



In the 60s Rt Rev John Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, was smeared as being an atheist by the Daily Mail, and that label stuck to him, distorting all discussion around what he was trying to say at the time. None of this was helped by Robinson's style of communication which, being a 1950s Oxbridge academic, was limited to 1950s Oxbridge academic language; that is: unintelligible.

I found the book that caused all the fuss, *Honest to God*, quite impenetrable. I'm not sure Robinson himself knew exactly what it was he wanted to say, he just intuitively felt it. The developments in society at the time were all too *new and rapidly changing* for him to coherently explain *why* things were happening, or for us to understand what he was trying to express. Over time, and having read his later books, I now understand what he was trying to say. He felt that the God of the 18th century Enlightenment was as dead as their now passé science, and that we are living in the days after the death of God, not the real God, but the God as defined in 18th century *language and thought*. He was saying that those of us who believe in the Truths as expressed by Jesus need to find new and better ways to articulate those Truths and relate them to the world as it is now. That's what makes both him and me 'Liberals'. In a later book he provided three basic Fundamentals to hang on to as we negotiate the rapid changes in our world. This is Liberal Fundamentalism.

1) **God is God** and Science is Science, don't confuse the two. There is no war between the two, no matter how loudly Richard Dawkins and others shout to the contrary. Science is an important, useful manmade tool that we use to measure the world, the universe, and creation, but which cannot prove or disprove God.

In the 18th century, the spiritual became radically detached from the material. Eventually any notion of transcendence, any intellectual consideration of something beyond the concrete literal touchable measurable realm was jettisoned. And 10,000 years of human experience of reaching out to the Other, reaching beyond to Something else, was discounted. But that is science, a tool of man's creation, which is only a part of God's whole creation. In our worship we reach out to God who meets us in the story of the Gospels which enflames us: a power from beyond ourselves brings healing, forgiveness, and a reconciliation we cannot provide on our own. Our hunger for God cannot be filled by things of this material world. There is no war between God and Science. God is beyond creation, is beyond anything and everything we as humans can ever conceive of. God is God.

2) **Spiritual maturity.** The prophet Micah wrote: *'He has showed you, O man, what is good: To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.'* God says to Ezekiel: *'Mortal man, stand up, I want to talk to you.'* God's Spirit entered Ezekiel and he was set upon his feet. We are grown-ups now, expected to bear with the world maturely. Paul wrote, *'When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child... Do not be like children in your thinking, but be grown-up in your thinking.'*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote; *'To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way, but to be a Human; not a type of human, but the human that Christ creates in us.'*

Paul also wrote: *'Freedom is what we have; Christ has set us free! Stand then, as free people, and do not allow yourselves to become slaves.'* If we are going to be of service to our neighbours, if we are going love others as God loves us, we need to be mature children of God, not emotionally dependent like babies, not in a state of adolescent rebellion, but rather enjoying the adult, responsible freedom of his beloved *heirs of the kingdom*.

3) **Live in the present.** Despite being a 'Liberal', I do believe that when God resurrected Jesus, he shattered all known boundaries, released us from the fear of death, and thereby encouraged us to live in the present in order to transform the world through Love and Compassion while striving at all times for the Kingdom. The only thing we can actually know about the future is that God is there waiting for us with joy and love unbounded. Today there is only Now, where the ascended Christ is ever present. The Kingdom is real, it's here and it's now. Now is where we need to be of service.

Jesus told us that the Kingdom of God is small like a mustard seed, but if put in the proper medium it will grow all on its own, and it is something that will draw people everywhere to it. Not because of our individual doctrines, or our styles of worship, or our personal moral standards, but because, like when Paul and Silas were in prison they were still free men, and like them we too can sing to God with joy even in the darkest of hours. Praise God.