

A person is seen from behind, sitting on a blue and white striped beach chair on a sandy beach. Their hands are clasped behind their head, and they are looking out at a large, billowing white cloud that fills much of the sky. The ocean is visible in the distance under a clear blue sky. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

The Understandable Story of God

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PROLOGUE

After being raised from the dead, and for the two thousand years following, what was it that Jesus was supposed to be doing, and was it the same as what we imagined he had been doing?

Whether you believe there was a Jesus who existed and was resurrected, or half believe, or don't believe at all, there remains a question concerning the plan according to the logic of Jesus' *mission statement*?

Yes, Jesus had a mission statement: *I've come to finish the work my Father started,*¹ and *I've come only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*²

In the days when having a mission statement started becoming the rage, I worked for a company who took management out for a weekend to discuss, amongst other things, what should be written on their mission statement. During the first afternoon session, a relaxed, casual, and easy-going environment was provided in a cosy picturesque bushland amphitheatre nestled amongst tall conifers. The setting was meant to stimulate participants in the inspired generating of words, phrases, and sentences that could be used to describe the core values of our organisation. The soul of the company in a single paragraph was what we were determined to find.

After several hours, the white board was full of the good intentions the company would commit to from the top to the bottom ranks. Features such as *customer service*, *ethical integrity*, *best practice*, and *product delivery* were combined with adjectives such as *excellent*, and *outstanding*. All the sorts of things that no one had ever thought about writing on a mission statement before, except of course it's exactly what everyone writes on a mission statement, and this did not make our general manager happy. He wanted something unique.

Before our brainstorming concluded for the day we were asked to *sleep on it*, so that in the morning with freshened minds we could take turns revealing the stroke of inspiration that had come – hopefully in a dream – to each of us.

The next day began with a great expectation that a unique and inspirational corporate message would crystallise from the combined intelligence of the companies best and brightest. However, it was soon clear that what most people did overnight was consult a thesaurus and hunt for synonyms for *excellent* and *outstanding* as alternate and additional adjectives. Hence, literary creations such as *excellently brilliant*, and *pre-eminently outstanding customer service* started sounding around. I took a different approach when my

¹ John 4:34

² Matthew 15:24; Luke 19:10

turn came for an inspired offering; I was looking for laughs. My inspired mission statement for the company was:

“Crush our enemies, see them driven before us, and hear the lamentation of their women.” (Conan the Barbarian: 1982)

(Old Serbian proverb: if your incapable of adding anything constructive add humour, and maybe no one will notice.)

No person has ever been able to read a corporate mission statement from start to finish. My record is the first line before feeling the sting of having my cheek slapped by someone pulling me out of a coma. But I’m sure with an added quote or two from Conan the Barbarian mission statements would be far more readable. In fact, I think people would not only read them but share them around. And the advantage of that for a business, when it eventually winds up in court for unsavoury and brutal corporate practices, would be as a defence: *Your Honor, as you can see, we’ve lived up to all the moral expectations clearly outlined in our mission statement, which everyone has been reading and smiling at for years – we hid nothing!*

I did get the laughs I sort, and the company eventually got its mission statement lovingly embossed on a large bronze plaque for every office, and in print on all official corporate literature:

“We are committed to the delivery of excellent... blah, blah, blah...”

Perhaps Jesus should have added a quote or two from Conan the Barbarian in his mission statement, and we would have paid more attention to what he said he came to do.

By all accounts, when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, the leaders of Judaism found it almost impossible to fathom what it was they were dealing with. And it is not surprising they had difficulties. With Jesus, they were introduced to a seemingly fairer and more reasonable expression of God’s personality. Something that confused the living daylights out of the Rabbis and Pharisees. So much so, they understandably tested the theory of whether Jesus was really the Son of God.

However, their tests did little to clarify things and probably left them even more confused, because he acted nothing like what they were expecting God’s son to act like, and yet he was performing miracles like there was no end to them while dispensing clever verbal responses that showed deftly insight into the scriptures and the mind of God.

For the Jewish leaders at the time, Jesus seemed completely different to God. So, if he was God's son, perhaps he was one of those sons that wanted to distance themselves from their parents as much as possible. But he kept insisting that he and his father are united,¹ which sounds nothing like a child rebelling against the family business. They must have found it odd that despite claiming such unity, Jesus didn't appear to have many, if any, of his father's idiosyncrasies.

If we were to be bravely honest, and defined God by everything people wrote about him in the Old Testament, many of His actions could be classified as borderline psychopathic, with a few actions crossing that twilight border and staying for an extended holiday.

For instance, around 1000 BC, King David conducted a census of the population of Israel, and for a reason not clearly understood this practical action of government completely infuriated God to the extent that all sense of proportion was lost, and with fearful vengeance the Almighty struck dead 70,000 of his own people with the plague.²

Would anyone, other than Stalin, not think this was an overreaction? But events such as this are rarely openly questioned by *true believers*, and it is by no means an exceptional case. In another instance, a man was caught *gathering sticks on the sabbath day*.³ Now, the penalty for doing any form of work on the sabbath was capital punishment, so, it seemed reasonable for God to have the man taken away and stoned to death.

Even more spine-chilling was the instruction given to the children of Israel that upon entering and possessing the land promised to them, the local inhabitants should all be put to the sword ... *save alive nothing that breaths!*⁴

Faced with these examples, a *true believer* has no real alternative but to agree that God's actions are fair, just, and good; since, quite worryingly, an all-powerful deity exhibiting such a temperament may just as easily do away with you, should you cause him offence. It was a survival strategy used extensively within the court of Joseph Stalin.

To avoid being placed on one of Stalin's *shooting lists* during the Great Purge,⁵ it was important to smile while agreeing enthusiastically that the execution of hundreds of thousands of people was exactly what the nation needed to have done.

In the case of Stalin and his murderous purges, party members could think what they like as long as they didn't express or share their misgivings or give any indication that they felt the

¹ John 10:30

² 1Chronicles 21:1-17

³ Numbers 15:32-36

⁴ Deuteronomy 20:16,17

⁵ Purge of the Communist Party of the USSR (1936-1938) 700,000 executed.

great leader was a homicidal maniac, but we know for certain that many within the party did think exactly that.

Shortly after Stalin's death, there was an immediate halt to the *shooting lists*, and orders were given for the release of millions of political prisoners from the Gulags: a good indication of what most of the *comrades* really thought of their dead leader's time in office.

When Nikita Khrushchev, a sycophantic subordinate of Stalin, became Premier of the Soviet Union he openly denounced his former boss in an address to the Communist Party. Was there even the slightest sign of Khrushchev's dissatisfaction with Stalin while he was alive? Of course not, his thoughts were safely tucked away.

True believers do not have that luxury. They imagine God is constantly reading there every thought and forming a judgement on them. For a true believer there is no escape from God, even in your own mind. They cannot even doubt the moral value of a questionable horrific action without some fear that they are committing heresy by the very thought. It is not good enough just to verbally express complete agreement, you must also be convinced by it. You would think lying to yourself would cause mental conflict, but in the words of the philosopher George Costanza *it's not a lie if you believe it*.

The religious leaders of Judaism, at the time Christ, were quite comfortable with the God they had dedicated their life reading and learning about. They thought they understood his character; what He liked and didn't like, and then they were introduced to his son.

Jesus came along and didn't seem to care about keeping the sabbath, was not interested in stoning anyone, and reduced the 613 laws of Moses to just love God and everyone else.¹ It was almost like God realised that in the past he may have been a bit over-the-top, and as a public relations exercise sent his son, who, having superior people skills would lift the *family* image. And without doubt, if Jesus did come to improve the family image, he did a decent job of it, but was that the *mission* he said he came to complete?

One of the tests given to Jesus was deciding on the fate of a woman caught in the act of adultery.² The leaders of Judaism knew exactly what Jesus' father would have done: God would have been hopping mad, but it is recorded that as they dragged the woman towards him Jesus just sat scribbling in the sand with his finger showing absolutely no interest whatsoever in the commotion surrounding him.

Most people know the rest of the story: Jesus says something clever that confuses those persecuting the woman, the crowd disperse in disappointment – no stoning today – and she

¹ Matthew 22:36-40

² John 8:1-11

is sent on her way, but not before a warning *not to sin again*; presumably, he might not be around next time to save her from these psychopaths.

We don't really know what Jesus was thinking while he was *doodling* in the sand, or why he did not act as you would expect God to act. But there is reason to suspect that something is not quite right with our understanding of what is of interest to the characters of God and Jesus.

You would think the question on everyone's lips would be *why the difference between Father and Son*? But as shown earlier, when dealing with all powerful entities such as the Inquisition, Stalin, or God, it's safer not to look too closely at contradictions lest you become accused of being critical. Fear is the issue, and in respect to God, it's not just the fear of divine retribution, it's also the fear that dwelling on contradictions may lead to conclusive proof that the notions that had given comfort your entire life are a fantasy.

But let's put fear aside momentarily, and consider the possibility that God isn't everything that people have ever written or claimed about him. And let's assume it's not a tragedy that much of what has been cobbled together to form the bible is either commentary or diary and wasn't a dictation from God.

In the case of King David and the census that led to 70,000 dead Israelites. There is no reason to doubt that the King did conduct a census, and that some time shortly afterwards the Israelites were struck by a killer plague. Naturally, people being people, and always needing a reason for why bad things happen decided that the census must have aggravated God. I have a nephew who once exhibited similar behaviour. Up until the age of four if he accidentally stubbed a toe, or banged his head, he would glare intensely at the first person he saw after the event as if they had done it.

Jesus spent considerable time dispelling misunderstandings surrounding divine cause and effect. His disciples would frequently pose questions concerning the moral cause for tragic life events, such as the man they had come across who was blind from birth.¹ The disciples wanted to know who was to blame for his misfortune. Who had sinned, *the blind man or his parents*. Jesus made it clear; no one had sinned, things just sometimes go wrong.

Then, in a breaking news story of the day, a building collapsed killing eighteen Galileans.² Naturally the disciples wanted to know if this tragedy happened because of divine punishment. The implication was clear, the victims of this calamity must have been *sinners*, but when the question was posed to Jesus he simply said, *physics can be a cow*

¹ John 9:1-3

² Luke 13:1-5

(paraphrased). And no doubt, had the engineers paid more attention to stress loads, standardised codes of practice, and the appropriate selection of building materials, the eighteen would have lived to die a more contemporary natural death from malnutrition, water borne diseases, syphilis, or stonings.

To many true believers, the mere thought that the story of King David's census was penned by someone just trying to make sense of events at that time is a blasphemous heresy full of mortal danger. A bit like meeting Stalin for the first time and telling him *you're a heck of lot shorter in real life*.

There is no reason to doubt that many of the events in the bible are more or less correct, but God's opinion and reaction to them is probably highly speculative. Our estimation of people is heavily biased by what we are told or see of their behaviour and response to circumstance. Any action, therefore, attributed to God will colour our image of his personality. Considering what we know of God has been written by people we've never met, and in many cases are anonymous, this could account for the perceived discrepancies between Jesus and his father, and why they seem to have completely different personalities.

At this point, the true believer may be experiencing feelings of insecurity and even pangs of anxiety, but things are not as bad as they may feel. If Jesus and God are perfectly united in purpose, then what Jesus is interested in should exactly match his father's objectives. And if these *interests* and *objectives* can be reconciled it should lead to a clearer picture of the goals, strategy, and intent of *Father and Son*.

And this brings us back to the *mission statement*: *I come to finish the work my father started.*¹ What exactly is this *work*, when did his father discuss it, and where and how did Jesus describe it?

The first two parts: *what exactly is the work and when did his father discuss it*, are straight forward. There may have been a lot written in what we call the Old Testament, but by far the only thing that can be considered an ongoing project are the promises that God made to Abraham:

I will make your name great ... you will be a great nation ... your seed shall be like the stars of heaven ... they will possess and control the gates of their enemies ... they will be the head and not the tail ... I will confirm all

¹ John 4:34

*this through your offspring ... and this kingdom will be a blessing to all the families, people, and nations of the earth.*¹ (Genesis 12,15, 17, 26 ...)

It certainly sounds like God has a detailed planned undertaking in mind: first build a Kingdom, make it dominant, and then use it for the benefit of all humanity. The same plan was echoed through Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons who formed the twelve houses of Israel. The promises of God, which are the backbone of the project to save humanity, were later restated by the prophets of Israel even while it looked like the project was failing catastrophically.

Jesus arrived approximately two thousand years after God's plan was first outlined to Abraham. And by the time Jesus was walking the streets of Jerusalem, the project's future looked bleak. Without doubt, it needed *finishing*. The kingdom that was promised had broken apart, the twelve houses of Israel were dispersed, exiled, and lost, and what remained was clinging on as best it could under the yoke of Roman rule.

What is surprising, is that there is little regard given by *true believers* to the notion that without the restoration of the houses of Israel God's word is a complete failure, and so is his son Jesus whose mission it was to *finish the work his father started*. To get around this unconscionable prospect, we've spent most of the last two thousand years believing that the Church is the replacement for the promise that was made to Abraham, but this unintentional attempt to do God a favour by covering up, what could be described as a disastrous fiasco, is unnecessary. God was in possession of a broken, lost, and scattered Kingdom that he vowed would be *great* (that must be a bit embarrassing), and so Jesus was commissioned to regather and rebuild it, not find a substitute.

The question as to why it was deemed necessary for God to make such far reaching promises to Abraham and his offspring is barely considered by many true believers: the *promises* were not a reward for work well done. The Kingdom that would be built through the descendance of Abraham was a response to the dilemma facing humanities future.

In whatever way the events surrounding Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden may be perceived, there can be little doubt that the message after eating of that allegorical Tree of Knowledge,² is that humanity was on a path to death. The solution, however, was immediately foretold but it would be a rough and painful journey, much like *giving birth*,³ but through the seed of Eve *salvation* would come; and that promise, was the beginning of prophecy.

¹ Appendix A: *Promises to the fathers of Israel*.

² Genesis 2:17

³ Genesis 3:16; Revelation 12:1,2

The religious leaders, of what was left of God's Kingdom at the time of Jesus, had to contend with the apparent failure of that promise. Two thousand years after the oath was sworn to Abraham there was nothing great or inspiring about the Kingdom of God. It was in subjection to the Romans, and before that the Greeks, Persians, and then the Babylonians. Those in charge of what remained had all but given up on the idea that the great things told to Abraham and his offspring were any sort of reality they were likely to experience. And so instead, they became obsessed with ritual, ceremony, and religious piety as a replacement for a vision of a promised Kingdom they could not imagine eventuating. This was one of many criticisms Jesus had of the leaders of Judaism – they were blind to God's conviction that he would see his promised project to completion: and who could blame them.

After two millennia, God's project is just as mysterious to much of Christianity. Interestingly, many churches today are fixated on the same concerns that obsessed Judaism at the time of Christ – the focus on morality – as if that were the central issue with God's project. But it never was, and it still isn't.

It's not that morals aren't important; they are important to everyone, even atheists are known to be moral. Our morals are a product of conscience and practicality, and our conscience comes from our inherent empathy. Hence, every culture or group end up formulating a set of moral ethics based on values that are consistent among all reasonable humans. Our difficulty is keeping to the codes of conduct we set for ourselves. But we like them, need them, and understand their practical use for building functional communities that are pleasant to live in.

So, Jesus coming to present us with a better way of understanding morality seems a bit pointless, and certainly, this would have been mentioned in his *mission statement* if it were his purpose. Instead, he came to get his father's project back on track and see it finished. But there was a lot to do.

Historical records show that the kingdom promised to Abraham collapsed a couple of centuries after the reign of King David. The twelve houses of Israel, which formed God's Kingdom, were dismantled, exiled, and scattered *like sheep*. They would eventually be lost both geographically and historically, making it tempting to conclude – even if reluctantly by a *true believer* – that God had failed.

A commitment was made, and it was ambitious, that a great Kingdom would be built through Abraham's offspring as an instrument to save all humanity, and it was in Christ's mission statement to put the project back on track.

Whoever you may think Jesus was, his own words leave no doubt that he believed he was the one who had the job of finishing what had been left unfinished, and as part of that undertaking, he announced a second mission statement.

“I have been sent only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

(Matthew 15:24)

The Kingdom had disintegrated, the House of Israel had broken apart and vanished, yet this man thought he could save his father’s plan by first sacrificing himself and then over the centuries, begin the process of regathering and rebuilding the Kingdom that had been scattered, lost, and was in effect dead.

Most people plan to do considerably less after they die, so at the very least this ambitious character should be commended for his exceptional optimism. But the collapse of the kingdom was anticipated from the very beginning, and a *redeemer* foretold. Shortly after the promise of a Kingdom was made to Abraham, it was dramatically demonstrated that everything necessary would be done to ensure that the promise was kept and the project successfully concluded, even if it necessitated the ultimate sacrifice: the project was that important.

It’s a strange concept, and perhaps not immediately understandable, but the idea of a sacrifice highlights the importance of God keeping his vow. A vow that consistently ends, on the numerous times it was repeated to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with the reason it was made:

“to bring blessing to all the families, people, and nations of the earth.”¹

Regardless of whether it may seem that a deity obsessed with keeping his promise is the stuff of fanciful mythology, it should be understood that the promise is the core thread that seamlessly connects the vow made to Abraham with the words of the various prophets afterward, and the stated purpose of Christ and his cryptic parables.

The parables of Jesus carry a mystery that has waited to be understood for centuries. And it is hoped that the reader will find the connection that links the words of Jesus to the undertaking God started an extraordinary connection, since it will be the subject of our tale.

¹ Genesis 12:3

The setting for the Understandable Story of God is fictional, but it follows a solid line of reasoning that binds a project that began thousands of years ago to what may most likely be an unexpected conclusion. Many of the characters in our story are fictitious, while others have been fleshed out from scripture to make the tale more entertaining and enjoyable to write and to read. Entertainment isn't frivolous, It's one of the nicest and most efficient ways of getting a concept across without putting an audience to sleep. During my time teaching, it became apparent that comatose students are not in the best state of mind for absorbing ideas. I often felt a responsibility to try and not bore my class to death and, on the occasions when I made an effort to be entertaining, it was rewarded with marginal improvements in comprehension, which to an educator of adolescents is about as much as one can hope for.

The book [*God's Duty*](#)¹ differs from *The Understandable Story of God* in that it is a nonfiction work that comprehensively examines, in technical detail, all the parables of Jesus and every chapter of the book of Revelation. Its interpretations are founded on the principle that the words of Jesus, with their cryptic and often bizarre imagery, makes perfect and logical sense only when linked to the promise that was repeatedly made to Abraham.

¹ Coffee Table Discussions: "God's Duty"

1

Coffee: nectar of the gods.

Nestled amongst tall palms and the impressive aerial root system of a Banyan tree, hides a moderately busy café overlooking a short stretch of ocean reaching out to a nearby island in the Australian tropics.

The scene is a perfect backdrop for taking a holiday selfie. The type of picture that generates instant envy from those back home trying to keep dry during an uninspiring commute to the office. But envious commuters can dull their jealousy with the knowledge that vacationers posing for cameras always appear to be having more fun than they are.

Who could deny that most photographic snaps begin with the photographer telling everyone to smile. And thanks to the convenience, ease, and abundance of cameras constantly clicking, there is a massive quantity of images depicting smiling individuals having the *time of their life*.

As the line goes, in Monty Python's *Song of Catholicism*:¹ *every sperm is sacred ...* so too is every snap taken on holiday. Even if they are never looked at again, or even at all, it's vitally important that each of these precious memories are stored on your phone, personal computer, back up computer, your friend's computer, USB's, mysterious clouds, and a social media industry eagerly competing to be the convenient repository for your life's story in pictures.

Once safely tucked away for the rest of eternity, we may never look at these images again, but what if the only intel accessible to extraterrestrials for the pre-invasion planning of earth, were Facebook? They would possibly conclude that we are the happiest and most digitally enhanced beings in the galaxy, and they'd be half right.

But images are not just misleading to aliens, they give humans the notion that sun and sand are fun. Through filtered lenses and advertising craftwork, tourism promotion exploits our inherent tendency to take what we see at face value and make us believe that coastal vistas featuring swimwear clad individuals outstretched on virgin white sandy beaches under a baking sun, is bliss available to you right now.

But the image is a lie; you're *baking*, and no living thing really likes to bake, which is why under most circumstances, chickens, sheep, and coral trout, if asked, would prefer to be killed first before being placed in an oven.

And this is the same way George felt about the sun and cooking under it. Like most people, he enjoyed the look of the sun beaming down on azure waters lapping onto slumbering beaches, but he much preferred shade. And what better shade could you have than the thick dark menacing clouds that were currently covering the tropical skies above Him.

'Do you think we should at least sit inside?' suggested Oliver.

George considered Oliver's clothing: *was that a silk shirt? Does silk ruin in the rain? Those are definitely suede shoes*, and he knew for sure that rain and suede were not friends even though, like everyone else through history, he wondered why that should be so, seeing how cows naturally wear suede and never seem overly fussed about standing in weather.

'We'll only get wet,' said George, 'and up here that's just like having a warm shower with your clothes on.'

'That's bad enough,' said Oliver.

The waitress arrived to take their order after escorting a group of less adventurous patrons to an inside table.

¹ Monty Python: *The Meaning of Life*, 1983

‘Are you happy to sit out here? Or would you like something inside.’

‘Inside would be great. Thank you,’ said Oliver.

George disagreed, ‘come on don’t be like that. We’ll be happy here,’ he said to the waitress. ‘Ollie, if it begins to rain and you get scared, I promise we’ll quickly run for cover.’

‘It’s not fear, I don’t want my shirt getting wet.’

Ahh it is silk, but why wasn’t he concerned about his shoes? Fake suede?

‘So, what would you like?’ asked the waitress.

Oliver began, ‘I’ll have a quarter strength decaf skim milk latte please.’

‘And you sir?’

‘The caffeine and fat taken out of his latte could you please add to my flat-white and I’ll have an extra shot on top of that.’

‘Our coffee is fairly strong; you might not need that extra shot.’

George was impressed. He hated being disappointed by coffee and often asked baristas if their coffee was strong enough or needed an extra shot. There was nothing more irritating than hearing the reply, *it depends on how strong you like it*.

True, the reply made some sense, but it was, nonetheless, a useless response on par with, *how long is a piece of string* as an answer to a question about a subject a novice knows little about. Some experienced guidance from the expert is what is wanted, not another question. The rookie knows nothing of *string* or the sizes, styles, or range of applications an everyday person would require from *string*. That’s why he’s asking a seemingly dumb question.

One time when faced with the question, *how long is a piece of string?* George, with undisguised irritation, fired back, *one meter!* and walked out. The *expert* was stumped; the answer was as useless as the question. And although George didn’t get his coffee, he was quite satisfied with the puzzlement he left behind.

George thought he knew a lot about coffee, but he wasn’t clairvoyant enough to know how each establishment he came across for the first time dealt with theirs. And it wasn’t that he arrogantly expected people to know what he liked and disliked by looking at him, but he did expect that a barista worth his training and experience would know and offer insightful advice to the sort of person who would ask whether an extra shot would be necessary.

George appreciated the waitress’ restraint in not immediately adding an *extra shot* on request. It indicated she knew something about coffee and the café she worked for. But he decided to test her just to be sure.

‘You didn’t flinch when my friend Ollie ordered quarter strength.’

The waitress flashed a smile at Oliver, 'I did, on the inside.'

'Perfect, good enough, I'll accept your recommendation,' said George.

'Are you making fun of the way I drink coffee?' said Oliver.

The waitress turned to George, 'no extra shot then?'

'No extra shot,' said George pleasantly to the waitress before turning to Oliver and lying. 'I'm not making fun of you Ollie, I just find it mysterious that people would take perfectly good hot water and taint it with something flavourless and then add milk with everything removed except the colour.'

Oliver wasn't going to be distracted by thoughts of wasting hot water: 'I'm pretty sure it's about to start pouring,'

George looked up at the thick rolling dark grey mass above. 'It's only pretending, it often does that up here.'

George loved the heavy look and feel of a brewing storm. The arrival of those menacing clouds didn't bring chilling winds like they would at higher latitudes, but they freshened the air and took the sting out of the clear sky sun: nature's umbrella was doing a fine job.

There was also something apocalyptic about clouds gathering with dark intent that reminded him of the gas station attendant and Sarah Connor's final words in *The Terminator*.¹

In the last scene of the movie, after defeating the mechanised Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sarah Connor is driving her Jeep into the Arizona desert knowing that she could not escape, only prepare. The war would come, Armageddon was coming, and with it the rise of the machines. As inevitable and unstoppable as an approaching cyclone.

Unaware of the prophetic implications of his words, the service station attendant points to the horizon and says, *there's a storm coming in*. Sarah Connor looks up wistfully as the camera pans out to the vanishing point of the lonely highway that lay ahead. The storm is building in its dark strength before her eyes, it is ominous, and it's on the road she must travel. With prophetic knowledge, Sarah Connor replies with a profound melancholy only she could understand ... "I know."

CUT! That's a wrap! Firmly cemented in the top fifty best ending sentences of any movie! Blockbuster sequels on their way!

It was the last words, and the final visual depiction of approaching catastrophe that inspired George like no other Terminator movie, which to be fair were always going to be more about action packed fun than inspiration.

¹ Cameron, J. (1984) *The Terminator*. Orion Pictures.

Like Sarah Conner, George could see the approaching apocalypse coming upon the world. It was a fearful but exciting insight he once shared with other true believers. But unlike Sarah, he was looking forward to it. Or at least he thought he was, or at the very least thought he should be. At any rate, this is what his pastors and everyone else was telling him, and each other, all those decades ago.

The plan seemed quite simple: Jesus returns with apocalyptic fury and a little less empathy than the first time, destroys everything George was told God didn't like, then he and other likeminded followers of the truth are rewarded by becoming the rulers of what's left. What's not to love about that? It's always more enjoyable to be on the winning team, and after some necessary unpleasantness the earth would be a better place.

It was a chilling moment, at 3:35 am, on the night George had finished watching a documentary on the Deadly Hobbies of Famous Nazis, that he woke with a fright wondering whether Himmler and Adolf had a similar plan: *"destroy all the things we don't like, and after some necessary unpleasantness the world will be a better place, and everyone left can live in this over-the-top Romanesque model city I've been designing with my best friend and favourite architect."*

It was a horrifying comparison, and obviously completely ridiculous. And only after assuring himself it was ridiculous; the young George had calmed and was back to sleep by 3:45 am.

But the thought shamelessly lingered at the back of his mind, way back, in the reassuring part of the brain that resists being unsettled by contradictions. But if ever the thought did stir and struggle against comforting thoughts to take root in the parts of the brain inclined to kick against the things he decided he already knew, it was promptly pushed down by surging waves of guilt and fear.

George was not a Nazi! Even if those he had the most to do with salivated each time news of a global catastrophe promised to usher in an end of days blood drenched apocalypse. So, whenever Armageddon came knocking, the various warring factions of George's psyche would erupt into eccentric contortions of conflicting theology:

The world is going to end! I'll be saved, that's good ... others won't, most others, serves them right, doesn't it? ... but it's a righteous carnage, the lord cleans out humanity.. And my parents? They should have listened to me; it must be good that Jesus is going to destroy them otherwise he wouldn't do it — its unpleasant but it's necessary – I'm not a Nazi! – ahh! – they had a choice, didn't they!? Completely their fault ... no one really wants this to happen, except for God of course, so I must want it too ... it's a necessary process, like meat processing in an

abattoir – a cattle train efficiently transports the beasts to a place of orderly disposal ... horrible work but good, well not exactly good ... Important, but done humanly and with efficiency Himmler would have approved of ... no not like Himmler ... ahh, why would I think that!? I'm not a Nazi! ... what if I don't know I'm gay!?

... and so forth.

To escape this torment, and find respite, George turned to coffee, since alcohol, drugs and sex were not allowed, and he became painfully obsessive about it. But it wasn't painful to George it was Zen, and the café a sort of convenient temple to sit and meditate while experiencing a *legal* Christian high.

'Ollie, I've got a question for you. Jesus coming back in *anger, fury, and righteous indignation* firing bolts of vengeance upon people for being human (which, by definition, is to be confused about everything), do you think he and his father are looking forward to that?'

'I don't know if *looking forward to it* is the correct way of putting it, George. It's more a necessity that needs doing.'

'But that sort of rage is something you normally get when things happen you weren't expecting, which is a bit odd really, and slightly embarrassing; especially if you're God. What do you think the original conversation up there, in whatever ethereal space you might imagine, was like?'

'I've got no idea what that would look like, or what you're suggesting even means,' said Oliver.

'Let's say for the moment, so we can get our head around things, that God and his son are just a couple of normal blokes, with impressive powers of course, who are planning the future of humanity over a cup of coffee.'

'Does God drink coffee?'

'Of course he does.'

'I'm not good with hypotheticals George, I work better with reality.'

'But what do you suppose that conversation would look like? Would it look like two angry old white men getting infuriated about every little thing around them until they can bear it no longer and lash out with their canes?'

'Like us two sitting here, but in the clouds somewhere?'

'On occasions.'

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