

## A Draft

### What I Believe

When I was about twelve years old, I attended the annual week of revival meetings held at our rural church. Nearly everyone at our church attended as it was like a social event. Each year a new itinerate revival preacher was invited to speak to us each evening, Tuesday through Sunday. The meetings were usually preceded by a pot luck dinner and a musical number by a member...usually a youngster. (See How Dr. Glenn Became a Professional Speaker in the Professional Section of Dr. Glenn's website. It occurred during one of these revival meetings). Then, after a few announcements and several bible passages, the touring evangelist told us how we were all sinners and were gonna go to Hell if we didn't repent. There wasn't a lot of opportunities to sin where I grew up...no bars, no gambling... oh sure, we were too proud when our corn rows were straighter than our neighbors and our one neighbor drank beer and played bingo (he was one of those Catholics) but for the most part we worked hard doing what farmers did...planting and harvesting crops and caring for our cows, pigs and chickens. This fact didn't seem to phase our evangelist as he never seemed to let up on us... comparing us to thieves and murderers...and constantly reminding us of our unpleasant fate if we refused to be "saved."

On the third evening of the revival, the minister called for those of us yet to be saved to come to the alter to repent our sins. After about nine verses (exaggeration is a sin too) of the song, **Come As You Are** (...taste the living water, and never thirst again... come just as you are...come and live forevermore.), the minister looked out into the congregation and shouted, "Glenn Saltzman, have you been saved?" I tried to make myself very small, but the next thing I knew he was now coming down the isle and into my

row to sit next to me! Loudly, he repeated the same question several times and I kept shaking my head NO. He was unrelenting, escalating his comments to, "On the way home tonight Glenn, you might be killed in an auto accident, and if you haven't been saved you will spend eternity in the fires of Hell!" I snuck a peek and saw that the teenagers smart enough to go immediately to the altar to avoid individual harassment were smiling at their cleverness and my naivety! I also remember thinking, rather strangely I now conclude, that I couldn't be killed in an auto accident as I only lived one quarter mile from the church and had walked to the service...how could I be killed in an auto accident? I kept shaking my head NO and the minister kept repeating his belief that I was doomed. I just wished that folks would stop looking at me and that he would go away! Finally, he did! The service ended, no one said anything more to me (or for that matter ever again) and I walked home with my mother.

When we got home, my mom made herself some tea and got me a glass of milk and some cookies. We sat at the kitchen table. Mom said, "Glenn, I want you to know that what you did tonight was the right thing for you to do. You have to make your own decisions in life and not blindly do what others tell you to do. The bible says GOD IS LOVE and I think he wraps us in love and wants us to get better each day and doesn't expect us to be perfect. Jesus is like a big brother and sets an example of how we might be better folks. Keep trying to get better each day and don't judge yourself by what others think you should do or be. Let's go to bed."

The closest we ever came to talking about that again was when on each of my visits during the last months of my mother's life, we discussed each chapter of the book **The Prophet** that I had given her. Each week we would discuss a chapter of her choice, each week her choosing a chapter other than the one "On

Death,” which was getting closer and closer to being her reality. Finally, a couple of weeks before her death, with all of the other chapters crossed off, she said, I guess it’s time to discuss that last one. We did and it was one of the great honors of my life. We shared what we believed, and I told her what she had told me so many years before about God being love and Jesus being an altruistic role model...not so much about being “saved” as about serving others...and trying to get better every day. We agreed that Heaven and Hell were probably experienced here on earth, and that our eternal contributions were probably going to be the legacy lived on in others we had served. I promised her that I would try to get better each day as my tribute to her and that she had surely been my role model of a life of service. At the end of that time with her, I knew I would never see her alive again, but knew that she would always be alive within me.

My sister, Ruth, was “saved” when she was eighteen and I doubt that she ever strayed from her, and her husband Carl’s, youthful commitments. Each Christmas, Ruth would write me, and along with her Christmas wishes, tell me how proud she was of me, how I was a really good brother but that she worried about my soul and prayed that I would be saved (accept Christ as my personal savior). On her death bed, one week before she died, she had Carl tell me that her dying wish was that I would “find Christ” and that she could die knowing that I had done so. I said to her that that was not the way I believed...and Carl said, “Glenn, there is only one way.” That revival minister and my sister both believed that there was only one way. I think my mother laid the foundation of my faith by explaining God as the Love Force that surrounds us, motivating us to be better people, and that Satan is, in fact, the Hate Force, tugging daily at our negative behaviors, which we must strive to overcome.

Recently, I attended a Rotary meeting and the speaker (attempted to) explain the Big Bang Theory to us. Most of us were dazzled by the enormity of theory. He mentioned that there

are more than 100,000 heavenly bodies with atmospheres similar to the Earth's! He was asked if he thought there might be life on some of these bodies and he said, "As a human I would say yes, but as a scientist I would have to say we don't know for sure yet."

Voyager 1 was launched September 5, 1977, and after traveling over 13 billion miles, left our solar system in 1980. It has been estimated that it will still be silently traveling deep into space, long after our sun has died, several billion years from now. All of this...constantly updated information about our universe...and the probability that there may be many universes...raises some questions as to why more about all of this was not explained in the Bible, for surely The Creator would know. The Middle Eastern Centric world explained in the Bible might be blamed on the sages of the time...but a Creator would have known and might have explained more to us. I don't want to sound like I don't believe in God, but for me, God is the Love Force of the universe is a concept I can wrap my head and arms around. How can one go wrong believing that God is the Love Force and the Devil is the Hate Force? Love forces us to embrace kindness, service and selflessness while hate promotes meanness and selfishness.

I guess I will never completely understand how the Earth was conceived or how the Universe behaves...but I know that following the Golden Rule, the Ten Commandments and Embracing Love as one's purpose will give meaning to our lives.

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