

## About the Author



*Arthur J. Smith*

It seems appropriate for me to introduce myself and explain how a non-credentialed layman became the author of three books on Christianity. To begin at the very beginning, I was born in southern Indiana in 1936 during the lingering aftermath of the great depression, and I grew up through the Second World War era in what was essentially a Christian home. There I learned the basic precepts of Christian thought and virtue from my parents – particularly from my father who was a devout believer. From my earliest years I instinctively knew that there was a God, but I envisioned Him as being very obscure and impersonal. What I knew about Christianity growing up was largely filtered through my father's personal faith, which was narrowly based upon a vision in which he had seen Christ. Through an earlier hostile church encounter, in which his vision was labeled as satanic, he soon lost confidence in all churches. Therefore, none of our family ever commonly attended church. Nevertheless, my father regularly prayed and diligently studied his Bible, and he encouraged me by his example to do so as well. But, my busy lifestyle and broad secular interests at school and later at work always seemed to leave me little opportunity. I eventually moved away from home to seek better employment, whereupon I later married, and went about earning a living to support my wife and two children. My personal leather-covered Bible, given to me by my father, was forgotten and collected dust on a shelf. Looking back, I can see that God had often led me along the way in making various sound life choices while protecting me from many serious pitfalls; but, at the time He was far from my thoughts as I pursued my secular lifestyle.

My first personal encounter with Jesus Christ was in a dream, which came at a time when my spiritual life was near its lowest ebb. In my dream I was wandering alone lost in a sand-filled desert with no sense of direction. The sun was extremely hot, and I was exhausted from lack of food and water. Suddenly a bright light shown down upon me, whose brilliance caused the sun to dim as if it were nearly extinguished. Under the great light's powerful force, I fell down into the sand and felt my body slowly dissolving to become one with the grains of sand about it. Soon all was darkness in which I had no sense of awareness. How long I remained in that state of unawareness was uncertain, but eventually I began to sense awareness again as I felt someone take my hand and felt my body coming together out of the elements. I was then lifted up from the sand by that hand to stand upon my feet. The overwhelmingly intense light was still there as before, but it no longer had any detrimental effect upon me. In the reflected brilliance of that light, I saw a man dressed in exceedingly bright white who was holding my hand and gently smiling at me. His face was the most beautiful I have ever seen, and as I recognized Him I cried out aloud, "Thou art the Lord my God!" But, then the scene immediately changed, and I saw standing before me another man dressed in an ordinary suit and tie. Although his face was obscured, I was made to understand that this man had answers that I sought and needed to hear. I remember that I rebelled against the notion that I could receive spiritual things of any value from a mere man when I abruptly awoke from the dream. I wondered about this man and how and when I would encounter him.

The dream had badly shaken me making my daily life at work and even at home with my wife and family much harder to endure. The mental pressures on me intensified until one day in 1979 as I was driving home from work, I pulled up to an intersection at a red traffic light and with that stop I finally gave up on all hope in my own abilities to achieve any kind of life acceptable to God. There and then, I cried aloud for Jesus to save me from my great sin and guilt. When the traffic light turned green and I drove away, I sensed that something inside me had changed.

I developed a great hunger for God's Word, and I soon discovered that thereafter when I read Scripture it became alive – as if someone had turned on a bright light in a darkened room. Athirst for biblical Truth, and still remaining wary of traditional church teaching from my earlier upbringing, I began a determined effort to directly analyze Holy Scriptures on my own while praying that the Holy Spirit would be my personal guide and instructor. One day while searching for a radio station in my car as I ate lunch in a nearby park, I heard a

country preacher with a drawl who was speaking on the book of Galatians. I considered changing the station to one that was airing music, but I became curious how this bumpkin would grapple with the teachings I had received earlier in my youth regarding grace and works. To my amazement, everything he said agreed with my own interpretation of that Scripture. I was hooked. Every weekday thereafter, I was compelled to tune in to that noon broadcast until I finally realized that just perhaps this could be the man I had been seeking – although I still could not see his face. That man was Dr. J. Vernon McGee and the broadcast was *Thru the Bible Radio*. That radio program became my Bible School for the next five years as I studied through the entire Bible chapter by chapter, and I used it as an outline and commentary for my individual studies.

Having discovered that I was not totally alone in my faith, I became anxious to search for still other believers with whom I could fellowship face to face. I dared not just drop in on any local church at random while hoping for the best, so I continued studying the Bible and praying that a choice would soon be made clear to me. At that very time, I stumbled on to a brief five-minute radio broadcast that aired each day on my drive home from work. It was a local minister speaking, and the non-denominational church-sponsored program was called *The Bible has the Answer*. Everything I heard I verified with Scripture, and it compared well with my own interpretations. Even after months of listening, I actually rebelled when a small still voice within urged me to visit that church next Sunday. Even after the second command to go, I stubbornly refused. However, the third time I heard that voice within me it was so intense that I was compelled to obey. In doing so I found a conservative church home that I attended for the next eleven years before I moved away from the area. While there, I was privileged to meet and talk with “refugees” from various denominational backgrounds allowing me to sort out their many doctrinal issues and distinctions. I was also introduced to the vast subject of church history by Dr. Fredrick W. Evans Jr. – a godly man and church historian who was the senior pastor.

Meanwhile, I had begun to expand my own study notes into topical essays in an effort to express biblical truths in my own words as they had been revealed to me by the Holy Spirit from the pages of Holy Scripture. Over the years, I diligently compared and honed my own analysis of Scripture against the views of many theologians of the past as well as the present, but I was determined that Scripture must always have the ultimate authority over the opinions of man. As the number of these topical essays mounted, I began to realize that my notes and essays could be organized to create a complete study of the essential doctrines and practices of the Christian faith. I also began to think that those studies could benefit other believers who found themselves where I had begun earlier, lest they sink into the quicksand of popular opinion and nebulous church tradition rather than firmly adhering to the solid foundation of God’s Word. It was with that thought and purpose that I began to organize my topics into chapters and sections even as I began to edit them for easier reading by others. This early effort became the basis for Book I and Book II of this work.

Having initially encountered much difficulty in seeking out a sound local church that consistently interpreted essential theological doctrines in a way that was similar to my own careful interpretation of the Scriptures, I became interested in discovering how the wide diversity and divisiveness of modern-day churches had come into being; in Christ, we should all find unity, not divisiveness. That perplexity drove me to a personal study of church history from the church’s inception on the day of Pentecost to the present day. I then cautiously extrapolated a tentative path over which present events and trends could eventually bridge from the present age to the time of the apocalyptic events recorded in the book of Revelation. This study of church history extending through the present into the doctrines of the last days became the basis for Book III.

By late 2010, the fully organized manuscript of this work had been edited and published into the three volumes that are now presented here on this web site along with regular monthly newsletters that reiterate and expand upon various important doctrines as well as address significant spiritual issues of the day that help promote continuing biblical reform. It is my sincere hope and prayer that God will make use of this work to help unite his Elect throughout the world during this interval of diminishing peace preceding the even greater ordeals and severe persecutions that await the true Church as we near the final days of this age of grace.

*Arthur J. Smith, 2015*