

APPLIED CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

By Christopher J. Patton
June 2001

The Essentials

New concepts.

The freshness of gospel and forgiveness. The name of Jesus Christ and the message of forgiveness for sins are so prevalent in western culture that they are not well heard. The sounds are so common that they are too often glossed over - missed by those most in need.

The message is eternal. The Kingdom of God is at hand today as it was thousands of years ago. Jesus/Yeshua stands at the door ready to enter the heart of any honestly repentant believer. What is needed is a venue of communication that restores the impact experienced by the early fellowship groups of believers.

Example of Messianic and Jewish experience with the name of Jesus Christ and the persecution received at the hands of the Christian Churches. The wars between Protestant and Catholic and the annihilation of unbelievers at the hands of supposed Christians dominated by political or economic survival.

Importance of confession and sign of healing (Js/Gospels/Acts).

All things in common. Role of property.

Belief in a soon return of Messiah (John 14 why not revealed to all or appear to all.)

Paul and the simplification of ritual through a redefinition of holiness and the abolition of judgment.

Local autonomy. Group determined traditions, ritual, and doctrine. What is meaningful and minimal.

Applicable to those who believe in an imminent coming and those who do not. Irrelevant to this and most doctrine.

My proposal is to introduce a new spiritual reference group. For some it may come in place of an organized church, but for most it will be in addition. In fact it will probably create a greater commitment and active involvement in conventional church activities because of renewed personal spirituality of genuine depth.

My vision is for a continuously dynamic renewal of the mystical spiritual Body of God's presence among humanity through the formation and maintenance of informal fellowship groups over medium to long-term time frames.

Many short term groups successfully being formed today. By short term I mean from a few days to a few weeks. In business and in the therapy used to heal dependence or other psychological problems.

Summary of hypothesis: everyone needs a support group, especially normal people. Social interaction by universal observation and study involves a number of circles or groups regardless of race or culture. Common sense.

Many de facto groups exist. Most would benefit from the application of the principles contained in this book, but there are practical limits based on the rules generating the group.

One is born into a family, so that even though the family commonly recognized and necessary, it cannot usually supply all of an individual's psycho-spiritual needs.

Family long term, community and ref groups mid term, specific needs are short to midterm. Community and reference groups, fans of role models and the like, are other de facto groups. Here, choice becomes increasingly important.

One is does not choose the community (s)he is born into, but usually modern life later offers the opportunity to do so. On the average people move very five years. Moving changes one's community, though the impact of community change is relative to the distance and parameters of the move.

Without ignoring the essential de facto groups of life, free choice of personal fellowship is essential in order to experience the fullest growth in the liberty of love. The essential pre-requisite for membership in a mystical fellowship group is to have no other purpose for being there than to give and receive love in natural reciprocity.

There can be no personal agendas such as profiting from, soliciting aid from, or manipulating of others' time, being or resources. This includes recruiting for political movements or evangelistic efforts.

Some may give to the group or to another member of the group, but it must come about without restriction or solicitation. Once given any property so surrendered must be released without lingering possession. It has become the group's stewardship responsibility.

Of course, this does not mean that someone can not allow the group to use property temporarily - for a meeting place or to provide transportation, for example. Common sense will dictate, and it is a sick group that falls into such abuse of its grace.

Need for a fresh vision of the gospel that transcends the broadest possible human experience and that personally communicates to each of us in accordance with our diverse modes of understanding. A spiritual vision

that provides grace without dogma yet is found to be within the mystical tradition of Judeo-Christian revelation in its broadest social context.

It cannot exclude the foundational revelations of the gospel as I have attempted to outline in this book and still be considered the Body of Yeshua / Jesus, the Salvation of God. In so doing endless life is its founding power, and balance its nature. Beware of limitations, which could twistedly deform the fragile faith of God's babes.

The goal is to make available regularly a mosaic of God's face in the security and solace of active unconditional love, which is founded on dependably constant forgiveness, the biblical grace. It is never finished, and it is an expression of God's reality, which can be deeply understood because it is physically translated through ever variable human expression in common experience.

In other words, its self-evident fruit should be an intangibly spiritual foundation of love and grace experienced in common by its participants. In paralleling the early structure of the church, mystical fellowship does not replace existing western cultural and doctrinal traditions but rather creates a vital foundation for them so that they do not die but continuously renew and grow.

I believe that the key to unlocking the mystical power of the early church will not be found in church services. It is a function of the church, which should exist in parallel independence to traditional liturgy and worship services. It is also something, which will naturally make both liturgy and worship more meaningful.

Furthermore, I do not think that the full answer lies in church sponsored and structured small group fellowships, usually organized around prayer and/or Bible study. At the same time, I do believe that most of the material presented in this book can and should be rightly used to support the expansion and continued use of such small group programs.

I heartily endorse church sponsored small group ministries, but my principle purpose at this time is to reach those who are not participating in church sponsored intimate social environments.

I also imagine that there are many people who are active in their churches who still honestly feel some spiritual drain, tiredness, or emptiness. This can be especially true for pastors and lay workers who are so active that they fail to regularly recharge their spiritual center of being.

More on this later. First, though, I feel that I must address the church going experience because that is how most people relate to the religion attributed to Jesus Christ. I will follow with a discussion of the relevant biblical mysteries of God in relation to human nature to support my understanding of the success promised to those who submit to God in the meaningful practice of forgiveness in faith.

Maintenance of Mystical Fellowship

Cannot be forced. Discipline in silence and patience is necessary, however.

Composition of groups will change over time as will their focus and purpose. Some will not last others will continue but the membership will alter significantly. But change should come through a process that does not undermine the participant's initial commitment to the group.

In understanding the processes of group formation and maintenance, one knows that a certain amount of chaos and struggle is inevitable. Without work and sacrifice nothing of value is born.

There are no rules on this except that it work for those who are members. For those to whom it does not answer, they should be free to leave, hopefully to find another group which does inspire loving forgiveness to grow in their lives.

No employers - separate group situation, de facto group like a family. Must be in operation but realistically business groups must be formulated towards the purpose of a economically productive task; therefore, there are limits to what can be rationally expected from such groups at this point in our cultural maturity.