

SPECTRUM

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A slow train coming **METANOIA**

I refer again to a statistic in Bibby's book *Fragmented Gods* which indicate that 83% of Canadians "believe in" God. I'm not sure what this "believe in" God means for all 83%, though I know what it means for some. I know even less what sort of picture or view all 83% have of God, though again I know of some.

Who or what God is is difficult to answer, though not impossible to grasp. The Judeo-Christian Bible gives us great assistance in sorting this out. All we need really is the will and effort to grapple with it.

The Bible frequently speaks of God as father, king, judge, husband, wife, mother, shepherd, etc. These are metaphors, rather than real depictions of God. Religious tradition has preferred some depictions over others. Thus we have had almost exclusively masculine terms for God. But, the women's movement has exposed and corrected some of this rather narrowed focus, just as Liberation Theology has turned attention to viewing God more as one who frees the poor and oppressed.

The Gospel writings speak about the kingdom of God. Their focus on Jesus is really a focus on the God's kingdom. But what is that kingdom, and is it evident today?

What the kingdom of God is is also rather difficult to answer, though again not impossible to grasp. Jesus explained the kingdom largely through parables, through story metaphors. Metaphors describe the unfamiliar and unknown by means of the familiar and the known. That appears to be the only way we can get some idea about the kingdom of God.

We have not always done a good job of uncovering the meanings of the parables. We have frequently truncated, limited and even distorted their meaning. Hence, the kingdom of God has been understood in terms of a new social or political order, as a future millennium, or as an internalized rule of God in our hearts.

That is not really the full picture presented by the Bible, however. The Scriptures affirm rather than the kingdom of God

is an all-pervasive, rather than partial, rule over everything on this earth. Furthermore, the Bible states that this kingdom is imminent, and that it was manifested in Jesus.

That, of course, is the clincher. It is the most difficult thing to fathom and accept, and for at least two reasons. One, though the Gospels state that the rule of God has been unleashed it is not fully apparent to us. We generally see more pain, evil, devastation and destruction than peace, joy and happiness. But the Gospels state that it is here, though it is not fully visible. So, there is a tension between our present reality and the future promise. The Parable of the Mustard Seed speaks about

this slow coming into being of the reign of God, and indicates that it is hidden in those things we often think of as being small, ordinary and insignificant.

Two, what God has in mind for humans was revealed in and through Jesus. He was more than a moral person, insightful teacher or role model. Through Jesus we get a glimpse of God and what God is about to do vis-a-vis the people of this earth. Mind you, sometimes it takes centuries before some of the changes Jesus inaugurated and realized or evident. And, the institution which ought to herald the change often impedes it. Think, for example, of the role of women.

In Jesus' day women were fre-

quently treated like pieces of property, to which a father or husband had exclusive rights. Men had authority and control over women. Jesus, however, did not look at it that way. In fact he was quite radical in his treatment of them. He saw men and women on equal footing, equal in the eyes of God. In his relationship with women he defied all custom, social convention and religious tradition. He made friends with women, taught them the Torah, spoke highly of them, and entrusted them with his most important task: bearing witness to his resurrection.

In the Western world it has taken almost two thousand years for this equality to surface in any

great way, even in the church, and much still needs to be done. But the point is that this is part of God's plan. And, God's reign of peace and justice is coming, here in North American, Latin America and the Middle East, albeit ever so slowly. Bob Dylan sang about it in "A Slow Train Coming."

How do we know the kingdom is coming? Well, we get good indication through the many parables Jesus told. In fact, Jesus himself is a parable. He is the best way to get a handle on the coming reign of God. And, what is that reign all about, and what should we do in regard to it? Read the parables.

Contracts and the student



A contract is an agreement, written or spoken, between two or more persons. It creates an obligation to do or not to do something. When a contract is entered into, the parties usually expect something from each other and will often act in reliance on these expectations. Because of this reliance it is unfair to allow one party to back out of his or her promise to the other party.

What are the requirements for a valid and binding contract?

The first requirement in making a valid and binding contract is that both parties be fully aware of the terms of the contract and its implications. One party must offer these terms and the other party must accept them. Both parties must agree on what is expected of them under the contract and be willing to bring themselves to these promises. The parties must agree to identical terms. The final basic requirement of a valid contract is that something of value must be exchanged between the parties. This might be money, a particular object, or even a favour.

What are some common types of contracts?

SALES CONTRACTS: When you buy something at a store, you enter into a contract with the store for merchandise in exchange for a sum of money. Usually, the receipt or invoice contains terms that are favourable to the store. Even if you do not take the time to read the terms, they will still be binding on you, unless they are very unreasonable.

STANDARD FORM CONTRACTS: When you park your car in a parking garage or take clothing to the dry-cleaners, you will usually receive a ticket stub that states "we are not responsible for any loss or damage" or something to that effect. This is a clause which the business relies on to deny any responsibility for your goods. Even if you do not notice the clause, it is binding on you unless it is completely unreasonable.

CANADA STUDENT LOANS: A student loan is a contract negotiated between a student and a Canadian Chartered Bank. The student has the responsibility of ensuring that

all information declared is accurate and that the government is kept informed of all changes in the student's financial status. These loans are contingent on the student attending an approved educational institution.

UNIVERSITY REGISTRATION: When you pay your tuition fees, you enter into a contract with the University. In exchange for your payment, you receive professional instruction towards the completion of a University degree.

LEASE: When you rent an apartment, you enter into a tenancy agreement which involves a place to live in exchange for a sum of money. A lease binds both the landlord and the tenant to its terms.

What should you know before entering into a contract?

Before you sign or give assent to a contract, you should be sure that you understand all that it will involve. If you can, you should try to read the contract in its entirety. When you sign a contract, it is normally considered to be binding even if you have not read or understood it.

Your signature is proof that you actually intended to enter into this contract.

It is helpful to include in a contract a clause indicating what will happen if one of the parties should breach his or her side of the contract.

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by Terry Rich
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