgiven for worshipping the Golden Calf. That Jesus should forgive sins was blasphemous in Judaistic thought.

Unfortunately, Christianity left its Hebrew roots and in the first five centuries its expression was moulded by the Greek philosophical thought of the Schools of the Diaspora. This is reflected by the creeds with their philosophic interpretation of Jesus the Christ and relative lack of concern for the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The God of Christianity becomes so

remote as to require a Son of God to represent him on earth and Jesus of Nazareth gets anointed as Jesus the Christ.

Greek philosophical thought required salvation from this sinful world and Jesus Christ became the agent of salvation by his atoning death. Hebrew thought, however, had no problem with this material world because God had declared it good. Jesus would never have countenanced the orthodox theory of his atoning death somehow satisfying God's purity. It was Paul's work.

Another Pauline innovation was what is now known as the Eucharist or Holy Communion. Prior to the Passover meal Jews would take bread and wine and give thanksgiving for the food to be received. Paul converted this into receiving the body and blood of Christ Jesus.

The Pharisees attempted to keep Judaism relevant by using midrash to interpret the Torah in terms of their present day. Their name means 'the separated people' because they separated themselves from the general population by their strict adherence to fulfilling the Law and from the conservative Sadducean rulers of the Temple who stuck to the literalism of the Torah (the Law). They get a bad press in Matthew because Matthew wanted to break any significant links with institutional Judaism. He believed that Christianity and Judaism were two separate offspring from the Hebrew parent (Luke thought quite differently).

Whether Jesus's lifetime reflected a quiet time in Judeo-Roman relations probably depends on whose doctoral thesis you last read. I wonder what happened to Joseph? Did he get killed in the civil war following the death of Herod, or was he crucified after one of the many skirmishes with the Romans or did he just catch pneumonia? Matthew made him go to Egypt after Jesus' birth to escape the turmoil arising from Herod's death, but when monotheistic holiness comes up against blasphemy in the guise of the worship of Caesar, there seems to have been plenty of turmoil in occupied Palestine.

6 Thoughts on Evil – Why Does It Exist?

What does the word 'evil' mean? As an adjective it is a descriptive word for something that is morally wrong, and as a noun it would mean a wickedness. An example of wickedness is the human perversion which indulges in behaviour for personal gratification at the expense of others. Also, there is that seeming wickedness of the existence of human suffering which is wholly undeserved in that, for example, a virus or parasite may be contracted which can devastate the human body.

As Christian orthodoxy likes to refer to God as omnipotent (holding absolute power) and omniscient (having all knowledge), why does he allow the deliberate or gratuitous suffering that can arise from evil to happen? The answer is 'he doesn't' because he's not involved. Omnipotence refers to the creation of time 'in the beginning' and to the outcome of final things when time ceases to exist; at both times God is in ultimate control. Between times, he supports the evolution of the universe he has created and if it is going to be in his image it must choose unconditional love as its evolutionary path. He cannot intervene directly in any situation because that would deny the opportunity for the free choice of unconditional love.

Because God's actions are understood to be those emanating from unconditional love, he has to forego any sense of direct control over his creation. Theologically this is known as the self-emptying of God. For that which is created, it means that at all times everything (animal, vegetable, mineral) has to make a conscious choice over what to do next. It's easier to understand this conscious choice as referring to our human condition, but we know from sub-atomic science that every electron (the present known base unit for all materiality) is engaged in making choices. If unconditional love is to come into existence it can only be as a result of free choice.

The problem with free choice is that we can and do make wrong choices, so it's the human being that messes up this planet, not God. God's provisioning has provided evolution with a living spirit (the Holy Spirit of God) which is always endeavouring to mend what is wrong (caused by human selfishness) and to guide what has apparently gone astray (the virus-carrying insect or parasite) by a process of synthesis, namely, that which is on the wrong lines (thesis) struggles with that which is on the present right lines (antithesis) to produce the next outcome (synthesis). This outcome cannot yet provide the perfect answer because everything around it is still in the evolutionary and therefore imperfect state, but it can create the next step towards that perfect answer.

7 Thoughts on Jesus of Nazareth (the human being) and Jesus the Christ (the spiritual being)

In simple terms Jesus of Nazareth was an itinerant Aramaic-speaking Galilean preacher who was concerned with reforming the Judaism of his time. Jesus the Christ is a product of the Greek (Platonic) worldview. He is spiritual and belongs with God. The difference between the two is so stark that Jesus of Nazareth would not recognize the concept of Jesus the Christ as being of himself. The Aramaic and Greek worldviews are as different as chalk and cheese.

Orthodox Christianity with its credal statements is based upon the spiritual Jesus the Christ identified as the previously human Jesus of Nazareth, but there is a strong groundswell of opinion that the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth give us the essential guidance on how we should be living this life whilst the creeds are simply non-essential and problematic academic statements of belief set in the stone of a previous culture.

Around 28 CE John the Baptist and Jesus appeared on the scene in Galilee. Both preached the imminence of the Kingdom of God. Jesus' message was to interpret the Mosaic Law with the eyes of unconditional love. Unconditionality and the imminence of the coming Kingdom meant there was no time for conditions. The lost sheep of Israel must be saved; the poor, the outcasts, the sinners must be brought back into the fold. There was no place for enmity, all must work together and be loved equally.

John suffered early death at the hands of the political authorities whilst Jesus continued his mission to the Jewish people. He travelled with a group of men disciples and women support workers. Clearly a charismatic person, he was able to heal people's ailments quite readily, but he didn't want that to overshadow his message that the Kingdom of God was at hand and that right living (righteousness) was the essential requirement. He was often at odds with those Pharisees (the pure people) who were so busy practising the minutiae of the Mosaic Law that they had lost sight of its spirit. He was always at odds with the Sadducees who governed the Temple at Jerusalem and who would not move from a literal understanding of the Law as written in the Torah, the Five Books of Moses.

At the time of the annual Passover celebrations in Jerusalem commemorating the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, and a garrison of Roman soldiers would come up from their headquarters on the coast at Caesarea in case there were any nationalistic disturbances to put down. Escape from Egypt and escape from Roman occupation were thoughts that went hand-in-hand. For the Sadducees Jesus was a troublemaker and they had him arrested and handed over to the Romans as a political prisoner. He was found guilty and put to death in the Roman manner by being nailed to a wooden stake (crucifixion).

Jesus's disciples were astonished that after his death they were still aware of his presence which experience they could only describe literally as if he were moving among them. Jesus didn't 'appear' to his enemies; only to those who had known him. These were spiritual appearances and the resurrection story came to be formed around them but, as the story was many times re-told, the resurrection became literally a physical raising after a physical death – a divine miracle.

Jesus the Christ, or Jesus of Nazareth in spiritual form, now becomes the subject of the story. Paul of Tarsus, a well-educated Jewish Pharisee with Roman citizenship, became convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-awaited Jewish Messiah, that his crucifixion effected reconciliation between humankind and God, and his resurrection indicated the way to that reconciliation (salvation). Jesus had been God's principal agent. Paul had little luck in convincing the Jews and he took his message to the Gentiles (non-Jews) mainly in Asia Minor and Greece between c40 and c65CE. The Gospel story told by John (c90-c100CE) also advanced the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was of divine origin despite the fact that Jesus had never claimed to be the Son of God.

The overall effect of working in Greek among Greek-speaking people is that Jesus's Aramaic life began to be interpreted from a Greek or Platonic worldview. This worldview said that there may be an ultimate reality (equivalent to God), but life was ruled by many intermediate gods who each controlled an aspect of human life and who lived human lives. Jesus of Nazareth, on account of his supposedly physical resurrection, was not only put at the head of these intermediate gods; he was placed at God's right hand (Greek concept of The Word) as Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Messiah.

During the next two hundred years many points of view concerning Jesus's nature were debated, but because the Roman Emperor Constantine, himself a Christian, wanted only one point of view for his Empire, he convened and chaired the first Christian ecumenical conference at Nicaea near Constantinople in 325 CE to determine the issue. There was much wrangling between the assembled bishops until Constantine decreed that those who believed that Jesus was of divine origin were correct. Jesus was now God and later, in 381 CE, it was decreed that anybody who disagreed with that understanding could be put to death.

Whether the statements about Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke are absolutely factually accurate is irrelevant. What they do is paint a picture of how a human being inspired by a benign God should live and that picture remains generally relevant to the 21st century. How the Greek-speaking philosophers cum theologians of the first five centuries interpreted Jesus the Christ is academically interesting but irrelevant to living in the 21st century. Orthodox Christianity needs to set its culturally-imprisoned credal millstones adrift if it is to remain relevant in the 21st century.

8 Thoughts on Remaking The Mould - Religion

Consciousness has always existed, even before the human being appeared. It must have been innate in what we understand as the original act of creation, the big bang, and also is present in the continuing evolution of creation, in that electrons are always looking for new partners. Quantum science tells us that everything is fluid and changing, conscious and creative. Maybe consciousness and creativity have the same root in an aware and creative Mind (God) that gives birth to everything.

From the beginning of humankind the development of social life would have been natural and would have created its own culture. From within that culture they would have attempted to grapple with the inevitable question of 'From where have we come?' But just as their culture would have varied according to their geographical situation, so their founding stories would have arisen out of those geographical situations. If life is dominated by the sea, then your gods would have lived under the sea; and if you live within a land mass, then your gods would either have lived on the mountain tops or somewhere beyond the sky. In these founding stories are the origins of religions.

We present-day Christians would like to think of ourselves as sophisticated, but our religions all carry remnants of the founding stories. These remnants have to be understood as myths: fictional stories which may reflect important truths about ourselves, and distinguishing between what is fact and what is fiction, and what is an amalgam of the two, can cause enormous problems. Varied interpretations lead to hard divisions, and in Christianity we have so many sub-divisions that to call anything 'orthodox' is merely to state what you or your group regard as correct religion.

Unfortunately, some groups, if not all, have historically regarded their religion as the only true religion and wars have been fought in the name of their god. Both astronomy and common sense tell us that there is only room for one god (the godhead), so Christian society is now generally moving on beyond ecumenical relations with other parts of Christianity to working with other faiths on common causes – a growing realisation that everything is interdependent.

But what about the atheistic wing of humanism which seems to exist in order to ridicule religion? Why does it not just propagate the founding stories appropriate to the humanistic outlook rather than use resources on denying religions' founding stories? No matter whose founding stories they are, they are only part of the ingredients that form any particular mould, and the mould needs to be reformed every so often to reflect the evolution or deepening of consciousness. No mould is sacrosanct; every mould reflects only part of the truth because ultimate truth is beyond us. There doesn't have to be any insuperable gulf between the many Christian and other faiths' orthodoxies and the many varieties of humanism. Each human being links socially into whatever is akin to their nature and we should then all get on with making this terrestrial life worth living.

9 Thoughts on Remaking the Mould - God

Why does the universe exist when nothing need exist? Something must have created it. There would have been no point in creating it unless it was for a purpose. So this universe in which planet earth is situated has been created for a purpose. What is the something that created the universe? We do not know. Because we are part of that creation it is beyond our comprehension to fathom it out. It is a mystery. But in the English language we have created the word 'God' to represent this mystery.

God created the universe for a purpose. Because God is a creative God it is inevitable that some aspect of her/his/its character is reflected in this creation. This means we can establish some aspects of God's character from examining the nature and history of the universe. The universe is about 13.8 billion years old and it is forever evolving in order to achieve its purpose. We know that this evolution is a consequence of the most incredible micro-managing and particularly of the first seconds of the universe's existence. If the necessary reactions had not occurred at that first point of creation at a millionth of a second's timing then evolution could not have proceeded the way it has and indeed may not have proceeded at all. So God the creator is very rational.

After a very long time it required some of the stars which had been formed to complete their life cycle and die (explode) so that new chemical elements necessary for human life, and second-generation stars like our sun, could be formed. It was about 4.5 billion years ago that planet earth, an utterly microscopic unit in the universe, was formed in this way. We human beings have now evolved on planet earth and naturally believe ourselves to be the present peak of purposeful evolution. Our scientific designation of ourselves is that we are self-conscious beings existing most probably in a sea of consciousness (the universe). But institutional science can tell us little more until it breaches its self-imposed limitation of enquiring only into physical matters.

How do we make sense of this? Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (Genesis) and the concept of mankind's Fall from perfection on account of original sin (Augustine c400-430) are clearly not part of this scientific story. It was only very gradually from the sixteenth century onwards, the beginning of the period of the Enlightenment, that the growth of scientific knowledge enabled us to recognize these stories as the myths or perhaps misinterpretations that they are.

As this planet provides everything for human consciousness to flourish, so our creative God is obviously a benign God. Also, our human consciousness has come to identify unconditional, self-giving love as the greatest human virtue, so our creator must also have that characteristic. Yes, of course, we describe aspects of God's character in human terms because we have no other experience from which to express ourselves. This unconditional love is that of God which is guiding evolution in every part of creation, including the human being. Quakers call it the Inner Light; orthodox Christians call it the Holy Spirit of God.

10 Thoughts on Remaking The Mould - Jesus Christ

The first thing that is necessary is to distinguish between Jesus of Nazareth, the human being, and Jesus the Christ, the spiritual being. Recognizing this distinction is the only way of resolving the otherwise now scientifically contradictory credal statement of the fourth ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451CE, near Istanbul) that the one person of Jesus Christ comprised two completely separate natures, the human and the divine. This statement was necessary if Jesus was to be God incarnate which was the conclusion many philosopher-theologians were arriving at more than 400 years after the crucifixion of Jesus.

Much closer to that time of crucifixion, say between 40 and 65CE, Paul of Tarsus, a Jewish pharisee, came to the conclusion that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah (or Christ, in Greek) foreseen by the Hebrew bible: that is a human being anointed or inspired by God to lead the Hebrew people to freedom. Paul spoke Greek and used Christ as a title, i.e. Christ Jesus. Those Greek-speaking philosopher-theologians of the Jewish diaspora who were convinced of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth changed the title into a name, i.e. Jesus Christ.

But the ancient Greek understanding of reality which allowed them to conceive a human being as God incarnate was based on a three-decker universe and with planet earth as the centre point of everything that existed. That worldview has long disappeared so we must re-express what they were trying to say; the mould must be remade.

The character and life of Jesus of Nazareth as portrayed in the Gospels is of a person in whom the physical and the spiritual blend completely (perfectly). Here was the human being that God wants us all to be. After his crucifixion the power of his remembrance was so strong that for those who were aware of it, it could only be expressed in physical terms as if he were still present. The point to remember is that these descriptions were only expressed by some of those who had known him. There were no independent witnesses of this spiritual body walking around (and even eating), but the conviction of subsequent generations was that this was a physical resurrection meaning that Jesus must have been God incarnate. Whilst this may have been an astonishing conclusion it was something that the ancient world could accept because it was quite plausible within their worldview. Today that evidence does not lead us to such a remarkable conclusion, but simply assures us that there is spiritual life after physical death. When we die, all human beings move into the same new spiritual existence. Common sense says we all go the same way.

Jesus the Christ is a spiritual being forever present with the human person but recognized only by those who care to recognize it. It is only different from that of God in every person (the Holy Spirit of God) insofar as it reminds us primarily of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. In human terms it makes real the people we are called to be in order to work with God in achieving his purpose.

11 Thoughts on Remaking The Mould - The Holy Spirit

Some theologians like to make a distinction between the spirit of God or the spirit of Jesus and the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit (spirit/Spirit). This is to express the co-equality of the three persons of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). In orthodox terms each is God in itself and not dependent on the other. Also, from the late sixteenth-century, and perhaps earlier, the English term Holy Ghost was used as the third person of the Trinity to make the same distinction. But by the twentieth-century the English understanding of 'ghost' had become 'the spirit of a dead person' and the term Holy Ghost has largely been dropped.

But theological niceties are not my concern. It is better to look at things existentially, how they actually are, and proceed from there. How they actually are is a creative God creating the universe and leaving his imprint in it in order that his purpose might be achieved. God's imprint is called the Holy Spirit and it is present in everything. Not only human beings, animals and plant forms which obviously have growing life in them, but earth and rocks as well. Quantum science tells us that all matter, including seemingly solid matter (rocks, timber), is actually fluid; the electrons comprising matter are moving and communicating (growing/living) all the time. This 'life force' is an aspect of the Holy Spirit whereby it is causing change or evolution.

Traditional science would deny the existence of any such force called the Holy Spirit, but many individual scientists have no difficulty in recognizing it. They see science and religion as complementary; different sides of the same coin, with one side (science) explaining **how** things happen and the other side (religion) explaining **why** things happen. Of course, science hasn't always existed, but the Holy Spirit, or God's imprint on the universe, has been recognized from early times. In the oral traditions written down in Genesis on the return from the Babylonian captivity (c 530 BCE) "the spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water" and then gave its commands (God spoke) and light, the heavens, etc were formed. At one time religion had to do both the 'how' and the 'why', and historically it has been difficult for religion to accept that their creation stories, for instance, are not valid scientific history but mythical or traditional stories of how things came about. This is how the rift between science and religion has happened and it still needs to be healed.

Because God's imprint on the universe is necessarily of a spiritual nature, many words have been used to describe it: Holy Spirit, spirit of God, spirit of Jesus, spirit of truth, advocate, comforter, seed, Inner Light, that which rises up within you All refer to the same source, God the creator.

12 Thoughts on Remaking The Mould - The Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity was a product of Greek philosophical thinking and like any emerging concept it was disputed and evolved over time. The concept was intended to clarify the relationship between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It is essentially a forced compromise between the monotheism of Hebraic thought and the polytheism of Greek thought. Added to this was the language confusion brought about by Greek and Latin words not necessarily being exactly equivalent in meaning.

The ecumenical council of Constantinople (381CE) came up with a credal statement incorporating the Trinity which the Roman Emperor Theodosius then imposed. This was analysed by Augustine (c 400-430CE, Platonic worldview) and modified by Aquinas (c1270, Aristotelian worldview) and the latter version is generally what is held by Orthodoxy today.

Does it matter? Personally I would give a resounding 'No!'. I would suggest that if Christianity (the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth) had not gone through the intensely analytical and acerbically argumentative hands of Greek and Latin philosopher-theologians and had managed to survive, it would be far more meaningful to the ordinary person today.

The theological niceties were about which came first, the Holy Spirit or Jesus the Christ, or did one generate the other? Ignoring such niceties, Christianity acknowledges that the reality of God (the Godhead) is a mystery, but because of his purposeful work as creator some aspects of his character are revealed and comprehended by us human beings. From human experience (reflected in the parable of the prodigal son) we know that God the Father offers unconditional forgiveness. From the life of Jesus of Nazareth we see that God the Son reflects the potential for the human being to evolve into the likeness of God; Jesus' unconditional love is a hallmark of God. And God the Holy Spirit is God's purpose being worked out in all aspects of the created order, known scientifically as evolution and religiously as the evolution of God's purpose.

These three features, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three aspects of the Godhead (the ultimate mystery) which we human beings are capable of comprehending and absorbing into our twenty-first century worldview. The unfortunate image of 'three persons' arises from an inadequate translation of the Latin 'persona' as 'person' when it would more correctly have been three faces (or masks) reflecting three different characteristics. For the Orthodox even so basic a matter as the Trinity is a source of ecumenical tension. The Eastern Orthodox church holds to the former ecumenically-agreed order of Father, Holy Spirit and Son, but in the eleventh century Papal fiat changed the order to Father, Son and Holy Spirit and contributed to the growing split between Eastern Orthodox based in Constantinople and Western Orthodox based in Rome. So there's plenty of need to remake the mould.

13 Thoughts on Remaking The Mould - The Quaker Way

Orthodox Christianity has to struggle with an ancient Greek philosophical straitjacket. Does the Quaker Way have a revolutionary seventeenth-century straitjacket to cope with? Or an eighteenth-century quietist straitjacket or even a nineteenth-century evangelical straitjacket? Or a twentieth-century recovery of original roots straitjacket? Quakers have never ceased to remake the mould, but what is our relationship to current Christian orthodoxy or to the new mould offered in these thoughts?

George Fox's struggle to understand the message of the Bible resulted in the personal conviction that God/Jesus Christ was speaking to him directly and that he didn't need a minister of the church to explain Christianity to him. He needed to listen to his inner voice. Fox sought to reform the ways of the church and in 1654 some sixty Publishers of Truth (Seekers/Quakers) left the north-west of England to take that message to the rest of the country and beyond the seas. The Truth may have seemed revolutionary at that time but this was because some of the teaching of the church had descended into semi-magic incantations. Fox's enlightenment came from discovering that 'Christ (the spiritual Christ) has come to teach his people himself'. Fox had experienced Jesus the Christ as a living reality, much as Paul of Tarsus had. What he experienced so powerfully was the Holy Spirit of God at work in the world.

There is no distinction between the Holy Spirit of God and the Quaker Inner Light (or Seed, Spirit, Light) other than, because the work of the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) was not fully understood or even recognized by many in the seventeenth-century, a new word was needed for what seemed to be a new revelation. There is a difference in practice between mainstream denominations which initially go to the pages of the Bible for guidance whereas Quakers wait for God to guide them directly, both individually and communally, and subsequently may find confirmation of the guidance received in the pages of the Bible. Quakers endeavour to access directly that same Spirit that inspired the writers of the Bible in their work. There is also the more apparent difference whereby mainstream churches rely on Eucharistic services (Holy Communion) and liturgy (programmed worship) whilst Quakers endeavour to engage the Spirit in stillness and quiet.

Because Quakers are Spirit-led and they hear the Spirit in today's language, they express their motivation in today's language and hence are up-to-date and modern in their thinking. The seventeenth-century Publishers of the Truth may have thought of themselves in a similar way and they were a pain to other Christian denominations which were rooted in the past. Twenty-first-century Quakers are ecumenically-minded because the pull of their Christian roots is strong and expresses itself in the desire to work with others, whether Christian or not, in moving society towards that realm where that Spirit of God resides, the kingdom of heaven as reflected in life on earth.

14 Thoughts on Remaking The Mould - Coronavirus and Climate Disaster

Do coronavirus and climate disaster have anything to say about remaking the mould? Well, rather obviously, if we don't change some aspects of the economic mould and continue as before then these two 'plagues' will continue. And there is a great danger that if we only touch up the mould around the edges then it won't take long to return to 'business as usual'.

That Authorized Version's translation from the Hebrew which gave us the confidence that humankind has natural dominion over nature has led us seriously astray. We know now that we should understand that phrase within the context of 'and God saw that it was good'. What we have is the responsibility for stewardship, for sustaining the natural world and not exploiting it, but we have only just begun to change our ways. When the capitalist system, or any variation of it, totals up the debits and credits to ensure that profit results, then respect for the natural world must feature in a realistic way in the calculations.

Factory farming, ranging from battery hens to swathes of monoculture, does not respect the genius of nature where everything is created to be naturally interdependent. Factory farming is solely designed to improve cash flow. The costs of production do not include respect for creation. The same for mineral extraction; the same for fishing the seas.

Stemming climate disaster is even more challenging, but the international response to the covid 19 pandemic shows that serious economically-restrictive responses can be made with public support in a remarkably short time. The difficulty with climate disaster is the need for everybody to recognize that it is imminent, with non-reversible tipping points being reached and perhaps passed well before disaster is apparent.

Of the ten plagues which brought Pharaoh to his knees, nine were extremes of naturally occurring events whilst the tenth, the death of the Egyptian first-born, may have been exclusive to that social group. What we are now faced with is a virus which is indiscriminate in its reach and climate changes which will be universally devastating.

Waiting for disaster to identify itself by striking will be disastrous. Before the call comes from the political elite and the leaders of finance and industry to get back to normal, alternative scenarios must be explored and built. What was normal must be changed. The Peace Cry on behalf of the environment must be raised: Remake the Mould!

And what of institutional religion? It's very unlikely to change its religious mould until it's facing near extinction, but individual Spirit-led people and organizations can change their individual worlds and lead the way by bringing all moulds into question in the public domain.

15 Thoughts on Coronavirus – Who's To Blame?

Did God invent coronavirus and in particular covid 19?

I want to say 'what a stupid question' but if he/she/it was responsible for the big bang act of creation, then he/she/it is responsible for everything that follows, whether directly or indirectly. Or is he?

Did the big bang create a universe that is imperfect or did it create the only possible universe that can evolve into unconditional love? And what we mean by 'unconditional love' we can only express within the limitations of our language and knowledge as 'being with God at the end' which seems to be the purpose of evolutionary creation.

Whoever wrote Genesis (perhaps Ezra in the 6th century BCE brought it together) had no scientific understanding to consider, but only folklore handed down through the generations. He wrote a mythical story about a perfect land called the Garden of Eden in which a perfect man, Adam, managed to get things wrong. In the Genesis story that's why humankind is saddled with an imperfect world.

In the last four centuries the scientific world has been moving us away from myth to fact, whilst acknowledging there are always questions it cannot answer. Every scientific fact is as much a provisional statement as any spiritual revelation. Both are ongoing and some would see both as directly or indirectly related.

We know there was a big bang (the universe emerging from a black hole?) and that subsequent evolution has been an engineering miracle, or a trillion miracles. Evolution, or God's Holy Spirit in action, is moving creation by degrees towards a future described in Revelation as 'a holy city, new Jerusalem'. Time may eventually re-create the Garden of Eden, the place of unconditional love where God is. But the journey to unconditional love is only fulfilled when everything in creation is making the right choices, choosing 'life not death'. Everything must possess the unconditional right to choose, and wrong choices are made. If humankind chooses to exploit animal life we get death or covid 19. Covid 19 is not in God's plan.

Unconditional love can only be achieved through the exercise of freewill choosing the path of love. But the human being on his evolutionary journey is still immature and chooses to trash nature and the natural law for selfish, perhaps thoughtless, ends. Hence in China's unhygienic wet markets where live and dead animals and birds are sold for human consumption, viruses to which the animal world is immune can cross to the human world which has no immunity. Some viruses have a low death rate (covid 19), some have a high death rate (sars), but the potential to decimate humankind is there without the devastation of nuclear war and radiation.

Covid 19 is not only humankind's creation but we knew before it happened that it could happen. All the Chinese wet markets were expected to be upgraded or closed after the sars epidemic in 2003.

16 Thoughts on God Is Spirit With Personal Qualities

A person is an individual human being. God is not a person. God is a being in that a being is something that exists [The verb 'to be' means 'to exist']. That existence may be either physical, like a human being, or spiritual, like God. God is spirit.

'Personal' means having the attributes of an individual human being. Because we posit that God is our creator, then those attributes or characteristics must have originated with God and be part of his nature. Hence God has personal qualities.

But how does God demonstrate or live those personal qualities? By creating the human being in his own image and likeness, so that we human beings possess those qualities and have the potential to become like God. For Christians this is demonstrated by the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The character of Jesus portrayed in the New Testament is so close to the fully-evolved human being that God wants us to be, that the Greek-speaking philosopher-theologians of the early centuries decreed that he must have been God come to earth [God incarnate in a human being].

If we use the word 'love' to describe the sum total of all those good qualities, then we understand that God loves us individually through the caring actions of other people, relatives, friends and even strangers. And if we are not caring then we are denying God's gift of love to the other person.

If we are concerned at the existence of bad personal qualities it is because we have perverted the open and unconditional love that God has given us into our own self-centred purposes. The nature of Christianity is to transform that self-centred element, which derives from our need for self-preservation, into a power that works for the community of people and not for the individual. That community of people may be local, national or international and will extend to the non-human parts of creation because everything that has been created has come from the same source and is interdependent. No one part can survive without the support of the other parts. The human being cannot survive without an environment that is attuned to his needs. If the tuning is lost, then humankind dies.

Interdependence is fundamental to the whole of creation and to its creator. Creator and creation are inter-dependent. God is dependent on us as his 'extension', as we are on him for his continuing support. As the universe evolves, for God to fulfil his purpose he needs our willing co-operation. We need God because he is the ultimate source of that unconditional love which permeates his creation, this universe, and which manifests itself in the way that planet earth provides everything needed for the human being to flourish.

God is spirit with personal qualities and probably a lot more as well because the ultimate God, the Godhead, will always be a mystery. The human mind cannot fully comprehend that greater mind which created it.

17 Thoughts on How Jesus Came To Be Thought Of As God

Only Christianity claims that its human founder is also God. For Judaism such a claim is blasphemy. Islam only recognizes Mohammad as the prophet of Allah. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism make no such divine claim. What's the difference? The answer is deceptively simple. Christianity was articulated via ancient Greek platonic and stoic philosophies. If it hadn't been, Christianity might have been a lot simpler - just basic learning from the life of Jesus. But then it would not have had the supernatural aspect to help take the world by storm.

At the time of Jesus and for another four centuries the political and military power was Roman but the cultural and philosophic power remained Hellenic (Greek) and Greek was the dominant language. The Diaspora was the name for the Jewish population spread through the towns of the eastern Mediterranean and its outlook was far more cosmopolitan than that centred on the Temple at Jerusalem. But the Romans destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 CE and so the development of Christianity prospered in the gentile world of the Diaspora. Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople and Rome all featured as centres of Greek learning and therefore of Christian philosophy.

There were as many theories about the nature of Jesus as there were centres of learning and the Emperor Constantine, based in Constantinople and himself a proclaimed Christian, despaired. His vision was of one empire (Roman), one Emperor (himself) and one religion (Christianity). In 325 CE he called the bishops of the Empire to an ecumenical Council at Nicaea, just outside Constantinople, to sort out the conflicting views. No unanimity could be found, so Constantine decreed that those who believed Jesus was God were right. Jesus was to be wholly divine with the title Son of God meaning God, and wholly human with the expression Son of Man meaning man. This was a 'solution' which defied all logic, although the absence of any rational understanding did not disturb the contemporary Greek and Roman worldview in the way it does the western outlook 1700 years later. The Constantinian decree was to be held as a matter of faith and in 487 CE the death penalty was introduced for any who expressed contrary opinions.

Paul of Tarsus, who never met Jesus, recognized him to be the Jewish Messiah (the Greek Christ) but never claimed him as God incarnate. But the strength of the story of Jesus's resurrection led the ancient philosophic mind to think of him in terms of God. Nowadays we need to understand the reasons for the impact of Jesus's life differently. The stories as portrayed in the New Testament give the picture of a human being with his full God-given potential developed. This is the human being God wants us to be – this is the metaphorical (not biological) Son of God. Christian orthodoxy needs to lead people to understand that God is not so much the person who controls everything, but, from our human perspective, the Spirit leading us to a future when the potential for unconditional love will be fully realized.

18 Thoughts on Christian Nonviolence

The 1991 Collins English Dictionary defines nonviolence as 'abstention from the use of physical force to achieve goals'. Quite an advance in understanding in that it no longer lists the negative hyphenated 'non-violence'; it has become more positive and even teetering on the brink of recognizing it as a way of life. Nonviolence is a way of life that endeavours to promote harmonious social living by endeavouring to diminish all forms of violence.

It is a positive force that seeks to engage with ignorance, injustice, insensitivity, indeed all those forces and passions which impair the desired harmony of social living. Nonviolence is not non-resistance; it resists the forces of disharmony.

For Christians, and others, it is essential that every nonviolent action should respect the conscience of the other person. This is the essential judgment that should lead one into discerning appropriate action. One does not override the opponents' rights because that is violence and if the opponent, say the state, holds the right to punish, then commensurate punishment is accepted at some stage as part of one's witness to a nonviolent way of life.

There is no absolute form of nonviolence which operates in all situations. A degree of violence is likely to exist in most human relationships and differing approaches are needed. Common sense and rational thinking remain positive attributes and only peaceful means can create the desired peaceful solution.

The opponent is not the problem even if he is the oppressor; it is the enmity and the system of oppression or exploitation which has to be overcome. The enmity may be to oneself, to a truly democratic society, to harmony with the environment, etc. It is this which needs to be changed by transforming the attitude of the opponent. The opponent remains as oneself, a son or daughter of a God who loves unconditionally, and engaging in nonviolent action can become a source of spiritual growth for oneself and, most importantly, for one's opponent. The outcome must leave both parties satisfied because the aim of the action is to have love reborn in the mind of the opponent. The sacrifice or suffering which the nonviolent person may incur can have this effect by giving the love of God sufficient space in which to work. Sacrifice and suffering create that space. The end to be achieved, a society based on unconditional love, has to be incarnated in the means that are used. The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth has meaning: absolute trust in God's providence.

The incarnation of the Christ, the presence in the world of the Holy Spirit of God, that of God (the Inner Light) in every human being, this is the power which undergirds the practice of nonviolence and has the power to create in every miniscule corner of this planet the reality of God's presence, the place of heaven.

19 Thoughts on Loving your Enemy

It is not possible to love an enemy in the same way as one may love a friend. Friendship is born out of mutual interests and mutual respect. An enemy does not have respect for you and is usually pursuing the fulfilment of different aims.

One needs to understand why an enemy is an enemy. If there is some element of reasonableness in his position, however small, it has to be found and respected. One has to get into the thinking of the enemy in order to understand their position. One needs to respect the qualities that an enemy may have so that one's own outlook towards him is not dominated by the enmity. This does not mean one starts to compromise even though one may finish with a negotiated position. What one is trying to do is to relate to his humanity. In Christian terms, to find and respond to that of God which exists in the enemy as in every human being. It is the person that matters, not the policy. The policy will only be modified when the author of that policy realises that it is perhaps imperfect. This may happen when the God who is unconditional love is given the space in which to work.

Loving one's enemy is to seek out any justice in his position and avoid any personal antagonism. When we love an enemy we think of the harm that an injustice may be doing to him. That enemy is a human being loved by God and we have to conform ourselves to God's unconditional love by giving it the opportunity to prevail over the enmity or violence that separates us. That action of conforming ourselves to God's love also means a close look at our own feelings and behaviour. Are we projecting any of our own repressed feelings on to the enemy? Are the apparent faults the enemy displays also our faults?

In working that way we may well suffer and suffer badly, but that would be a lesser price than would have been paid had we used violence to overcome the enmity which would have the result that everybody would suffer and no lasting solution would be found. The attempt to transform enmity into love is the greatest of all challenges and short-term success is not guaranteed.

Quarrels often exist because one side or the other misinterprets the other's actions and this is frequently compounded by distance. Friends tend to be near and enemies far away making communication seem less vital. But gentle communication is vital to find a harmony which blends the differences and that vision of harmony is the end product which must be enshrined in the means used.

In Jesus's time the enemy was the Roman army of occupation and Jesus's advice to his fellow Galileans was if you are conscripted to carry their load for one mile, then offer to continue to carry it for a further mile. There is no one approach to loving one's enemies but all approaches should seek to create the space for God's unconditional love to work.

20 Thoughts on Bibles

Septuagint: Between 250 and 150 BCE the Hebrew Scriptures (that is the Old Testament) were translated into Greek. This was done because Greek was replacing Hebrew as the spoken language of Jews in Alexandria (Egypt). The origin of the name is that 70 scholars were allegedly involved in the work (Latin, septuaginta, 70).

Codex Vaticanus: Held in Vatican Library since at least the fifteenth century and is dated from early fourth century. Written in Greek and contains the Septuagint and New Testament. It is considered more accurate than the Sinaiticus.

Codex Sinaiticus: Handwritten on parchment in Greek in mid-fourth century. Half the Old Testament and all the New Testament has survived. Already corrupted through sourcing and copying. Probably commissioned by the Emperor Constantine (306-337) on his conversion in 312 CE. Most of it is in the British Library. All is available on-line.

Vulgate: In 405 CE Jerome translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Latin. In 1455 Gutenberg produced the first printed Bible, being the Latin Vulgate and New Testament. Vulgate is the Latin for 'Common Version' and it has had official approval in Roman Catholic circles until overtaken by modern translations in the late twentieth century.

Wycliffe's Bible: Between 1380 and 1384 John Wycliffe, an Oxford professor, trained a team of preachers to translate the Latin Vulgate (plus New Testament) into English. It circulated in handwritten portions and the Lollards used it to preach in villages.

Tyndale's Bible: In 1526 William Tyndale, working from the Greek, produced an English New Testament with margin notes. Henry VIII (1509-1547) banned it but it was smuggled in from the continent and eventually became the basis for the King James Authorized Version. Tyndale completed the translation of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) before being burnt at the stake for heresy in Belgium in 1536. In 1535 Miles Coverdale had produced the first entire printed Bible in English based largely on Tyndale's work.

Great Bible: This was Archbishop Cranmer's official 1539 Bible overseen by Coverdale and ordered to be chained to every parish pulpit in the Church of England.

Geneva Bible: English Puritans fled to Geneva during Catholic Mary's reign (1553-1558) and in 1560 under the guidance of Miles Coverdale and John Knox they published the Protestant Geneva Bible. It had Calvinistic margin notes and with its handy quarto size and set in chapters and verses it was the Bible of every Puritan household.

The Bishops Bible: The Geneva Bible was too radical for Elizabeth 1, so a new lacklustre translation was produced by a committee of Bishops in 1568 for official use.

King James Bible: For political reasons James 1 (1603-1625) authorized a new Bible (the Authorized Version) which was published in 1611. Its margin notes were much reduced which meant the text might require interpretation from the pulpit. George Fox would have had both the Geneva and King James versions available to him.

American Standard Version: 1901. **Revised Standard Version:** 1946-1952

New English Bible: 1961-1970. **Revised English Bible** 1989