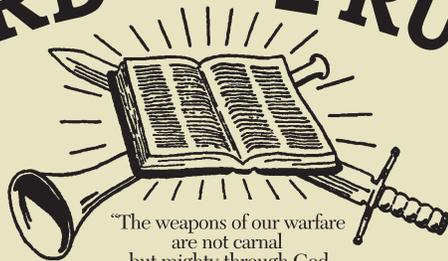


# The SWORD and TRUMPET

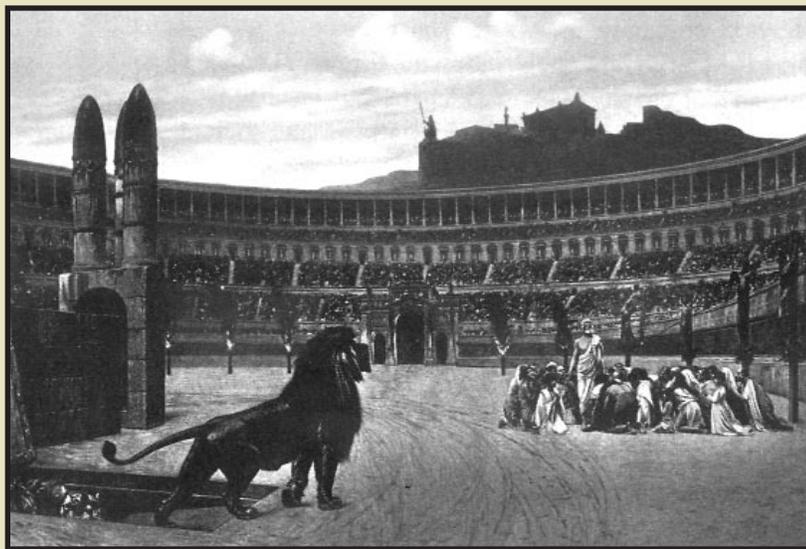


“Blow ye  
the Trumpet  
and warn  
the People.”

“The weapons of our warfare  
are not carnal  
but mighty through God  
to the pulling down of strongholds.”

“Take the Sword  
of the Spirit  
which is  
The Word of God.”

## *Guidelines*



*IGNATIUS*

JULY 2004

\$1.50

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## The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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JULY 2004

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**SWORD AND TRUMPET GUIDELINES** monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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# Person of the Month:

## Ignatius

### (Birth? -107)

As to Ignatius' beginning, we know that he was born in Rome of pagan parents. There are several speculations about the man, but we know for sure that he was at one point a disciple of the Apostle John.

The use of the term, *Christianity* is attributed to him, as he was from the city of Antioch where the Scriptures record that believers were first referred to as *Christians* by their pagan enemies.

Although he was a leader in the Antioch church for forty years, not much is known about the earlier years of his life and ministry.

Nero was considered to be a monster when it came to persecution, but the Emperor Domitian was even more ruthless. He considered himself both lord and god and required people to worship him. Jews and Christians could not comply and thus were severely persecuted for their refusal. Ignatius was apparently singled out for persecution, possibly because of his leadership position and his shining witness for Christ. Being the only one arrested, he stood trial alone. He remained strong for the Lord and gave a good witness before the officials. He was thus placed in chains and transported overland to Rome. It is speculated that he was not martyred in Antioch since he was so popular with the people.

On the journey he was accorded the freedom to meet with friends along the way, especially Polycarp in Smyrna. He also was able to quickly write seven letters. One of these was a note of farewell to Polycarp. One was to the church at Rome. The other five were to churches in Asia Minor. In the letters he shared his concerns as a pastor and addressed problems facing the Church. His letters evidence his good knowledge of the Old Testament as well as the Gospels and writings of Paul.

As the saying goes, "The more things change the more they stay the same." Ignatius' letters addressed areas of false doctrine that had crept into the Church. The first of these was the teaching of the Judaizers who tried to add works such as circumcision, etc., to the simple Gospel message. On the other hand there were the Docetists who denied that Christ had come in the flesh—He was not a real person. Therefore, they claimed that His suffering on the cross and His resurrection never really happened; they were just an illusion. In addition to these problems, some in the churches had an independent spirit and were "doing their own thing" rather than following God-ordained leadership.

Philippians 1:21 expresses well Ignatius' view and desire for martyrdom. When he arrived in Rome he was taken to the Coliseum where he was brutally tortured before being fed to the lions to satisfy the pleasure-seeking spectators. When it was over, all that was left were his bones—the date was December 19, 107.

—Gail L. Emerson

# *The Stewardship Conundrum*

by Bob Crew

In math, proper application of rules or principles always leads to a correct answer. The same rules apply for all math problems. A correct answer exists; you don't have to wonder if you got it right.

Christian financial stewardship isn't like math. Scripture gives us many rules or principles to guide our stewardship decisions, but what the Bible says seems to contribute to a conundrum, a puzzle left for us to piece together.

## ***Earthly Investing***

The Bible repeatedly encourages us to save and provide for our families. The creation of a spiritual and financial inheritance for future generations is scriptural as well: "The wise man saves for the future, but the foolish man spends whatever he gets" (Proverbs 21:20, TLB). Furthermore, Jesus goes to great length in the parable of the talents to emphasize His pleasure when we multiply, or invest, the resources He has given us to steward (Matthew 25:14-30).

## ***Heavenly Investing***

Yet we also are strongly admonished to give to others. The widow's mite is the benchmark for heavenly investing, while the farmer who built more and bigger barns to store all his wealth is labeled a fool. After the Macedonians gathered an offering for the Jerusalem Christians in the midst of their own dire needs, Paul held them up as an example for the Corinthians to follow. Jesus commanded, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor," and He finished by telling us to store up treasure in heaven, not on earth (Luke 12:33).

## ***Resolving the Conundrum***

So what rules or principles can we glean from Scripture and apply to this dilemma? The starting point is to exam-

ine our motives and attitudes toward saving and investing. Remember, Scripture never condemns money itself but only the misuse of or wrong attitude toward it. Jesus wants even our heavenly investing motives to honor God; recall how He contrasted the self-glorification of the Pharisees' giving with the humility of the widow who gave her last mite.

We must develop the attitude of a steward or trustee to manage God's resources for His honor and glory. "Everything in the heavens and earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom," David prayed to God. "We adore you as being in control of everything" (1 Chron. 29:11, TLB). When we properly assume the role of a steward, we make every investment decision in light of the best interest of the owner of the assets. Such understanding doesn't make a difficult decision easier. Instead, the difficult decision becomes a prayerful one. We can be glad the Holy Spirit guides us.

## ***Legitimate Investing Guidelines and Motives***

In spite of a seeming conundrum, Scripture contains some definite principles about investing.

**Invest in heaven and earth.** Jesus' response to the rich farmer who stored *all* his grain shows us that God expects us to use some of His resources to meet the needs of others. The farmer's saving was not balanced with generous giving. Before you invest, give to God's work until you know you are being faithful to the needs God places on your heart.

**Provide for your family.** "If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, NASB). Paul also instructs parents not to be a burden to their children and to save up for their

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children's future needs, even to the point of an inheritance (2 Corinthians 12:14).

**Limit spending.** The most common impediment to heavenly investing is spending that equals or exceeds income. In that case a surplus for heavenly investing is never realized. Settle on a family lifestyle that is pleasing to God, and then give to God and invest as He directs.

**Invest to become financially free in order to serve the Lord.** If by saving and investing we are able to become finan-

cially independent, then we can volunteer our time in Kingdom ministry. However, many times the objective to achieve financial independence does not include a limit on spending, so the goal to serve is therefore never achieved. We must be careful to maintain the attitude of a trustee and resist the temptation to act as if we own the resources we accumulate.

Clearly our role as stewards requires us to manage conflicting priorities. The

*(continued on page 4)*

## But . . . I Can't Love

by Simon Schrock

The lady parked her Cadillac and walked inside the office building with her adopted son. They entered the psychologist's office. She wanted help for her son.

"You see, he doesn't love people. He does not want to associate with others. He won't go to church. What can be done?"

"He does want a black leather jacket and a motorcycle. A hate-everyone-cycle club, maybe hell's angels, is right up his alley. That's his life, but no love."

The doctor explained why he didn't love. He had everything when he was a baby. He had the best nursery room including the best quality of incubator. The hired maid was there to give him the best of needed care such as bottles and changes. He had just everything, everything he could want as a child—except—well, what he really needed: a real mother's love. He needed a mother to hold him. He needed to feel the message of love in his mother's heartbeat. He needed to feel the warmth of a big hug as Mother conveyed a message of true love to him. He needed a real mother's love. But that he didn't get. You see, machines can't express love. Machines and things can't love and train boys. Here is a boy that can't love, because he never knew love.

Probably his parents never experienced

real love. Only Jesus Christ can give that true love. Parents cannot love their children with a true love if they themselves have never experienced Christ's love.

To love you must have love, and true love comes only from Jesus Christ. Why do parents not love their children, and children hate their parents? Why do races hate each other? Why do fellowmen hate? Because they are without Christ's love in their own hearts.

When we realize Christ's love and receive Him as sin forgiver and director of our own lives, then He can replace guilt with His love. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:7-9).

Friend, can you love your family, your fellowman, or even your enemy? Receive the love of God now. You owe it to yourself, your family, as well as your fellowman. Jesus Christ invites you to come to Him, confess your sins, and receive the love of God in your heart. That love lasts forever. ■

—Used by permission of the author

## From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

# Does a Shepherd Need Training?

Is there a premium on ignorance in the Gospel ministry? By referring to Acts 4:13, some tend to insinuate that one of the requirements for modern-day ministry is ignorance. Such is surely not the case. It flies in the face of clear Scripture commands regarding “study” as well as the implications of “loving the Lord with all your mind.”

Let us hasten to add that there are no specific educational requirements for the ministry. An uneducated man who is not Scripturally qualified for the ministry will not become qualified by education—no matter how much education he pursues. On the other hand, a Bible-based education is not the enemy. The training of shepherds to be better and more effective shepherds is much needed today. Our problem today is the lack of true Biblicism due to a lack of ministerial training. In the absence of Biblicism, a rather dead traditionalism has developed in some circles which emphasizes conformity rather than nonconformity and transformation (Romans 12:1, 2).

The effort known as the Shepherd’s Institute (as previously discussed in this column) continues in the planning stages. A board has been formed, cur-

riculum has been laid out, and administrative and teaching personnel are being recruited.

Funds will be needed to get the project “off the ground.” Temporarily, such funds can be channeled through *Sword and Trumpet*. Please designate your gifts for *The Shepherd’s Institute*.

Many ministers have expressed interest in studying with the program. Shepherd’s Institute has committed to working within the context of conservative Anabaptism and protecting the distinctives of each group. Please give this matter your prayerful support. ■

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### STEWARDSHIP CONUNDRUM . . . cont’d.

Christian life isn’t about finding rules for living that will satisfy God’s requirements but about living wholly and completely as trustees of the possessions He places in our care. Without doubt the greater danger of balancing heavenly investing and earthly investing is erring on the side of earthly investing. Scripture repeatedly warns us of that tendency. Only by submitting to the direction of the Holy Spirit can we solve the stewardship conundrum to the glory of God. ■

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



*A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**JULY 4, 2004**

## ***Exhortation to Christian Maturity***

Hebrews 5:11–6:12

This passage speaks to two themes every Christian must continually hold before him: Christian maturity, and the dangers of apostasy. The passage is somewhat parenthetical. The writer interrupts his discourse on Christ, the great high priest and His likeness to Melchisedec, to exhort his readers to growth and watchfulness in Christian experience. Chapter five, verses six and ten introduce the comparison of Christ to Melchisedec and Chapter 7 expands the relationship. In between we find the passage for today's discussion.

The writer starts off by chiding his readers for their dullness and lack of spiritual comprehension. His readers had been Christians long enough that they should have reached a level of maturity that would enable them to be teachers of others. However, they had stagnated in their Christian growth and were still immature, feeding on baby food when they should have advanced to the meat stage in Christian experience.

At the end of verse 14 he gives the reason for their lack of growth: lack of exercise. We know what happens physically when we fail to get adequate exercise. We atrophy. The same is true spiritually. Failure to exercise Christian virtues results in "baby" Christians.

In the first three verses of Chapter 6 the writer encourages his readers to move forward in Christian experience, to

develop deeper theological issues than simple salvation. These basic doctrines are of course essential: repentance, baptism, and the future life. However, the growing Christian will move beyond these basic issues to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the Christian life.

He then gives dire warning about the failure, or refusal, to grow past the initial stage of salvation. Those who go backward and finally reject the means of salvation, and go into apostasy, place themselves in severe jeopardy. There is no other means, outside of Jesus Christ and His shed blood, for anyone to achieve salvation and eternal life. Those who refuse it cut themselves off from all hope of salvation.

The writer then uses an example from nature to reinforce his point. Cultivated soil which produces a useful crop is a blessing to the one who plants. Soil which produces thorns and briars, however, is despised and subject to destruction. Spiritually, God blesses those who grow and produce. Those who produce a useless crop, however, are judged worthy of destruction.

The writer then hurries on to assure his readers that he realizes they are not in this latter group. He is persuaded better things of them, evidence of good works that accompany salvation. He assures them also that God will remember their kind deeds to fellow saints, these deeds which are a result of their salvation experience and growth into Christian maturity. His desire is that each one of his readers exhibit such traits and not become lazy in Christian

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endeavor, but “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” And such is his message to us as well.

***For thought and discussion***

1. What are the dangers of spiritual dullness? The long-term effects?
2. What are some methods the church can employ to stimulate continuing growth and maturity among her members? Class discussion on this would be helpful.
3. What are some things we can do personally to stimulate growth to maturity in our Christian experience?
4. How does apostasy happen? What are some signs to be alert to?
5. Is it safe to follow other Christians (v. 12)? What are advantages and disadvantages? Discuss this issue.

**JULY 11, 2004**

***A Better Covenant***

Hebrews 8:6-13

The writer of Hebrews has already explained how Christ is a better mediator than man or angels and that His priesthood is an enduring one. He now goes on to explain how the New Covenant he mediates is so far superior to the Old Covenant given under Moses. Be sure to read at least from 7:18 through 8:5 for context to today’s lesson. (Chapters 9 and 10 will be helpful also.)

This better covenant, established upon better promises (in relation to the former), of necessity also needed a better, or more adequate mediator. That better mediator is Christ Jesus, Son of God, Son of man, eternal high priest. His position uniquely enables Him to represent man to God and God to man regarding the terms of this New Covenant.

The first covenant instituted at Mt. Sinai was weak in that it focused on outward ritual, making it difficult for man to

adequately observe its demands (v. 7 and 7:18, 19). It also lacked the heart relationship which became the central element in the New Covenant.

We must hasten to add that it was man’s fault and not God’s that led to the inadequacy of the first covenant. God does not design faulty covenants. Rather, it was Israel’s failure to keep the terms of the covenant that rendered it inadequate (see v. 8a).

The writer then begins, in verse 8b, an extensive word-for-word quote from Jeremiah (31:31-34), in which God, through the prophet, foretells the establishment of this better covenant, and explains its terms. Jeremiah makes it clear that Israel’s failure to maintain their side of the covenant agreement, led God to disannul His side (v. 9).

After explaining the inadequacies of the first, he then spells out the terms and relationships of the new. No longer will there be a focus on outward ritual and observances, but rather, God’s laws will be written on the heart of man. There will be a new, more intimate and highly personal relationship between God and man than was possible under the first covenant. Hence, a “better covenant.”

Verse 11 does not imply that no longer will there be need for teachers or instructors, but rather it hints at that deeper personal relationship which will exist between man and God under the New Covenant. It will no longer be necessary to go to God through a human mediator. We can now go directly to Him on our own. Yes, there will always be need for those who can instruct and guide others into a deeper relationship with God, who can explain more adequately His demands and His will.

Verse 12 tells us that this new relationship between God and man will be based upon mercy and love and not the harsh demands of a law man finds difficult, if not impossible, to keep. What a blessing to know that our sins are forgiven and that we do not need to live in fear of the

judgment of God. That Old Covenant with its demands and uncertainties has been superseded and has faded out of the picture, replaced by a much better covenant whereof we are beneficiaries.

***For thought and discussion***

1. In your study, be sure to compare the demands of the two covenants. Which is more adequate?
2. Think through the reasons why God first established the Sinaitic Covenant, then later superseded it with the New.
3. By what are covenants established, and what breaks them? Relate your answer to both the Old and the New Covenant relationships.
4. Jeremiah lived and wrote around 626 B.C., the writer of Hebrews approximately 70 A.D., some 700 years later. How does this verify and authenticate the Scripture?
5. Does this New Covenant, based on love and mercy, give us freedom to live carelessly? How would you respond?

**JULY 18, 2004**

***Roll Call of the Faithful***

Hebrews 11:1-13

Hebrews, Chapter 9, portrays Christ as the perfect sacrifice, opening up man's way to God through the sacrifice of Himself. Chapter 10 expands on this theme and also outlines practical exhortations for Christian living—individually and in Christian community. That brings us to Chapter 11 where we see, in the first three verses, the nature of faith and, in the rest of the chapter, the application of faith to life as exemplified by numerous Old Testament saints.

What is faith? It is believing what we cannot see and accepting as fact that for which we have no concrete evidence. It was the exercise of this virtue that secured for saints of old "a good report" with God. The writer then goes on to identify a num-

ber of these ancients, and to explain how they exercised faith in their various life experiences. And, before we forget it, let's be sure to understand God's purpose for having these stories recorded. The answer we find in Romans 15:4. The writer of Hebrews uses (mostly) exemplary personages from the past who would be well known to his Jewish readers.

He begins by recounting the faith of Abel, that first victim of murderous hatred, and how his offering, in faith, secured for him right standing with God. Enoch walked with God in such a faithful and strong relationship that God took him to heaven without facing death.

Before going on with his recounting of the heroes of faith, the writer interjects, in verse six, the importance of a vital, living, active faith. It is essential in coming to God. One must first believe that He exists and then, secondly, that He does reward faith placed in Him.

Noah is the next character mentioned. Against all human logic he took God at His word and worked 120 years to build an ark to preserve his family and animal life from the destructive flood God promised to use to destroy wicked mankind. His faith condemned the unrighteous society in which he lived.

It is not without reason that Abraham is called "the father of the faithful." Abraham stepped out in faith at God's command to move, not knowing where God would lead him. Throughout his life he continued to walk by faith, living loosely, moving at God's direction, living in anticipation of God's promise. Sarah also played a role in the fulfillment of God's promise, accepting by faith what seemed humanly impossible for her, that she would bear a son in her old age. Through their faith God's promise was fulfilled and they became the progenitors of an innumerable host, the nation of Israel.

The faith of these saints of old enabled them to live as strangers and sojourners in this world, as they looked by faith to a better world beyond. They were so persuaded

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of God's faithfulness to His promises that even though not seeing the fulfillment, they embraced the promise by faith and clung to that faith till death. True men and women of faith.

These things are written for our instruction and learning. Are we paying attention?

***For thought and discussion***

1. Do you understand "faith"? Can you give a clear and understandable explanation of it?
2. Note at the end of each example of faith in today's lesson the singular phrase that describes the result of that person's faith.
3. How can we deepen our faith and assure that it is an active faith, such that God will reward? What can we learn from the characters in today's lesson that will help us in this?
4. It will be helpful in your study to go to the Old Testament and read the fuller account of these heroes of faith mentioned in today's lesson.
5. Is your faith in God's promises so secure that nothing can shake it?
6. It should give us pause as we read these accounts of people of old that our lives are also writing a story. How can we be sure it will be a legacy of faith that will inspire others?

**JULY 25, 2004**

***The Disciplined Life***

Hebrews 12:1-13

After portraying the life of faith of a number of saints of old, the writer now turns to his readers here in Chapter 12 with a challenge for their faithful, disciplined living. The lives of these men and women of old are to serve as examples to readers of all time. Seeing how others have triumphed over adversity and uncertainty shows us how to be faithful in our walk with the Lord. The figure used is

that of a race where the contestants lay aside all hindering weights and run with a singular focus on the goal.

The example of Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, is given as a prime motivating example for us. He endured because He looked beyond the pain and suffering of the cross to the joy of completion, much as was said of the Old Testament saints in Chapter 11 (see vv. 13, 14). Consider Him, the writer adds. Consider the opposition, the hostility, the insults that He faced when you face hardship or persecution. Dare we even compare our experience with His? Have we yet paid the ultimate price as He did, in shedding blood for the cause? Certainly not.

The writer goes on to explore the matter of chastening, or discipline, and its salutary effect on one's life. He makes the point that at times the Lord uses difficult circumstances and experiences to mold the character of His children. He is not chastening for sadistic pleasure, but out of love, that through the experience His child will become stronger, more mature, and more focused on right living.

There is a second benefit to the Lord's chastening. It assures us of sonship (v. 7). He does not chasten those who are not His children (v. 8). The writer then tells us how we should react to the Lord's chastening. Just as we received correction from our earthly father and respected him for it, so we must accept discipline from the hand of our heavenly Father, realizing that it is for our spiritual profit. The Lord's purpose is to mold us into the character of Christ.

Is discipline pleasurable? Certainly not. And whether it was from earthly parent or heavenly Father, it was only after the experience that we were able to see value in it. It seems to be the human tendency to shy away from these hard learning experiences. However, all of us can attest to the strengthening of character, the purifying of motives, and the clarifying of direction they bring into our lives. We should not fight against God's chastening, but rather

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receive it with thanksgiving, realizing both His love which prompts it and the beneficial effect it will have on our life once the experience is over.

“Therefore, lift up the hands which hang down and strengthen your weak knees.” Take courage. Press on. There is a constant, daily effort we must make to face the trials and struggles of the Christian life. Be careful not to allow temporary difficulties to sidetrack you from the race.

Look to Jesus. Persevere. Accept and exercise discipline. Live with an awareness of God’s hand on your life and you, too, one day will join that great cloud of witnesses, testifying to the saving grace and keeping power of our great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

***For thought and discussion***

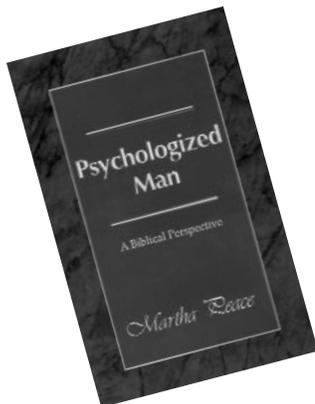
1. How do the faithful lives of others inspire and challenge us? Is there someone in your life who has played such a role for you? Have you thanked

God for them? And expressed appreciation to them?

2. This passage speaks of self-discipline and godly discipline. Explore how both are needed to keep us faithfully walking in the truth.
3. Just several months ago we took an in-depth look at the suffering of Jesus. Review again what He went through and realize again that it was on your behalf. Then thank Him again for what He did for you.
4. How has God’s discipline molded your life? Would you feel free to share your experience with your class as a means of challenging others?
5. So often in difficult or hurtful experiences we struggle against the experience. Should we not rather be asking the Lord what He would have us learn through that experience?
6. What are some ways we can strengthen ourselves for daily Christian endeavor? Discuss. ■

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# Newslines . . .

by Rebecca Good

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems  
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings  
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

## Struggles of Christians in Vietnam

Some Vietnamese Mennonites have recently experienced police harassment. It happened like this. Two church leaders noticed two undercover agents on motorcycles observing them and threatening them for several weeks. When a pastoral assistant and an associate pastor took a photograph of the motorcycle's license plate, the agents charged toward them. When two other leaders from the church approached, the men hit them, then took off. A large number of security and special armed police arrived on the scene shortly, where they wrote up a complaint against the church for "disturbing the peace." Several of the church people were severely beaten. Four men were detained at the police station. Church leaders are calling for prayer and appropriate action as they deal with this situation.

—from *The Mennonite*

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## Cicada Cycle

This is the year the biggest clan of 17-year cicadas return. The group due to hatch out this year is called Brood X. When the soil warms up in late spring, the immature cicadas will crawl out of the ground and climb up trees, where they hang until they split out of their amber-colored shells and emerge as winged adults. Cacophony ensues as the males vibrate a drum-like organ on their bodies to attract females. The periodical cicadas' song stops at dusk. After mating, the females lay eggs in slits in tree twigs. Though adults for only a few weeks of

their 17-year life, it is now time for the cicadas to die. The newly hatched young cicadas burrow into the ground to wait out another 17 years. Brood X's next appearance should be the summer of 2021.

Though nearly every summer some brood of 13- or 17-year cicadas hatches somewhere in the East, none have attained the notoriety of Brood X. It is the biggest tribe and covers the largest territory, including some major cities. Brood X was first mentioned in records in 1715.

—from *U.S. News & World Report*

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## Partial Birth Abortion Ban on Trial

Dr. Kanwaljeer Anand is a supporter of a woman's right to abortions, but he has been testifying in court that the partial birth abortion (PBA) procedure is unethical. The Oxford- and Harvard-trained neonatal pediatrician and pain expert believes that a fetus can feel pain as early as 20 weeks' gestation. By that stage of development, infants possess all the brain and nerve capability to experience pain, but have none of the means of coping with pain that children learn while growing up. Dr. Anand believes that PBAs cause "prolonged and excruciating pain to the fetus," and therefore should be outlawed.

The argument that fetuses feel pain during abortion procedures supports Congress's ethical argument that the procedure should be banned. President Bush signed the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 last fall. Now the National Abortion Federation, Planned Parenthood, the ACLU, and others are filing suits challenging the ban. In April, judges in New York City, San

Francisco, and Lincoln, Nebraska, listened to evidence in order to determine whether the ban is constitutional.

The government's arguments defending the ban are based on three points: that no maternal or fetal conditions make PBA necessary for a mother's health; that the procedure offers no safety advantages; and that PBA "blurs the line between an abortion and a live birth." One National Abortion Federation doctor admitted in court that he had never seen a case where the mother's health necessitated a PBA procedure. —from *World*

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### Protection for the Unborn

President Bush signed the Unborn Victims of Violence Act on April 1. The law grants federal protection to an unborn child harmed during an assault on his mother. This is the first recognition of federal legal rights for unborn children.

—from *World*

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### The Importance of Pets

According to statistics, most U.S. households who own pets spend approximately \$460 a year on each animal.

—from *USA Today*

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### New Church Trends

Many younger evangelicals react to the baby-boomer seeker-style churches of their parents. They long for authenticity, quality relationships, and good Bible teaching, but shy away from churches selling a prepackaged gospel. Younger Christians want real music, not a show, and a real pastor who is honest about his struggles—"not a fakey pastor who wears a fake smile and pretends at a fake relationship with his wife." —from *World*

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### Chinese Church Buildings at Risk

The Chinese government has been destroying historic Christian churches

built before 1950. The number of churches destroyed is anywhere from dozens to hundreds. A video clip of the leveling of a 70-year-old church building associated with Hudson Taylor may be viewed at [www.persecution.com/CHINA](http://www.persecution.com/CHINA). Some who have tried to peacefully protest have been removed from the scene and even beaten. Some think that the Chinese registered church, called the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, is connected to the destruction. —from *The Voice of the Martyrs*

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### What Next?

Doctors in the Netherlands are performing a new service—installing tiny pieces of jewelry onto people's eyeballs. It costs \$1,232 to insert the .13-inch decorations. Doctors say they have seen no problems with the procedure and do not expect that any will materialize. —from *World*

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### Religious Vacuum in a Populous Nation

According to *Operation World*, there are 30 to 100 million Christians in China. About 28 million people are registered with the government church, while the unregistered house churches may be the spiritual home for as many as 80 million people. There are more Christians than Communist Party members. China's independent Christian congregations, mostly evangelical and charismatic groups, are growing around 9% per year. Perhaps one reason for this is that China also contains 625 million people that have no religious affiliation, the largest such population of any nation on earth.

—from *Christianity Today*

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### Those of the Uttermost Return to Christianity's Genesis

Chinese Christians are heading west, west toward Jerusalem, and in so doing, they may bring the Great Commission

to its completion. The Chinese church sees Christianity as beginning in Jerusalem, then spreading west into Africa and Europe. The Christian faith continued to march west, until it reached China, and now Chinese Christians are responsible to complete the gospel's encircling of the globe. A Chinese mission movement, called Back to Jerusalem, aims to reach the 5,200 unreached people groups and tribes between China and Jerusalem as they head back along the old Silk Road trade route to where Christianity was born.

The Jerusalem vision made its first appearance in the 1920s, when a Christian communal group in China called the Jesus Family, or a derivative of it, believed that God was calling them to walk on foot all the way to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel and establishing churches in every town and ethnic group along the way. But they never got beyond the Chinese border. When the Communists took over, they incarcerated a leader in the Back to Jerusalem movement named Simon Zhao. In the prison labor camps, he would often pray facing west, toward Jerusalem, asking God to raise up a new generation to fulfill the vision. Released in 1983, he shared the dream with Christians. They grabbed the baton. By 2004, around 1,500 missionaries have left China in fulfillment of the Back to Jerusalem vision; the Chinese church's goal is to send 100,000 missionaries west, a tithe of the 1 million full-time pastors and evangelists in China.

The Chinese are learning about how to send missionaries by trial and error. Going out with great enthusiasm, lack of success sometimes discourages them. It is not as easy as they thought. But they keep growing and learning. Some Christian leaders believe that God has molded His Chinese believers in such a way that they are especially equipped to reach Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus for Christ. More information may be

found at [www.BacktoJerusalem.com](http://www.BacktoJerusalem.com).

—from *Christianity Today*

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### **Christian Nightclubs—an Oxymoron?**

Night spots where Christians can hangout, dance, listen to Christian music, and socialize in a drug-, alcohol-, and smoke-free environment are a growing phenomenon. These clubs often start with the goal of evangelism, but wind up as a social spot for the already converted. Most who find Christ at the nightclubs often consider the hangout to be their church, and look no further for a church home.

—from *Newsweek*

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### **Community in Action**

Eastern Mennonite University requires that everyone who works at or attends the university must sign a community lifestyle commitment. Everyone who signs the statement acknowledges their responsibility as a member of the community of faith and agrees to refrain from sexual relationships outside of marriage.

In early April, some EMU students and other individuals protested the firing of two homosexual faculty members who were apparently practicing homosexuality. The university also did not rehire an openly homosexual faculty member whose contract had expired.

President Loren Swartzentruber said some individuals believe that personal behavior is a private matter and institutions should keep out of it; however, EMU, as a private university, has the right to set behavior standards. He said that no organization operates without standards, and that the community commitment clearly states what is expected of the students, faculty, and staff of EMU, and what the consequences are for not meeting those expectations.

—from *Daily News-Record*, Harrisonburg, Va.

# Musings About Bossy's Music

by Paul L. Miller

*Progressive Farmer* (February, 2004, page 7), reports on an unusual project. It tells how Daniel McElmurray, only 10 years old, won a major award in a science fair in Augusta, Georgia. Daniel's father, Earl, is a dairyman, who likes to have music playing for his cows while they are being milked. Earl is an enthusiast of rock music. Daniel's project evaluated the music played by noting milk production.

Young Daniel compared three different kinds of music. He experimented with country, rock, and classical. The result? **More milk with classical music.** The difference? 1,000 pounds of milk over an unspecified number of days. We are not told how large the herd is or how the other two categories of music compared with each other. I think we are safe to assume that rock music put the least milk in the tank. Why do I think so? Because of the relationship between . . .

## *Music and Mathematics*

Even though cows don't know it, music is mathematical.

*Rhythm* depends on math and is an integral part of music. Each measure's notes equal the timing stated in the key signature. Both the pace and the length of a sound are measurable.

*Pitch* also rests on math. The A, above middle C, has 440 vibrations per second (hertz). Going one octave higher, that note has double that number with 880 hertz. One octave above that doubles again to 1760 hertz. You get the picture: music has predictability and order.

That rapid rise in vibrations per second accounts for the wide range of hearing in humans, which is about 20 to 20,000 hertz. God has endowed other lesser members of His creation, such as dogs and bats, with very keen hearing

and an auditory range even greater than that of humans.

*Harmony*, too, has a mathematical base. Harmony is created when notes that have common (sympathetic) vibrations are produced at the same time. To simplify, let us illustrate this by taking the number 20 and dividing it by 2, 4, or 5. These numbers divided into 20 without remainders, and thus are sympathetic, but 3 and 7 don't and aren't sympathetic. This illustrates why certain notes harmonize and others clash.

If music has an absolute mathematical structure, does it overtax our imagination that absolute moral value may rightly be assigned to music? Let's restate that question as a positive assertion: Since music is based on mathematical absolutes, it follows logically that every musical composition is in itself absolutely something. Either it's good or it's bad. **Music is not neutral.**

The words in music, of course, are important. You can make good music bad with bad words. It's not a good fit, but you can do it. But you can't make bad music good with good words. That's why "Christian rock" is a contradiction of terms. No, the McElmurray cows would not have produced more milk with so-called Christian rock.

## *Learning From Nature*

Paul asked the Corinthians to consider this question, "Doth not even nature itself teach you . . . ?" (1 Cor. 11:14a). Let us learn from God's creation by noting the following two examples of rhythm:

1. Cows' hearts and our hearts beat at a regular rate. We cannot tell our hearts to speed up or slow down, although when we exert ourselves our pulse quickens.
2. Cows' breathing and our breathing is

rhythmic. True, breathing isn't quite always involuntary. We can hold our breath momentarily or we can huff and puff and thus interrupt innate control. We can influence the rate of respiration, even though it is usually automatic. **God designed many of His creatures with and for rhythm.**

I suppose that rhythm figures largely into the Georgia dairy cows' response. Rock music "hijacks" the body's natural rhythms and "takes them for a bumpy ride." I'd guess that is the main reason for the cows' greater milk production with classical music.

Other possible reasons are less clear, but harmonious music befits harmony of life and peace in the heart. Maybe the busy bovines picked up on that. They weren't trying to prove anything to Earl McMurray. They weren't biased. They just made a simple, involuntary response to stimuli in their environment.

Another issue that we have no word on

is volume. If we assume that the volume was about the same for all the music played, it wasn't the noise that made the difference. Excessive noise, though, is a common culprit in early hearing loss in humans.

We don't have to extract meaning from every possible parallel between life in the barn and the house. But what this experiment teaches is important and practical.

Even though cows cannot sin, if I were a dairyman I would not want unworthy music reaching their ears. Furthermore, I can think of no good reason for having such music reach human ears. Because man makes moral choices, the negative results for man in choosing bad music have a far greater significance than a reduced milk check. Such music shrinks his capacity for good and shrivels his response to God. ■

—Used with permission from *Calvary Messenger*



## When God Complained

by Don Kistler

For us to understand God, He must speak to us in anthropomorphic terms. When He speaks to us of anguish, He must explain it in a way that we can understand. In Jeremiah 4:19-22, we have God crying out as if He were a human being: "O my soul. I am pained in my very heart."

God is complaining here. "My people have not known Me." He says that His people are foolish, and the essence of their foolishness is that they do not know Him! It is also strongly stated in this passage that the source of all their problems was their ignorance of their God.

Much is made of what happens in Acts, when Paul says that he saw the

shrine to "the unknown God," but it is to be feared that this passage describes many so-called Christian churches in our day, not just the heathen temple in Paul's day!

In a recent *World* magazine article on the top 100 selling "Christian" books, only 4 of them were remotely about God, Christ, or salvation—and that is being extremely charitable!

You can hear God evaluating the state of affairs today: "My people know financial concepts; they know love languages; they know pop-psychology; they know how to express their 'needs' to each other; they know how to give hugs to women; they know how to deliver themselves from demons, how to loose them-

selves from oppression, how to take weight off, how to make decisions, how to bind Satan, how to claim this and that, how to cast out demons. They know a thousand peripheral things, but they do not know Me!”

We seem interested in the gifts, just not the Giver. We are more interested in what God can do for us than in who He is in Himself. Jonathan Edwards once said quite accurately, “If we only love God for what He can do for us, we really only love ourselves.”

The amazing thing is that God has revealed so much of Himself to us, not only in His Word, but in His very creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God,” said the psalmist. But we study astronomy without seeing the wonder of the God who makes it all so amazing! God has revealed Himself in His Word over and over again. But we see it as a self-help manual rather than as God’s revelation of Himself. There is much in the Scripture that can help us, but the focus of Scripture is not us and our problems, but God and His glory!

God reveals Himself and His character in His names. Each of His names reveals something of His character. His activity reveals something of His character. We are told: “He made known his ways to Moses, and his acts to the sons of Israel” (Psalm 103:7).

The narratives of Scripture tell us how God does things, and from that we can deduce much of His character. But we do not seem to be very interested in the character of God, just the “goodies” of God. Yet we are commanded to “grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.” We are commanded to love God with all of our mind.

The knowledge of God is so much an issue that God summarizes all of eternal life with these words: “For this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Eternal life is knowing God and Christ. It is knowing

about them as much as it is knowing them. You wouldn’t give two cents for anyone who said they wanted a relationship with you, but weren’t interested in who you were! And neither does God.

Compare the attitude of most professing believers today with that of Paul, who declared, “I determined to know *nothing* among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” What a contrast!

Hosea says this on God’s behalf, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land” (Hosea 4:1).

There is no truth, and there is no mercy in the land. Why not? Because there is no knowledge of God in the land. These are inseparable items. Only to the degree that there is knowledge of God in the land will there be truth or mercy.

Second Peter 1:2 says that grace and peace would be multiplied to us through the knowledge of God. In fact, “everything that pertains to life and godliness comes through the true knowledge of him who has called us” (2 Peter 1:3).

Through the true knowledge of God, which presupposes that there is a false knowledge, comes “everything” that has anything to do with life or godliness. Physical life and spiritual life all have the true knowledge of God as their source, and everything that has anything to do with either of those two things!

Is it any wonder then that God says His people are foolish for not knowing Him? The Hebrew there carries with it the idea that the people are not just silly, but they are morally deficient; and then He adds that they have no understanding.

They are totally ignorant of doing that which is pleasing to God. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they do not know. The idea of foolish or stupid here also carries with it an obvious arrogance; they are not only foolish, they are not only ignorant, they are not only stupid,

but they are arrogant in their ignorance, which calls to mind the words of Paul: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools!”

Look at all that God has done to reveal Himself, and how aggressively man has rejected that knowledge. Paul tells us that God has put the knowledge of Himself within every man, so that all men are without excuse.

Paul says that God’s invisible attributes are *clearly* seen. He then explains that ignorance of God is a conscious choice that men have made. He says, “Though they *knew* God, they would not have God in their thoughts.” Now, before you can not have God in your thoughts, you must have God in your thoughts.

So atheism is a conscious choice on the part of wicked men to eliminate the knowledge of God from their consciousness. Atheism is not an intellectual

thing; it’s a moral thing! Repeatedly God says, “They have *rejected* knowledge.”

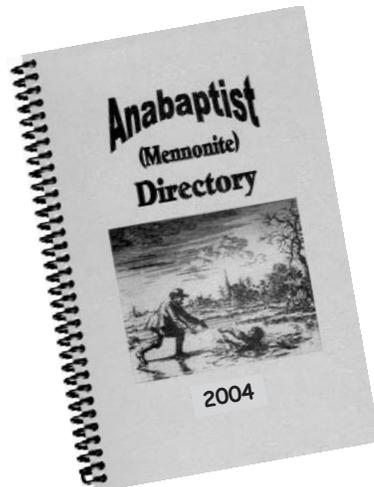
We don’t know God because it’s not important to us to do so. It is far more important to us to know ourselves than to know God. But it is a conscious choice, and every last one of us is without excuse. Our problem is self-induced and our wounds are self-inflicted.

What are we to do? We are to “press on to know the Lord.” We must confess the sin of self-imposed ignorance and turn from it. And then we must give ourselves to know not just facts about God, but the God of the facts. How does He think? How does He act? Why does He act that way? What does that tell me about His nature and character?

Let us be determined to know God, for this is eternal life. ■

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# Pop Goes Morality

by Richard M. Jones

How in the world could a group of professing Christians decide that it would be best to appoint a divorced father of two, who is today a practicing homosexual, as a bishop in their church?

How can a judge and a number of his fellow jurists come to the conclusion that the censorship of the 10 Commandments from the public square is mandated by the U.S. Constitution?

How could a Princeton Professor be given a serious hearing for proposing that since our courts have concluded that it is not ethically wrong to kill the unborn, we should not oppose infanticide up to 30 days after a child is born? After all, argues the professor, the only difference between the unborn and born is their location, and location is not an ethical issue.

The far-reaching implications of these decisions cannot be overstated. But how could it be that modern man has come to this point?

Abraham Lincoln once observed that those who teach in the classrooms determine the destiny of the nation. And to that we would add, those who preach in the pulpits are responsible for the moral destiny of our nation.

Indeed the philosophical groundwork for these momentous decisions has been laid over a century of shifting mores and secular (read God-less) education. **By removing God as the intelligent designer of the universe, we have enthroned man as his own creator. By extolling tolerance as the greatest of virtues, we have dethroned moral judgment. By revising our national history, we have written Christianity out of our national life. By doubting and then reject-**

**ing God's Word—the Bible, as our infallible moral authority, we have opted for a pop morality that asks "What do you think?" rather than "What is God's Word?"**

China's Communist Chairman Mao had his "cultural revolution," that caused social upheaval and was responsible for the death of millions. We fear that the godless cultural revolution underway in our nation and the West will be responsible for social upheaval and death of millions in our own nation. In fact, the 30 million lives already lost in the abortion mills are testament to the dangers inherent in the American "cultural revolution."

But the trends in America come as no surprise to students of God's Word. In Romans 1 we read of a day when men who "knew God, glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." They became "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools . . . changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." The results were tragic then, as they are today, "For this cause God gave them up."

There is a way back, but it will require repentance and revival in the Church, the restoration of virtue to our Civic Life, and the recovery of moral certainty in our nation's classrooms—from kindergarten to college.

That is an incredible challenge—but it is not greater than the God we serve. Let us fervently pray and faithfully act to rescue our perishing friends and lost nation. ■

—from *Faith in the Future* with permission

# The Octopus of Humanism

by Jeff Farnham

Pastor, LaGrange Baptist Church, LaGrange, Indiana

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8).*

Use of the word *philosophy* usually evokes memories either of a boring college elective or of an obsolete part of some vanished culture. Quite subtly, the god of this world has woven philosophies into every culture since the Garden of Eden, and each one of them has been vainly deceitful, traditionally carnal, and rudimentarily worldly.

Unequivocally, the reigning philosophy of these last days is humanism. In the minds of the general populace, the term *humanism* is undefined, but because of its wide usage, mysteriously respected. If one narrows to consider the church, still humanism is largely misunderstood so that many in pulpit and pew have an uninformed esteem for this ever prevalent idea of our new millennium.

Those pulpiteers who do seek to define this philosophy discover that defining a philosophy is not only as frustrating as the proverbial nailing of Jell-O to a tree but also as impossible. Public education, the mainstream media, and word of mouth are a three-fold cord of promotion that essentially renders most sermons useless ere the believer leaves the vestibule.

Rather than to define humanism, let me dissect this specimen and pull it into its parts. Perhaps by viewing it in pieces, we may recognize its presence in our lives so that the next time a preacher seeks to warn us of this damning philosophy which is NOT after Christ, his sayings will sink down into our ears, and truth will be retained.

As we all know, an octopus has eight tentacles. One tentacle wrapped around an unsuspecting prey is nearly impossible to remove because the muscular strength of the tentacle is exponentially increased by the vacuum power of dozens of suction cups. When that amazing strength is multiplied by eight and enhanced by the confusion of entanglement, doom is nearly certain.

For this reason, I use the metaphor of the octopus, dissecting the philosophy of humanism into eight sub-philosophies (tentacles, if you please) for clearer discernment and for more detailed explanation. Consider the following:

## *I. The Tentacle of Mysticism*

Mysticism is as old as mankind and has always taught that subjective experience brings one to the knowledge of God, to the knowledge of spiritual truth and to the knowledge of ultimate reality. In other words, this tentacle of humanism is the belief that whatever one goes through in life is his private road to a private understanding of God and definition of truth.

This flies in the face of Scripture revelation that “. . . the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23, 24). Jesus was here referring to the single truth of His Father, not to the multiplied reasonings of men. Contrary to mystical teaching, Jesus did not allow the woman at the well to “climb up some other way,” but instead He led her

by God's one way through God's one door into God's one sheepfold so that she could say, "Is not this the Christ?"

Mysticism's first child was Cain, who exemplifies for us the subjectiveness of mysticism. He thought he could get to God through his personal experience as a dresser of the fields; and when the issue of sin was presented to him, he avoided it. Repentance never characterized Cain, and at his death, Mysticism's first child became Hell's first child.

## ***II. The Tentacle of Secularism***

Secularism is the removal of and denial of the sacred. The humanistic forces about us have conspiratorially succeeded in eroding away the sacred, so that in our day things once thought sacred are either redefined or removed.

A relationship with Jesus Christ is no longer deemed sacred, for many who claim salvation in one breath will use God's name in vain in the next. Marriage is no longer considered sacred, for the vows uttered at the prayer bench are ever so quickly annulled at the judge's bench. Family is no longer thought to be sacred, and the transsexuals and sodomites are redefining *family* every day in our land.

Scripture is no longer sacred to our secular society, as is evidenced by the popularity of tampering with its contents for profit. Church and the Lord's Day are no longer sacred, as is seen by our substitution of entertainment and emotionalism for true worship and service to Christ.

The sacredness of authority is irrelevant today. Marital authority has been replaced by "equality of the sexes." Parental authority has been replaced by "children's rights." Pastoral authority has been replaced by the "reach-all-please-all" mentality. Civil authority has been replaced by a plea-bargaining judiciary and a law-mocking populace.

Secularists can trace their roots to

Babel where the sacredness of Heaven was deemed touchable by sinful man. Indeed, Babel's confusion reigns today in the heart, in the home, in the church, in the school, and in every place where holy words and holy men and holy things are deemed common.

## ***III. The Tentacle of Emotionalism***

Already cited, emotionalism is the lascivious and capricious expression of the soul, just as mysticism is the ungoverned and lawless endeavor of the spirit. In the emotionalistic context, truth must be *felt* to be believed, and if it is not *felt*, it is not true.

Every preacher of righteousness has been told by some presumptuous soul, "I do not *feel* convicted about this or that," when the very topic of discussion is one clearly judged in Scripture. This is emotionalism, a gross iniquity that leads souls to make decisions based upon what *feels* good.

This tentacle is wrapped securely around the souls of our day who believe that fornication and gambling and workplace stealing and lying under oath and a host of other sins are acceptable because they *feel* okay doing them. Desensitization has made these and many other sins so commonplace that the normal feelings of embarrassment and shame associated with them are overtaken by feelings of acceptability and even pride.

Emotionalism can trace its roots as far back as the days of Noah when the thoughts of men were "only evil continually." Because they felt their behavior was acceptable, they mocked Noah, a preacher of righteousness, just as those of today mock those who preach Jesus Christ. Emotionalists are those who do not feel that their sins will condemn them because they feel so good about themselves and can point out someone else whose sins are "far worse."

#### ***IV. The Tentacle of Intellectualism***

In the same way that emotionalists must *feel* truth to believe it, intellectualists must *understand* truth to believe it. Science and discovery and technology have led the way for an intellectualism that teaches that experimentation can always lead to explanation. Referring again to Noah, let us remember that he believed God with no proof of rain, while the intellectualists of his day who had never seen rain refused his message because they could not prove its possibility by explainable or experimental precedent. It is no wonder that Peter cited these mockers when the Holy Ghost inspired him to write about the last days before a judgment by fire.

This tentacle entangles American and world culture in these last days of “seeing is believing” thought. The vast majority of scoffers deny the existence of God because they cannot see Him, because they cannot find Him in a scientific laboratory. They have taught us from the nursery school to the nursing home that God is who we can prove Him to be, and what we cannot prove, we must not believe.

#### ***V. The Tentacle of Relativism***

Much like secularism has removed all sacred things, relativism has removed all absolute things. Emotionalism appeals to the feelings; intellectualism, to the mind; and relativism, to the will. Emotionalism makes truth dependent upon what one *feels*, intellectualism makes truth dependent upon what one *thinks*, and relativism makes truth dependent upon what one *chooses*.

Relativism is a tentacle securely encircled about the mind-set of today. Its suction cups have sealed themselves upon the flesh of men in such a way that all truth must be chosen based upon its relative application to relative situations.

Principle as a basis for legal decision has given way to precedent due to relativism. Principle as a foundation for personal decision has been pushed out of vogue, and peer-group action has been ushered in, all due to relativism.

The all-out message of relativism is that right is not right all the time. Rather, relativism states, right is right if it is right for you at this time; but relativism allows that even for you, right may not always be right because there may come a time when right may be wrong. Furthermore, right for you may not be right for me. All situational ethics and circumstantial morals have their origin in relativism, whose roots can be found as far back as Lot. Lot chose, did he not? What did he choose? He chose a sinful destination which led to sinful toleration, all because he rejected absolute truth about sodomy, etc.

#### ***VI. The Tentacle of Hedonism***

Mysticism and secularism affect the spirit and one’s worship. Emotionalism, intellectualism, and relativism affect the soul and one’s feelings, thoughts, and choices. The next three tentacles affect and relate to the body in one way or another.

Hedonism is the belief that pleasure is the sole aim and chief good in life. All about us, humanists are on the prowl, convincing us that pleasure should drive us. Slogans and sales pitches aplenty tout the ideas of selfish pleasure, deserved pleasure, indeed, pleasure for pleasure’s sake.

Smokers, drunkards, and a host of other self-abusers claim that their lifestyle brings them pleasure and that therefore no one should expect or require them to change, even if their pleasure harms others. In this case, secondhand smoke complicates and causes a host of illnesses in others. Drunkenness kills more than wars and more

than most diseases. Drug abuse results in harm to many innocents. But thanks to hedonism, our culture presses on toward destruction—all in the name of personal pleasure.

One of the earliest hedonists was Lot's wife. Pleasure for pleasure's sake caused her first to linger and finally to lag. The kind of salt she became is ironic: solid and indispersible. The believer is to be the salt of the earth, to be scattered and distributed about in measure. Hedonism turns salt into pillars, rendering testimonies ineffective.

### ***VII. The Tentacle of Materialism***

Materialism has left its mark in all developed nations worldwide. Humanists are wont to equate material ownership with success, even though God condemns the desire for luxury and opulence. Materialists live for just one more dollar, just one more possession, just one more of anything because they are convinced that their temporal value and eternal reward will be judged by what they own. Workaholics have sacrificed their families on the altar of materialism. Workers have sacrificed their keenness on one job by overextending themselves to two jobs, all because of materialism. "The eyes of man are never satisfied," and to let the tentacle of materialism tie you up is to have the life of contentment squeezed out of you.

Early in Scripture, materialism reared up in the life of Lot. He saw Abraham's sacrifices, losses, and uprootings. Lot failed, through materialism, to see Abraham's rewards, his gains, and his stability in faith. By coveting much, he gained little. Through choosing the world's best, he got God's worst. In pursuing the material and forsaking the spiritual, he lost both. In the well-watered plain, he found brimstone-scorched ground. What he took, he gave up; and what he got, he gave away.

### ***VIII. The Tentacle of Narcissism***

This word is nearly unknown, largely due to humanistic effort to keep it out of circulation. Narcissism is the love of one's body or body worship, even to the point in some cases of lustful feelings for oneself. In the humanistic fervor of the day that is promoting sodomy and a host of other sexually deviant behaviors, narcissism is an undiscussed but up-and-coming aspect of the humanistic platform. We taste its distinct flavor in society in the worship of bodies of athletes and starlets of both genders. We smell its odor in the wind that blows through the corridors of art and drama schools where pornographic depictions and crass characterizations are being hailed as "a revival of the fine arts of the Greeks and Romans."

Narcissism made Saul beloved for his appearance, though his leadership was deplorable. Potiphar's wife, narcissistic at heart, lustfully longed for Joseph until she sought to seduce him for herself. The narcissism of Nebuchadnezzar led him to erect a huge statue to himself. This humanistic tentacle clutched souls as far back as the earliest giants, whose only claim to honor was physical prowess.

### ***Conclusions***

While we have observed examples of the eight tentacles as presented in Scripture, it is sure that all humanism (octopus and tentacles all) comes from Satan and that he is its first father. Beware, dear friend, lest any man, however qualified and educated he may be, spoil you through the philosophy of humanism. Examine your life, dear one, lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Is one of these tentacles wrapping about you, your marriage, or your home? Cut it off before it spoils you, and preserve your Christian testimony until Jesus comes at the day of Christ! ■

—from *The Sword of the Lord*

# *Preparing a Heart for Marriage*

by Ernie Baker

Pastor of Harvest Baptist Church, Blacksburg, Virginia

“By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches” (Proverbs 24:3, 4).

Young people today need to be encouraged and taught to build their future marriage house wisely. There are so many who don’t and, instead of reaping the blessings of wise preparation like Proverbs 24:3, 4 suggest, they reap horrible fruit, and we counselors are asked to clean up the mess. Wise planning and preparation lead to stability later on.

Premarital counseling is a wonderful tool to help prepare young people for marriage. Wouldn’t it be wiser, though, to start earlier so that the foundation of their future marriage house is even more solid? Don’t they need guidance now on how to *choose* a spouse? Shouldn’t they be working on communication and conflict resolution skills now, instead of cramming during premarital counseling? Wouldn’t it be wiser for them to be thinking about why God designed this thing called marriage? Then they can look for someone who has the same convictions they do. Let’s call it pre-engagement counseling or discipleship.

To briefly illustrate the benefits of an earlier start on marriage house construction, let me tell you about Stacy. She is a single, growing Christian. Stacy is very intelligent and is entering her second year at the university.

Unfortunately, her Christian parents are busy with life and do not seem to have much time to deal with all her questions about relationships. She has many. Stacy is prone to crushes on guys, spending much time daydreaming. In the few years I have known her she seems to always have a guy in her sights. She finds herself anxiously asking herself, “What does he think of me?” Typically this ends up with her being hurt when she finds out he likes someone else. She fears that no guy will ever marry her.

Stacy would also admit to impatience. She even wrote a poem called, “When will you come?” She wants a serious relationship and she wants it *now!* In her “theology,” marriage is the perfect remedy for life’s problems. When her prince comes, all will be well in her kingdom. What will happen to Stacy if she does not deal with these tendencies before getting into a serious relationship?

She tends to be vulnerable because of her thinking that a relationship with a guy is the panacea for life. Almost anytime a guy expresses interest, she thinks, “This is the one.” One time she prayed and prayed for a relationship and was particularly burdened to find someone. That day she walked out of class and saw a guy sitting on a wall reading a Bible. Because she had been praying so intensely, she thought, “This must be from the Lord.” She went over and introduced herself, learned he was

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a Christian and invited him to church. He came and visited a service but when she found out they had some significant doctrinal differences, she realized it wouldn't work. Again, she was hurt.

Can you see why she needs pre-engagement discipleship? She needs guidance in proper decision making instead of relying on "signs" (like a guy sitting on the wall). She needs to be taught to not trust her heart even though our culture says, "Let your heart be your guide." It has been significant for her to come to believe that ". . . the heart is more deceitful than all else and desperately sick . . ." (Jeremiah 17:9). Her thoughts and feelings, not guided by biblical wisdom, are not reliable.

She is learning that if she does not deal with this tendency of hers to "need" a fellow, and thinking that a relationship would solve all her problems, that she will be deeply disappointed when her future husband lets her down—and he will. She (and other young people like her) needs to be taught that a person was not designed to take the place of God in her life as her chief security.

This wonderful Christian young lady needs to understand that the Lord is her sufficiency. Instead of allowing relationships to be her refuge from life, she needs to make the Lord her refuge (Psalm 18:1-3). She has begun to realize that her dreaming about relationships is an indication that her heart is leading her toward substitute gods in her life and away from finding the Lord all-satisfying. She is realizing that the Lord must be the solid foundation of her future marriage house. There should be no question of competition between a guy in her life and the Lord. She is learning the truth of Matthew 7:24, 25: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain

descended, the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock."

She is also realizing that her tendency toward worry is because she has a plan for her own life and does not trust the Lord's timing. It is her heart's tendency to want to control. She is realizing that if she does not deal with this she may have a hard time following her husband's leadership. Psalm 27:13 and 14 have become key verses to help her trust the Lord's timing and not her own.

Here is how Stacy describes the benefits of thinking through relationship issues and dealing with what is in her heart even before being involved in a serious relationship: "A husband will not completely satisfy me. Only God can do that. Then the other relationship will be everything it is supposed to be, and I will not be surprised to find that my husband is human! Also, realizing I need to become a godly woman now, not assume it will magically fall into place when Mr. Right comes along. So, my time now isn't wasted. I have a lot to do to become that person."

I believe the state of marriage in our culture demands that we (whoever has influence) start earlier with our young people. Too many are stumbling around, making unwise choices, being guided only by their flesh. It is no wonder that so many homes are showing the signs of faulty construction. Let's make a difference by discipling them toward marriage so that their marriages can glorify our great God, as they were designed to do. ■

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# The Church of Jesus Christ

by Craig Alan Myers

The Church is the fundamental reality of the Christian faith. Its importance is hard to overstate, and it reminds us that the Christian life is not a solitary one. The New Testament teaches that Christ bought the Church, Christ loves the Church, Christ nourishes the Church, and He cherishes the Church (Eph. 5:23-29). Building that Church is Christ's principal work in this age. It is the only institution that Jesus Christ Himself established. "One of the most wholesome provisions which God ever made for the welfare of His people was to call into being an organization to serve as the spiritual home for them while on earth" (Daniel Kauffman, *Doctrines of the Bible*, page 162).

God has always had a people in special relationship to Himself. It was not always the Church as we know it today. God bound Himself into covenant with people throughout history. He made a covenant with Adam in Genesis 3:21-24. He made a covenant with Noah and all mankind (Gen. 9:1-17). God called Abraham from a pagan background to establish a covenant to show Abraham a new Promised Land (Gen. 12:1-3). He set out a covenant with Moses and Israel after the Exodus, and the Israelites became known as the "Chosen People" (Exodus 19:5, 6). God made a covenant with David and his descendants that they should remain on the throne of Israel forever (2 Sam. 7:5-16).

What is the Church? Many definitions could be given. Some may consider the Church to be a denomination—such as the Church of the Brethren. Others may consider the Church to be that universal association of Christians or the complete Body of Christ (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:2, 13). Still others may consider the Church to be the local body, according to Colossians 4:16; Philippians 4:15; and 1 Corinthians 1:2. Certainly there is a sense in which all those things are true. Millard Erickson writes, "The church

is the whole body of those who through Christ's death have been savingly reconciled to God and have received new life" (*Christian Theology* [1st Edition], page 1034). For the purposes of this article, we will consider the Church to be a called-together body of growing believers in Jesus Christ, which has Christ as its Foundation and Head, and which is organized for worship, edification, and evangelism. For the most part, references in the Scriptures to the "church" are allusions to the local body of Christians who worship and serve God together.

## *The Church Is Called Together*

The word *church* itself comes from the Greek term *kyriakos*, which means "belonging to the Lord." The New Testament speaks of the Church as the *ecclesia*. This Greek word, which is used 114 times in the New Testament, and means "a called out, or called together body"—is the root of words such as *ecclesiology* (the study of the Church), and *ecclesiastical* (that which relates to the Church). The term was used in New Testament times to refer to a political assembly that governed cities, much like our modern town meetings.

The early Church adopted this word, signifying that it saw itself as being a called-out body of people. The Church is called together out of the world system. "It means those who have heard the call of Christ, as well as the call of His servants, to come out from the world and become faithful followers of their Master" (J. H. Moore, *New Testament Doctrines*, page 88). No longer are Christians merely citizens of this world, but rather citizens of Heaven (Phil. 3:20). The Church is distinctive in its origin—Jesus established it (Matt. 16:18). It is unique in its makeup—comprised of all those who trust in Christ and walk in faithful obedience to Him (1 Cor. 1:2). The Church is different in its charter—the New Testament is its rule for

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faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16). The Church is distinctive in its mission—to do all under the direction of Christ, but primarily proclaim the gospel of salvation as found in the Bible (Matt. 28:19, 20). The Church has a matchless future—eternal life with the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:27).

The called together, voluntary nature of the Church makes it important that we note the three prominent marks of the faithful Church. The Church is to be faithful in the preaching of God's Word; to be diligent in the regular observance of the ordinances; and to carefully exercise both preventive and corrective discipline. These marks contrast the Church with other man-made institutions. Every other institution, including human government, the family, and social organizations—will eventually come to an end. By way of contrast, the Church will live throughout eternity as the Bride of Christ.

#### ***The Church Is a Body***

Several metaphors are used to refer to the Church. One of the most prominent is "body." In 1 Corinthians 12, we find that the gifts and functions in the Body of Christ are varied, just as the gifts and functions of different parts of the human body vary. Each part, or member Christian, has his or her proper place within the Church of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27).

In Ephesians 1:22, 23, we find the body of Christ spoken of as the center of Christ's activity. Jesus did not set out to build up para-Church ministries, valuable as they are. The focus of Jesus in this present age is His Church. He said, "I will build My Church" (Matt. 16:18). It has an intimate connection with the Lord, and because of that, brings about the close relationship of believers to each other. Each part of the Body is related to Christ, and so is related to every other part of the Body. We are not Christians in the solitary sense, isolated from others and relating only to Jesus. We are dependent on other believers. In fact, we need other believers, and other Christians need each believer (1 Cor. 12:22).

#### ***The Church Consists of Believers Growing in Christ***

The basic requirement for persons to be members of the Church of Jesus Christ is that they have trusted Jesus as their personal Saviour, made a public confession of faith, and live consecrated lives before the Lord. The New Testament assumes that all members of the Church will be believers in Christ. This precludes babies or those who have not accepted Christ from being members. There is no instance in the New Testament where babies are baptized or considered members of the Church before their baptism as believers.

Many professing churches have laid aside the requirement that persons be Christians when they become members. It is enough for them that someone wants to participate, and they believe that the congregation should include all, regardless of relationship to Christ. But not even all those who are baptized are really a part of the true Church. At times, even pastors and other leaders have not experienced being born again. These minimal, often nonexistent, standards have led churches to experience spiritual weakness and ultimately apostasy.

It is important, too, that the Christians in a fellowship be *growing* in their faith in Christ. Every believer is to be enlarging their understanding and practice of their faith. Real Christians grow in holiness, are concerned about doing good, and are interested in seeing others trust Christ. Every Christian should commit himself to be a faithful attender (Heb. 10:25); a generous giver of money and time (1 Cor. 16:2); one committed to prayer for the Church; and one who honors those that labor as leaders in the Church (1 Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:7).

#### ***The Church Has Jesus Christ as Its Foundation and Head***

Jesus taught that He would build His Church (Matt. 16:18), and see the full establishment of that Church in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit came upon the assembled disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem. The rest of the book of Acts shows the

development of the Church as a worldwide movement, which embraced people of various backgrounds, nations, and languages.

Jesus is the Foundation of the Church (Matt. 16:18). When Jesus spoke of the Rock on which He would build the Church, He was speaking of Himself. Peter, though a strong individual, was but a pebble compared to the Foundation Stone of Jesus. Jesus chose His disciples and then He taught them. He is the Chief Cornerstone. He is the One who sent the Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of those who are born anew (Acts 2:33).

The Church is called the “Bride of Christ” several times in the New Testament. The initial picture is found in the parable of the bridesmaids in Matthew 25:1-13. The Church is loved intensely by Christ. That love is related to the fact that the Church has been chosen by Christ for His purposes (Eph. 5:22, 23). Rev. 21:9 says that the Bride has been prepared for Christ. So in this way, the Church is Christ’s, and exists for His pleasure.

Jesus is also the Head of the Church. There is no other human “head” of the Church to which it must submit, contrary to the teaching of one major denominational group. He has given specific instructions in His Word. The Church is to cheerfully and willingly submit itself to Christ through His Word. It dare not act contrary to the Word, or else it ceases to be His Church.

### ***The Church Is Organized***

While the Church is a living organism, every organism needs to be organized, or else it is just a mass that cannot do anything. The Church, since its genesis in Acts 2, has always had an organization or “polity.” According to Acts 2:42, the early Church had standards (the apostles’ doctrine); it was joined together in fellowship; it practiced the ordinances; and it prayed together as a body. The early Church had regular places and times of meeting, and had regular hours of prayer. Members were regularly (daily) brought into the Church.

There have been three major kinds of church government through history, each

of which finds some authority in the New Testament. The *episcopal* system has authority residing in bishops. Bishops can be appointed by those in higher authority, or elected by church assemblies. Anglican, Catholic, and Methodist churches operate with an episcopal government. The *presbyterian* system rests its government in a council of both ordained and lay elders (presbyters) selected by a congregation. These elders represent the congregation in conference with elders from other congregations. Presbyterian and Reformed churches use this kind of leadership. *Congregational* church government rests its authority in the assembled congregation itself and the officers it elects. The congregation is the final authority in all matters. Baptist and independent churches operate under a congregational system.

The New Testament specifies only two necessary officers of the Church. *Elders* (or overseers) and *deacons* (servants) were set apart in every church body, usually on a city-wide or geographical basis. Paul commissioned Titus to appoint elders (or bishops) in every city in Crete (Titus 1:5). Paul bade farewell to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17, 28. Philippians 1:1 mentions bishops and deacons being greeted by Paul. Likely the best system is that in which the congregation calls elders and deacons, and then respects the authority of those called. Those called to serve the congregation also maintain accountability to the congregation. Simplicity in organization would seem to reflect the New Testament ideal, rather than have numerous committees just to give people something to do. J. H. Moore wrote, “In order to carry out the apostolic idea of doing things, there should be a plurality of elders in every congregation, and while one of their number may take the lead, there ought to be a careful cooperation of the elders in looking after the spiritual interests of the church” (*New Testament Doctrines*, page 95).

The duties of the elder are to oversee (1 Tim. 3:1) and to rule in the Church (1 Tim. 5:17). Elders are to guard the doctrines of the Church from corruption and apostasy (Titus 1:9). Specific qualifications

for elders are laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9.

Deacons are to be servants of the Church, based on the initial calling of deacons in Acts 6. They are to concern themselves with the care of the poor, assisting the minister (apostles or elders), and to generally assist as needed for the entire ministry of the Church).

*Pastors, teachers, and evangelists* are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11—but the reference is not so much to the function of an office; these are specific gifts exercised by those in leadership (elders and deacons) for the upbuilding of the Church.

### ***The Church Has a Purpose***

No other organization or body has the threefold duty of the Church of Jesus Christ. That duty is: First—*toward God*, as we seek to worship Him through Jesus Christ (Col. 1:18); second—*toward other believers*, as they are edified or disciplined in Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:12); and third—*toward the world*, as we proclaim the Gospel and introduce people to Christ (Matt. 28:19, 20). Through this threefold purpose, the Church glorifies God in all things. Our time, treasure, and prayers should be toward this end.

*Worship* ought to be central for the Church. Worship is essentially acknowledging God, and giving Him the praise and honor that is due Him. We are to be proclaiming what God has done in history—He has acted in human events to bring His creation to its right end. We are exalting what God is doing today—He is saving people, to make for Himself a godly people. We are to proclaim what God will do—Jesus will return, set up His Kingdom on the earth, and ultimately take His people to Heaven. In worship, we also uphold the rites and ordinances of the Lord. Every time we meet for worship, witness a baptism, observe the Love Feast, greet one another with the holy kiss, and anoint the sick with oil, we are obedient to what Jesus told the Church to do. It is a treasured opportunity to once more bring praise to God through the assembly of God's people.

*Edification* is the work of building up believers in their faith. Generally this occurs as the Church meets for fellowship, or *koinonia* as found in the New Testament. We need to have the regular encouragement of like-minded believers in Christ, who can give guidance, counsel, material support, and other help when needed. Teaching or discipling is also an important work of the Church in building up Christians (Eph. 4:12). This teaching comes from the pulpit through expository preaching; it comes from the Sunday school hour in systematic study of God's Word; it comes through the mid-week prayer meeting or home Bible study in hearing from God through His Word and speaking to God in prayer.

*Evangelism* is the Church taking the Good News of salvation to those who have not heard it, and inviting them to trust Christ and enter into the new relationship with Him and with the Church itself. Some Christians are particularly gifted to tell others the Gospel, yet each of us is commanded to give out the message whenever we are given the opportunity.

Social concern may be a part of the overall mission of the Church (James 1:27), but it is not the primary mission or duty. It is a means toward the end of glorifying God, of building up believers, or of bringing others to Christ. It is incidental to the work of the Church, not the focus.

Every believer in Christ should be active in the Church and its local body. Every Christian should seek to make the Church more of what Christ intends for it. Every believer should be using his or her gifts to build up the Body of Christ, to the goal that He might receive even more glory through His Church. The Church, populated by fallen men and women as it is, is not perfect while still on this earth. It may have many problems and struggles. Yet, in the plan of God, it is still His instrument for His purposes today, and will continue to be that instrument for His glory until Jesus returns. ■

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# The Real Passion of Jesus Christ (Part 2)

## What Mel Gibson Will Never Tell You

by Alan Morrison (Director, Diakrisis International)

### 2) What lies behind the arrest of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The first thing which lies behind His arrest is that

#### i. This was a planned-for event.

What do I mean by that?

First, His arrest was a planned-for event in the sense that He had amply prepared Himself for this moment. His whole life had been geared to it:

“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51).

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? *Father, save Me from this hour?* But for this purpose I came to this hour” (John 12:27).

He then duly prepared Himself in prayer. And we should also be similarly prepared for the moment of our deaths. Are we prepared? In what condition will you be found if you breathe your last breath in the next moment?

Second, Jesus’ arrest was a planned-for event in the sense that He chose the place carefully. Yes, He chose the place, not Judas! Our Lord was not hiding out in Gethsemane in order to keep Himself in a secret place and avoid arrest. Quite the reverse.

Luke tells us that “*Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed*” (22:39). Anyone who wanted to find Him in an evening could go there. They didn’t arrest Him in public in Jerusalem because there would have been an uproar among the people. Instead they came by night to this olive grove to do it in secret. But the Lord Jesus had planned to be there so that He could be arrested. He knew they couldn’t have done it in Jerusalem.

So the Lord Jesus’ arrest was a planned-for event, entirely under divine control:

“No one takes [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father” (John 10:18).

The second thing which lies behind His arrest is that

#### ii. It was a fulfillment of prophecy.

At the moment of His arrest, He said to those carrying it out:

“*I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.*” Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (Matt. 26:55, 56).

His arrest not only fulfilled prophecy but it also demonstrated that the Lord was in control of it all.

Another aspect of the fulfillment of prophecy in His arrest was when the Lord Jesus said to them, “*All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written [in Zech. 13:7]: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered’*” (Matt. 26:31). And sure enough “*all the disciples forsook Him and fled*” (Matt. 26:56).

The third thing which lies behind His arrest is that

#### iii. It provides a warning to all impenitent sinners.

**There is no freedom or protection from the judgment of God except by the arrest of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

How well we need to understand this.

Those who refuse to repent and take hold of Christ as their Saviour will at the end of this age be themselves arrested and brought before the bar of God’s judgment to be tried by the King of heaven and earth.

Christ could not have been our Saviour and Redeemer—our substitute—unless He had been brought before the bar of an earthly judge and arrested as a guilty law-breaker.

Jesus Christ had no sin of His own; but He still had to be numbered with the transgressors. The Lord Jesus said just before He was arrested: “*Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See,*

*My betrayer is at hand*" (Matt. 26:45, 46). He was betrayed into the hands of sinners so that they could accuse Him of being a sinner, try Him for it, and execute Him for it. And all of this as our substitute!

The fourth thing which lies behind His arrest is that

**iv. It was the true beginning of His hellish experience.**

What are we to make of the little verse which says: "*Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled*" (Matt. 26:56)? This had already been prophesied earlier by the Lord in the prophecy of Zechariah: "*Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered*" (Zech. 13:7). And at the hour of His arrest—the very moment when He was given into the hands of sinners—He was deserted by all.

Again, this was all part of God's outpouring of wrath. The Man, Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God manifested in the flesh, was to stand totally alone before the judge of all the earth. In His suffering all the pangs of hell, there was to be no comfort whatsoever—human or divine.

Not only would He be forsaken by God, but He would be forsaken by all humanity also.

There will be no friendships in hell. Hell means to be utterly, utterly, utterly alone and forsaken forever.

The fifth and final thing which lies behind His arrest is that

**v. It is a great comfort to the Lord's people.**

He was arrested and brought before human judges in order that all who believe in Him and trust in Him for salvation would not themselves be "arrested" and brought before the bar of God's justice at the Last Day.

We read of all this happening to the Lord Jesus and can take great comfort in it. It happened to Him so that it would not happen to us.

**3) Non-Resistance of the Lord Jesus Christ to Arrest**

Why did the Lord Jesus not resist arrest at that time? Would it not have been a good idea to continue His obviously very beneficial ministry among the people?

The Lord did not resist arrest because

**i. To do so would be entirely contrary to the nature of His Kingdom.**

John 18:36: "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

Christ's kingdom is not of this world. True kingdom power relies on spiritual weaponry. This is the great fact of the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, Israel fought with material weapons, but in the New Covenant,

"the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).

When John said: "*Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?*" (Luke 9:54), the Lord Jesus

"turned and rebuked them, and said, '*You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them*'" (Luke 9:55, 56).

When one of the disciples drew his sword to protect the Lord, Jesus said to him,

"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:52, 53).

A legion is between 3000 and 6000 soldiers. Twelve legions is equal to between 36,000 and 72,000 angels. And the Lord Jesus says "*more than twelve legions . . .*"!

Kingdom power relies on spiritual weaponry.

The Lord did not resist arrest because

**ii. To do so would run against the Scriptures.**

The Lord Jesus was continually aware that His life was unfolding in fulfillment of the Scriptures. We have observed this already earlier; but here once again at His arrest, He says: "*How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?*" (Matt. 26:54).

The Lord did not resist arrest because

**iii. To do so would deny the voluntary nature of His death.**

Part of the shining forth of the Lord

Jesus' Divinity here in the Garden is the fact that although He could have resisted arrest with a massive demonstration of divine power, complete with many legions of angels, He gave Himself to it entirely voluntarily. This is in keeping with His mind-set throughout the whole of His earthly ministry:

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father" (John 10:17, 18).

"Then Pilate said to Him, 'Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?' Jesus answered, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above' " (John 19:10, 11).

The Lord did not resist arrest because **iv. To do so would be against the Father's will.**

"Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me' " (John 18:11).

He had been given a "cup" by the Father. What is this cup? And what does it mean to have it given to Him by the Father? Here we have to understand the significance of the divine cup in Scripture.

For example, the closing words of Psalm 11 say:

"The LORD tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain coals; Fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be **the portion of their cup.** For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright" (Psa. 11:5-7).

Again, the Psalmist says:

"God is the Judge: he puts down one. And exalts another. For **in the hand of the LORD there is a cup.** And the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out: Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain and drink down" (Psa. 75:7, 8).

"Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk at the hand of the LORD **the cup of His fury;** You have drunk the dregs of **the cup of trembling.** And drained it out. . . . Thus says your Lord, The LORD and your God, Who pleads the cause of His people: 'See,

I have taken out of your hand **the cup of trembling.** The dregs of **the cup of My fury;** You shall no longer drink it. But I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you . . . ' " (Isa. 51:17, 22, 23).

The Lord Jesus was plainly alluding to this cup of God's fury before which the whole world must tremble. This is the cup of judgment for sin which will be poured out on the earth on the Day of Judgment as the impenitent are cast into hell.

The Lord Jesus says: "*Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?*" Plainly, it was the Father's will that He should drink this cup.

### **5. The Passion of Christ's Torture and Execution**

The passage in Paul's letter to the Philippians (Phil. 2:5-7) which speaks about the humiliation of Christ in His incarnation also states: "*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross*" (Phil. 2:8). His birth was indeed a humiliation, but this brings us to another aspect of His humiliation: His shameful death.

It was humiliating enough for the Son of God to come in the flesh—in *the likeness of sinful flesh*" (Rom. 8:3). But to be put to death like a common criminal is the ultimate in humiliation.

Yet this was the road that was worked out in the Godhead. The pathway to exaltation and glory in this fallen world is through shame, degradation, suffering, and humiliation. Always.

There is a glorious Divine logic to this when we think of why there are problems in this world in the first place. For the fallen angel, Satan, tried to achieve glory through raising himself up above his station. So what does the Lord do? He not only stands that on its head, but He also overthrows Satan and his angels in the process: He sends His Son to come in utter humiliation so that He can be glorified. This was a beautiful reversal of Satan's hubris. Satan sets himself up as God and exalts himself in order to enslave the world; God abases Himself by coming in the flesh in order to liberate the world.

There was also a divine paradox in this.

Isaiah prophecies about Christ's appearance on the Cross:

"Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Isa. 52:14).

Here it is almost as if the prophet Isaiah is sitting at the foot of the Cross gazing up at the Lord Jesus Christ. We are given an image that shows us just how abased He was in those last hours before the world. He was by human standards a complete nonentity, utterly "phased." This is not merely referring to the fact that His face would have been smashed up and horribly disfigured, but refers to His entire *persona*, His image before the world; so that when the world looks at Him there, it sees something awful, degrading, and completely abased.

Not only was this abasement physical but it was in every other respect too. The Lord Jesus became *persona non grata* on the Cross—disgusting to behold, the very epitome of all that is associated with sin and degradation. An inestimable amount of sin was being punished in Him who knew no sin Himself. The vilest deeds imaginable—murder, rape, robbery, deception, fornication, sodomy, pedophilia, incest, adultery, bestiality, cruelty, cold-heartedness, and wickedness of all kinds, were all heaped as it were upon Him in one enormous festering mass of sin. "So His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Isa. 52:14).

But in this hideous abasement is a precious truth: what we can call "The Exaltation Paradox." The "Exaltation Paradox" reaches its cosmic and historical zenith in the death of Christ. To the outward gaze, He was a broken man, His mission in tatters, His disciples scattered. **Yet this momentous "defeat" was the very event which brought the destruction of its architect, Satan, along with the exaltation of its "Victim" and all His people throughout time and history** (John 12:24, 31, 32).

The Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity "empties" Himself, takes the form of a servant, is obedient to death, and is thereby exalted and given the Name which is above every name (Phil. 2:3-9).

This is the exaltation paradox epitomized, and must be understood when one is considering the ignominy of the Cross.

Herein lies the **real** Passion of Christ. Merely to depict the physical torture of Christ at the hands of Jews and Romans in a film for two solid hours in a cinema and to present that as the sum of the Passion of Christ is to miss the point entirely and to skew the Gospel beyond recognition. Yet it is still necessary for us to understand what was happening in the midst of that brutality. So let us here go into the significance of those violent events.

In the passion of Christ's torture and execution, we can see that He was humiliated in all His offices. The Lord Jesus was the culmination and fulfillment of so many elements of Old Testament ceremonial practices and offices. Apart from His fulfillment of the atoning sacrifice, the fact remains that the offices of prophet, priest, and king all found their fulfillment in Him.

#### **1) He suffered in His office as Prophet.**

The Lord Jesus Christ was the end of all the Prophets of God in the Old Testament. He was the Prophet of all prophets, the One prophesied way back in Deuteronomy:

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die' " (Deut. 18:15, 16).

He is the culmination of all the Prophets and all prophecy. Everything has its fulfillment in Christ. But in this hour of His humiliation, His office as the Prophet to end all prophets and fulfill all prophecy was reduced to ridicule.

Matt. 26:67, 68: "Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, 'Prophesy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?'"

What a judgment these men must have brought down upon themselves by insulting the ultimate Prophet!

#### **2) He suffered in His office as Priest.**

One of the plainest teachings about the

Lord Jesus Christ was His role as the culmination of the Old Testament Priesthood. He had come as the high priest: “*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*” (Heb. 5:6). Melchizedek was serving as a priest but was not from the lineage of Levi. He was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in his role as a High Priest.

“There were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (Heb. 7:23-27).

And here, in the hour of His humiliation, we see the Lord Jesus humiliated in His office of Priesthood.

“Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a shining white robe, and sent him again to Pilate” (Luke 23:11).

A shining white robe such as the priests wore. He suffered in His office as priest.

### **3) He suffered in His office as King.**

The Lord Jesus was born in the line of succession of David. When we read in 2 Samuel 7:16, “*Your throne shall be established forever;*” we are forced to ask How could David’s throne be established forever? The answer is that just as the promises to Abraham about an “*everlasting covenant*” and an “*everlasting possession*” could only be fulfilled in Christ and His church, so the throne of David can only be fulfilled “forever” in Christ, the eternal King.

“But to the Son He says: ‘*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom*’” (Heb. 1:8).

Adam was originally ordained by God as King of the Earth—as His vicegerent, having received delegated authority. But Adam’s disobedience led to Satan becoming “legal”

ruler of the world, under the permission of the Lord for His own higher purposes.

The reason the Second Person of the Trinity came into the world was “*to destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8), and to wrest the rulership of the world away from Satan. So, the Lord Jesus, as He is man, is King of the earth (John 18:37). As God, He is and always has been ruler of the universe. And here, in the hour of His humiliation, we see the Lord Jesus humiliated in His office as King:

“And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘*Hail, King of the Jews!*’ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head” (Matt. 27:28-30).

“And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, ‘*Hail, King of the Jews!*’ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him” (Mark 15:16).

Not only was He humiliated in all His offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, but also

### **4) He suffered betrayal and rejection by His people in His office as their Messiah.**

“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again” (Mark 10:33, 34).

We see here that the Lord Jesus predicted His Passion and Resurrection. There are seven predictions here:

#### **i. He predicted that He would be betrayed.**

“The Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes.”

The extraordinary thing about this prediction is that it refers to the spiritual leaders of Israel. Consider that! The Messiah who had come at first to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, was rejected

by them. He was going to be judged by the teachers of the very law which He had given them! Such irony.

**ii. He predicted that He would be condemned to death.**

They will condemn their Messiah to death. The spiritual leaders of the people are going to do this! You would have thought they would have known better. This is not very different from the situation in our own day, in which Jesus Christ is being systematically condemned to death by those who set themselves up as spiritual leaders. And Jesus Christ was going to be condemned to death by the establishment "Church" of His time.

One may well wonder what many churches would do if the Lord Jesus suddenly turned up and applied for membership! Surely, He would be rejected, reviled, and even crucified all over again.

**iii. He predicted that He would be handed over to the Gentiles.**

*"They will deliver Him to the Gentiles."* This is very significant. Handing the Messiah over to the Gentiles was the ultimate degrading act. It was a sign of the complete rejection by His own.

Mark 15:1: "Immediately in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate."

This handing over of Jesus to the Gentiles is very significant. Listen to what Peter says to the people of Israel:

Acts 2:23: "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death."

*"By lawless hands . . . ,"* that is, through the aid of the Gentiles—those without law. To have crucified their Messiah was bad enough, but to do it through handing Him over to the Gentiles is the ultimate humiliation. Again, we read:

"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, **whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate,** when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be

granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses" (Acts 3:13-15).

*"He came to his own, but his own did not receive him"* (John 1:11).

And look what the Gentiles did to Him when He was handed over to them.

**iv. He predicted that He would be mocked and spat upon by the Gentiles.**

*"The Gentiles . . . will mock Him and spit on Him."* We see this worked out in Mark 15:16-20.

**v. He predicted that He would be flogged by the Gentiles.**

*"The Gentiles . . . will flog Him."*

*"Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified"* (Mark 15:15).

**vi. He predicted that He would be killed by the Gentiles.**

*"The Gentiles . . . will kill him."*

But that was not the end of the story, for

**vii. He predicted that He would rise again.**

*"And the third day He will rise again."*

We will be dealing with this in a separate article shortly. But we can see here that the Resurrection was the aim of it all, for a resurrected Christ is proof of a successful atonement for sin.

**5) He suffered in all His senses.**

**i. He suffered in His hearing.**

He had to undergo the sound of various people scoffing at Him. He even had to experience His own people chanting *Crucify Him!*"

**ii. He suffered in His sight.**

He suffered by having to look at the scornful, hate-filled faces staring at Him.

**iii. He suffered in His smell.**

Golgotha, the site of the Cross, was the place of dead men's skulls. There must have been a hideous stench from the putrefying remains of those executed there.

**iv. He suffered in His taste.**

He was offered vinegar mixed with gall.

**v. He suffered in His touch.**

Here we move into the next section looking at the way that the Lord Jesus was physically abused as part of His Passion.

**6) He was physically abused.**

Isaiah 52:14: “Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.”

He received thorns on His head, blows on His cheeks, spit in His face, the nails hammered in His hands. And He did not in the least shrink from it. In fact He says in Isaiah by way of prophecy:

“I gave My back to those who struck Me, And my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting” (Isa. 50:6).

That was the state of the Man who was raised up on the Cross. Beaten to a pulp, abused beyond description, utterly bereft of any human solace, utterly alone.

Oh, my friends, He did not suffer to that extent because of anything on His own part, or for which He could be blamed. All that was for the sake of others. In fact, it was for you and me!

**i. He was beaten.**

*“Then they struck Him on the head with a reed”* (Mark 15:19).

“Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands” (Matt. 26:67).

He was savagely beaten up. His face must have been completely disfigured. He was literally beaten to a pulp.

**ii. He was spat upon.**

*“Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him”* (Mark 15:19).

This was a sign of complete baseness to be spat upon. In the East it still is the sign of the greatest contempt.

The Lord underwent every human curse imaginable. It would not stop until the Cross itself. He was bearing the full brunt of divine displeasure as the three hours of darkness loomed into view.

**iii. His face was disfigured.**

Not only was the Lord Jesus beaten and spat upon, but apparently He had his beard pulled out:

“I gave My back to those who struck

Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting” (Isa. 50:6).

For that to happen, He must have had parts of His face ripped off. How many of us could stand even that—never mind being crucified, the most painful kind of execution imaginable. Perhaps that is why the Scripture describes the Lord Jesus in the following manner:

Isaiah 52:14: “Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.”

**iv. Other unmentionable things.**

Who knows what else the Lord Jesus suffered within that Roman garrison that night. He was taking the punishment for sinners upon Himself. Punishment for every kind of sin.

I do not wish to be at all irreverent here, but we must be realistic when considering what it meant to be handed over to an entire Roman garrison—when you know what kind of abominations the Romans were into, and you can imagine Roman soldiers, the rough underclass, let loose on a wayward Hebrew on whom all their base instincts could be poured out. Even today, many soldiers behave like beasts when given their head and do unspeakably cruel and rapacious things.

I do not draw attention to this in a gratuitously sensationalist manner. I want to drive home to you the depths of suffering of our Lord Jesus—not for His sin but for the likes of us. Our violence, our fornication, our idolatry, our lies, our dishonesty, all our filthy sin. The punishment for all that was poured out on the Son of God.

How are you going to respond to all this? Here is a man who died in the place of sinners, that they should escape from the futile enslavement to sin and Satan and a sure future in hell. How are we going to respond? He says: Repent and believe the Gospel. Give up the life that you have had since your birth, get down on your knees and humble yourself.

As we come to the conclusion of this section on the passion of Christ’s torture and execution, we can say that the entire span of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is

an extraordinary contrast between His human and divine natures. Especially this is the case in the Garden—but above all when He is impaled on the Cross before the world which nailed Him there.

This is the lowest point that any human being could ever reach: He was born in an animal feeding trough; He had nowhere to lay His head; He was reviled by human beings; He was rejected by His own people; He was tortured and abused; He was put to death by the powers of the world; He was put to death by the most base and ignominious method possible. Crucifixion for a Jew was a sign of being cursed by God:

“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God” (Deut. 21:22, 23).

And Paul applied this “accursedness” to the Lord Jesus: “. . . *having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)*” (Gal. 3:13).

He was accursed. The Son of God was accursed! And in three hours of awesome darkness on the Cross, something extraordinary happened:

“Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*’ that is, ‘*My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?*’ ” (Matt. 27:45, 46).

This is what was meant when we spoke earlier about the fact that there was something else—something so profound and vital—which made Christ’s suffering, even His physical suffering, qualitatively different to any other suffering which has ever taken place, even the worst of all suffering. For during those three hours of darkness on the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ suffered all the pangs of hell as He was completely abandoned by the Father as the experience of hell closed in on His soul. For complete abandonment by God is the essence of hell. “*He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ, the Son of God] who*

*knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*” (2 Cor. 5:21).

### III. CRYPTIC INFLUENCES OF THE FILM

Having said all the above and shown the real passion of Christ from its bitter beginnings to its triumphal end, what purposes are being served by Mel Gibson’s film? Wittingly or not, what are the cryptic influences of this film on its audiences? What effect has the year-long pre-release debate had on the collective mind of humanity?

The first cryptic influence of the film is that

#### ***1. It creates a false trail concerning the issue of “Who killed Christ?”***

The usual cast of thousands have thrown in their two-cents worth about the inherent anti-Semitism in Gibson’s film. It has been rather bizarre to watch so many Jewish people (and Christian Zionists) debating about whether the film is likely to lead to synagogues being burned down, when the real issue is: “Who is Christ and what is His real message?”

The fact is that the message of Christ and of the entire New Testament is essentially anti-Jewish, in the sense that it demonstrates the redundancy of the Old Covenant now that the Messiah has come. But that anti-Jewishness is merely religious; it is not personal and thus can never justify any kind of nastiness or violence towards individual Jewish people who have chosen to reject their Messiah.

Furthermore, whether or not the Jews killed Christ is not really the issue at all when considering the Passion of Christ. It goes without saying that the Jews rejected their Messiah and had Him put to death. Let there be no mistake about that, for “*all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children’*” (Matt. 27:25). Around forty years later, Jerusalem was ransacked by the Romans and the Temple was destroyed. That was the plain judgment of God. Even Paul, the Jewish rabbi, admitted that the Jews:

“killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to

the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:15, 16).

That divine wrath against the Jews has continued unabated to this day. However, to stop there and merely say that the Jews killed Christ becomes a "red herring" which leads to a futile finger-pointing exercise for those who need a fall-guy. For the full theological view is that Christ was killed as "*the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world*" (1 John 2:2). It was the sin of the world which killed Christ—that is, His Passion, His death, were the direct result of His coming as a substitute to pay the penalty for our sins. In other words, we are all responsible for the death of Christ.

The second cryptic influence of the film is that

### ***2. It encourages mass desensitization to violence.***

There is something utterly warped about watching someone play the part of a torture victim for two hours in a film. What kind of person could possibly want to sit in an auditorium in the company of many others and observe actors and actresses pretending to be involved in the gradual killing of a man with hyper-realistic sights and sounds of blood and gore in high color and full close-up? Mel Gibson is the master of such graphic vulgarity. This vicarious voyeurism is serving a purpose in the social engineering of society in the cause of a New World Order.

There has been a process of desensitization to extreme violence in place for some time. It is what can be called "The Clockwork Orange Syndrome." Millions sit for hours in front of a screen watching the most heinous and barbaric acts imaginable, in the cause of entertainment. Through the use of the international media—especially cinema and television—the world has been/is being systematically desensitized to extreme violence to such an extent that it will tolerate anything without flinching. It naturally leads to a hardness of heart and tolerance of cruelty.

In fact, the passive toleration of the enactment of violence against certain

groups of individuals is a classic hallmark of a pre-fascist era. Many other hallmarks of such an era are already in place at the present time: The suppression of freedom allegedly in the cause of "the need for greater security," the menacing of the population with a fear of terrorist attacks, the irrational adulation of unsuitable individuals as leaders, the mass control of the population through the media, the complete dumbing-down of the populace, and so on.

Soon dictatorial leaders will be able to wreak havoc on dissenters in a vicious fashion while the world looks on dispassionately. They have seen such violence many times before in the comfort of their own homes and in the cinemas. It will not overly concern them.

The third cryptic influence of the film is that

### ***3. It engenders fear in the population.***

A clear message of this film is that it is portraying what will happen to anyone who becomes a dissident. The scoffing Jews and Romans portrayed in the film are archetypes of the attitudes of modern "democratic" governments to all those who dissent to their ideology.

We are back in the world of Dostoyevsky's "Inquisition Scene" in his book *The Brothers Karamazov*, where the ruling elite of the Roman Catholic church arrange to dispose of a revisiting Christ who is likely to mess up their priestcraft and congregational control.

The common representation of Christ in the Roman Catholic religious system is that of a figure nailed to a cross with his head hanging down—very dead and very defeated. This is a powerful symbol concerning the fate of all dissidents at the hands of the authorities. It is as if it is saying, "*This is what happens when you dare to question the system.*" This defeated figure is plastered over the walls of all Roman Catholic churches—either as a picture or a stature. It contrasts powerfully with the alive and glowing figure of Mary, who is very often depicted aloft the defeated figure of Christ.

This presents an incomplete picture of Christ—the Risen, Ascended Christ—to all adherents, and becomes a powerful figure

of control in Roman Catholic churches. Without a completed picture of Christ as the One who is the substitute before God and who has successfully risen from the dead in glory, it then becomes possible to exercise priestcraft and fool the people into thinking that they still need priests and sacrifices in order to be cleansed of sin.

A classic example of this is the way that Mel Gibson said that he had to practice the Mass each morning before filming in order to be “*squeaky clean*.” In that system, the once-for-all-time sacrifice of Christ is negated and human religious endeavor becomes necessary. The same inadequacy and incompleteness of the picture of Christ must inevitably permeate Gibson’s movie.

The fourth cryptic influence of the film is that

#### **4. It negates the sovereignty of God.**

The real answer to the question “Who killed Jesus Christ?” is not “the Jews” or “the Romans.” Certainly, they were the human instruments used to bring about the heinous act; but ultimately it was not they who instigated it. So who **did** kill the Lord Jesus Christ? Who **did** have Him tortured, beaten, and nailed to a cross? It was His Father! The Father—the first Person of the Trinitarian Godhead—instigated all that.

In His Passion, the Lord Jesus Christ was “*smitten by God, and afflicted*” (Isa. 53:4). It is a recorded fact that “*the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all*” (Isa. 53:6). Even more astonishing, “*it pleased the Lord to bruise Him*” (Isa. 53:10). Why did the Father do all that? Again, the answer is simple. Because of our sin:

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; th chastisement for our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:5, 6).

Whether or not the Jews killed Christ is a complete smokescreen thrown up by the Jews of our day to hide the real issue. The real question is “Why did the God the Father kill Christ the Son of God?” What a beautiful question that would be to debate in all the liberal theological seminaries and

synagogues! What a subject that would be to place before the Anti-Defamation League and all the other tendentious Zionist organizations which pretend to be interested in truth but are in reality the truth-twisters of our time!

The sovereignty of God in salvation lies at the heart of the Passion of Christ. Two hours of brutality at the hands of wicked men is hardly a fitting demonstration of that sovereignty.

#### ***Epilogue***

There can be no doubt that the world is being seriously manipulated with this film and that we should behave circumspectly and discerningly towards it. We live in the midst of an anti-Christian world culture. True Christianity is being torn apart and trampled on in the media and in the minds of the majority. Ask yourself seriously if a film about Christ is going to convert the world or even receive a welcoming hearing from the average person in the street. There is no way that the true Lord Jesus Christ is going to be a box office success at this point in history. No way at all. If this film is a box office success, then we need to understand where it is all leading and the reasons why it is leading there—for those reasons have nothing whatsoever to do with leading to a Christian revival any more than the “Toronto Blessing” has led to a Christian revival.

With all the brouhaha about having to show Gibson’s film to successive committees of bristling Jewish and Christian “leaders” (sic) to ensure that it is politically or religiously correct, one cannot help but feel that the world’s population is being groomed for one of the biggest hype events in recent history from one of the biggest benders of historical truth in the recent world of movies.

Here is a recipe for disaster: Take one dumbed-down population, add an overdose of emotional manipulation and trauma, and put them all in a cinema for two hours at a high temperature. It will make the perfect meal for hegemonical governments everywhere. ■

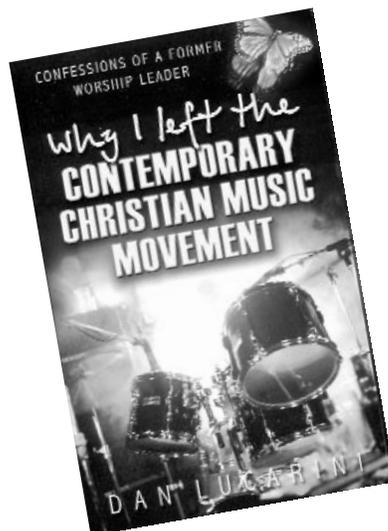
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by Dan Lucarini



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