

PART ONE: An Impotent and Irrelevant Christianity

Chapter 1 – Where is the Promised Power of God?

Amongst the winds of change blowing in the jet stream of modern civilization, I feel the hearing crash of technology-driven lives shattered all around me, the charade shards of a delusion that echo a hollow existence full of imaginary meaning. Individuals, peoples, nations -- each in an aimless, accelerated motion, driven ever faster from the lost wisdom of his or her spiritual heritage, disoriented to the compass points needed for a purposed direction in life, and confused by the endless echoes of an informational blizzard of conflicting data issued by a world of competing interests locked in endless combat.

For these souls the web of life is not engaged or consciously woven. It just happens to them ONE seemingly isolated strand at a time, or worse, they become entangled in it being paralyzed by fear. Such are unaware of the spiritual realities that connect us from past to future, woven through the uncountable complex of interactions composing the present experience of daily life. And so life meaning is either avoided as too painfully difficult to face up to, or its material dimensions are consumed in violent substitution for the real thing. It is but an empty diet of shed snakeskin fried in the oils of lusty greed, being the fragile shells of spent life gobbled without lasting satisfaction, nourishment or purpose.

Like searching for subatomic particles, what we see and experience as evidence of God's intervention in the affairs of men is merely the debris trails of micro-measured miracles left over as a result of accelerated electro-particular collision. Neither God nor the spiritual world can be ever totally grasped by human effort. To most of us, God seems too difficultly absent to understand and experience.

However, I have experienced growth in the perception of the divine presence in my daily life. It's as if spiritual fingers have been developed, and a spiritual sensitivity heightened so that my faith has grown and some measure of confidence, joy, and purpose is entertained fruitfully. This experience is available to each who will seek it in humility and truth. In doing so ONE can enter into the grace of God's pure goodness, celebrate His gifts to men, and share them with others because there is no life apart from Him. It is His gift to each person: the more undeserving the person, the more miraculous and divinely revelatory this gift of spiritually powered, eternal life becomes.

And so I am driven to write this book in an effort to relieve the pain I sense, to explain some of the whys of life, and to suggest some approaches that could improve the lives of others. From my earliest recollections I have wondered about who I am and what I was doing here, alive on this earth. None of us ask to be born. We just are, and by birth's consequence, forced to respond in how we live out our consciousness. For me, being born began a life search for some answered whys. Given reasonable love and stability, most children share these questions, but the answers, or lack thereof, drive the curiosity out of most young adults long before the daily routine of existence sets in, dulling both senses and sensibility.

We plan vacations or careers but not life meaning. That seems to be an accident of occasion, if it rises to one's consciousness at all. For those frustrated or sidetracked in a meaningful search for life's meaning, twisted answers can sometimes lead to the margins of society and sanity. The inhabitants of the societal margins live in mental environments of variegated and overlapping fantasies ranging from imaginations trapped by conspiracy theories and depressive funk, to feelings of hopeless abandonment, miserable loneliness, and suicide. These are just some of the more obvious symptoms of ONE marginalized by personal non-relevance, of personal impotence to deal with life's interminable challenges.

Subtly, with less obvious symptoms, this same bane of personal non-relevance plagues the broad
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dimensions of modern western civilization. It is an integral characteristic of our secularly focused culture as it has evolved through the twentieth century. Today's mass consciousness relegates the socially acceptable spiritual dimension of life to a mere something between psychological growth and humanitarian relief/community service.

Although psychological growth and humanitarian relief works are good and necessary, I strongly believe that limiting the spiritual dimension of the human experience to such is damaging to the continuation of even such secularly acceptable good works. In fact I believe that the continued existence of humanitarianism is severely threatened by its disassociation from God, the source of all goodness. Basically, doing good works without real spiritual roots is like giving cut flowers instead of a flowering potted plant: beautiful while they last but not equipped to endure.

The departure of the spiritual dimension from our modern world is primarily due to Christianity's collective loss of its generative experience. While individuals scattered through time and denomination have understood the essence of spirituality, they were unable to promote its spread beyond a few reverberating circles of influence. I believe that the chief reason for this lack of impact is that efforts to replicate such leaders' charisma and/or the early church's dynamic power to change lives and nations have generally failed due to a preoccupation with the external issues of liturgy, doctrine and social organization or governance. Though important, these ordinary dimensions of group interaction are distributive and not generative by nature.

Over the last nineteen centuries, the gifts of the original church have been lost in the visible church's struggle to survive the chaotic strife that has and does exist between eternally warring peoples often experienced in violent political confrontation. Today, as a result of the church's imperfect success in meeting the challenges of western civilization's sociocultural evolution, Christianity has lost relevant impact as a major force in secular or daily life. It has ceased to be a direct influence on the molding of public behavior and belief, although it still maintains strength in the private lives of many individuals. Publicly, the Bible and Christianity have become the philosophical grandparents of a modern morality icon that receives lip service in honor of their historical importance in our culture, but in the reality constructs of modern consciousness, Christ and Christianity are treated as if powerless - not relevant unless there is nothing else left to try.

Christianity once was a prime mover behind political change, colonization, and social development. Yet the trend is for public education to rewrite history in accordance with the modern secularist perspective. Children are not even being taught the truth about ancient and historical peoples' motivations for what they did. Yes indeed, human nature does remain constant: people have always sinned and even great heroes committed moral transgressions because survival and economic gain have ever been dominant human motivators. Yet it is also true that earlier peoples and nations moved and fought for (certainly imperfectly conceived) Christian ideals.

These examples of massive imperfection of the flesh are used to deny the genuine presence of God in the lives of our so very human forefathers in order to justify the skeptical secularism of our modern social psyche. Therefore, we have this picture of the Christian faith's incomparable strength at its genesis, only to wane through time in steady dilution of power and moral influence.

Why? Is God dead?

No! Just forgotten and unasked to the party of daily life. God's forgiving grace is His power to overcome the world. When she was flowing in the saving spirit of Jesus - the then recently resurrected messiah, the early universal church humbled the legions of the Roman Emperors with the practice of nonviolent love and devotion to spiritual regeneration. Today's diverse assembly of churches have largely worked themselves away from submission to God's grace and into a position of virtual impotence from the perspective of meaningful impact on the future course of human civilization. Unlike the mystical Body of Christ, established churches are visible, political, and possess physical assets of some wealth. These attributes are not necessarily evil or bad, but they have had their consequences on the character of the church and the depth of church members'

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experience of spiritual substance.

In most modern societies, churches are largely in retreat. Why? Because they are religious organizations built by men and women in an attempt to serve God as each has understood his or her vision of, and mission from, the Eternal. The natural reaction of humans is to focus on these individuals of vision because it is easier to do that than to focus and rely upon a spiritual power that they cannot control. The natural human tendency is to do what a person or a group can using their own resources rather than rely upon an unseen God. Most Christians relegate God to the sidelines due to this natural, inadequately fallible, human comprehension of the spiritual, which is further confused by society's history of religious and social traditions. This should not be a surprise to us because God is ineffably perceived in a vastness beyond mental grasp.

However, this human limitation should be recognized, accepted, and accommodated in a manner suitable to the liberation of the Holy Spirit's work within any true fellowship. God may be present and honored, but I observe that our religious traditions (and sometime those who honor Him) have, more often than not, greatly hinder God's identity transforming work. I know that there are exceptions, and these exceptions should be honored and upheld. While I believe that the number of such small miracles is indeed underreported, I still believe that their actual rarity in the public's awareness is proof of my observation and not its contradiction.

Consequently, western civilization and most global societies operate on secular assumptions. Governance and social institutions of behavior have been built on tangible material principles of natural and human resources as if God does not exist enough to materially intervene in the affairs of humanity. Accepted mass culture presumes a scientific, secular materialism, which at its best is humanitarian. But there is no such thing as a secular world. We do live in a world of science, but the secular presumption, or model, of the universe excludes ultimate reality of spiritual power and purpose. This denial of spiritual reality has sentenced humanity to the death of a biological life lost to confused wandering in a social desert devoidly desiccated of spiritual waters.

The great misconception lies in the idea of spiritual neutrality, which is a mass hysteria of agnosticism – that what one does not know will not hurt or harm him. Humans are born with a self-deceptive spirituality that seeks an internal balance of good versus evil to the exclusion of divine reliance and meddling in personal affairs retained by each of us. Social consciousness seeks to ignore, or functionally deny the existence of God and Satan, through the practice of applied psychological self construction. Outwardly, secular society seems to succeed. Societies function with apparently normal people who love their families, work to provide for them, respect their neighbors for the most part and are otherwise "good" citizens who may even at times be altruistically benevolent with their time and wealth. Yet, each person dies, and most lives are limited by the material resources available to them, person by person, subculture by subculture, nation by nation.

Secularism's ascendancy in modern western life is at least partly in reaction to the historical and modern abuses and deceptions of those wolves that have come collared and frocked in the name of Jesus only to rape and pillage the spiritual tenderness of innocents as well as to consume the wealth of the sincere. I intend not only individuals but also institutions, who in their zeal for the Lord, have served instead the Opponent and cast their own lives into the abominable pit of lying denial and sacred destruction. Over hundreds of years, various governments have deceptively used some religious sword of steel or another to ostensibly defend a particular interpretation of faith. Military power ostensibly called upon for righteous causes has in fact been a socially acceptable cover for a conspiratorial grab for power and wealth by those in control. In the process many innocents of various religions and nationalities have been oppressed in the name of Jesus. This poignant experience of Europeans led to the incorporation of the concept of a separation between church and the exercise of the power of the state in the United States of America. This legal remedy has been followed closely by the promotion of tolerance, which is a decent cultural value but also ONE with some potentially harmful consequences if pressed by politics possessed by loss of spiritual balance.

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As has happened so often in the course of human events, the enthronement in our culture of the good ideas of tolerance and the separating of church from state establishment has twisted a good intent to bad effect. The original purpose for the separation of church and state was to enable the free and open practice of religious life. Politically correct thought has transformed the openly integrated life of spiritual faith and daily works into an alienation of spiritual integrity from daily social intercourse. Tolerance is to be evidenced by silence.

ONE does not talk about faith, matters of religion - especially Christian religion, the Bible, or Jesus. Anyone who violates this socially expected code of silence or who does not conform to strictly secular expression of humanitarian blandness is promptly isolated and removed from presence. On the public stage it seems that any non-Christian religion is presently more acceptable than Christian fundamentalism in public discourse. Media preference is editorially guided to promote the legitimacy and equal value of all belief systems. The bottom line of what this means is that none of them have any real value and that religious faith is imply a matter of personal preference with no impactful consequence beyond the inner life of the person exercising his private right to choose.

Another reason for the shrinking impact of Christianity on western civilization is that we have become desensitized by repetitious exposure to the external story of Jesus so that the real significance and power of the Christian gospel is lost in the surfeit of facts historical and hysterical. This phenomenon has occurred even as the proclamation of the gospel has become more readily available through electronic media.

In other words, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been heard so often, in so many variations, and experienced so rarely that the reality of its power is dismissed due to its failure to penetrate the inner consciousness of modern man. It is a commercial gone unconscious due to its omnipresence in imagery. There are exceptions, of course: personal tragedy, for ONE, often breaks down the psychological barriers of the burdened sufferer, which creates an opportunity for transforming growth through God's grace without any imposed or bargained conditions.

I do not accept Jesus' future return as an immortally omnipotent reigning King of Kings as an excuse for Christianity's relatively impotent impact on public life. I believe He will return in power some day to literally rule the earth, but I also believe in the power of His current presence in my life today. It is my awareness of His quiet power already at work as the Kingdom of God in my midst and around me, which inspires my faith in His promised return.

Some seem to derive strength of faith from prophecy, but the strength of prophecy fades. Prophecy is not eternal; it is material. Bible prophecy is a class of temporal knowledge for a specific point in space-time - even though it is sincerely interpreted from Scripture. Years ago I would study the Bible and believe that I read about my generation in its prophetic warnings. Like the early church, I was focused on the imminent return of Christ. I watched world news and sought out signs of the end. I earnestly hoped for the return of the true King to set the world straight and make it once again a peacefully happy place for people.

Today (1998), I am too busy to be preoccupied with prophetic musings. I do keep an eye out even as I pray; however, my focus is on God at work daily in my life as I witness the almost imperceptible mini-miracles He performs randomly throughout the course of my day. I am not withdrawn in expectation of an external manifestation of a sword-in-hand Messiah. Rather, I am wondrous at His power at work within my life and the lives of others. Jesus will return when He will. That is not under my charge.

What is given us today is to be living now the promised coming Kingdom to all. All around me I see awesome spiritual power present in its subatomic state. It is there in abundance, yet diffuse and unfocused. As a consequence of sacrificial faith, I have experienced that God's omnipotent power of presence is still available and indeed is unfailingly harnessed to His purpose, His mission for my life and yours. The power of God can only be accepted without condition, without clear knowing of its consequence and without full knowledge awareness of what your particular **Mission of ONE** may become. I seek to raise your spiritual perception of God's presence and give you an enhanced

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framework for putting the power of God to work in your world today – to become ONE in Him as Jesus and the early disciples were ONE, but your experience may also be as ONE alone or in family only.

By Their Fruits You Shall Know

Were Jesus indeed alive in ONE of us today, would He do differently now than He will when He returns? I think not. It is through the presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus alive in my flesh, that a difference is made. I believe that He is at work establishing His Kingdom in my home and inner life even as He shall in some near future day of terror and victory intervene in the political world of mankind and establish a righteous government in Jerusalem that will eliminate all forms of social evil, including the corrupt human governments of political and religious entities.

Anciently, it was the presence of the persons of Jesus or his successors living a delivered message of God's grace and love that built the early church, moved nations, and changed the course of western civilization. I believe that wherever and whenever the true gospel of the Kingdom of God is so proclaimed, lived and experienced - in the real context of the Holy Spirit present and working in His holy Body of believers, that the world's peoples will move to peaceful change of revolutionary proportions through a dynamic transformation of personal identity, individual by individual.

The potential is real, but it is not without risk. Jesus was executed; early Christians tortured and publicly mauled to death in the Roman arenas for entertainment. The power of God's loving grace is perceived as a material threat to those caught up in a lying maelstrom evilly driven to enslave others. These empty souls twisted and consumed by the parasitic concentration of wealth and power stolen from subjugated populations of reasonably normal persons, feel their existence threatened by ordinary people set free to a relatively stable life of enjoyed happiness and personal consequence. Love as a way of life is something that despots great and small do not understand, and so they seek to destroy it.

As recent historical witness to the potential power of sublime truth lived and shared, I offer Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi. Although certainly not a Christian, Gandhi's ideas and philosophical mode of life witnessed truths of Godly liberation that stirred millions of his fellow nationals to bring world focus to India's struggle for freedom. Such was the impact of this ONE man that, like Jesus, he was assassinated for it. The fruits of his life include independence for India and Pakistan through an incredible violence he sought to avoid, as well as a lasting legacy in world consciousness. Here is a modern model of ONE man with a mission of ethical love for others whose life had a transforming effect on the secular world.

Gandhi's mission exhibited some external aspects of Jesus' message to mankind, and its consequence presents evidence for the potential good (without the violence) that can be logically expected of a Christian civilization renewed. Although Jesus was also just ONE person executed for the threat He posed to the power and authority of the religious and political leaders of His day, he was not just a man but ONE believed to be God in the flesh, the bridge between God and man. Unlike Gandhi, through Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection God promised the gift of His Holy Spirit to empower those who believe to become a multitude of "little christians" or Christians.

To the external perspective of a material world, the difference should at least be ONE of numbers. Like the assassins of Gandhi, the enemies of Jesus strategized that his messianic movement would die with him. There is a certain social momentum that lives beyond the life of a martyr. The independence of India and Pakistan could not be stopped, but Gandhi was not around to deliver a peaceful birth. Today, his memory lives in a public shrine, but with shrinking impact. In the history of the United States, Abraham Lincoln's death similarly did not reverse or revenge the outcome of the Civil War: it just prohibited the opportunity for a peaceful healing of the newly forced union. In the place of Lincoln's visionary leadership, rose up vacuously consuming greed. Instead of an exercise of healing compassion, came the crushing heels of rigorous oppression.

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The story of Jesus is significantly different. Where as there have been a number of remarkable, significant individuals throughout history, only the Early Christian Church offers a testimony of ONE person's transformation into masses of empowered individuals drawn together as ONE from the full spectrum of the human population's diversity. So spiritually powerful were these simple folk that they faithfully suffered the crushing brunt of the Roman Empire's wrathful, fear driven derision and torturous massacres in humble peace until the Empire imploded on its own iniquitous power, crumbling before the forgiving faces of those early saints of God, multiplied by the very witness of oppression's victims.

An imponderable gap exists between the eccentric appearance of a remarkable person or genius on the world's stage as opposed to the manifestation of multitudinous numbers of people mystically united in a spirit of humble dedication and identity with the divinity. Modern Christianity tells the story of Jesus Christ, but the seemingly lost secret is the reality of Jesus' resurrection to dynamic life as the personal savior of believing Christians. It is so ineffable that even those truly "born again" elude a lasting grasp of God's spiritual power in their lives. I write this kindly because multitudes can and do testify to the changing experience of mental transformation that occurred when they accepted Jesus as their personal Savior.

But I am still left with the question as to why omnipotence does not more commonly express itself in the lives of individual Christians to the point of them having greater influence on secular culture. How is it that growth in the number of Christians parallels a decrease in the positive impact and relevance of the Church on the course of western civilization?

Why did the power of saving grace slip away? How can spiritually renewed love again become a daily reality? That is what this book is all about. I hope that it addresses the matter in a way that is helpful to more than a few, but specifically I hope to open your eyes to the spiritual dimensions of life that exist around you every day, every moment, in any situation you find yourself.

ONE need look no further than to his or her life today to find the start and essence of spirituality, of meaning and purpose. Indeed, the Kingdom of God is at hand for each of us, now, at this moment, if only we receive it openly, simply, as would children. Reading this book should help. Your life should change from it. But it is up to you as I can only offer a few tools of understanding, concept, and faith.

Life is not a right to be seized and consumed but a gift to be received and given. Personal identity transformation is something co-created in eternity with Jesus and the Father in faith. It is impossible to evidence sensually. During the material reality of space-time, humans cannot directly measure their progress towards the fulfillment of the biblical promises of a first resurrection into the coming Kingdom of God on earth. It cannot be confirmed by membership in any church, but that progress may be experienced in the ultimate spiritual power at work in mortal life, which is the product of a growing spiritual ONEness in mystical fellowship with the Creator and the Savior:

...that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. (1John 1:3-4)