

Understanding Christian Commitment 1 The Spirit Realm Reality

The Argument

1. God exists (God is spirit Jn 4:24).

This is the basic and essential assertion. If God does not exist then Nature is a closed system which is the source of everything. Then, according to the theory of Evolution, Nature is self-generating, self-regulating, self-defining and self-concluding.

2. The spirit realm exists (spirit source).

If God exists then God exists somewhere. God (as Creator) is different from everything else (the creation). Using Biblical language, I place God (the Father) on a throne in the highest heaven, where He has total power and authority over His creation. The spirit realm is not just an idea realm but a place of separately existing beings or spirits. Spirits are the beings of the spirit world. The Bible is the textbook on the nature and behaviour of the spirit world and our means of interacting with it. The spirit realm (the heavens) is a creation even as the earth is a creation (Gen 1:1). This original creation is good but elements of it have become rebellious and the creation is under the judgement of God which we experience as corruption and death (Gen 3:3, Rom 8:20-22).

3. There are good and evil spirits (spirit behaviour).

Morality finds its source in the spirit realm. A good spirit (or angel) is obedient to God. An evil spirit (or demon) is disobedient to God. Human beings do not create moral values. Good and evil are established in the heavens. We are part of a moral universe determined by God. As human beings we reflect the moral issues and struggles of the cosmos. There is warfare in the spirit realm. Humanism asserts the human origin of values (morality). Moral values existed before human beings were created (Gen 1:4).

4. The spirit is the source of life (spirit life in humans).

Human beings have a spirit (and a soul and a body). It is the spirit that gives us life as human beings. Animals have a body and a (rudimentary) soul but not a spirit. God breathed into Man the breath of life and Man became a living being (Gen 2:7). Humans have a spirit (spiritual life), a soul (psychological life) and a body (physical life) (1Thes 5:23). The source of our life is not our body but our spirit. It is the spirit that gives life, not the flesh (Jn 6:63). We see things (or are shown things) in our spirit. Our spirit bears an image of what we see (or are shown). That image has spirit force in our life.

5. What spirit are you of (spirit identity)?

Jesus claimed that His disciples did not know what manner of spirit they were of (Lk 9:55). Equally, we may ask what spirit animates our spirit. If we claim that spirit force is powered by an image (or images), we may then ask what image is driving our behaviour. It is very interesting to note that the second of the Ten Commandments requires that there be no carved (or graven) image of God (Ex 20:4-6, Deut 5:8-10). We must be very particular in our Christian imagery. Spirits work by images (art). An image invokes a spirit. We must recognise the spirit influences under which we come in this or any culture. We must choose whom (what) we obey. A culture can be defined as a system of images. Modern TV advertising is a current example of the power of an image. So that we could claim that the advertising image has spirit force once it has got passed the barrier of our psychological defences.

6. Jesus Christ rules the spirit world (spirit authority).

In the NT Jesus Christ is portrayed as being above all principality and power. 'You are complete in Him who is the head

of all principality and power' (Col 2:10). He is also the agent through whom the spiritual powers were created. 'For in Him all things were created that are in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or lordships, whether rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him' (Col 1:16). Again Paul says that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father 'far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come. He has put all things under His feet and has given Him to be head over all things' (Eph 1:21-22). Also 'having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the Cross' (Col 2:15). So whatever chaos we may conceive in the spirit world, Jesus Christ rules above it.

7. We live in spirit clarity or spirit confusion (spirit life).

Each one of us has a spirit life to live. Our spirit interacts with the spirit world. We are shown things in the spirit. What we are shown has spirit and life force and determines much of our behaviour. We live out of our spirit. If we describe a spirit force as an 'image', then our life can be said to depend on the image out of which we choose to live. If our life is lived consistently out of one image then we have integrity and wholeness. If we live out of a number of images (often conflicting) then we live a confused and self-bewildering life. An image can be expressed psychologically as a role. The unhappy or unwholesome person is the one living out of (seeking to obey) conflicting or confusing roles or spirit images. There is also the question of how adequate for life is the image under which I live.

8. Which image do I serve (spirit image)?

The question now becomes which image do I serve? An image has a spirit force that means that I must obey it. I will conform myself (soul) to the image I obey. I am powerless before the image that I worship. As a Christian I must ask what image do I bear. Is the image that I pursue a Christian image? Is it a Christ-generated and a Christian-generating image? It is therefore essential that I conform myself (or be conformed) to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Christ in me is the Holy Spirit in my spirit creating the image of Christ in me for His glory and for my salvation. I must become committed to the image and the presence of Christ in me. There are many images in the culture and in the heavens ready to challenge the power and presence of Christ in me.

9. Jesus Christ is to become the central image (the Christ image).

For me to be a committed Christian, Jesus Christ must be the central image and spirit force of my life. My spirit dictates who I am. My spirit generates and directs my behaviour. To the Christian a false image is an idol. Idolatry is submitting to the wrong image and sorcery is using (cooperating with) the wrong spirit power. Just as the Holy Spirit is a spirit power in our life, an idol can be a mask for an evil spirit power or demon (1Cor 10:19-21). I need to commit myself to the pure image of Christ, ministered to me by the Holy Spirit.

10. Is Jesus Christ the central image of your life?

I have to get my spiritual life together under one spirit (one image). For the Christian, this is the Spirit of Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of holiness. If my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19) then I have to clean up the temple and its precincts. I need to learn to function in a God-fearing way. I need to establish godly character (1Tim 4:7).

11. How do I make Jesus Christ central to my spirit and therefore my behaviour?

This is really about becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. I am going to indicate four ways:

12. Get a Bible mind.

The Bible is our textbook of spirit realm activity. To get a Bible mind means that I use Bible (spirit) language, I seek Bible (spirit) experience, I love Bible revelation of the spirit and I look forward to Bible history fulfilment. I learn to love the Word of God. In fact, I am given (supernaturally) a love for the Word of God. I want God (I ask God) to speak to me through Scripture. May I have a clarified spirit life that can handle appropriately, God's spirit revelation to me. Established in the Word of God, I listen to what Jesus says in Mark 8:34 which says that if I want to be a follower of Jesus then I must

13. Deny my Self

14. Carry my Cross

15. Follow Jesus.

The rest of the course is about doing this.

The Spirit Realm Diagram

The human being consists of spirit, soul and body. This corresponds to the spiritual, psychological and physical dimensions of our human being.

	1	2	3	4	5
Spirit (given)	Revelation Vision	Image Sensing	Feeling Presence	Authority Powers	Territory Possession
Soul (responsible)	Thought Mind	Choice Imagination	Emotion Habit	Cross Self	Personality Person
Body (given)	Speech Genes	Behaviour Events	Sensation Parents	Obedience Society	Place Circumstance

The Spirit (spiritual realm) is the area in our being for the activity of spirits. My spirit responds to other spirit activity in my spirit space (Mtt 12:43-45). A feeling indicates the presence of a spirit in my spirit. We cannot control our feelings or what we feel. Nor do we know where our feelings come from. We can only control our response to a feeling or a spirit presence. The spirit realm is an authority realm. A liberal church which denies the spiritual realm will usually have a very democratic and non-hierarchical approach to authority. Such a church has great difficulty with ordination. A church that recognises the spirit realm will recognise authority and allow for hierarchy (1Cor 11:3). 'You have many teachers but not many fathers' (1Cor 4:15). The Radical Movement rejects fathering as paternalism and isolates people for spiritual attack. They have no covering in their spirit.

The Soul (psychological realm) consists of the will (choice), the mind (thought) and emotions (habits). This is the area for personal responsibility. It is my responsibility to choose which image in my spirit I will follow. The spirit force of the image I choose will help establish my mind and the way I think. It is also my responsibility to choose which feelings in my spirit I will go with. So with the force of my decision and the arrangements of my thinking I will create emotional patterns by which I live and define myself. As I grow in these choices, thoughts and habits I build a Self. My Self is constructed by me from my interpretation of my experiences. This is always an ongoing process as my experiences and my interpretation of them continually interact and change. I can never really locate an absolute original Self, which I must believe in when I am trying to find my Self. The Self that

is sought is always changed in the process of being found. However, I may recognise a behaviour originally generated by a spirit image. **The Body** (physical realm) is the realm in which I behave and in which I interact with social and cultural givens. I do not determine when, where or by whom I am born. Although I speak, I speak by means of a language provided for me that, hopefully, lets me express what I believe is happening to me and around me. All of what I do, I do in the context of what is happening around me. The question becomes whether I am event-driven or spirit-driven. Am I living out of my circumstances or out of my spirit choice? If I choose (out of a spirit of fear or a pagan spirit of God-rejection) to live out of my circumstances, then I lose integrity. If I live consistently out of my (chosen) spirit image then my mind (thought life) and emotions are consistent with my behaviour. My behaviour is not a response to the environment but a response to God (and the God-Christ image) in my spirit.

Cross carrying. The Cross is the true doctor of our soul. There are two crosses in scripture: the Cross (capital C) that Jesus carried and the cross (small c) that His disciple carries. Jesus models cross carrying. The cross is the peculiar Christian symbol. It is only the power and grace of God that can change a vicious form of public execution into an eternal form of human deliverance. The Cross of Calvary that Jesus carried could only be carried by Him. By the Cross of Calvary our redemption is complete and our salvation is possible. For the disciple, the carrying of their cross is the way to follow Jesus. Jesus has shown the Way (He is the Way) and, if I want to be a follower of His, then I am to carry my cross. My cross is the means by which I offer my self to God as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1).

Cross carrying forces the image choice, rivets the total attention of the soul and nails the body to the place of personal sacrifice.