

PUBLISHED BY
Christian Witness Ministries

AUSTRALIA
P.O. Box 353
Loch Sport Vic 3851
T: (03) 5146 0280
F: (03) 5146 0270
Email: maureen@christian-witness.org

NEW ZEALAND
P.O. Box 15 159
Miramar, Wellington 6243
T: (4) 907 1110
Email: info@christian-witness.org

UNITED KINGDOM
83 Retford Road
Handsworth
Sheffield S13 9LB
T: 0114 269 9554
Email: CWM@paulmoore.org.uk

WEBSITES
www.christian-witness.org
www.cwmfellowship.org

MAILING LIST
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EDITOR
Philip L. Powell
Email: ppowell@christian-witness.org

Easter: Pagan or Christian

SOME of the many devices of Satan¹ are conflict, confusion and compromise. In these areas the devil often takes advantage of us. Should there be conflict? Yes, but we need to avoid disputing about things of no consequence. Is confusion wrong? No, but we must not allow uncertainties to cloud our minds. Is compromise right and wrong? Yes it is. We must not compromise essential truth, but we must be flexible about matters of mere opinion.

I wrote this editorial in the aftermath of Christmas and in preparation for Easter, both of which, as Christian festivals (ceremonies) have attracted a great deal of controversy, especially over recent times, and are in danger of being set-aside. I think it's a device of the devil to undermine our Judeo-Christian heritage. Those who follow false religions are being used as tools of Satan to undermine a Christian foundation, which has been built up over centuries of history, and to thus make way for the anti-Christ. We know "anti-Christ" will come, so this editorial and the entire CETF 43, the first of 2008, is not intended as a preventative but ONLY as a warning and explanation.

In the lead article *Why We Should Not Pass-over Easter* we face head-on a big present day controversy that has produced unnecessary bondage. Please read the entire article carefully (prayerfully) and follow the reasoning and logic. You are not forced to agree but by the same token you should not force your practice on others, whether abstinence or participation. (The same applies to Christmas!)

This issue of CETF is wide-ranging. As editor it is always difficult to decide what to include and what to omit. We

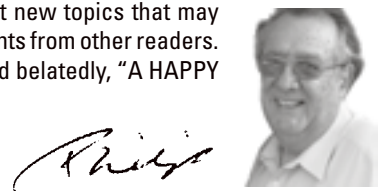
1 2 Corinthians 2:11 "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices".



endeavour to maintain a balance between TEACHING and WARNING in the light of one of our guiding Scriptures, while always focussing on Christ:

HIM we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:28).

The first part of this CETF—pages 2 to 13—relates to Easter, the Cross and the Crucifixion. You will be able to read LETTERS to the editor NEWS and VIEWS and much about the spreading apostasy, which some seem to think is "revival". As always your response and other comments are invited. Why not join the new CWM blog—(http://www.christian-witness.org/blog/). You can even suggest new topics that may stimulate comments from other readers. God bless you and belatedly, "A HAPPY NEW YEAR"!



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Why we should not Pass-over Easter



Jesus died on the 14th of Nissan, the very hour the yearly Passover lamb was killed.

ACTS 12:3-4

KING JAMES VERSION—And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

NEW KING JAMES VERSION—So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

By **NICK SAYERS**

The dominant strength of English

ENGLISH has risen to become the dominant world language. Because most Christianised nations use English as their chief means of communication, for English-speaking believers, it is crucial to understand the history of our language accurately ourselves, before presenting vaguely constructed etymologies, particularly when expounding the words in the Bible. Many cults, which prefer old wives' tales over the word of God, despise the very word Easter believing it to be a Christianised pagan festival of the spring goddess Ishtar. Many good Christians feel obligated to their conscience to reject celebrating Easter because they too believe it to be based on idolatry and paganism. The traditions which have been added to Easter have not helped either. Most English-speaking people associate chocolate eggs and rabbits with Easter as much as they do the celebration of Christ's resurrection.

Hebrew *Pesach* became Greek *Pascha*

In most languages the word for Easter is exactly the same as the word for Passover, so the relationship between the feast of Passover, and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is directly linked. A few examples are; Latin *Pascha*, French *Pâques*, Italian *Pasqua*, and

Dutch *Pasen*. All these words mean both *Easter* and *Passover*, only the context formulates the difference. With the exception of English and German, all other European languages do not have separate words for Easter and Passover, but simply use a single term derived from *Pesach*, the Hebrew word for Passover.

In one way, this is an advantage to the believer, who immediately associates Jesus Christ as the Passover Lamb. Whether reading the New or Old Testaments, the association between Christ and the Passover is clearly seen. This was also the case in the original Greek language which uses the Greek word *Pascha* for both Passover and the resurrection of Christ. This has been the same for 2000 years in the Greek. Even if you look up a modern Greek dictionary it will tell you that *Pascha* means both Easter and Passover.¹ This was also the case in English until Tyndale coined the term *Passover*. But as we shall see, the English rendition of Easter and Passover in the King James Bible is superior and needs to be exalted into its rightful place in English Bible versions, dictionaries and Christian literature again. This does not conclude that the English is superior to the original Greek, which is a form of Ruckmanism², but in this particular instance there is a special feature in the KJV, which is made clear in the original Greek when read in context, but is made abundantly clear by the scholarship of the KJV translators. Just as most Bibles include things like capitalisation

of deity or have the words of Christ in red, and other helps, so too did the KJV translators make the Old Testament Passover and New Testament Easter easier for the reader to understand in context.

Latin

When the Bible was being translated into the Latin language in the fourth century, when translating the word *Pascha*, which can mean both Passover and Easter in Latin, Jerome simply used the same Greek word without creating a new Latin word in its place, thus *Pascha* was basically un-translated.

Wycliffe

In the first translation of the entire Bible into English, the hand-written Wycliffe Bible in 1382, appears basically the same un-translated Latin word, *Pascha*.³ When we come to the Latin word *Pascha* it is transliterated without an English equivalent. The words used were *Pask* and *Paske*, still a basic type of the Hebrew word *Pesach* and the Greek *Pascha*. Later

1 Divry's Modern English-Greek and Greek-English desk dictionary 1974. p 99 & 634

2 Ruckmanism is the false teaching that the King James translation is absolutely inerrant, and is superior to any Hebrew or Greek text.

3 Christopher De Hamel, *The Book. A History of The Bible* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2001) Most extant Wycliffe Bibles contain Catholic liturgy which Wycliffe would have opposed, and because of this some assert that Wycliffe's version was completely wiped out, and that the existing Latin versions are later Catholic corruptions, and thus, Wycliffe may have translated from the Hebrew and Greek. So to date most historians will affirm that Wycliffe did not translate the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew, but from the Latin Vulgate. Thus existing versions are a translation of a translation.

when Roman Catholic scholars translated the Douay-Rheims Bible from the same Latin Vulgate in the 17th century they used the word *Pasche*, which gave it a more English feel, but was still in essence un-translated. Wycliffe's version translated Acts 12:4:

And whanne he hadde cauhte Petre, he sente hym in to prisoun; and bitook to foure quaternyouns of knyghtis, to kepe hym, and wolde aftir pask bringe hym forth to the puple.

So we can see the English language in the 1300s had the same characteristics as most foreign languages do today, concerning the translation of *Pascha* as meaning both Easter and Passover. Then Tyndale gave us a greater advantage by using the word *Ester* (Easter) in his translation and then later inventing the term *Passover*. Ultimately this gave us two separate words for two distinct occasions. It must be noted that the Anglo Saxon term Easter was used much more frequently in common literature to denote the Passover and the celebration of the resurrection than the Latin *Paskever* was. *Pask* was basically a synonym for Easter (meaning both Passover and Easter) but was mainly used by the clergy.

Anglo Saxon Roots

easterly
 eastanwind - east wind
 eastcyning - eastern king
 eastdael - eastern quarter, the East
 easte - the East
 eastende - east-end, east quarter
 Eastengle - the East Anglians: East Anglia
 Easteraefen - Easter-eve
 Easterdaeg - Easter-day, Easter Sunday
 Easterfaestan - Easter-fast, Lent
 Easterfeorm - feast of Easter
 Easterfreolsdaeg - the feast day of Passover
 Eastergewuna - Easter custom (appears only in the 9th century sermons of Aelfric where he is referring to Christian Easter practices)
 Easterlic - belonging to Easter, Paschal
 Eastermonath - Easter-month, April
 Easterne - east, eastern, oriental
 Easterniht - Easter-night
 Eastersunnandaeg - Easter Sunday
 Eastersymble - Passover (lit. Easter gathering)
 Eastertid - Eastertide, Paschal season
 Easterthenung - Passover
 Easterwucu - Easter Week

So as we can see, the word *Easter* in Anglo Saxon was used for both the Jewish Passover and the celebration of the resurrection, and also was very commonly used.

William Tyndale —a brilliant scholar

William Tyndale was a brilliant scholar and was first to incorporate *Easter* in an English Bible and he also invented the word *Passover*. William Tyndale translated and printed the

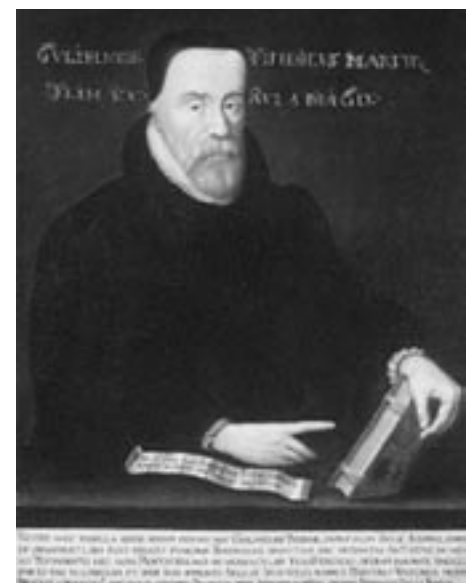
New Testament in English and the first five books of the Old Testament between 1525 and 1535 in Germany and the Low Countries while in exile. He was the first person to ever print an English translation. He worked from the original Greek and Hebrew texts at a time when knowledge of those languages in England was rare. He was educated at Oxford University and later at Cambridge where he also lectured and became skilled in not only Hebrew and Greek, but also Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French with such fluency that Herman Buschius, a friend of Erasmus, stated that: "whichever he spoke you would suppose it his native tongue".⁴

Tyndale was responsible for the insertion of both *Easter* and *Passover* in the English Bible. In his 1525 New Testament, Tyndale used the English word *Easter* to translate the Greek word *Pascha*. *Pascha*, being formerly transliterated in Wycliffe's version, was for the first time in a Bible translation, translated into a unique English word.⁵

As we can conclude from the Anglo Saxon terms mentioned above, English people celebrated the season around the Jewish Passover as *Easter*. Also it must be pointed out that Tyndale used *Easter* as a synonym expressing the Jewish Passover and never in association with a pagan festival. Some modern day scholars conclude that the word *Easter* has pagan origins, but the facts are that the word *Easter* and also the celebration of Easter are *entirely* Christian. *Easter* was not only a synonym for Passover, but also a descriptive word revealing the New Testament fulfillment of the Passover, in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The Greek word *Pascha* occurs twenty-nine times in the New Testament, and Tyndale has *Ester* (or Easter) fourteen times, *Esterlambe* eleven times, *Esterfest* once, and *Paschall Lambe* three times. In 1525, Tyndale's New Testament was printed. Five years later in 1530 he printed the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Old Testament. When Tyndale was working on the New Testament, the word *Ester* (Easter) was adequate to translate *Pascha*, but when he started the Old Testament book of Exodus, in 12:11 he discovered the word *Easter*, which means resurrection, was inappropriate. This problem involved the translating of the Hebrew word *Pecach*, which if translated *Easter*, meaning resurrection, would form an anachronism (from the Greek *ana*, "against," and *chronos*, "time"), which is something located at a time when it could not have existed or occurred. Basically, if he used the English word *Easter*, which describes Christ's resurrection, in the translation of the Old Testament, he would be speaking of an event that had not yet happened. The *Easter* lamb or resurrection lamb was a logical translation to Tyndale in the New Testament setting, but seemed rather odd in the Old Testament. So Tyndale with his astounding linguistic ability

formed the word *Passover*, and used it in all twenty-two places of the Old Testament Pentateuch. The word *Passover* comes from the idea that God passed over the houses of the Israelites, who had marked their doorposts with blood in obedience to God, and the children of Israel were spared when God smote the firstborn sons of the Egyptian taskmasters on the eve of the Exodus. The sons of Israel were thus redeemed from the land of sin, Egypt, and redeemed from Pharaoh to serve Jehovah. The Hebrew word *Pecach* was understood by the Israelites at the time to mean skip over or to limp. So Tyndale used two words "pass" and "over" meaning to skip over or limp over, which shortly became the one word *Passover* in the 1530 Pentateuch, but *Ester* (Easter) remained in Tyndale's revision of the New Testament in 1534. Brilliantly, Tyndale's *Passover* also incorporates the pass sound as in *Pask* and *Pascha*. Interestingly, the word *Passion* which means suffering, seems to have evolved from *Pascha*. Perhaps Gibson should have called his film *The Pascha of the Christ!*

Since the time of the King James Version until the early twentieth century, the term *Easter* was commonly identified by believers solely as the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Before Tyndale, *Easter* was the chief word used for the Jewish Passover by Christians. This is because Easter and Passover are the same season, Jews celebrating the shadow, and Christians celebrating the fulfillment. The word *Easter* has illustrated to the Englishman much more than simply the Passover celebration, but through Tyndale's addition of *Easter*, construction of the word *Passover*, and later with the King James' translators correctly re-applying *Easter* only once in Acts 12:4, it gives significant insight into revealing the fulfillment of the *Passover* in Christ. It exalts Jesus Christ's death and resurrection above all. In past times *Easter* to the English speaker not only saw Christ



Tyndale was first to incorporate Easter in an English Bible and he also invented the word Passover.

4 *Life of Tyndale*, Demaus, p130
 5 <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/articles/easter.asp>

as the Passover lamb but clearly defined the difference in the celebrations, one containing the promise and one fulfilling the promise. Modern criticism has blurred that revelation.

After 1611, the Old Testament *Easter*, which formerly meant both Passover and Easter, became solely the old covenant *Passover*, a trend Tyndale had begun to accomplish. Because Luther's version was printed before Tyndale's, Tyndale would have had the advantage of being able to cross reference and improve any inconsistencies.

Martin Luther

Luther's translation was a strong influence on Tyndale's New Testament. Because of persecution in Catholic England, Tyndale left England for Germany. It is strongly believed that he met with Luther in Germany in 1525, as many of Tyndale's beliefs were, in essence, Lutheran. By the end of the year, Tyndale had printed the New Testament in English. It is likely that Tyndale's use of *Easter* in his New Testament is also indebted to his knowledge of Luther's German translation, which uses *Oster* (pronounced Ouster) in the same way as Tyndale uses *Easter*. Because the English Anglo Saxon language originally derived from the Germanic when the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes came to England in the 5th and 6th centuries, there are many similarities between German and English. Many English writers have referred to the German language as the Mother Tongue! The English word *Easter* is of German/Saxon origin and not Babylonian as Alexander Hislop falsely claimed, and as we shall see later. The German equivalent is *Oster*.⁶ *Oster* (*Ostern* being the modern day correspondent) is related to *Ost* which means *the rising of the sun*, or simply in English, *east*. *Oster* comes from the old Teutonic form of *auferstehen/auferstehung*, which means resurrection⁷, which in the older Teutonic form comes from two words, *ester* meaning *first*, and *stehen* meaning *to stand*.⁸ These two words combine to form *erstehen* which is an old German form of *auferstehen*, the modern day German word for resurrection⁹. The English *Easter* and German *Oster* go hand in hand.

Tyndale with his expertise in the German language knew of the *Easter-Oster* association. Luther obviously defined *Oster* both as a synonym for the Jewish Passover and a phrase used for the resurrection of Christ. In Luther's

German New Testament we find *Ostern*, *Osterlamm*, *Osterfest*, *Fest*, and only once *das Passa* (Hebrews 11.28). In His Old Testament he used the German word *Passaopffer* (an obvious forerunner for Tyndale's *Passover*), *Osterfest*, *Ostern*, and *Osterlamm* once each. In Exodus 12.11 Luther rendered *Passah* with a marginal note referring to the *Osterlamm*. Even in contemporary German the phrase *das jüdische Osterfest* (the Jewish Passover) demonstrates that the German *Oster* can mean

Pascha vaguely remains an adjective meaning Easter, as in Paschal candle. In Scotland and the North of England, children hunt for Pasch eggs.

Early Biblical Examples

In the 1537 Matthew's Bible which incorporated Tyndale's work on the Pentateuch, the word used was *Passeover*, but there were references to *Ester* in the chapter summaries in Leviticus 23, Numbers 9 and Deuteronomy 16.

In the 1539 Great Bible they used *Passeover* 14 times, while *Ester* appears 15 times all in the New Testament. The Great Bible translates Acts 12:4 this way:

And when he had caught hym, he put him in preson also, and delyvered him to. iiii. quaternions of soudiers to be kepte, entendinge after Ester to bringe him forth to the people.

In the 1557 version of the Geneva Bible, every place had *Passeover* except Acts 12:4, where it had *Easter*, which was identical to how the King James Version translated it.

In the 1560 version of the Geneva Bible, which became the most popular of the Geneva bibles, the word *Easter* was completely substituted with *Passeouer* on all occasions. The Geneva Bible of 1560 does not use *Easter* anywhere. Acts 12:4 reads:

And when he had caught hym, he put hym in prison, and delivered hym to foure quaternions of souldiers to be kept, intending after the Passover to bryng hym forthe to the people.

In the 1568 Bishops' Bible, *Easter* appears twice, in John 11:55 and Acts 12:4. The Bishops' Bible of 1568 translates Acts 12:4:

And when he had caught him, he put him in prison also, and delivered him to foure quaternions of souldiers to be kept, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

In the 1611 Authorised Version, *Easter* appears once in Acts 12:4.

The King James Version

Until 1611, English-speaking people had always associated the word *Easter* with the celebration of Passover and the prophetic implications which occurred at Christ's death and resurrection. They saw that the Old Testament shadow was the Passover and that the New Testament fulfilment was Christ's death, burial, and resurrection called *Easter*.



The English Easter and German Oster go hand in hand. Many English scholars referred to German as "the mother tongue".

both the Jewish and Christian festivals. In fact the meaning of the German word *Ostern* is today just as the English word *Easter* was until the KJV translators skillfully put it in its correct semantic range in Acts 12:4, thus separating forever the Old Easter and the New Easter as we shall see.

Early English Examples

Before the 1530s, England always used the word *Easter* for both the Jewish Passover and the Resurrection celebration. Sometimes clergy used the Latin *Pask* or *Paske*, but predominantly *Easter*. Here are two non-biblical examples of *Easter* and *Passover* being synonyms.

In the Peterborough Chronicle of 1122 we read:

On this geare waes se king Heanri on Christes maessen on Norhtwic, and on Paxhes he waes on Northamtune" (This year King Henry was in Norwich for Christmas and in Northampton for Easter).

A 1563 homilist spoke of "Easter, a great, and solemne feast among the Jewes". Today,

6 Langenscheit's German-English English-German dictionary, 1963 p167

7 Cassell's German and English Dictionary by Karl Bruel, 1952 p48

8 Cassell's German and English Dictionary by Karl Bruel, 1952 p182

9 Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Translated by C.F. Cruse, Hendrickson Publishers, p437

The King James Bible finalised 86 years of change in the use of *Easter* and *Passover*. After seeing what Tyndale had begun and the refining of the word *Easter* within almost a century of various translation attempts, the KJV translators caused the semantic range of *Easter* to be translated only once as *Easter* in Acts 12:4. This was because in every instance in the New Testament except Acts 12:4, the Greek word *Pascha* represented the pre-resurrection Passover, i.e. the Jewish celebration. In other words Christ had not yet died as the Passover lamb for the whole world. But in Acts 12:4 it is a post-resurrection Passover, where Christ had died and was risen.

The Greek word *Pascha* appears 29 times in the Greek New Testament. In 28 of those instances it is referring to the Old Testament Passover. But in Acts 12:4 it is referring to the New Testament celebration which was the Lord's Supper. Christ had become the Lamb of God and replaced the old Passover sacrifice with the new covenant in His blood. Therefore the old Passover type was replaced with the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ which is the fulfilment called *Easter*, meaning resurrection.

Because the KJV translators rendered this word once, in Acts 12:4, with the understanding that it was the Christian resurrection celebration being celebrated and not just the old Passover, it stands to be the most accurate of all the English translations concerning this topic. After 1611, with the predominance of the KJV and with the process of time, *Passover* became known as an Old Testament word, and *Easter* became known as a New Testament word. The only other time *Pascha* is mentioned in the post-resurrection semantic range is in I Corinthians 5:7, "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us". Tyndale's Bible has, "For Christ our Easter lamb is offered up for us". Obviously, with the semantic range of the Old Testament *Passover*, and the New Testament *Easter*, this scripture is correctly translated *Passover* by the KJV translators, as it alludes to the Jewish custom of carefully putting away from their houses all leaven upon the approach of the feast of the Passover, thus making the

word *Passover* more appropriate than *Easter* or Easter lamb in the context. A paraphrase would be "For Christ our fulfilment of the Old Testament *Pascha* is sacrificed for us". Tyndale was correct to translate Easter lamb and not Passover because the terms were not clearly defined until 1611.

Hislop's Clumsy Scholarship

With this in mind, let's look at what Hislop claimed about the KJV in his *The Two Babylons*:

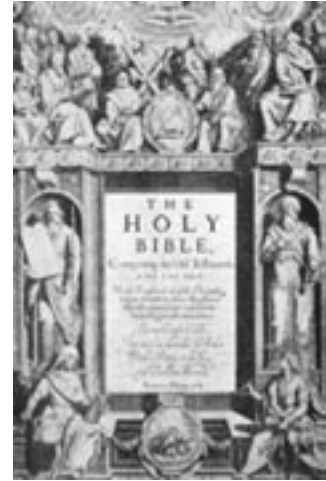
Every one knows that the name 'Easter' used in our translation of Acts 12:4, refers not to any Christian festival, but to the Jewish Passover. This is one of the few places in our version where the translators show an undue bias.¹⁰

Linguists and true Assyriologists would laugh at the claims made by Hislop's pseudo-scholarship. Since it does not hold up under basic scrutiny, its claims about *Easter* must be abandoned. Firstly, while Hislop boldly claimed *Easter* was pagan, he offered no real proof. Alexander Hislop also stated:

Then look at Easter. What means the term Easter itself? It is not a Christian name. It bears its Chaldean origin on its very forehead. Easter is nothing else than Astarte, one of the titles of Beltis, the queen of heaven, whose name, as pronounced by the people of Nineveh, was evidently identical with that now in common use in this country. That name, as found by Layard on the Assyrian monuments, is Ishtar. The worship of Bel and Astarte was very early introduced into Britain, along with the Druids, "the priests of the groves". Some have imagined that the Druidical worship was first introduced by the Phoenicians, who, centuries before the Christian era, traded to the tin-mines of Cornwall. But the unequivocal traces of that worship are found in regions of the British islands where the Phoenicians never penetrated, and it has everywhere left indelible marks of the strong hold which it must have had on the early British mind.¹¹

It must be noted that most cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists gravitate warmly to Hislop's false ideas. While he does offer some sound information about pagan traditions becoming Roman Catholic practice in his book, he fails to recognise that biblical Christian traditions that were formed from the Word of God were initiated by Jehovah God Himself and have no roots in paganism whatever. Hislop fails to see that the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, etc. were ordained by God who did not borrow ideas from Israel's pagan neighbours.

The King James Bible finalised an era of change in the use of Easter and Passover.



Hislop's Claims: Based Merely On Phonetics

Hislop's whole theory is based merely on phonetics and not on historical verification. His whole argument is based on the false notion that *Easter* sounds like *Ishtar* and he therefore concludes that they must be related. Any linguist knows that this type of conclusion is unreasonable. Then without a single shred of evidence Hislop denounces the entire biblical Christian celebration of Easter as pagan because of this phonetic similarity. This is absurd, even if he was right, which he wasn't, do we need to throw out the entire celebration of Easter because an English word has roots in the name of a pagan god? Is that enough ground to wipe Easter off our church calendars? What about every other language that doesn't use the word Easter, are they wrong also or just German and English speaking people?

Hislop claims that the word *Easter* is of British origin, he then goes on to theorise that the word somehow became tied to the Hebrew word *Ashtoreth* which then somehow became attached to the Greek *Astarte* and which is the same as the Babylonian *Ishtar*. Hislop performed all these linguistic gymnastics without any understanding at all of the Germanic roots of *Easter* thus proving his ignorance of the matter. While Hislop has absolutely no evidence to support his theory, there is a library of evidence against his theory. The main one being that Hislop fails to recognise the relationship between the word *Easter* and the German *Oster*. The fact that this essential piece of information is not mentioned even once in Hislop's book proves without a shadow of a doubt that he did not understand the basic etymology of *Easter*. This demonstration of the *Ester/Oster* bond again reinforces the Saxon and Germanic etymology, in preference to some ancient Babylonian goddess. This is plain for all to see and elementary to skilled linguists. Hislop stated:



Hislop boldly claimed Easter was pagan, but offered no proof or substantial evidence.

¹⁰ *The Two Babylons*, Alexander Hislop p103. (Chapter III, Section II, Easter.) First published as a pamphlet in 1853—greatly expanded in 1858)

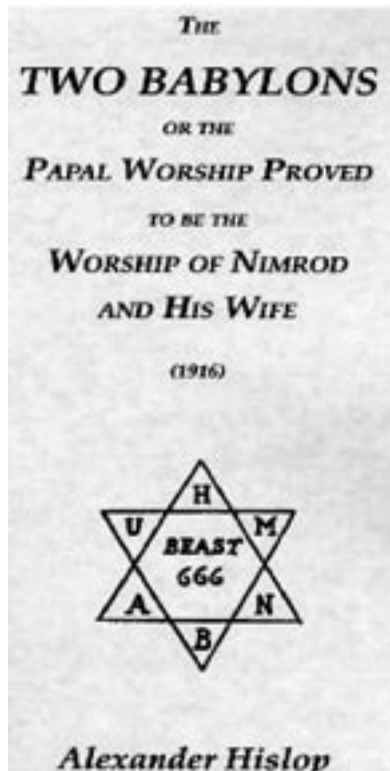
¹¹ *The Two Babylons*, Alexander p103.

But the unequivocal traces of that worship are found in regions of the British islands where the Phoenicians never penetrated, and it has everywhere left indelible marks of the strong hold which it must have had on the early British mind.¹²

This statement demonstrates that Hislop was surprised that the word *Easter* is used so frequently in England, concluding that the influence of the Phoenicians must have been much greater than previously thought, thus demonstrating again that he knew nothing of the link to the German *Oster* which all evidence leads to. C.F. Cruse in 1850AD pointed out three years before Hislop wrote *The Two Babylons*, that

Our word EASTER is of Saxon origin and of precisely the same import with its German cognate ostern. The latter is derived from the old Teutonic form of auferstehen / auferstehung, that is—resurrection.¹³

The etymology of *Easter* is easily traced to the German word for resurrection, not to some fabricated pagan goddess, for which there is not a crumb of evidence. A child could understand how *Easter* came from *Oster*, but skilled linguists grapple to decipher Hislop's confusion, because like evolution, it is an inexhaustible myth, i.e. a wild goose chase! You can spend forever going through names of *Istar* in Latin, Hebrew, Greek, etc, and you will be none the wiser.



The book *The Two Babylons* is filled with illogical conspiracy theories.

Jehovah initiated Easter, not pagans

According to scripture, Jehovah initiated both Passover and Easter. The Hebrews didn't need the intermediary of pagans. Moses states in the book of Exodus that God gave the Passover Feast to the Jews, and that God gave the specific date upon which the Passover was to be celebrated, the 14th of Nisan (formerly called Abib, before the Exodus). The Jews did not borrow the Passover feast or the Passover date from anyone, but got both the feast and the date of the feast directly from Jehovah God. The Easter celebration, which is the Christian fulfilment of the Jewish Passover, occurred on the very same date as the Jewish celebration, the 14th of Nisan. Christians did not need to copy the Resurrection idea or the Resurrection date from pagans. Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ literally rose from the dead in fulfilment of the Passover on that day. Hislop speculates that the Christian celebration was not based upon the Jewish Passover, but that Christians somehow abandoned the fulfilment of the Jewish Passover and instead celebrated an unknown fertility festival. There is no evidence for this apart from what Hislop theorised. If you're a Bible believer, you believe the Bible—if you're superstitious, you believe Hislop.

Ralph Woodrow who repented of writing many Hislop-style books pointed out that Hislop theorised that Nimrod, Adonis, Apollo, Attes, Ball-zebub, Bacchus, Cupid, Dagon, Hercules, Januis, Linus, Lucifer, Mars, Merodach, Thithra, Molock, Narcissus, Oannes, Oden, Orion, Osiris, Pluto, Saturn, Teitan, Typhon, Vulcan, Wodan, and Zoraster were all one and the same god! By mixing myths, Hislop supposed that Semiramis was the wife of Nimrod and was the same as Aphrodite, Artemis, Astarte, Aurora, Bellona, Ceres, Diana, Easter, Irene, Iris, Juno, Mylitta, Proserpine, Rhea, Venus, and Vesta. With these types of generalisations one must seriously consider whether Hislop's book has any redeeming qualities at all.¹⁴

King James Translators

In stark contrast, let's take a quick look at the scholarship of some of the King James Version translators.

Lancelot Andrews,¹⁵ one of the chief translators of the Authorised Version, spoke 15 European languages which were, at the time, the majority of the modern languages of Europe. He had private devotions all written in Greek. He is still regarded as one of the greatest scholars ever! Lancelot Andrews was fluent in 15 languages. Considered a genius, he was just one of 57 brilliant scholars who helped translate the Bible.



Lancelot Andrews was fluent in 15 languages. Considered a genius, he was just one of 57 brilliant scholars who translated the Bible.

William Bedwell¹⁶ was an eminent Oriental scholar whose fame for Arabic learning was so great that scholars sought him out for assistance. He was the first person who considerably promoted and revived the study of the Arabic language and literature in Europe. In 1612, he published in quarto an edition of the Epistles of St John in Arabic with a Latin version. He compiled an Arabic lexicon (dictionary) in three volumes, and also began a Persian dictionary. He was educated in cognate languages and thoroughly conversant in the science of Semitic linguistics, i.e. he knew a great deal about Hebrew's sister languages—Arabic, Persian, Syriac, Aramaic, Coptic, etc.

Miles Smith¹⁷ deeply studied the 100 church fathers from 100 to 300 AD and 200 more who wrote from 300 to 600 AD in Greek and Latin and made his own comments on each of them. He was well acquainted with the marginal comments in the Hebrew language. He was fluent in Hebrew also an expert in Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, so that they were almost as familiar as his native tongue.

Henry Savile¹⁸ was famous for his Greek and mathematical learning at a young age. He was Queen Elizabeth's tutor in Greek and Mathematics. He translated countless ancient works from Latin and Greek his chief work being the first to edit the complete work of Chrysostom, the most famous of the Greek church fathers, in eight large folios. A folio was the size of a large dictionary or encyclopaedia.

John Bois¹⁹ had read the entire Bible by the age of five in Hebrew! By the age of six he wrote Hebrew in a reasonable and stylish character. He was also just as skilled in Greek by his mid teens. He was known to study continually from 4am to 8pm—i.e. 16 hours straight. He had a library which contained one

12 *The Two Babylons*, Alexander p103.

13 Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Translated by C.F. Cruse, Hendrickson Publishers, p437

14 *The Babylon Connection?* Ralph Woodrow

15 cf. <http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/transla1.htm>

16 cf. <http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/transla5.htm>

17 cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miles_Smith

18 cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Henry_Savile

19 cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Bois

of the most complete and costly collections of Greek literature that had ever been collated. He left over 30,000 pages of writing when he died. He could read the Greek New Testament like he read English.

This is a small portion of the testimonies of the 57 translators who translated the KJV. How sad that in this day and age we trust someone like Hislop who was uneducated in the *basics* of linguistics and barely knew any English etymology at all let alone any ancient Semitic languages fluently.

Many Bible critics and translators today who perhaps know how to use a Strong's or Vine's, or took a year or two of Greek or Hebrew at a Bible school, have followed in Hislop's footsteps. What a shame that believers devote so much time arguing against Easter, something that Christ himself instituted, or waste so much time attacking the KJV Bible.

It also seems strange if not blasphemous that we as Bible-believing Christians could think that the King James Version translators would insert the name of a pagan deity in place of the word *Pascha*. Imagine if we placed Krishna or Allah in its stead.

To think that the world's most famous translation could get it so wrong here is sheer ignorance on our behalf. To believe that Tyndale, Cranmer, Martin Luther, Coverdale, Matthews, the translators of the Great Bible, and the Bishops' Bible, the King James Bible, were referring to a pagan god of the spring called Ishtar is so absurd that it becomes humorous when examined.

If this hearsay is true, then Luther and Tyndale who named Christ the "Easter-lamb" were being blasphemous, as it would be like calling Christ the "fertility goddess lamb!" Imagine calling Christ the "Allah-lamb", or the "Buddha-lamb". But I suppose that is why people have rejected *Easter*, for conscience sake. But with the information provided, it is time for Christians to examine Easter in a logical way and not follow conspiracy theories, which is usually the practice of cults. Modern biblical criticism, more than anything else, has weakened and almost destroyed the high view of the Bible previously held throughout Christendom.

Modern Versions

The modern KJV 21st century version and the Third Millennium Bible both read *Easter* in Acts 12:4, while every other modern translation has Passover. While it was correct to translate *Pascha* as Passover in the 16th century, it is not factual to state that *Easter* is an erroneous translation of *Pascha* today. I believe that the word *Easter* should be resurrected (no pun intended) from its current state in modern translations, dictionaries, and in our personal worship. The celebration of *Easter* should be a time of jubilation, not a time to talk about myths, fables and old wives' tales. Just as the Jews remembered the Passover, so too should Christians remember Christ at communion. So

next time you break the bread and drink the wine at *Easter*, consider the Passover lamb, and the celebration of Easter, which has been a part of Christianity since the resurrection of Christ.

In Summary and Conclusion

The early church never debated whether or not to celebrate Easter, but only debated the day to celebrate it on. The King James translators concluded that the insertion of the words in Acts 12:3 "*Then were the days of unleavened bread*" just before the inclusion of the word *Easter* was enough evidence to prove that Luke was talking about the Christian *Pascha* i.e. Easter, the celebration of the resurrection.²⁰

Whether they were right or wrong, you be the judge.



And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

—Acts 4:33

Links for further study:

http://www.lambion.net/Articles/ScottJones/easter_or_passove.htm

<http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/articles/easter.asp>

<http://www.geocities.com/brandplucked/Easter.html>

About the Author



NICK SAYERS is a web page designer who became a Christian in 1995 at the age of 19. Being single, Nick spends most of his spare time in street evangelism, studying biblical Greek and Hebrew, and also refuting the false claims of Bible critics. He attends a Pentecostal Church in Lismore NSW Australia.

²⁰ http://www.lambion.net/Articles/ScottJones/easter_or_passove.htm

Why does Easter's date wander?

By FARRELL BROWN
Introduced by Chris Armstrong

This article first appeared at www.christianhistory.net and is republished here with the author's written permission and the publisher's knowledge and consent.

This week, as they so often do, my Sunday School class of bright 12- and 13-year-olds posed a tough question: why did Easter fall on Evan's birthday last year, but it's falling on Abby's birthday this year? Though I couldn't answer on the spot, I knew I had a secret weapon back at the office—saved for just such an occasion: a short article by Farrell Brown, a retired chemistry professor with an interest in the historical interactions between science and religion. Here, as a public service for those still scratching their heads over the calendrical wandering of Easter, is Dr Brown's answer to my Sunday School children's question—and thrown in for free, the story of why Easter dates still differ in different parts of the world:

THE date of Easter Sunday, a so-called movable feast day in the Christian church year, may seem mysterious to many who celebrate it. There are 35 possible dates in the spring season (northern hemisphere) for celebrating a one-time event. Why this wandering? The answer comes from decisions made several centuries after Christianity's inception.

And why do most Eastern Orthodox Christian churches observe Easter occasionally on the same Sunday as the rest of Christendom and at other times as much as five weeks later? This answer lies primarily in how different people reacted to a centuries-old church decree.

Our first stop on this tour of the wandering Easter is a quick study of how calendars were used in the biblical lands around 30 AD. Although the Julian or solar-based calendar of the Roman Empire had been in place since 45 BC, it did not supplant the lunar calendar that was the chart and compass of 2,000 years of Jewish history. (A lunar year is 12 lunar cycles of 29.53 days each or 354.36 days while a Julian year is 365.25 days with a leap day every four

years.) The Julian calendar functions by having three years of 365 days and one year of 366 days every four years.

The incongruence of the two calendars had marred historical recordings in the Eastern Mediterranean and environs since the dual systems began. And to add to the confusion, Jesus' followers had failed to record the exact date of their Lord's resurrection. Many of those first believers expected Jesus to return soon, a hope that (some scholars believe) rendered such anniversaries unimportant for them. For these reasons, a single, universally accepted date for the event's celebration had little to no chance.

The Nicean Accord

Three hundred years later in the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine, Christianity was beginning to spread throughout the Empire. Since any self-respecting religion was expected to have its religious festivals and days of observance, a date for celebrating Easter now became a priority. In fact, this was one of eight major topics considered by priests and bishops at the church's first Ecumenical Council in 325, in Nicea (present-day Turkey). One unanimously accepted canon guaranteed that Easter would never fall on the beginning of the Jewish Passover, perhaps reflecting Christian animosity towards the Jewish people for their perceived role in Jesus' death.

However, each church group present at Nicea seemed to have a different opinion on the matter of Easter's date. The biggest division was that between the Eastern churches of Antioch and Syria, which still relied on the Jewish or lunar calendar for determining the date of Easter, and the Western churches of Alexandria and Rome, which employed the more efficient solar calendar. The resulting accord, as commonly stated, was that Easter shall fall on the first Sunday following the first full moon following the spring equinox. (The spring equinox is one of the two times in the year when the sun crosses the celestial equator and the length of day and night are approximately equal.)

This explains the 35-day span where Easter can occur (March 22 - April 25, inclusive): the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox may occur as little as two or as many as 37 days from the equinox.

We owe this complicated formula, with its attention to both the sun (the equinox) and the moon (full phase), to a political compromise among Nicea's gathered factions. The Eastern Christians injected the irregular phases of the moon into the calculations—thus causing the "wandering" effect—because they wanted their lunar calendar to keep its historical (though problematic) role in determining important dates.

A Portentous Shift

Cumbersome though it was, the Nicean accord ruled the church's commemoration of Jesus' resurrection for the next 900 to 1000 years. But this was not the end of the story. Unfortunately,

the Julian solar calendar contained a non-trivial flaw that reared its head as the centuries crept along. This flaw affected the celebration of Easter, and its correction wrought great strife and consternation among Christians.

In the mid-1200s, an English friar named Roger Bacon observed that the date of Easter, in addition to its prescribed wandering, was drifting farther and farther into the spring season. Astronomers now knew that the length of the solar year was closer to 365.242 days than to the 365.250 days assumed in the Julian calendar year. In 1,000 years, the Julian calendar counted 365,250 days, while in actuality, 365,242 solar days had elapsed. Bacon realised that each Julian year "overflowed" slightly into the next solar year, and that any given date was farther along in real time than the calendar would imply. The man-made calendar might say one thing, but nature's seasons were not fooled! Though the small mismatch caused a shift of only 11 minutes per year, this had accumulated—from Julius Caesar's to Roger Bacon's day—into a troubling nine days. Bacon's petitions to correct the drift went unheeded.

By the mid-1500s, Pope Gregory XIII recognised the consequences of the drift and entrusted a solution to a Jesuit mathematician and astronomer, Christopher Clavius. The Pope endorsed Clavius's findings in 1563 at the Council of Trent, and 19 years later, on October 4, 1582, Gregory signed a papal bull promulgating the new calendar that bears his name—the Gregorian calendar.

Gregory's calendar inserted a correction to the Julian calendar from that time forward. Ingeniously, it removed eight of the 250 leap days (February 29) occurring in each 1,000 years of the Julian calendar, thereby approximating more accurately the average number of days in a year—namely, 365.242. The exact rule is that at the century boundaries, a leap day shall be observed only when the century number is wholly divisible by 400. In other words, observance of a leap day in 2000 was a special event. It will not happen again at a century boundary until 2400.

More Trouble for Easter

While the Gregorian calendar solved the problem for future years, there remained the critical matter of correcting the older calendar's "slippage". By 1582, the cumulative mismatch of the Julian calendar year against the solar year totalled 10 days. The papal bull addressed this problem in a practical but provocative way: it advanced the Julian calendar by 10 days. The calendar days October 5-14, 1582 simply vanished!

This part of Gregory's decree sealed confusion and conflict across Christendom. Not only would Easter continue its wandering, but it would wander differently in different regions. Germany, with its mixture of Catholic and Protestant enclaves, was particularly hard hit. For 193 years, Easter was celebrated variously at different times by different Germanic states.

The Anglican Church joined the fray, resisting the change for nearly 170 years.

Some jurisdictions within the Eastern Orthodox Church retain to this day the Julian calendar for determining festival dates. That calendar is now 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar and the difference in the year 2,100 will be 14 days. For immovable festival dates, the lag determines exactly the Orthodox date; e.g. Christmas occurs on January 7 (until 2100). For movable festival dates, the situation is more complicated. Both the moon phases and the equinox are at play and the ecclesiastically defined equinox at Nicea, March 21, becomes April 3 in the Gregorian calendar. An in-depth explanation is beyond the scope of this historical recount. But it is interesting to note an agreement throughout Christendom of Easter dates in 2001 and 2004.

ADDENDUM: *The author sent us the following comment which may be helpful to more inquiring minds:*

As a side note, due to space constraints, I was unable to elaborate much in the article about how the Eastern Orthodox Easter date and the date in the Western Christian churches can agree but most often do not. Since the equinox in the Julian calendar is 13 days after the equinox in the Gregorian calendar (the "true equinox" in modern astronomy) and since both churches employ the accord from 325 AD, an early Easter in the Western churches will never coincide with an Easter date in the Orthodox church. But clearly, there are years when a mid-to-late Easter date in the former will equate to an Easter date in the latter. Conversely, a late one in the Eastern church will have fallen past the latest date for the Western churches.

For more on Easter and the calendars, see the following sources:

- Duncan, David Ewing. *Calendar*, NY, Avon Books, Inc. 1998
- Gould, Stephen Jay. *Questioning the Millennium*, NY, Harmony Books, 1996
- Thurston, Hebert. *Catholic Encyclopedia: Easter Controversy*. Retrieved from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05228a.htm>.
- Lewis Patsavos. *The Calendar of the Orthodox Church*. Retrieved from www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/article7070.asp

About the Author



FARRELL BROWN is a retired professor and administrator from Clemson University in South Carolina, having been employed there for 34 years. He retired in 1997 with the title Emeritus Professor of Chemistry and Emeritus Interim Dean of the Graduate School. His interest in this topic was from early days of youth, originating from instruction in preparation for confirmation in a Lutheran church in rural North Carolina. In addition, he has had an abiding interest in all of physical science, including astronomy. The book by David Duncan in the reference citations was the catalyst that set into motion the article about the wandering of Easter. It illustrates vividly how science and religion have influenced and continue to influence each other.

The rich family in our church



By Eddie Ogan

[Story supplied by Bernie & Dar Koerselman
www.bereanpublishers.com]

I'll never forget Easter 1946. I was 14, my little sister Ocy, 12, and my older sister Darlene, 16. We lived at home with our mother, and the four of us knew what it was to do without many things. My dad had died five years before, leaving Mom with seven school kids to raise and no money. By 1946 my older sisters were married, and my brothers had left home.

A month before Easter, the pastor of our church announced that a special Easter offering would be taken to help a poor family. He asked everyone to save and give sacrificially.

When we got home, we talked about what we could do. We decided to buy 50 pounds of potatoes and live on them for a month. This would allow us to save \$20 of our grocery money for the offering. Then we thought that if we kept our electric lights turned out as much as possible and didn't listen to the radio, we'd save money on that month's electric bill.

Darlene got as many house and yard cleaning jobs as possible, and both of us baby-sat for everyone we could. For 15 cents, we could buy enough cotton loops to make three potholders to sell for \$1. We made \$20 on potholders.

That month was one of the best of our lives. Every day we counted the money to see how much we had saved. At night we'd sit in the dark and talk about how the poor family was going to enjoy having the money the church would give them. We had about 80 people in church, so we figured that whatever amount of money we had to give, the offering would surely be 20 times that much. After all, every Sunday the Pastor had reminded everyone to save for the sacrificial offering.

The day before Easter, Ocy and I walked to the grocery store and got the manager to give us three crisp \$20 bills and one \$10 bill for all

our change. We ran all the way home to show Mom and Darlene. We had never had so much money before. That night we were so excited we could hardly sleep. We didn't care that we wouldn't have new clothes for Easter; we had \$70 for the sacrificial offering. We could hardly wait to get to church!

On Sunday morning, rain was pouring. We didn't own an umbrella, and the church was over a mile from our home, but it didn't seem to matter how wet we got. Darlene had cardboard in her shoes to fill the holes. The cardboard came apart, and her feet got wet. But we sat in church proudly. I heard some teenagers talking about the Smith girls having on their old dresses. I looked at them in their new clothes, and I felt so rich.

When the sacrificial offering was taken, we were sitting on the second row from the front. Mom put in the \$10 bill, and each of us girls put in a \$20. As we walked home after church, we sang all the way. At lunch Mom had a surprise for us. She had bought a dozen eggs, and we had boiled Easter eggs with our fried potatoes!

Late that afternoon the minister drove up in his car. Mom went to the door, talked with him for a moment, and then came back with an envelope in her hand. We asked what it was, but she didn't say a word. She opened the envelope and out fell a bunch of money. There were three crisp \$20 bills, one \$10 and seventeen \$1 bills. Mom put the money back in the envelope. We didn't talk, just sat and stared at the floor. We had gone from feeling like millionaires to feeling like poor white trash.

We kids had had such a happy life that we felt sorry for anyone who didn't have our mom and dad for parents and a house full of brothers and sisters and other kids visiting constantly. We thought it was fun to share silverware and see whether we got the fork or the spoon that night. We had two knives which we passed around to whoever needed them. I knew we didn't have a lot of things that other people had, but I'd never thought we were poor. That Easter Day I found out we were.

The minister had brought us the money for the poor family, so we must be poor. I didn't like being poor. I looked at my dress and worn-out shoes and felt so ashamed that I didn't want to go back to church. Everyone there probably already knew we were poor! I thought about school. I was in the ninth grade and at the top of my class of over 100 students. I wondered if the kids at school knew we were poor. I decided I could quit school since I had finished the eighth grade. That was all the law required at that time.

We sat in silence for a long time. Then it got dark, and we went to bed. All that week, we girls went to school and came home, and no one talked much. Finally on Saturday, Mom asked us what we wanted to do with the money. What did poor people do with money? We didn't know. We'd never known we were poor. We didn't want to go to church on Sunday, but Mom said we had to. Although it was a sunny day, we didn't talk on the way.

Mom started to sing, but no one joined in and she only sang one verse. At church we had a missionary speaker. He talked about how churches in Africa made buildings out of sun-dried bricks, but they need money to buy roofs. He said \$100 would put a roof on a church. The minister said, "Can't we all sacrifice to help these poor people?"

We looked at each other and smiled for the first time in a week.

Mom reached into her purse and pulled out the envelope. She passed it to Darlene. Darlene gave it to me, and I handed it to Ocy. Ocy put it in the offering. When the offering was counted, the minister announced that it was a little over \$100. The missionary was excited. He hadn't expected such a large offering from our small church. He said, "You must have some rich people in this church".

Suddenly it struck us! We had given \$87 of that "little over \$100". We were the rich family in the church! Hadn't the missionary said so? From that day on I've never been poor again. I've always remembered how rich I am because I have Jesus.

Stunning answers to the mystery of Calvary

Scholars find evidence of Jesus' crucifixion at Golgotha

Editorial Disclaimer: I visited Israel only once (1978) just prior to my family and I taking up residence in Australia at the invitation of a local Assembly of God. I went to participate in a prayer and Bible week under the leadership of Denis Clark, then director of **Intercessors for Britain (IFB)**. Lance Lambert (LL) led us on a tour of Jerusalem, during which he pointed out the location of what is known as **Gordon's Calvary**¹ near the Garden Tomb (see below). The reasons that many consider this the authentic crucifixion site as given by LL were convincing. I remain convinced to this day. However there are other possibilities, the following being one that I recently came across. Personally I think it builds too much on an idea that the centurion mentioned in the gospels actually saw the rending of the temple veil from where he stood near the Cross. The gospel records do not say nor do they infer any such thing. The argument also rests on a fanciful notion that Hebrews 13:10-14 refers to a named location and is not just a general description. The linked John 19:20 reference in the following article is also questionable. However it is another view which according to Jacob Prasch who is a frequent visitor and tour leader in Jerusalem says has been around for a long time. It's nothing new. Interesting? YES. Convincing? Well you be the judge. As for me, I think I'll stick with Gordon's Calvary.

—Philip L. Powell

By **BENJAMIN HARTMAN**

JERUSALEM, Israel—"There is no question in my mind... the greatest single event in all of history happened on the cross."

So were the words of Alexander MacLaren² describing the importance of Calvary (Jesus' crucifixion). He continued:

The cross is the centre of the world's history; the incarnation of Christ and the crucifixion of our Lord are the pivot around which all the events of the ages revolve.



Early church historians indicated that in the first century, Christians revered the Mount of Olives (above). It was the site of the first church and was considered the most significant place in Christian history. The arrow marks the place believed to [by some] be the site of Jesus' crucifixion near the ancient altar of the red heifer—the altar of the sin sacrifices.³

Indeed, for centuries, scholars and theologians have studied the last days of Jesus' life on earth. Throughout the years, an important question has puzzled many: where did Jesus' crucifixion actually take place, and was there a very special significance to this place?

In Jerusalem there are several sites which have been suggested for many years as the location of Jesus' crucifixion ("Golgotha" [Aramaic] or "Calvary" [Greek], both meaning "the place of the skull"). Two of them are best known.

Northwest of the Old City there is a small hill with features which some say resemble the eye sockets of a human skull. Near it an ancient burial cave is known today as the Garden Tomb.

Another well-known location is the present site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the oldest church still in existence. It was built by the mother of Emperor Constantine, Queen Helena, in the 4th century AD. On the same site, before that time, a temple to the goddess Venus was built on top of the remains of a second century BC monument to the king/priest John Hyrcanus of the Hashmonean dynasty³.

While much tradition is found at these and other places, "the one thing all these sites have in common is that they are all the wrong place," says the Christian-Biblical historian, Prof Ernest L. Martin, in an exclusive interview with the *Jerusalem Christian Review*.

Indeed, several years ago, Dr Martin, president of the Academy of Scriptural Knowledge in Portland, Oregon, took a fresh

look at the question with some startling results.

"The simplest of my findings revolves around some basic New and Old Testament scriptures, whose significance has been overlooked for centuries," said Dr Martin as he described his latest book, *Secrets of Golgotha*.

While working with the renowned Jerusalem archaeologist, Prof Benjamin Mazar, at the Temple Mount excavations in the 1960s, Martin studied the geographical history of Jerusalem with some of Israel's leading scholars.

"My initial interest in researching this subject was spawned from... one primary fact," said Martin.⁴ "It appears as though the centurion who was at the foot of the cross was able to observe the tearing of the temple veil [the outside curtain, called in Hebrew 'masach'], something that would have been possible only from a point east of the Temple Mount, and not from any point west of it."

"While this is not evidence in itself," said the historian, "it did inspire my curiosity."

Historical sources are conclusive that the massive 80-foot curtain was located in a spot that was visible only from atop the Mount of Olives. "It would have been a physical impossibility for anyone in Jerusalem to have seen this curtain from the south, the west, or the north—the locations of today's traditional crucifixion sites," says Martin.

Throughout Martin's investigations, he searched through hundreds of contemporary

1 http://www.lifeintheholylnd.com/gordons_calvary.htm
2 Alexander MacLaren (1826–1910) was a Baptist minister, who became a widely read author whose many books feature in the "Christian Classics Ethereal Library"—<http://www.ccel.org/m/macLaren/?show=worksBy>

3 142-63BCE cf. <http://hashmonean.com/hashmonean-dynasty/>

4 Editorial comment: This is clearly more fancy than fact as the author himself proceeds to elaborate.

5 The location of this altar is not known with any certainty—cf. Numbers 19:3. Some believe it was transferred to the temple.

and first-century writings, ancient church literature, and the original Hebrew and Greek scriptural sources.

He found that the Bible itself indicates that the crucifixion occurred in a "holy place"—a place John describes as belonging to the temple worship ritual—which the book of Hebrews refers to as an altar called "Outside-the-camp" (John 19:20; Hebrews 13:10-14).

"'Outside-the-camp' was not a description but the name of a specific place, known from biblical and contemporary sources," said well-known Jerusalem historian, Prof Ory Mazar, the author of numerous books on the history of Jerusalem.

Mazar, who worked with Martin on part of his research, explained that this place "was the location of the 'altar of the red heifer.'" Although the altar was located "outside the city" on the Mount of Olives and not on the Temple Mount, it was still an extremely important part of the temple worship ritual—it was the altar of the major sin sacrifices.

"According to the Law of Moses," said Mazar in a interview with the *Jerusalem Christian Review*, "one could not worship on the holy grounds of the temple without first sacrificing a sin offering 'outside-the-camp'."

Adding to dozens of additional pieces of evidence, Martin found that the Bible itself identifies the place called "Golgotha" ("the Place of the Head") in 2 Samuel 15. The "Place of the Head" (mis translated in English translations as the summit of the mountain) was the place on the Mount of Olives where King David stopped to worship as he was fleeing from Jerusalem to Jericho. The original Hebrew is clear, describing a specific site called "the Place of the Head".

"What strikes me as incredibly significant is that this would mean Jesus was crucified near the altar of the sin sacrifices—a place that had been the traditional site of the sin sacrifice of the red heifer for over ten centuries," said Martin.

"The true place of Golgotha is very critical, because it proves that Jesus Christ was indeed sacrificed, as the ultimate sin sacrifice for the world, at precisely the same place which was designated by biblical law, by tradition and by the ritual custom of the temple for the major sin sacrifices to be killed," said Martin, adding, "It happened on the Mount of Olives in the holy city of Jerusalem. "This evidence was proof positive for all His disciples to see... that His prophecy came true—He was indeed the Lamb of God!"

To receive a copy of Dr Ernest L. Martin's 280-page book entitled *Secrets of Golgotha*, email Jerusalem Christian Review at edchr@Christian.edu.

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About the Author

BENJAMIN HARTMAN is a staff reporter for the *Jerusalem Christian Review*.

The Old Rugged Cross

By **ANDY and BERIT KJOS**

On a hill far away
stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross
where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.¹

"...the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are saved it is the power of God"—1 Cor 1:18

"O most merciful Christ," wrote the faithful reformer John Hus (1369-1415) as he awaited his execution, "Give us a courageous spirit, so that it may be ready. And if the flesh is weak, may your grace go before it, for without you we can do nothing."

In the eyes of the church establishment, Hus had committed heresy. He believed that everyone should be allowed to read the Bible in their own language—an unthinkable notion in a culture that reserved God's Word for elite students of Latin. He also opposed the pope's money-raising efforts to sell indulgences (the false assurance that people could buy or earn pardon for sin instead of trusting in Christ's redemption through the cross).

Hus was "tried" and found guilty. When asked to recant, he refused. Instead he knelt and prayed that God would forgive his accusers. Mocked and humiliated, he was led naked to the stake, where executioners covered him with wood and straw for the torturous fire. Given a last chance to recant, he answered,

In the truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached I will die today with gladness.

Then the fire was lit using pages from the forbidden Bible printed by John Wycliffe as kindling. Enveloped in flames, Hus kept singing an old hymn, "Christ, thou Son of the living God, have mercy upon me". He died praising the Lord He loved!²

O that old rugged cross,
so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God
left His glory above
To bear it to dark Calvary.³

1 THE OLD RUGGED CROSS, words and music were written by George Bennard (1873-1958) in 1913—see <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/o/r/oruggedc.htm>

2 Notes from <http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/john-hus.html>, <http://www.lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVarticles/JohnHusThePreReformer.htm> and Extreme Devotion, an email from Voice of the Martyrs, February 16, 2007: <http://www.persecution.com>

3 Hear the melody at <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/o/r/oruggedc.htm>

Despising the Cross

To a world bent on social unity and moral laxity, the cross stands as a divisive and humiliating obstacle. Attempts to minimise its offence through laws and intimidation have bullied both secular and church leaders into continual compromise. Public crosses are demolished or hidden; Bibles are forbidden in schools, the traditional days for celebrating the resurrection have been renamed "spring break" and countless corporations and government agencies ban cross-shaped pins or jewellery. Even Jesus Himself has become a popular target for media mockery and ridicule!

Results-driven churches and Christian colleges are marketing a new, more inclusive form of Christianity. Afraid to offend unbelievers, they present a watered-down version of the gospel that veils the significance of the cross. Trained to pursue self-esteem rather than self-surrender, few share Paul's delight in the source of our salvation:

God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Galatians 6:14).

Back in 1963, that Bible verse was the focus of a series of sermons preached by Martyn Lloyd-Jones⁴ (1899-1981), then pastor of London's Westminster Chapel. Reminding us that human nature hasn't changed, he asked some probing questions:

There are contradictory voices going out in the name of the Christian church.... So the first thing we have to do is to discover which is the true message.... What is the Christian gospel? What does it proclaim? What [must I do] which:

- will render me immune to what may happen round and about me...
- would enable me to smile in the face of death
- assures me that I have nothing to fear when I come to the judgment of God
- guarantees me everlasting and eternal bliss in the glory indescribable?

The central thing, the thing that matters above everything else... is the cross.... the death on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ... This is what they preached.... The preaching of the cross has never been popular....⁵

It's true. That's why Jesus warned us long ago:

they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:9-12).

4 <http://www.crossroad.to/Excerpts/books/faith/lloyd-jones/cross.htm>

5 Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Cross* (Good News Publishers, 1986), pages 18, 20

The heart of the Gospel

Some years ago, Graham and Gladys Staines left the comforts of Australia to serve poor lepers in India. Because of their loving encouragement, many Hindus believed in Jesus and burned their idols. One day, Graham and their two young sons travelled to a distant church to share God's encouraging message. While they slept in their car, a crowd of angry Hindus surrounded the car, doused it with petrol and set it aflame. Imprisoned inside, the father and two children were burned alive. At their memorial service, the grieving mother and daughter (who would stay in India and continue their ministry) sang these words:

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone,
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living
just because He lives.⁶

Why is this wonderful old Gospel so offensive to the world? Why does it stir such murderous responses? Or more important, what is it? The apostle Paul summarised it for us almost 2000 years ago:

I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day... He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once... (1 Corinthians 15:1-6).

In short, the gospel is the "good news" of the historical event of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection—all for our salvation. But in today's market-driven churches, this gospel is overshadowed by an enticing counterfeit gospel. In the place of the cross, many of today's most popular churches are celebrating their visible "good deeds"—the kind of "works" and ethical living that draw man's applause, not God's approval.

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10).

As in the days of John Hus, people are fooled into thinking they can earn their pardon from sin and their place in heaven. Rick Warren summarised it well:

The first Reformation was about belief; this one's going to be about behaviour... The first one was about creeds; this one's going to be about our deeds. The first one divided the church; this time it will unify the church.⁷

6 Words: William J and Gloria L Gaither - © 1971 Gaither Music Company / Kingsway Music

7 Ken Camp, "Second Reformation" will unify church, Warren tells Dallas GDOP," 2005, at <http://www.pastors.com/article.asp?ArtID=8280>

This new "reformation" focuses on human goodness and ignores human depravity. It leads to pride and blindness, not humility and repentance. It assures sinners that their good deeds merit God's approving smile, while it hides the actual need for the cross.

Such self-justification sounds good to the masses. When led by our human nature, we all would "*desire to make a good showing in the flesh*," not "*suffer persecution for the cross of Christ*" [Galatians 6:12]. So, to maintain a Christian identity while avoiding "*the offence of the cross*", many adapt their message to politically correct standards for tolerance. Thus they please the world, but not God.

None of the Bible's ethical lessons can make us holy or acceptable to Him. Neither the Ten Commandments nor the Sermon on the Mount can save us from our sin and prepare us to follow our Lord. They were given to show us God's high and holy standard (a criterion we can't possibly reach by human will or strength) and then to draw us to the cross.⁸

I'm not saying God doesn't value "good works". But until He changes our hearts, our deeds are worthless as a means to salvation.

However, when we are "born again" everything changes. The result of the cross in our lives will be "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness...*"—manifestations of the good "fruit" of His Spirit at work in our hearts (Galatians 5:22). But such "good works" can neither replace nor precede the cross. His fruit can only come after our hearts are rooted in Christ.

In other words, our primary need is for a new life through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Having "put to death" our old sinful nature on the cross, Christ fills us with His own victorious Life!

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This wonderful "exchanged life" was prophesied and promised centuries before the cross became a physical reality:

He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:4-5).

When we, by His grace, truly believe what Christ accomplished for us through the cross, we may share in His victorious death and resurrection. Filled with His Spirit, we are enabled "*to work out*" the salvation we have in Christ through the cross. For "*it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" [Philippians 2:12-13].

All is from Him, through the cross, and by His Spirit: our salvation, our new Life, our changed hearts, and our Spirit-led service and sharing. And all bear witness to His sovereign love and grace.

8 Please visit <http://www.crossroad.to/HisWord/verses/topics/holy.htm>

Spiritual battles ahead

But such a distinctly Christian witness may soon be banned. Spirit-led kindness and service will continue to offend the world as long as we keep sharing the cross of Christ. Since the world's religious leaders have little appreciation for that divisive message, they have been negotiating an "international code of conduct" with regard to conversions—a code that would place the world's authorities above God's commands.

Back in 2000 AD, the United Nations provided a platform where religious leaders from around the world could express their intolerance for cross-centred missions. Meeting in the UN General Assembly Hall, the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders discussed the problem of unwanted conversions. In his article, UN religious summit speakers decry efforts at conversion⁹, Tom Strode explained that the Peace Summit—

...evidenced widespread opposition to efforts at religious conversion...

...pronouncements were voiced by speakers from different religious traditions against attempts to convert people to other religions, and they met with strong affirmation... Evangelicals especially would be targets for such sentiments....

On numerous occasions, there were 'very negative comments regarding proselytisation'.... Such declarations were met by 'vigorous applause,' said Richard Cizik. ...the representatives of Christianity were joining that same call to denounce proselytising...¹⁰

In May 2006 the World Council of Churches joined hands with the Vatican "to seek a common code for religious conversions" and "explore 'the dos and don'ts' of trying to spread Christianity among other faiths".

Notice their hostility toward biblical evangelism:

Religious freedom and missionary outreach by Christian groups have become increasingly sensitive topics as many Muslims perceive their faith as under threat by the West and nations such as China struggle to maintain state controls on churches.¹¹

'How can we—anxious to maintain, develop and nurture good relations with people of other faiths—deal with this highly complex issue that sometimes threatens the fibre of living together?' said the Rev. Hans Ucko, head of the inter-religious relations office for the World Council of Churches....

The biggest challenges to the project will be highlighted by who will be absent: Pentecostal and evangelical-style congregations that often lead the drive for conversions.¹²

9 <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/62.htm>

10 Tom Strode, "UN religious summit speakers decry efforts at conversion," Baptist Press, September 2000. <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/62.htm>

11 <http://www.crossroad.to/News/Persecution/index.html>

12 Brian Murphy, "Vatican, Churches Work on Conversion Plan," AP, May 11, 2006. <http://www.wrrn.org/article.php?idd=21482&sec=56&con=56>

Since "living together" has become a common purpose, this conversion code implies that mission groups from America will be welcomed as humanitarian servers,¹³ but despised as God's ambassadors.

Lutheran bishop Mark Hanson exemplified this attitude at an interfaith meeting in Indonesia. He "assured the Muslim participants that the Lutheran World Federation did not try to convert disaster victims from Islam to Christianity in exchange for its help."¹⁴

Actually, if he had tried to convert, he would have violated UNESCO's Declaration on Tolerance¹⁵. This "soft" international law tells us that,

Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures... It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement.

Tolerance involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism...¹⁶

Tolerance... means that one's views are not to be imposed on others.¹⁷

Intolerance... is a global threat.

But Jesus told His followers that "*repentance and remission of sins*" should be preached in His name "*to all nations*" (Luke 24:47) Are we ready to "*obey God rather than man*"? (Acts 5:29).

Only because He took my sins to the cross and joined me to Himself could I ever be such a witness. Only because my life is forever "hidden in Him" can I face each future challenge with confidence in His triumph! For—

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true;
Its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then He'll call me some day to my home far away,
Where His glory forever I'll share.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it some day for a crown.

13 <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/05/peace-un-3.htm>

14 Religious Conversion Ecumenical efforts toward an interreligious issue: from controversy to a shared code of conduct on religious conversion, <http://www.eif-pcusa.org/InterfaithRelations/ReligiousConversion.html>

15 <http://www.crossroad.to/Quotes/globalism/Tolerance.htm>

16 READ—especially biblical truth

17 READ—especially religious views

About the Author



BERIT KJOS is the author of many books and magazine articles and a concerned parent (and grandparent) who has extensively studied religious trends, today's social changes, the roots and branches of the United Nations, the rising worldwide management system, and—most alarming of all—the transformation of the church. She and her husband, Andy can be reached at <http://www.crossroad.to.Q&A/personal.htm>

THE CROSS SEPARATES

By **ZAC POONEN**
Bangalore, South India

ON the hill of Calvary, in the hour when Jesus was crucified, two thieves, condemned with Him, hung on either side. For the hour of their suffering they were separated, if only physically, by the cross of Jesus. In the outcome they were eternally separated, one to perdition and the other to be with Him forever. This is a picture of what the cross of Jesus always does. It separates men who choose the light, from men who choose the darkness. Yes, it separates.

There are many sincere Christians today who feel that any attempt to separate mankind always has its source in evil, and that every movement towards unity originates from God. This, however, is only because they are not familiar with the Bible. The Bible talks about separation in its very first paragraph. In Genesis chapter one verse three we read about the creation of light, and in verse four we read that God saw that this light was good. He then separated the light from the darkness. Had He allowed the two to mingle they might have produced some form of twilight; but this could scarcely have served the life-giving purpose for which God had created light. Thus we see that God was the first to make a separation. He is a God of distinctiveness, and right through the Bible we find this principle clearly laid down. Moreover from a "separation of principle" it soon comes to involve a separation of people. God forbade Israel to intermix in marriages with the other nations because they were themselves to be a light to the nations who sat in darkness. In the New Testament for the same reason the church is clearly told to be separate from the world (2 Cor. 6:14). In fact, the very Greek word "ekklesia", which is translated "church" in the English versions, itself means "a called-out company".

The church and the world have something in common with the two thieves who hung there at Calvary on either side of Jesus. Both men were originally wicked, but one was forgiven and justified because he repented. The other continued in his sin and died unforgiven. So their eternal destinies were different, just as are those of the church and the world. For the spirit of the world is wholly contrary to the Spirit of God, loving the darkness and turning away from the light. It chooses its own destiny—and finds it.

Alas, this separation to God can at times mean a separation from the religious world also. When what passes as the Christian church lives according to the spirit of this world and not according to the Spirit of God, and is guided by the tradition of men instead of by the Word of God, a choice may be forced

upon us. At the very hour when the Lord Jesus was being crucified outside the city of Jerusalem, the priests and religious leaders were worshipping God in the temple, inside the city. They had crucified the Son of God, but in their blindness were carrying on with their empty religious rituals, in the belief that God was pleased with them! Both in His life and in His death the Lord Jesus Himself was outside all religious formalism, and so will His true disciples be (John 16:2). There are many professing Christian churches today that, like the church in Laodicea, have placed themselves in the same position as those Jews.

They are carrying on their activities, thinking that all is well with them, while in truth all the while the Lord Himself is outside their church door (Rev. 3:14, 20).

Separation from the world is in fact a leading theme of the New Testament. Before He went to the cross Jesus told His disciples that they did not belong to the world. Jesus was Himself one apart—"not of this world". And He affirmed that His disciples were just as truly other-worldly. And because they did not belong to it, He told them, that they would find this world a difficult place to live in (John 15:19; 17:16). It is the disciple's responsibility to keep himself unspotted from the world (James 1:27). For the church is Christ's Bride, loved, won and sanctified, by Him (Eph. 5:25-27). This explains Paul's "godly jealousy" over the Corinthian believers. He desired, he said, to present them as a pure virgin to Christ, and he feared lest the devil corrupt them (2 Cor. 11:2, 3). This explains too the extremely strong words, "*You adulterers and adulteresses,*" addressed by James to believers who showed themselves friendly with the spirit of the world (4:4). Yes, the Bible has much to say on separation.

About the Author



ZAC POONEN was an officer in the Indian navy who resigned his commission in 1966. He has been serving the Lord fulltime in India for the last 42 years and is primarily engaged in planting local churches. Zac married Annie 40 years ago. She is a medical doctor who conducts free medical clinics for women and children during Zac's church conferences in India. Many hundreds come for medical help. Their four sons are all disciples of the Lord Jesus in their secular professions as software engineers and are all married to born again believers. Zac has written 25 books on the deeper Christian life and travels to teach at conferences in many lands. His website has his video, audio and written material that can all be downloaded freely: <http://cfcindia.com>. To read or download previous issues of "WORD FOR THE WEEK" please go to: http://www.cfcindia.com/web/mainpages/word_for_the_week.php

News, Views & Your Letters



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FROM THE REGULAR (EMAIL) MAILER: To subscribe go to: <http://www.christian-witness.org/joinsearch.html> and follow the prompts.

DR GEORGE O. WOOD

New brush sweeps clean... hopefully

SINCE the last report (CETF 42—December 2007) Philip Powell (PP) and George Wood (GW) have engaged in an extensive correspondence, some of which was witnessed. GW declined an offer from Jacob Prasch to personally meet with GW in the company of James Sundquist to discuss the Rick Warren Purpose Driven practice and its detrimental impact upon AG-USA. GW also graciously declined to discuss matters of concern re past and present AG credential holders outside of the appropriate credentialing bodies that he is responsible to. When PP drew GW's attention to a ruling by one of the AG district's to the effect that no AG credential holder could attend a non AG Church, in the light of GW's admission that he had attended Rick Warren's Saddle Back Church, he explained that the original letter was confusing and that the intent was to address AG ministers who were permanently attending a non-AG church, rather than just visiting. In the meanwhile Jeffrey Whittaker one of our CWM conference camp speakers (September 9-14, 2007) has resigned his credential and withdrawn his church from AG-USA over the concerns that he expressed at the camp and in previous CETFs. Obviously neither GW nor his denomination (AG-USA) is answerable to us. But so long as matters are covered up things will continue to ferment. George Wood is a theocrat. It is sincerely hoped that he will reflect on our comments about matters of public concern and will in his capacity as general superintendent reverse



AG-USA headquarters in Springfield, Missouri: Political pragmatism rules in the "grey vatican".

trends towards PDL¹ and redress the wrongs that were done to other good and godly men during the regime of his predecessor, Thomas Trask—refer <http://www.christian-witness.org/aog/aog.html> Jeffrey Whittaker observed:

Unfortunately the official policy out of Springfield is to refuse to answer any "detractors". I was told by Brother Wood, "It only helps them build their mailing lists". Voices within the movement are simply ignored or shamed into silence, and in the name of "nobility" and "taking the high road", no true debate is permitted.

It is only too bad that the example left to us by the apostles is not emulated by the current generation of leaders who preside over their respective denominational corporations. Sadly, this practice merely perpetuates a self-reinforcing pattern of behaviour that allows the errors to remain entrenched. Political pragmatism rules the day in the "Grey Vatican" in Springfield, Missouri.

During our recent business meeting in which our local church body successfully withdrew from the AG corporation, Supt. Wood sent an email message along through our state supt. William Leech, in which he deliberately misrepresented the truth by stating that the AG-USA is not involved in global ecumenism in any way, thereby attempting to cast aspersions upon my leadership, and create confusion in the minds of our church family.

If one would try to respond to these

inaccurate remarks, one would simply receive the reply that the activities within the World Council of Churches and the Vatican through Dr Cecil Robeck of Fuller Theological Seminary, as well as the other AG credential holders who recently signed the *A Common Word Between Us and You* document with the Islamic community are not doing anything "OFFICIAL" in the name of the denomination. Thankfully George Wood's misrepresentations only served to strengthen the resolve of our church as they voted over 95% to withdraw from the AG denomination. I turn the movement over to both God's judgement and mercy.

Jacob Prasch wrote:

I made the offer to meet George Wood in good faith as a sincere gesture. He refuses to even discuss Purpose Driven. His theocratic mind is made up and he does not want to be confused with the facts. Theocratic politics prevails; truth, the Word of God, etc are irrelevant to him. The Lord has a way of dealing with such people (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12, 1 Kings 22: 19-23, John 12:40, Isaiah 6:10); He gives them over to the deceptions they choose and they are destroyed by them. In the true spirit of the Sanhedrin, such theocrats are not merely blind, but wilfully blind. We know how the Lord deals with theocrats like that (John 9: 39). If GW wants to be blind, God will blind him. Tragic—my offer was genuine. I simply wanted him to meet James Sundquist and myself and confront the facts. The only fact however is that the facts do not matter to him.

Your comments are invited on this issue at: <http://www.christian-witness.org/blog>

¹ PDL is the abbreviation for the "Purpose Driven Life" teaching and practice of Rick Warren.

Meanwhile Steve Svendsen has written an open letter dated January 11 2008 to the AG-USA General Superintendent requesting him for a study on the Purpose Driven doctrines and drawing his attention to a letter of Sept 20, 2007—<http://www.contending.org/woodresponse20070921.htm>. We quote in part:

January 11, 2008—Mr Wood,

This month Purpose Driven will openly couple itself with Robert Schuller. Schuller is a heretic. ... This is the bedrock for Self Esteem doctrine and New Age pride. In addition, Schuller's Rethink Conference is, by design, bound up in the dominionist/transformation ambitions that are manifest in several spheres. There are also other relationships that have come to light that document Purpose Driven as a New Age facilitator. You are a man of intelligence and wide ranging experience. Take action. Order a review of the developing Purpose Driven doctrines and call in those who have studied them. You would not be denigrating Mr Warren whom you so admire by simply ordaining a study. Warren can represent himself.

Here is a restatement of Purpose Driven Doctrines that must be examined;

Teaching **Dominionism**. Teaching **Universalism**. Teaching **P.E.A.C.E.** instead of the great commission. Teaching **Contemplative Prayer**, "breath prayers", vain repetitions, (transcendental meditation, and altered states of consciousness) is a way to a closer walk with the God of the Bible. Teaching the use of **Oaths**. Teaching **Self Esteem** rather than man's depravity. Teaching the **Inherent Goodness of unregenerate, unrepentant man**. Teaching "**Evangelism**" that does not declare the person and work of Jesus Christ or the unregenerate state of fallen man. Teaching the "church" is made up to include worldly Christians plus "**World Class Christians**". Teachings that methodically apply scriptures to the unsaved that should only be applied to the church of Jesus Christ.

It is in your prerogative to take simple but essential actions that will benefit the elect of God. Those purchased with blood. Do not abstain.

Sincerely, Steve Svendsen.

★ ★ ★

WARREN UNDER FIRE

■ Mega church leader, Rick Warren, is coming under increasing fire from Christian leaders for his support of a leading pornographer. Check the link, pass it on: http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=55616

—John H, The First Plumb-Line Church

★ ★ ★

POLITICS and PARTISAN PROPHETS

■ Though it seems so long ago this is in fact the first issue of CETF since the Australian federal election in which we have been able to make any comment regarding that event. We did comment in our CWM e-newsletter. As some of our hard print readers may have

missed that we repeat some of it here:

At 10.35pm on Saturday evening November 24, 2007 John Howard admitted electoral defeat handing government to prime minister elect Kevin Rudd leader of the Australian Labor Party. Thus ended a remarkably successful eleven and half years of Liberal-National Coalition ["conservative"] rule and an even more extraordinary election. It was extraordinary on account of the number of Christians and Christian organisations who actively and yet abortively sought to influence the electorate. In so doing those Christians forsook their biblical mandate to an amazing degree. They acted in an overtly partisan manner, which is dangerous unless there are clear issues of right and wrong or of good and evil. Some got carried away with imagined ideas of having heard God's voice and supposedly spoke on behalf of God, which is another very dangerous thing to do. An assessment is called for and a re-evaluation of any future participation in the political process by the prominent quasi Christian-social/political organisations in our great country.

FIRSTLY—We must pray for Kevin Rudd and the Labor party as they lead our country. This is not optional. It is a command of scripture—Pray "*For kings, and all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty*" (1 Timothy 2:2).

SECONDLY—Christians should stop being partisan in their praying. Here's part of an email I received just after the election:

Dear Philip: Thank you so much for this article on the election. I know of a church that was meeting on Friday nights to pray against the election of Kevin Rudd. I urge people to pray FOR Kevin Rudd

—CS, Northern NSW

Sadly in the build up to the election most of the Christian prayer meetings including the national ones held in Canberra were "loaded" with personal political preferences. I and CWM would not be party to them, because biblically it is wrong to be motivated by a party spirit. Even in the wake of the election some Christian organisations have showed their own bias by tacitly asking, "What went wrong?" Well did anything go wrong? The Australian public expressed their will in a pretty conclusive manner, just as they have done in previous elections. Both Salt Shakers and Catch-the-Fire seemed to take the view that the Liberal-Coalition Party was not returned because Christians were not united in prayer and purpose. Is their bias really showing?

THIRDLY—We should re-assess our ideas about true Christian leadership and carefully analyse those who are self-promoters such as Danny Nalliah of Catch-the-Fire. Based on his false prophecies, as detailed by CWM previously and his unrepentant honouring of the late Frank Houston who was a proven homosexual paedophile, Danny Nalliah should now be marked as a false prophet, notwithstanding the grandiose claims to his being an "apostle". Of course false prophets

are no longer stoned as in Old Testament times, however they should be disregarded and avoided. Mr Nalliah couldn't have been more wrong. The only thing he had right was the election date—sometime in November. Clearly Danny Nalliah has had his own agenda ever since his claim to fame in the Islamic conflict with the Victorian Civil Administration Tribunal. CWM has long since been warning the Christian public to beware of what is going on. Catch-the-Fire borrowed their name from the false so-called Toronto Blessing movement. It is high time sane Christians awoke to what is going on. We need to examine the aggressive so-called Spiritual Warfare that Mr Nalliah and others engage in. It sends a wrong signal to the secular world and it is NOT biblical. Danny Nalliah's claims of divine instruction allow Christians and Christianity to be ridiculed by humanists, secularists and the media alike—should they wish to push the issue.

★ ★ ★

CATCH-THE-FIRE SEQUEL

■ (Re Danny Nalliah). There is a mistaken notion among those who call themselves prophets that they are the same as the Old Testament prophets. These self-appointed or self-acclaimed prophets are only trying to build their own image to gain glory for themselves. The New Testament prophetic ministry is different. Every ministry in the New Testament times must be modelled after Christ—grace and truth, love, holiness, selflessness etc. One should earnestly study the first principles of Christ. One needs only to listen and observe these so-called apostles and prophets to know their motives and agenda—they only draw attention to themselves and not to Christ. O the greed for power, popularity and mammon! How sad! The so-called ministers of Christ have lost their godly or Christly character that a Holy God and Father requires of His children.

—Dr Thomas, President, International Fellowship of Apostolic Faith Ministers

This has been published on the CWM blog. You can see all comments (and add yours) on this post here: <http://www.christian-witness.org/blog/?p=8#comments>

★ ★ ★

ENCOURAGING COMMENTS

■ Dear Sir: Thank you for the publications you send me. Enclosed is my subscription costs. I am a fundamentalist Bible-believing Christian in my seventies. What caught my attention in the latest copy [CETF 37] was first the short message by C.H. Spurgeon *Feeding Sheep or Entertaining Goats?* Great title and words. The other was the short letter by BM—New Zealand [re any good fellowship in NZ]. Grace Baptist Church, Indus Street, Wanganui is such a church. Unfortunately the American pastor and his family have returned to the USA. I don't have a computer or website so could you pass this information on

—RAW, Wanganui

Dear CWM: Thanks for all your hard work. I pray the Lord would continue to help you to “earnestly contend for the faith”. It is greatly needed. Can you do an article on Brian McClaren and the emergent church, which is very disturbing. I have seen on BM’s website that he teaches “via purgative”¹ and other such mystical things (contemplative prayer, *lectio divina*² etc). I thought it would be good to expose these things. Yours in Christ,

—SB, Papamoa NZ

Philip [CETF 40]: Did you read the comments people were writing in regarding the article about the church on the Sunshine Coast? It is very disturbing! They were fiercely defending these worldly methods. They don’t depend upon the Holy Spirit and personal evangelism—there has to be gimmicks.

—Sherry Neese, Truth and Grace, USA

★ ★ ★

CWM RESOURCE IN NZ

I’m wondering whether it’s possible to order printed and recorded material here in New Zealand, and send a cheque to Wellington? Having to go through Australia really stops me from accessing your excellent materials.

—RS, Christchurch

ED: *This idea has been and is being investigated. Unfortunately due to the fact that we are a small organisation with no spare funds it is impossible for us to retain adequate stock in two outlets to make the operation viable. However airmail postage costs are quoted pro rata of the amount actually ordered, so are not much different for either country. It’s best for you if payment can be made by credit card.*

★ ★ ★

FACTS ABOUT COPELAND

Shalom! You question Kenneth Copeland’s ministry ... Allow me to give you FACTS. I am a missionary based in X and teaching online and physically in Y and other places. I am a biologist and theologian (“biologian” was a term coined for my ministry by Dr Paul Nelson some years ago at an International Creation Congress in Sweden.) As a creationist I requested from Kenneth Copeland’s ministry a set of videos by Dr Carl Baugh. There were TWO sets. *Evidences For Creation and Understanding Creation*. I explained that my income was only about \$40 a week and asked WHICH they recommended that I buy. They told me that I needed BOTH. I bought both. As a christian (sic) organisation I chose to trust

1 *The Purgative Way* is practiced in Roman Catholicism and in Islam—supposed to “purge” the soul. More next CETF.
2 *Lectio Divina* is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or “holy reading,” and represents a [Roman Catholic] method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to engender communion with the triune God and to provide special spiritual insights (from *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*).

them. They are of the SAME MATERIAL and the SAME SCRIPT but filmed on two separate occasions. The video slipcases clearly say JESUS IS LORD (presumably because those of us who know our Bibles know that you can’t SAY that; except by the Holy Ghost; The Bible doesn’t mention PRINTING IT to confuse suckers). I have to wrestle with the question of forgiveness. I request that YOU help to make sure that other Christians are not taken in by their “christian” (sic) claptrap. One HUGE problem is that “our” Indians are poor—seriously poor. I can feed and house a pastor for 3,000 rupees a month (that’s less than \$100 US). These people dream of getting a TV so they can watch God Channel and other Christian channels. Once they get a TV they are bombarded for the first time in their lives with the “tithing TO ME and god will bless you” message. So they contact a relative (frequently a Hindu businessman) who has a credit card and they make a deal with him to send \$x per month to the TV evangelist. This has to be found from somewhere SO IT IS TAKEN FROM THE SUPPORT THEY GIVE THEIR OWN PASTOR (“after all; it’s all going to the Lord’s work”). Our pastors have been taught not to ask PEOPLE for money for their ministries; but to rely on The Boss (as you and I evidently do). Many haven’t much practice so at the first hurdle they function in the flesh and some of these pastors are leaving the ministry to earn a living so they can pay their rent and feed their families. This is the REAL fruit of the TV evangelism ministries. “By their fruit you shall know them”. My own view is very simple and I believe that it is biblical. Tithing is a part of the Law. “It is finished” was the end of the Law; it was fulfilled at Calvary. A New Testament comes into force when the testator DIES (Hebrews). The Law is a curse. Therefore, to tithe brings a curse upon a congregation. Why limit yourself to 10%? The Lord Jesus gave 100% at Calvary. My views are too extreme for many people. I’m used to it. Try being a creationist who is a scientist AND a theologian. My strongest resistance comes from theologians who don’t know enough about science. When the subject of tithing comes up during teaching, as it sometimes does, I am often not invited back to churches who depend on manipulating PEOPLE instead of trusting the Lord. Universities won’t pay me to tell their students that they are being sold a load of tripe in the name of science. Faculties of theology won’t pay me to tell their students that they are being sold a load of tripe in the name of theology. Churches aren’t employ me in case I tell their congregations that they are being sold a load of tripe in the name of tithing. So there isn’t much alternative to living by faith. It isn’t so much a matter of trying to be “holy”. More a matter of practical reality. I have long been praying that the Lord would EXPOSE, EXPOSE, EXPOSE the false prophets and materialistic worldly basis of much that passes in the name of ministry. The same sort of people are attracted to leadership in denominations and churches as are attracted to power and

authority in ALL human organisations. Our Lord Jesus Himself warned us about doing the things the pagans do. Thank you; good to know there are others “out there” who are bringing these horrendous travesties of so called “faith” into the light! God bless!

—MS, Finnish Missionary to India

★ ★ ★

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

CWM editorial comment: Those who have their doctrine seriously wrong as do Copeland and his followers will also have their living seriously wrong. Recently a well-known Australian “Copeland-ite” called Colin Stringer received an email notice advertising our Christmas Carol services. I received a response dated December 14 as follows: “Who would want to come to anything this ding-a-ling was running!” Amazingly this same Colin Stringer on January 5, 2008 wrote to one of our research writers: “It is sad when a supposed brother in the Lord cannot discuss a difference without resorting to insulting remarks”. This statement was made in the context of Stringer being challenged about some claims in his amazing book *800 Horsemen*, which clearly contains distorted notions about the first world war battles leading to the liberation of Jerusalem. CWM may publish an in depth investigation of his book. For the present suffice it to point out the seeming duplicity of Mr Stringer and his throw away line about discussing differences without resorting to insults.

Are there any CWM readers or friends who would care to help in our research? Some links follow that could prove helpful or you may even care to drop the gentleman a line at either or both of his email addresses: colstringer@austarnet.com.au; csministries@austarnet.com.au If you do write, just ask him when he is going to answer my email of January 7, 2008 in which I wrote as follows:

Dear Colin: On Friday, December 14, 2007 5:38pm you wrote an email (see below) in which you called me a “ding-a-ling”. I took that as an insult from one person who claims to be a Christian to another who likewise claims to be a Christian. Do you agree? ... I am keen to make 2008 a year of “reconciliation” and peace—“as much as lies within me” (Romans 12:18). I hope to hear from you by return. Sincerely yours in Christ, Philip L. Powell.

As at the end of January 31st, 2008 there has been no response. Here’s those website links: <http://www.colstringer.com/>; <http://www.colstringer.com/partnerships.html>; <http://www.im-clients.info/cgi-bin/icgm02/index.html?domain=info&name=ICFM%20Convention> <http://www.colstringer.com/index.html>;

If you would like to make a public comment on the CWM blog, go to: <http://www.christian-witness.org/blog/?p=10>

If you want more information just do a Google search on his name “Col Stringer”—lots of stuff will come up.

★ ★ ★
**AoG and COPELAND
 INFLUENCE**

Dear Philip, I recently stumbled across the Christian Witness Ministries website (<http://www.christian-witness.org/actwelcum.html>) and have ordered your book *Gathering the Faithful Remnant*, which I look forward to reading. My wife and I have attended an independent charismatic fellowship since January. We have both grown significantly in our faith since joining this church, but not really as a result of their ministry. The church lacks any hint of discernment and is quick to latch onto any and every fad that raises its head. In the half year we've been there we've come across "Theophostic Prayer Ministry"; "The Emmaus Walk" (which I believe originated within a catholic order); a "Tenebrae service" before Easter (also with Catholic origins); and links to Toronto (pastor and family are there right now). The pastor also proudly told me that the fellowship at one time experienced a manifestation of gold dust. When I expressed reservations about the gold dust, he quoted the verses about our father not giving us a snake if we ask for a fish. I later read Toronto's John Arnott answering his critics with this same excuse. I note that you deal with this in your sermon *Who is the Vicar of Christ?* I have recognised that even IF this excuse had some validity, it would be nullified by the wilful ignoring of the countless warnings of deception that can be found in almost every book of the New Testament. We cannot expect God's protection from evils that He has Himself warned us to be aware of.

Now a little personal history... From my teens in the early 1970s, I had an on again-off again involvement with Christianity. I now recognise that I responded to a watered down "ask Jesus into your heart" gospel with a minimal emphasis on repentance. My faith was built on a faulty foundation. From the early to mid 1980s I became more committed with church involvement, spending many years with the Apostolic Church, followed by a year and a half with the AOG. My involvement was rewarded with leadership positions and regular preaching opportunities. During that time I was exposed to the Word Of Faith (WOF) teachings of the Copelands and my preaching drew heavily on their sermons. This influence did NOT come from either of the above mentioned fellowships. I was introduced to it by a few friends. Towards the end of 1986 I suddenly dropped away from the church. It was an extremely abrupt change and I can't pinpoint any particular reason. However at this time I read Dave Hunt's *Seduction of Christianity* which eroded my faith in the Copeland teachings. Around five years ago through a variety of circumstances my faith was renewed. I tried to find a suitable church but found nothing in my local area. My only "fellowship" until we arrived in Young late last year was via a Christian internet forum. It was

a fiery and controversial group, but it gave me a rapid introduction to the very much changed "Christian" world and I was made aware of the concept of the apostate church. It also gave some perspective to my 20 years away from the church and the Lord. I realised that my former faith had been built upon the word of man; either the word of pastors and elders or the word of TV preachers. I had been too lazy to develop a firm relationship with the Lord for myself. My Bible reading was minimal, so I was easily influenced by what sounded good and never checked its scriptural validity for myself (I suspect this is the case with MOST professing Christians). It would be easy to regret so many years of neglect, but I realise that had I continued in my ways within the church, I would have easily fallen for any (or all) of the false movements that arose during those 20 years. My renewed faith has been a challenge. The diluted gospel I held to in the past has been replaced by a gospel that emphasises the importance of repentance. I have also found it hard to find genuine, uncompromised Christian fellowship. I'm not sure how long I'll be able to remain with the church we currently attend, but for the time being I believe I'm there for a purpose; based on Jude verses 20-23:

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

Well, that's an overlong introduction which will perhaps convey the reason for my eagerness to find groups of Christians such as your own that recognise the increasing dangers of deception as we move further into these last days. The extent of the deception within the present day church is VERY clear to me due to the massive changes I can see between my earlier church involvement and today. Things were far from ideal in the mid-eighties; but today the situation has worsened incredibly. Bless you,

—TS, Young, NSW

★ ★ ★
TITHING

Hi Philip: God is raising up men of integrity to challenge the false teaching of tithing which pervades His church worldwide and brings the Gospel into disrepute...Your article is very good in the way it challenges this heresy [<http://www.christian-witness.org/archives/cetf2006/tithing37.html>]. If the church is not faithful with worldly riches (especially in demanding money from the poor under a false and lying doctrine)...how can they be trusted with true spiritual riches—i.e. the glory of the presence of God? The teaching of tithing has stopped hundreds of millions of people from being prepared to come to churches to hear the gospel as they perceive (often correctly) that 'all the churches are after is your money'. I

spoke to the pastor at my church about how the Word of God was being misquoted frequently about tithing and gave him my notes. It seems to have touched something. We all know God does not give us permission to tamper with his Word. Regards,

—CS, BRISBANE

★ ★ ★
MORMONISM EXPLAINED

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=zy0d1HbItOo>

You may have to copy-paste this URL into your browser. It will take you to a cartoon, in which the theology and eschatology of Mormonism is exposed as an attempt to re-explain Jesus. This could be FUNNY if there were not a MORMON creeping towards the presidency of the USA. This insane story and false history of the world is what Mitt Romney wants to bring along into the peak of American power. Also keep an eye on Glenn Beck (CNN) a self-confessed MORMON. Mitt Romney (the Mormon) actually has the most "delegates" (they are like "points") towards gaining the Republican nomination for the presidency. To think that someone so disconnected from reality that he believes the pagan fairy-tale of Mormonism is aspiring to lead the world's most powerful nation is indeed frightening.

—DF, USA

★ ★ ★
JOEL OSTEEN—MORMONISM

Dear Philip, I was just about shocked out of my computer chair when I received this emailer yesterday from the apologetics ministry, *Let Us Reason*, and the article by Mike Oppenheimer, *Living in a Time of Confusion*, in which he quoted Joel Osteen's statements about a Mormon presidential hopeful in the USA. Osteen is the pastor of the largest church in the USA in Houston (and a charismatic). He claims that "Mitt Romney has said that he believes in Christ as his saviour, and that's what I believe". Osteen admitted that he does not know much about Mormonism. I have written a post for the Christian Fellowship Forum (<http://community.compuserve.com/n/pfx/forum.aspx?redirCnt=2&msg=117851.1&nav=messages&webtag=ws-fellowship> I'm OzSpem.) that I have included below. This is abominable stuff when the pastor of the largest church in the USA thinks that Jesus, the brother of Satan (Mormonism), is the same Saviour that he worships. This sounds like a good kind of challenge in an article for *Contending Earnestly for the Faith*. I trust that you and Kath will have a happy New Year.

Spencer's Post: "Living in a time of Confusion" can be obtained by email from: administrator@letusreason.org. In part, Mike Oppenheimer wrote:

Joel Osteen the pastor of the largest church in America [Lakewood Church in Houston] has recently endorsed the largest cult in history with his comments on this matter. In an interview on Fox News Sunday (Chris Wallace) just before Christmas:

CHRIS WALLACE: And what about Mitt Romney? And I've got to ask you the question, because it is a question whether it should be or not in this campaign, is a Mormon a true Christian?

OSTEEN: Well, in my mind they are. Mitt Romney has said that he believes in Christ as his saviour, and that's what I believe, so, you know, I'm not the one to judge the little details of it. So I believe they are. And so, you know, Mitt Romney seems like a man of character and integrity to me, and I don't think he would—anything would stop me from voting for him if that's what I felt like.

CHRIS WALLACE: So, for instance, when people start talking about Joseph Smith, the founder of the church, and the golden tablets in upstate New York, and God assumes the shape of a man, do you not get hung up in those theological issues?

OSTEEN: I probably don't get hung up in them because I haven't really studied them or thought about them. And you know, I just try to let God be the judge of that. I mean, I don't know. I certainly can't say that I agree with everything that I've heard about it, but from what I've heard from Mitt, when he says that Christ is his saviour, to me that's a common bond. (source: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,318054,00.html>, Sunday, December 23, 2007)

Maybe in Osteen's mind he is preaching the gospel too, but the fact is we go to the Bible to see what the gospel is and is not, and what a person is required to believe to be a Christian. Osteen is so ill-informed it is shocking, admitting he knows next to nothing about this cult that claims to be a restoration of the church. If we take his opinion as true—(which many will)—every cult could be part of the church. And left up to pastors like himself that is exactly where we are headed. This is something I and others have been warning of for years. This is shameful that a pastor over this many people has no Bible knowledge or even street smarts on this subject. Of course him trying to be spiritually correct in the public did not help his position but it does show he is not a shepherd that protects sheep.

Romney on the other hand has assured the people that he will not let his (Mormon) faith influence his decisions. Which to me says that his faith is not really part of his life. I can't imagine any Christian stating this. [You can read the full interview with Joel Osteen by Chris Wallace on Fox News Sunday, 23 December 2007 at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,318054,00.html>]

Who is this Jesus of Mormon teaching? This Mormon article, *Jesus Christ, Our Chosen Leader and Saviour* (<http://www.lds.org/library/display/0,4945,11-1-13-6,00.html>), states:

We needed a Saviour to pay for our sins and teach us how to return to our Heavenly Father. Our Father said, "*Whom shall I send?*" (Abraham 3:27). **Two of our brothers offered to help. Our oldest brother, Jesus Christ**, who was then called Jehovah, said, "*Here am I, send me*" (Abraham 3:27). Jesus was willing to come to the earth, give his life for us, and take upon himself our sins.

He, like our Heavenly Father, wanted us to choose whether we would obey Heavenly Father's commandments. He knew we must be free to choose in order to prove ourselves worthy of exaltation. Jesus said, "*Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever*" (Moses 4:2). **Satan, who was called Lucifer**, also came, saying, "*Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honour*" (Moses 4:1). Satan wanted to force us all to do his will. Under his plan, we would not be allowed to choose. He would take away the freedom of choice that our Father had given us. Satan wanted to have all the honour for our salvation ... **After hearing both sons speak**, Heavenly Father said, "**I will send the first**" (Abraham 3:27). [Emphasis added]

So, the Jesus Christ, whom John Osteen wants to identify with the Mormon political candidate, Mitt Romney, who stated that he "believes in Christ as his saviour" and Osteen adds, "and

that's what I believe", is the brother of Satan. The Mormon Jesus is a totally different Jesus to the Jesus of the Bible. The One whom I worship is the eternal Son of God and had nothing whatsoever to do with the family of Satan.

The NT Jesus is this One who is described as the Word in John 1:1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Philippians 2:6).

He was equal with God.

The Jesus who offers salvation through his death on the cross is God and not the brother of Satan.

Sincerely,

—Spencer Gear, QLD

Please watch for Ed Barclay's concluding article, *Children of a Clayton's God: An insight into Mormonism—Part 6* God willing in CETF #44 (June 2008).

Christian Concerns

WORLD NEWS ITEMS THAT MAY HAVE IMPACT ON CHRISTIAN LIVING

Collated with editorial comments by B. Michael Bigg (MB)

PAULA White, Joyce Meyer, Creflo Dollar, Eddie Long, Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn ... names synonymous with the 'name it and claim it' or 'blab it and grab it' doctrine (also known as 'health and wealth' or the 'prosperity gospel'). Well finally it seems that the world has enough of their lies, deception and theft.

On November 9, 2007, the CBS News website reported,

Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa, the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, is investigating six prominent televangelist ministries for possible financial misconduct.

Letters were sent Monday to the ministries demanding that financial statements and records be turned over to the committee by December 6th.

According to Grassley's office, the Iowa Republican is trying to determine whether or not these ministries are improperly using their tax-exempt status as churches to shield lavish lifestyles.

The six ministries identified as being under investigation by the committee are led by: Paula White, Joyce Meyer, Creflo Dollar, Eddie Long, Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn. Three of the six—Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland and Creflo Dollar—also sit on the Board of Regents for the Oral Roberts University.¹

And though most of the ministries responded with an atypical "open book" type response, expressed their willingness to comply with the request and the like compliance with the law, "Benny Hinn's spokesperson, Ronn Torossian, said the ministry is in the process of determining the best course of action in response to the Senate investigation".²

Interestingly though, "Paula White is also expressing concern about precedents that could be set by turning over the requested information"³... but if ANY ministry is operating 'above board' and with integrity, there would be no such concern.

Tampa Bay Online (Tampa Bay's *The Tampa Tribune* newspaper's website) notes the following points of inquiry by Senator Grassley, in his letter to Paula White Ministries and her Without Walls International Church,

- A detailed explanation of the compensation paid to the Whites, as well as cash and non-cash gifts, housing allowances and personal use of assets.
- A detailed list of any expenses paid for by their church or ministries toward the purchases and monthly maintenance of their residences on Bayshore Boulevard in Tampa, and in New York, San Antonio and Malibu, California.
- Credit card statements for expenses paid by the Whites' tax-exempt entity, including a list of all expense account items such as clothing and cosmetic surgery.

¹ Laura Strickler, CBS News, Senate Panel Probes 6 Top Televangelists. WWW page. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/11/06/cbsnews_investigates/main3456977.shtml>, 6 Nov 2007, cited 9 Nov 2007.

² ibid
³ ibid

- A list of all domestic and overseas bank accounts and investments belonging to their organizations.
- A list of all vehicles purchased, leased or maintained by their tax-exempt organizations.
- Copies of flight records of any aircraft leased or owned by their ministries, as well as flight itineraries for both the Whites.
- A copy of the bill of sale, type of payment used and an explanation of the reported tax-exempt purchase of a Bentley convertible as a gift for Bishop T.D. Jakes.
- A detailed accounting of \$871,000 worth of items reportedly sold to the church since 2005 by two of the private businesses owned by the Whites, and an explanation as to who determined that the church would purchase these items.
- An explanation of who determines how the funds of Without Walls and Paula White Ministries are spent, copies of all board minutes and whether any of the decisions, both operational and financial, are subject to oversight by an elected or appointed body.⁴

The Tampa Tribune article also notes that they have "detailed problems at Without Walls, one of the largest independent nondenominational churches in the nation. Detractors said the Whites borrowed \$170,000 from an elderly widow and failed to keep promises to care for her or pay it back. A young woman who said she was promised a house for winning a church essay contest did not get it, though the church repeatedly publicised the award ceremony.

The Whites have since repaid the widow and secured a house for the young woman. After inquiries from the Tribune, the church published an audit of its 2005 and 2006 finances on its website. It states that the church took in \$39.9 million in 2006 and itemises some of its spending. It does not break down how much was spent on specific ministries or on salaries for its top staff.⁵

Copies of Senator Grassley's letters to all six ministries can be read on the Tambo Bay Online website⁶. The article also includes statements from Ministry Watch, Christianity Today magazine and Charisma magazine.

Rodney Pitzer, of a North Carolina-based donor advocacy organisation called Ministrywatch.com, said some ministries are

purposefully designed to make their leaders wealthy. He said he hopes the Senate inquiry will encourage religious organisations to "start cleaning house".

"Some of these nonprofits really know how to work the system," he said. "They may be in compliance with the law, but they're certainly not in compliance with the heart and the spirit of the law".

The pressure to change the laws will have to come from donors rather than the government, said Ted Olsen, managing editor for news and online journalism at *Christianity Today*.

But the ministries targeted by Grassley are in a subgroup of the Christian evangelical movement that Olsen calls the "health-and-wealth crowd". They preach the prosperity Gospel, a teaching that promises material rewards for those who give to the church.

"There's little fear of donor backlash when your donors see opulence as a sign of God's blessing," he said.

Even a national Christian publication that has given favourable coverage to ministries such as Without Walls is taking a harder look.

Lee Grady, editor of Charisma magazine, is now calling for financial reform in Christian evangelical circles. He is bothered that some ministries are giving "all of us a bad name because money has been misused".

"This is an awkward time for the church," Grady said. "I believe God is putting his finger on some problems and demanding that we set our house in order. If we don't correct these problems ourselves, then the government may have to step in and do it. And that will be unfortunate."⁷

In the light of a number of "christian" magazines' support (which at times seems to border on complicity), one is glad to finally see a change ... hopefully it will be for the better ... and won't be a quick splash in the pan.

The St Louis Post-Dispatch's St Louis Today website⁸, notes that the letter to Joyce Meyer Ministries includes many requests which "track information about the ministry revealed by the Post-Dispatch in a 2003 series"⁹. Specific inquiries to Meyer include:

- A "detailed accounting" of all her and her husband's expense-account items, including clothing and cosmetic surgery.
- Information about any overseas bank accounts and deposits made outside the U.S. after international evangelical crusades.
- The tax-exempt purpose of items purchased for her ministry's headquarters, such as a \$23,000 marble-topped commode, a \$30,000 conference table and an \$11,219

7 Michelle Bearden & Baird Helgeson, The Tampa Tribune, Without Walls Finances Face Senator's Scrutiny. WWW page. <<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2007/nov/06/na-without-walls-finances-face-senators-scrutiny/?news-nationworld>>, 6 Nov 2007, cited 9 Nov 2007.

8 <http://www.stltoday.com/joycemeyer>.

9 Deirdre Shesgreen, St. Louis Today, Joyce Meyer Ministries is a target of GOP senator's probe. WWW page. <<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/nation/story/9414456BE68D8F628625738B0018DE2E?OpenDocument>>, 6 Nov 2007, cited 9 Nov 2007.

French clock.

- A detailed accounting of total monthly expenses for upkeep on the Meyers' personal residence, and any vacation homes, from 2004 to the present.
- An explanation of any personal use of the ministries' tax-exempt assets, including "jets, employees, facilities," from 2004 to the present.
- An explanation for how personal gifts from donors, such as money or jewellery, are handled and reported to the IRS.¹⁰

Only time will show how this inquiry will play out.

★ ★ ★

In CETF 42, CWM reported Danny Nalliah's 11 August 2007 "prophetic" statement in the document headed *Prophetic Word Regarding Federal Election 2007*, which included,

The Lord told me to spend some personal time with Prime Minister John Howard and to prophetically prepare Federal Treasurer Peter Costello as the future prime minister of Australia. ... I will boldly declare that Prime Minister John Howard will be re-elected in the November election (if the Body of Christ unites in prayer and action) and pass the leadership onto Peter Costello sometime after.

Talk about "jinxing" an election ... not only did Mr Nalliah's prophecy fail to come true, with Mr Howard and the coalition parties losing the election, but Mr Howard also lost his seat in his own electorate.

Makes one wonder whether this is all coincidence, or if God is making a point.

The question to ask is, did "the Body of Christ" NOT unite "in prayer and action" concerning the election, or is Mr Nalliah's prophecy a product of his own imagination?

As we "prophetically" suggested in CETF 42, "a man who honours a homosexual paedophile won't hear anything from God".

On Danny Nalliah's *Catch-the-Fire* website's blog, Prime Minister elect, Kevin Rudd, and the newly elected Labor government were congratulated¹¹.

Below the congratulatory entry is a response by "Maria",

This is the only comment your website makes regarding the outstanding support for the Labor government which must, by sheer statistics, have included many Christian voters. Yet still you include so-called prophetic words on Howard and Costello being God's chosen. What understanding do you have on why your prophecy has been so spectacularly disproved? If the answer you give is that Christians did not do their duty in getting behind the prophecy by voting for the Liberals, then how could it have been a God-given prophecy at all—since prophecy by definition is a truth

10 ibid

11 Catch-the-Fire, We Congratulate Kevin Rudd & the Labor Government on Winning the Election. WWW page. <<http://catchthefire.com.au/blog/2007/11/27/we-congratulate-kevin-rudd-the-labor-government-on-winning-the-election/>>, 27 Nov 2007, cited 3 Dec 2007.

4 Michelle Bearden & Baird Helgeson, The Tampa Tribune, Without Walls Finances Face Senator's Scrutiny. WWW page. <<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2007/nov/06/na-without-walls-finances-face-senators-scrutiny/?news-nationworld>>, 6 Nov 2007, cited 9 Nov 2007.

5 ibid

6 Sen. Grassley letter to...

• Without Walls International Church: <http://media.tbo.com/tbo/pdfs/110507white.pdf>
 • World Healing Center Church, Inc.: <http://media.tbo.com/tbo/pdfs/110507hinn.pdf>
 • New Birth Missionary Baptist Church: <http://media.tbo.com/tbo/pdfs/110507long.pdf>
 • World Changers Church International: <http://media.tbo.com/tbo/pdfs/110507dollar.pdf>
 • Joyce Meyer Ministries: <http://media.tbo.com/tbo/pdfs/110507meyer.pdf>
 • Kenneth Copeland Ministries: <http://media.tbo.com/tbo/pdfs/110507copeland.pdf>

from God about the future which is NOT dependent on man's doing!¹²

On 29 November Danny Nalliah posted the article, "Election 2007—Did I get it wrong?"¹³ on his website. In it he recounts,

After ministering to the people of God on Saturday night, I struggled to fall asleep in my motel room in Albany, Western Australia, as I was all alone, in tears and feeling very sad for most of the night. I kept asking the Lord, "DID I GET IT WRONG???"

Around 5am on Sunday morning, I begin to hear the voice of God say, "Why are you so downcast, rise up and fight. The word you received was from Me. Did not I confirm it through many of My servants? I promised My children, through my servant Moses, that they would enter the promise land when they left Egypt. However, they rebelled against Me and My servant, consequently spending 40 years wandering in the wilderness. During this time My servant Moses went through much ridicule and mocking from My own people, with many saying that they should have stayed back in Egypt". (Read Numbers 14:1-5)

At this point I said, "Lord, why is it when the Body of Christ comes together to pray for rain, You answer our prayers so quickly?" The words from the Lord came to me, "For My people are united when they pray for rain". At this moment I felt so prompted to read the prophetic word from the Lord regarding the election that I released on 11th August 2007.

As I begin reading the prophetic word from the Lord, I was greatly stirred in my spirit to read the following words that I had stated, "I will boldly declare that PM John Howard will be re-elected in the Nov election – 'IF THE BODY OF CHRIST UNITES IN PRAYER AND ACTION.'"

Again I heard the voice of the Lord, "For My people were not united in prayer and action for this election. If they were, they would have experienced spiritual revival under My freedom reigning in this nation, but now My people have chosen another way. They have not voted for My will, but for self gain and personal change".¹⁴

Later, though talking about elected officials and the passing of legislation, Mr Nalliah has the audacity to say, "It's not about how much prosperity and success we experience on earth by compromising the WORD of God. It is about standing your ground for the Righteousness, Justice and Truth of the WORD of God".¹⁵

Mr Nalliah's "prophetic" word may have been "confirmed through many ... servants", but that is NOT the criteria of evaluating prophecy. Mr Nalliah's prophecy wasn't confirmed by

12 Catch-the-Fire, 1 Response to We Congratulate Kevin Rudd & the Labor Government on Winning the Election. WWW page. <<http://catchthefire.com.au/blog/2007/11/27/we-congratulate-kevin-rudd-the-labor-government-on-winning-the-election/>>, 28 Nov 2007, cited 3 Dec 2007.

13 Danny Nalliah, Election 2007—Did I get it wrong? WWW page. <<http://catchthefire.com.au/blog/2007/11/29/election-2007-did-i-get-it-wrong/>>, 29 Nov 2007, cited 3 Dec 2007.

14 ibid

15 ibid



Ichabod

the glory has departed

By ROGER OAKLAND

THE Bible calls Satan the great deceiver. To be deceived means to be led away from the truth without knowing it. If the person being deceived knew they were being deceived, then deception would not have occurred. One must believe that one is not deceived in order to be deceived. It is just that simple.

I believe that understanding deception has a lot to do with having a proper perspective. Instead of having God's perspective, the person being deceived has his own perspective. A human desire for power and the potential to be proud are two of the greatest barriers that prevent us from seeing God's perspective. Satan's plan is to deceive mankind by working on human weaknesses. He knows what he is

doing. In Proverbs we read:

There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end is the way of death (Proverbs 16:25).

Think about this for a moment. The Bible states "the wages of sin is death". So what may seem right, can lead to death because the consequence of sin is death. Do you see how deception works?

Sometimes it is beneficial to take time to do a reality check on our lives. For example, a Christian can be confident that he or she is serving the Lord when he is actually deceived. This is because what we do "seems to be right" in our eyes.

Not long ago a situation occurred which helped me to see how easily one can be deceived by not having the proper perspective. I was looking over a series of slides on my

"coming to pass"! Now Mr Nalliah and his apologists can raise the 'escape clause' that the Christians of Australia didn't pray enough all they want; the fact of the matter is that a PROPHECY from GOD does come to pass.

If Mr Nalliah had indeed heard from God, I suspect that God might have rather said, "The Christians of Australia are not politically united (not that they ever are, as is exemplified by having two church going Christian men leading political parties who are against each other), and though Australia might do well to have John Howard re-elected, I am going to give the people of Australia the leader they want ... I am going to give them the change they want".

Prophecy doesn't catch God unawares; God knows the end from the beginning (cf. Isaiah 46:10)... but even that doesn't seem obvious enough for Danny Nalliah's continued supporters.

Worse still, the Mr Nalliah's prophetic failings have further empowered the atheist and anti-Christian alike. Blogs, and independent news websites alike, have published it for their readers to well note. Neither God, the church nor the Gospel of Jesus Christ are served by such false claims and ridicule.

Included in Danny's letter's were statements attempting to minimise the effects of criticism against him, including,

Of course, I'm well aware that there will always be some people who will not agree with whatever I say, and I uphold your right to do so. However, the Lord has developed broad shoulders in me to cop quite a bit of flak. If I couldn't stand tall through the fiery storm of accusation, criticism and persecution, I would not be able to do what I have been doing for the advancement of the Kingdom of God across our nation of Australia.

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in Heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:10-12).*¹⁶

No Mr Nalliah, you are not "persecuted for righteousness" sake ... you are exposed for being a false prophet. There is a big difference!

16 ibid

digital camera. I had taken these photos while travelling around England. Without knowing what I had done I had somehow expanded the view on one particular slide from the normal view to a view that was 10 times enlarged. As I was flipping through the slides, I could not figure out what the scene was that I had photographed.

Moving the picture around on the screen from left to right and top to bottom did not help. It was the most frustrating experience. Nothing that I could see in the photo seemed to give me a clue where I had taken this photo. Suddenly, I remembered how to view the slide in the normal unexpanded view. In a second I could see what the picture was and recalled exactly where I had taken it. I just needed the proper perspective.

Perhaps this illustration will be useful to help you see what can happen to human beings, ministries, pastors and even denominations. It is very easy to go about our lives thinking we are God's chosen vessel, doing His will, when we are deceived and doing the work of Satan. This is why it is important that we read the Word and give ourselves a reality check from time to time.

When the Glory Has Departed

I know Christian leaders and denominations that started out right but have ended up wrong. This downfall can be predicted in light of church history. God has raised up individuals from time to time to be leaders. As long as these leaders are led by the Holy Spirit and continue in His Word, God's blessings will be abundant. Sometimes, a pastor will become a leader and a model for many other pastors. Eventually, a fellowship of churches with like-minded pastors may be the result.

This fellowship of pastors teaches the Word of God and the sheep are enlightened and fed. The sheep, because they are learning, love God with all their heart. This love spreads to the horizontal plane and love is overflowing. The sheep want to tell others about Jesus. It is even possible to have a Jesus movement.

However, the passing of time has a way of helping us forget. Perhaps another way of saying this is that Satan hates what God is doing. It doesn't take long before the fellowship of pastors takes on a different perspective. Some pastors forget from where they came. They were once shepherds with small flocks. As they taught the Word and fed the sheep, the small flocks grew to become mega-churches.

These mega-churches grew to the point that there was no longer "a flock", there was "a herd". There were so many sheep in the flock that the shepherd had no choice but to manage the flock by turning the church into a corporation.

As everyone knows, churches, when they become corporations have to operate like a corporation not a church. In the world, people

in corporations are always looking for position. The only way one can be successful in climbing the corporate ladder is to be loyal to the corporation and the corporate president.

Here lies a problem—when a Christian becomes more loyal to a man than to the Son of Man, spirituality can soon turn into carnality. Carnality that is further driven by the obsession for power, position and possession often is the perfect recipe for disaster. What once was a wonderful Spirit-filled church now becomes a machine that simply goes through the motions. Everything looks like it is working. However, the machine is broken.

The Bible paints a grim scenario with regard to what happens when the Spirit of God departs

When the Spirit Departs

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit inspired the writer of 1 Samuel to give us an example of what happened to the children of Israel in days past.

Israel, as a nation, knew the glory of God's presence among them. The children of Israel prospered and became strong as they followed the Lord. However, Israel turned from God by making wrong choices. Eventually, they came to the place where the presence of God was no longer among them. The glory of God had departed.

In a desperate attempt to win a battle with the Philistine army, Israel devised a plan. The leaders actually believed that if they took the ark of the covenant with them to battle that God was obligated to lead them to victory.

Such was not the case. God did not fight for Israel. Israel was defeated and the Philistines triumphed and even took the ark. When a messenger returned from the battlefield with the sad news that the army was defeated, the ark captured, and the two sons of Eli were dead, Eli fell backward off his chair, broke his neck and died.

Eli's daughter-in-law, the wife of one of the sons killed in battle was pregnant. When she heard the news that her husband, brother-in-law and father-in-law were dead she went into labour. She gave birth to a son, but she died during the delivery. The Bible states that the woman who was acting as the midwife named the son—Ichabod. "Ichabod" means the glory has departed.¹

¹ 1 Samuel 4:1-21

There are other examples in scripture of what happens when the Spirit of God departs from a man. For example in 1 Samuel 16:14 we read:

But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

Or, remember the story of Samson. Once empowered by the Spirit there came a time when the LORD departed from him and Samson was not even aware that it happened.²

A Biblical Solution

The Bible paints a grim scenario with regard to what happens when the Spirit of God departs, doesn't it? Well, I have some good news. There is a solution.

I believe that such a scenario can be turned around. God wants His servants to finish the race. He does not take joy in seeing them defeated. Do you recall the words of Jesus when He spoke to the church at Ephesus as recorded in Revelation 2?

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands; I know your works, and your labour, and your patience, and how you cannot bear them which are evil: and you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars: And have borne and had patience, and for my name's sake laboured and not fainted. Nevertheless I have something against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to you quickly and will remove your lamp-stand out of its place, unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Revelation 2:1-7).

While the members of the church were noted for saying what was right, in their zeal to be right, they were wrong. In fact it almost seems as if the Spirit of God had departed from their midst.

This can be deduced by reading what Jesus said. He was warning that He would depart from their midst. Jesus said that the church at Ephesus had "left their first love" and that they needed to "repent" and "return to the place" where they had once been. That means they had departed and did not know it.

Jesus said He would remove the "lamp-stand" if they did not repent. Clearly scripture interprets this to mean that Jesus would remove His presence from the church of Ephesus. Did that mean He was about to write "Ichabod" above the door of the church?

The Spirit of God points us to the Word. The

² Judges 16:20

Word, Jesus said, is the truth. What we do with the truth is entirely up to us. We can choose to obey or to disobey.

I would pray that every Christian would sincerely ask God for His perspective of where we are and what we are doing. Don't rely upon the praises of man or the fear of man as a spiritual barometer.

When we stand before the throne all the things we did in the flesh will burn like wood and hay. Only those things that were done when we were led by the Spirit will count.

It is all about getting the right perspective, now.

Before it is too late.

ROGER OAKLAND

and his wife Myrna, will be visiting Australia and New Zealand, God willing.

If you would like to host a meeting please contact CWM asap

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About the Author



ROGER OAKLAND is an author-lecturer and founder of a ministry called *Understand The Times International*. His easy to understand teaching style communicates to people of all ages and backgrounds. Over the past twenty years he has lectured at numerous churches, conferences, universities and educational facilities in over 40 countries. The topics present a biblical worldview of the past, as well as an understanding of the present and an insight into the future based upon a biblical perspective. A former biology teacher, who believed and taught the foundational beliefs of evolution, Roger is now a zealous promoter of biblical creation who proclaims that the God of the Bible is the creator of all things. Roger's messages are always centred on the fact that the Bible is true. He emphasises the importance for Christians to be active in their faith by communicating this same message to others. He has authored and co-authored numerous books and produced audiotapes, videos and other publications that have been translated into several languages worldwide. One of his books called *The Evidence for Creation* has over 300,000 copies circulated in the former Soviet Union, a location where he has travelled and lectured over 35 times since 1990. Roger and Myrna have been married for 40 years. They have two living children—Wade and Angela and two in heaven—Tyler and Bryce. For more information visit: www.understandthetimes.org

The demise of gospel preaching in the modern evangelical church

PART ONE

By **BOB DEWAAY**

"For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Greeks foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:22-24 NASB—Used throughout this article).

MANY cultural trends in contemporary evangelicalism are pushing gospel preaching out of churches. People are being asked to make a "decision for Jesus" without being told who Jesus is, what He has done, or why they need Him. In many cases, those who are failing to preach the gospel vehemently deny that they are doing so. This series of articles will suggest a simple remedy to the problem: gospel preaching. In part one I will discuss the person and work of Christ. In part two I will discuss what the sinner needs to know about God's law and the need for repentance. In part three I will discuss the problems with decision theology.¹

The Gospel in the New Testament

The word "gospel" is a translation of the Greek word *euangelion* from which we get our English word "evangel". By definition "evangelical" means those who are committed to the gospel. Therefore, to claim that "evangelicals" are not preaching the gospel is a strong indictment. However, the sad fact is that many are not. To show this we shall examine New Testament gospel preaching and compare it to today's popular messages in many evangelical churches.

Mark begins his Gospel using the word "gospel": *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"* (Mark 1:1). Here we learn something about its content—Jesus

is the promised Jewish Messiah and the Son of God. "Christ" means Messiah. This calls to mind the Old Testament promises such as the one given to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. The Jews were looking for one from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10) and from the lineage of David (2 Samuel 7:13-16; Jeremiah 23:5) who would bring salvation. So the gospel of Jesus Christ includes the idea of the fulfilment of ancient Messianic promises.

Mark also claimed that Jesus Christ is the "Son of God". Jesus existed as God and with God from all eternity. The gospel writers used Old Testament scripture to prove this. For example, Psalm 110:1 is quoted several times as proof:

The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'

Jesus quotes this Psalm in Matthew 22:42-45 to refute the pharisees, when He asked that since David called Messiah "Lord," how could He then be David's son? The answer is that in His deity Christ was pre-existent, thus was David's Lord; yet in His humanity he was born of a virgin, and was the legal descendant of David. This argument is expanded fully in Matthew, but is contained in Mark's brief statement about the gospel.

Do modern hearers of the gospel need to know who Jesus is? Of course they do! Man's need has not changed. Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 when he preached at Pentecost (Acts 2:34-36) making it clear to his hearers that Jesus is "both Lord and Christ".

Modern Gospel hearers must learn these truths about Jesus: He existed with and as God from all eternity (John 1:1), had a supernatural virgin birth, and lived a sinless life. Thus Jesus is God and man. Just citing the name "Jesus" does not fill in all this information in the minds of contemporary listeners. Perhaps there was a time when most people grew up in churches that taught all their members the facts about Jesus. Even then it was not safe to assume that in a large crowd there would not be people who had false ideas about Jesus or no idea at all. Today, given the paganisation of society, it is safe to assume that most people hearing the name Jesus do not know the facts that are necessary for believing the gospel.

Mark says that He is the Christ, the Son of God. These terms need to be explained. It is commonly believed that there are many "christs" (anointed ones) and that all humans are sons of God. We need to show that only Jesus is the Christ and that He, uniquely, is the

¹ See John F. MacArthur, Jr. *The Gospel According to the Apostles*, (Word: Dallas, 1993). MacArthur writes, "Decisionism is the idea that eternal salvation may be secured by the sinner's own movement toward Christ. A 'decision for Christ' is usually signified by some physical or verbal act—raising a hand, walking an aisle, repeating a prayer, signing a card, reciting a pledge, or something similar. If the sinner performs the prescribed activity, he or she is usually pronounced saved and told to claim assurance. The 'moment of decision' becomes the ground of the person's assurance" (pp 196, 197). MacArthur rightly rejects this approach as unbiblical.

Son of God. Sinners do not come pre-equipped with this knowledge.

The Resurrection

The resurrection of Christ is mentioned 19 times in the book of Acts.² It was the main theme of Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. The fact of the bodily resurrection of Christ was the reason why Peter's hearers were told to repent (Acts 2:32-38). When Paul described the content of the gospel, he referred to the resurrection. This passage is fundamental to the Christian gospel:

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Without the resurrection of Christ there is no gospel! Paul was so emphatic about this, that he also explained the consequences if there were no resurrection:

[If] Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17).

Faith that is not based on the truth of the gospel is worthless. Paul ties belief in the resurrection of Christ with salvation:

[If] you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Christ in His resurrection conquered sin and death. Therefore we cannot believe that His death avails for our sin problem if we do not believe in the resurrection. When Paul preached the resurrection to the Athenian philosophers they responded negatively:

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this" (Acts 17:32).

This negative reaction did not cause Paul to change his message. As shown in 1 Corinthians 15 cited above, Paul preached the resurrection of Christ in Corinth, his next destination after Athens. Whether sinners like it or not, they cannot be saved unless they trust Christ whom God raised from the dead.

Christ's Substitutionary Death

I mentioned the resurrection first because of the primacy the New Testament gives it in explaining the gospel. Christ's resurrection proves all His claims and demonstrates the efficacy of His death for sins. That Jesus died is not unique. All other founders of religious

movements died. Only Christ proved His claims by predicting His own resurrection and then emerging from the tomb and appearing before many credible witnesses. The others died because all sinners die. Jesus was not a sinner and proved it by His resurrection. He died for sins, but not for His own sins—He had none (Hebrews 4:15). He died for our sins:

For Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit (1 Peter 3:18).

The idea that Christ's death was for our sins is a necessary part of the gospel. In Paul's summary of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15, he said, "Christ died for our sins" (verse 3). The Bible teaches throughout that the penalty for sin is death. This includes eternal death, away from the presence of God (2 Thessalonians 1:9). When the gospel is preached, it must be made clear that all are sinners, have broken God's Law, and are liable for eternal punishment. If people do not believe they are truly lost and headed for hell, then they will see no need for Christ's death on their behalf. This is particularly true in our day. People think they have many needs, but they do not think that they are actually headed for hell. Therefore they do not see their true need for the gospel. It is the preacher's duty to make this need clear. Paul preached coming judgment and repentance to philosophers in Athens:

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30,31).

The need for a payment for sins is revealed in the blood atonement. Christ's shed blood averts God's wrath. Christ paid the penalty that we owed to God for our sins. This is foundational to the gospel and God's means of justification. Paul makes clear the role of Christ's blood:

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him (Romans 5:9).

Being saved from God's wrath is every human being's most urgent need. How ironic that many fail to preach this for fear of being "irrelevant" to "felt needs". Suppose a man was living in an upper floor of an apartment building and did not know that the building was on fire. Someone who was aware of the fire knocked on the man's door and said, "Sir, I am a Christian and would like to meet your needs, so please tell me what they are". The man says, "Well, actually, I am out of milk and have no transportation. Could you run to the store and get me a gallon of milk?" Would the Christian leave him in danger of perishing while he went off to meet this more "practical" need? Clearly not. How much greater is the danger of facing God's wrath at some unknown but imminent time? We want to be kind to our fellow humans in

meeting their needs, but we are cruel if we fail to tell them of their real danger.

When Paul preached, "Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23), he included the key facts about who Christ was and what He did, but also included the reason why it was urgent that the facts be believed: we have offended the most holy and awesome God; His wrath is revealed from heaven against our great sin (Romans 1:18); Jesus took that wrath upon Himself so that all who believe in Him would be saved from it. Even the most famous verse in the Bible about God's love mentions averting judgment:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

"Not perishing" is about averting God's wrath as is clear from this verse in the same chapter of John:

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36).

Notice that according to this verse, failure to believe is to be disobedient. The gospel commands people to believe under threat of wrath; it is not some paltry invitation to a happier life.

Many preachers who would cheerfully quote John 3:16 simultaneously deny that people are in danger of perishing. While visiting another city, I was invited to attend a church service. The pastor confidently assured us that, "God does not punish sin". Evidently, there are people in churches singing hymns and reciting creeds, who are there to be religious, but have no idea of their need for the gospel. If we never were in danger of perishing for all eternity, then what was the point of God sending Jesus to die for us? Although the church mentioned above was obviously a liberal one, far too many "evangelical" churches today simply neglect altogether the truth that God does punish sin. To fail to deny something is not the same as to preach it. "God does punish sin and you need a saviour," is the message that ought to be preached.

In part two of this series we will examine the importance of preaching God's law and repentance as part of gospel proclamation.

About the Author



BOB DEWAAAY is the senior pastor of Twin City Fellowship in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he has served for 25 years. He holds a BA in Bible and Pastoral Studies from North Central Bible College, and an MA in Theological Studies from Bethel Theological Seminary. Bob also has a Critical Issues Commentary Radio show on Oneplace.com and has written and published over 90 theological essays through Critical Issues Commentary. Bob and his wife Diane have been married 33 years and have two children and one grandson.

² Acts 1:22; 2:24,31,32; 3:26; 4:2,10,33; 5:30; 10:40; 13:22,30,33,34,37; 17:18,32; 23:6; 26:23.

Weighed and Found Wanting

A 2008 Daniel counsels Belshazzar, king of Babylon



By **ALLAN JENKS**

THE Daniel recorded in the Bible was greatly beloved and gifted of God, whose gifts and integrity were prized by the potentate Nebuchadnezzar. Several times his fearless refusal to compromise his loyalty to God put his life at risk, but his enemies and even the wrath of kings were never able to touch him. His words from God were 100 percent accurate. He was one of the most anointed prophets Judah ever saw. The scripture commends Him as an exemplar of the kind of man that can stand before God.

Do we have similar Daniels? How would the story turn out today if, instead of refusing to take up the philosophies and practices of his day, our modern Daniel exemplified the fully culturally assimilated men-pleaser of our time? Perhaps like this?

Daniel is woken up in the middle of the night, and told that King Belshazzar's triumphant party has been shockingly interrupted by a disembodied hand, writing some indecipherable message on his banquet-room wall and that Belshazzar is terribly afraid that it might augur very bad news. Could pastor Daniel come, and interpret it please? This is Daniel's first chance to witness to the King and to try to convince him to 'accept Jesus' and join the church.

Previously Belshazzar had no 'felt needs' that Daniel could have ministered to, but this eerie situation seems like a great chance to impress him with the church's answer to the terrible fear he is suffering right now. "What a coup! The King in MY church!". Then Daniel suddenly realises he won't be able to make it to the palace, as his chariot is in for its regular service-check, so he'll have to counsel Belshazzar on the phone.

"Belshazzar don't be afraid!—That writing has no power to hurt you."

"But what if it's a judgment from God?"

"God is a God of LOVE, oh King, and doesn't want us to be afraid."

"The Bible says He's not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind."

"It's the devil that wants you to feel condemned, not God."

"Repeat to yourself; 'God is LOVE—God loves ME.'"

"Keep saying that over and over, and the fear will subside."

"No it's OK Belshazzar, don't panic!"

"I want you to reject that feeling that it's God who is condemning you."

"Instead, start thanking God for all the good things He has already done for you."

"Look! He's given you riches, power, glory

and has made you great."

"He has a wonderful plan for each one of us, and I'm sure that's what the message on the wall will be all about,—God's plan for your life."

"No, I don't think God was against your party, or anything like that. After all, God wants us to enjoy all His gifts, and all the good things of life. He wants us to live our lives to the full. Life's too short not to be doing all the things we want to do."

"You think you were too proud?"

"Well God wants us to love ourselves Belshazzar."

"We all need to have a healthy self-esteem, and to know who we are in God."

"You were worshipping when it appeared?"

"Well that's great!—worshipping God is GOOD!"

"You were worshipping the gods of gold, silver and stone eh? Well, there are many ways of thinking about God, and worshipping Him."

"All religions have a different name for Him, and all worship Him in their different ways, but he's the same God of us all, and He knows our heart, whether we are sincere or not."

"Yes, certainly, your party-style worship is probably very different from mine Belshazzar, but it's not my place to say that my way of worshipping God is better than yours, because that would be judgmental."

"Our book says 'Judge not, lest you be judged.' Everyone comes to God in his own way. It would be bigoted of me if I said my way of worshipping was better than yours, and that you should give your way up and do it my way."

"Every faith can proffer something they have which they believe will benefit other faiths. They just need to have a conversation with each other about it, rather than try to find out which one is right."

"Anyway, how can I know MY way is right, and yours is wrong?"

"My way might be right for ME, but is it right for you?"

"Whatever works for you, is right for you, I believe."

"You've heard God seems to be with me?"

"Yes, but hey! I'm no better than you oh King!"

"He loves YOU just as much as He loves me, and furthermore, before we start putting anyone right, we first have to take the splinter out of our OWN eye, eh?!"

"Tell me Belshazzar, did you have a great sense of peace and joy and fulfilment BEFORE you saw this writing on the wall?"

"Yes?—Well there you ARE then!—If this experience has made you lose your joy, surely then it's not of God!"

"God has come to bless us, and fulfil us, to give us life more abundantly, not to frighten us."

"And if the writing on the wall IS from God, then it wasn't sent to condemn you Belshazzar, but to bless you!"

"Resist and rebuke that spirit of condemnation that's come upon you."

"I say again, God doesn't condemn us, He loves us all."

"What I want you to remember is this. God has made you mighty, powerful, rich and famous,—a major celebrity in fact, and now that you've had this amazing spiritual experience, God will want you to use that, for His glory."

"When this story gets known, and they want to interview you on Oprah, or Larry King Live, or Enough Rope, or on David Frost and put your writing-on-the-wall story in all the celebrity magazines, you'll be able to use your amazing story and increased celebrity status, for GOD! He needs just as many celebrities as He can get these days, to get His message out. So just thank God for this great opportunity He's given you Belshazzar, to be a tremendous influence for Him."

"This could be really big: You could do seminars: 'How to get GOD to write on YOUR wall!' "

"What's that Belshazzar? I can't hear you!"

"What's all that noise and shouting?"

"Army?—what army?! The PERSIAN Army!?"

"Belshazzar? Belshazzar?"—the line's gone dead.

The true story says:

In that night, Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans was slain. And Darius the Mede took the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old (Daniel 5:30-31).

About the Author



ALLAN JENKS was converted in the Church of Christ in New Zealand in 1958. He has been in various positions of spiritual leadership, including pastoring, over the past 40 years. For the greater part of that time he has served in Pentecostal churches, but has latterly returned to his home town and worships in his local Church of Christ where he was first converted, and continues to minister there as part of a ministry team.

I can't find a good church

BY ANTON BOSCH

BYOND doubt, the most frequent question I receive is: "Where can I find a good church?". There is no doubt that good churches are hard to find and that they are steadily declining in size and number. But, in trying to assist folk in this area, I have become aware that many people are asking the wrong questions.

To most people the first question revolves around worship. Many people tell me they had closed their minds to a church even before the first line had been sung. Either the music is too contemporary, too traditional, too professional or not professional enough. Our church, in Burbank, has a lot going for it (good teaching, warm fellowship, a desire to live the Gospel) but visitors seldom return and one of the main reasons is because we have not been blessed with musicians. That should be the last reason for making a decision against attending "church", yet it is often the first. Even if the worship is not to your liking, as long as it is not carnal, you need to stick around, listen to the ministry and meet the people before passing judgment. Remember that the purpose of worship is to bless God. It is not for our enjoyment, so the question we should be asking is not whether we enjoyed the worship, but whether God was honoured by the worship.

One of the most important considerations for many is the size of the church. Invariably the decision is based on the mistaken idea that bigger is better and that a crowd draws a crowd. The truth is that the bigger the congregation, the less likely that it will be a good church. Small does not guarantee anything, but the true churches will never be big. What is the smallest church you should consider? Don't consider anything smaller than two or three! (Matthew 18:20). These churches will be harder to find because they don't have advertising budgets and expensive properties, but they are worth finding.

The next in order of priorities for many are things such as a children's ministry, coffee, a nice building, comfortable seats and convenient parking. The importance of these things can be gauged by the prominence they take in the church's advertising. The billboard of a church down the street from us promotes "Jehovah Java". Beats me why anyone would want to go to church for coffee when they can simply go to the local coffee shop, except if they are too miserly to pay the going rate!

Many will reject a church because it does not have a children's ministry. Where does the Bible give the church the responsibility to train, entertain and educate the children? I thought that was the duty of the parents. Most people want a church with a nice building but did you

know that the church that meets in a hired hall or a storefront is more likely to be zealous for God and His Word than the established congregation with the big mortgage who think that the church is the building? Nowhere in the New Testament were things such as children's entertainment, accommodation, catering and personal comfort even thought of. They are symptomatic of our sick and perverted sense of values.

One of the decisive factors for many in choosing a church is that of demographics. Is the congregation made up of people my age, educational level, social standing, financial worth, professional status and most important, race? Of course no-one would admit to it, but it is the truth. Very few people are willing to cross these social and ethic barriers in their search for a church. And what a blessing that they don't because they would only contaminate a good church with their bigotry. It is best that people with that kind of intolerance die a lonely spiritual death than bring their sinful pride and prejudice into any church! Our common bond is Christ and nothing else. The only legitimate hindrance to fellowship in this regard is language—nothing else matters. The fact is that those that you look down on are more likely to be more spiritual than those you would like to associate with.

Somewhere at the bottom of the priorities is the question of whether people enjoyed the message. But this too is the wrong question. It is very likely that if you enjoyed the message that you were in the wrong place. There are even churches that preach a doctrinally correct message but its effect on people is to puff them up with knowledge and pride. Many flock to such churches because everything looks and sounds good, and they feel comfortable because there is no personal challenge to change their lifestyle. One of the other reasons why visitors do not like to return to our church is because the message is challenging. If the preacher does not leave you with something to think about (personally), he has not done his job. Yes, we also encourage, comfort and exhort but the Word is about doing more than about knowing or feeling.

The final question on most people's mind is whether the teaching is doctrinally correct. Yet this should be one of the highest priorities. It does not matter how much you like the church and how everything else seems to be a match, if the teaching is not truth or if it is void of sound doctrine then that is not a good church.

Somewhere near the top of most people's list is the question of denomination. Many will reject a church, sometimes without even attending a single meeting, just based on the denominational affiliation. Personally, I don't like denominations but if you are really hungry, you do not mind what kind of label is stuck to

the wrapping in which the loaf of bread comes. These days the denominational brand tells very little about the local congregation. You will find all extremes and balances in almost every denomination today. The only exceptions are cults where the activities of the branches are strictly controlled by the head honchos. So don't reject the church on the corner until you actually investigate it closely.

It seems to me that many people conclude that there is not a good church in their area by picking up the telephone directory or looking on the internet or driving past the buildings. Unfortunately there is no shortcut to the process of finding a church. You will have to physically pound the pavement and visit them one-by-one. Yes, some can be rejected because their errors are blatantly advertised (such as the Jehovah-Java church or the church where the distinguished feature is bingo on Wednesday night).

Before you begin your search, you need to make sure you have the right attitude. I will hope to address that later. In the mean time you may want to take a piece of paper and list the things the Lord really wants you to have in a church—not what you want but what He wants.

About the Author



ANTON BOSCH claims a fourth generation Christian ministry heritage. His great-grandfather was kicked out of the *Salvation Army* because he believed and practised divine healing. He later started the *Mahon Mission and All Nations*

Gospel Publishers which publishes tracts in 414 languages. Anton met the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour in 1968 and married his present wife, Ina in 1975. They have two married daughters and two grand-children in South Africa. Anton holds BTh (hons) and MTh degrees. From 1973 to 1997 he served with the *Assemblies of God in South Africa*. In 1997 he left the denomination, established Plumb-line Ministries and since then ministers regularly in churches throughout Africa and the United States. His tape and written ministry reaches to all parts of the world. At the end of 2003 he became senior pastor of *Burbank Community Church* (Los Angeles, California) and since 2004 has served as president of the *International Fellowship of Christian Believers (IFCB)*, which supervises a group of autonomous churches and ministries with international links. These churches form a loose association which recognises the autonomy of each local fellowship with common goals and values. They hold each other accountable to the Word of God. Anton's life-long quest is to call Christians and churches back to knowing, believing and living the Bible. He has planted a number of churches that are based on these principles. He is passionate about a correct exegesis of the Word and specialises in expository preaching and teaching. www.antonbosch.org — www.burbankchurch.org

Novelty and change will lead them



By **ORREL STEINKAMP**

From *The Plumblin*, Volume 12, No. 5,
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[http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/
orrel23.html](http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/orrel23.html)

THERE exist today hundreds of people in Christian think-tanks and agencies whose whole view of ministry is to promote and induce cultural change into the church. It is called contextualisation or transformation. But transformation is basically inducing change into the Christian church. Pastors who are properly trained in transformation and contextualisation principles are known as transformational pastors. Pastors are also called to be “change agents”.

The overriding feature of seeker-sensitive and transformational activities is to change the church to resemble the culture as closely as possible and thereby insure survival and success in today’s changing society. There is more to it than outward appearances. Seeker-sensitive churches keep their doctrinal statements low key, lest they scare away the seekers. Although doctrinal stances do not officially change, the week-by-week teaching exhibits the church as fellow travellers in the culture. The process of transformation calls not only for change but perpetual, ongoing change; in order to entice an ever-changing seeker population. Forgotten entirely these days, is the fact that God’s people are meant to be “salt and light” within the culture, a pocket of resistance to the foibles and ethos of the flesh. However, I suspect there are still some seekers left who expect to find something unique and noticeably different at church than in the world at large.

One area of dramatic transformation has been in congregational worship. Churches that are not even officially seeker-sensitive have introduced the style and ethos of seeker-sensitive worship. Music companies and popular Christian musicians have made the change in churches almost complete. Only resistant liturgical hard liners have escaped this particular transformation. If you question this, just listen to any Christian radio station. When some people leave a church service some of them whisper to one another, “That felt like a rock concert”. But that’s the point! It is Christian Rock Lite. The loud and pulsating instrumentation of first rock and then Christian

rock has been wedded with new limited tune ranges and limited lyrics. If it wasn’t for the beat, many of these songs would die a natural death; and most will die quickly as they are succeeded by newer and more novel songs.

The sign of new music can already be seen on the horizon. A new transformation lurks from a growing movement called the emergent church. The “emergents” have had enough of “ra ra” mega-church music. They eschew what they call electronic worship—they have been there and done that. Their agenda calls for a change in the church and church services, using only acoustic guitars forgoing the usual loud electronic music. The movement is scary because, being wedded to post-modern thought, they reject the Bible as the only source of truth. But in their call for reform and change, many young people are being attracted to a worship style with more subdued expression. So even as many churches that don’t identify themselves as seeker-sensitive and have adopted seeker-sensitive music; so also many churches will reject the teaching of the Emergent movement but adapt their music.

The emerging churches often characterise themselves as “ancient-future”. They hope to restore the treasures of the medieval and patristic periods. At a recent emergent conference, convention goers attempted to recreate the medieval labyrinth. They passed from the fluorescent daylight of the convention hallway into the darkness of sacred space and dimly lit candles. One by one, the participants filed in to walk the ancient path of prayer. But unlike the ancients, these post-modern pilgrims carried portable CD players that guided them and provided ancient medieval prayer music for the journey.

The emergents are calling for a return to ancient worship forms such as candles, incense, chanting, and labyrinths. The emergents find their following among youth and young adults, and they appear to be the next cultural elite who will be copied to varying degrees. This is simply because they represent change and the new and the novel. The shelf life of the seeker-sensitive service and borrowing of Christian Rock Lite is about over.

So! Are you ready to pack up the drums, electronic bass guitars and the mixing boards and trot off to the supermarket for candles?

The emergents’ call for reform and change will grow in the ensuing years. I wish it were not true because they reject huge areas of biblical doctrine. But when you wed yourself to perpetual, ongoing change, you need to always have your bags packed.

And the beat goes on and on and on

In the worship wars there is little room for negotiation. I realise that to even write briefly about it I risk stepping on mines and spiritual *Improvised Explosive Devices (IED’s)*. I know that scripture does not contain much teaching regarding the style of congregational worship. I also realise that congregational worship music has always drawn from the surrounding culture. But there are some guiding principles that may shed some light for us.

First of all, New Testament (NT) worship seems to have been primarily with the human voice. Hymns, songs and spiritual songs are the only kind of worship noted in the NT. The non-instrumental wing of the Church of Christ has taken this verse as normative and has historically not even used pianos and has sung ‘a cappella’. That would seem extreme to most of us. However, modern congregational worship music has also moved to the extreme.

In the evangelical church the beat goes on and on to the point where one proponent of contemporary church congregational music announced with apparent glee that the evangelical church has now been taken over by pop music.

Let me describe a city-wide night of praise and worship I attended recently. There was an orchestra, and a lady playing the keyboard. The drummer was ensconced behind a Plexiglas cage, supposedly to temper the noise, and electric guitars were all over the place. I think it was the bass electric guitar that produced those low thumping pulsing booming sounds similar to when a carload of young people drive up next to you at a stop sign and you wonder where that booming sound is coming from. It’s revealing that sound mixers and drummers are advised to wear earplugs in church. One sound mixer states: “As a sound engineer in a church I wouldn’t be caught in the building without good ear plugs.” This person then expressed his concern for mothers bringing young children down to the front during the services.

The lady who led the worship was attired in a long, flowing black gown. She literally pranced around the stage as she tried to get her audience to get on with the beat. The lyrics were projected on two double “jumbo-trons”, (large screens) giving not only the lyrics, but also fast-paced scenic sights. The lyrics were limited and were repeated over and over again. Mostly they were good as far as lyrics go. So, those who say that lyrics are everything could be satisfied. Some of the lyrics were odd, however. A popular praise song depicts God

dancing over us as well as believers dancing with Jesus. I can't find the source of this either from scripture or church history. We were all asked to stand for the entire worship time, which encompassed 45 minutes. I noticed many people were not singing. The songs were new, recently downloaded from the Integrity Music website, and not known to the rank and file. But the congregation dutifully kept standing and kept their hands raised lest they be seen as "unspiritual". But after song after song, first the older people sat down and then one by one others sat down until only a handful were still standing. Twice relatively muted songs started up and then after 30 seconds there was a slight pause and the worship leader said: "Are you ready church? Now here we go," and suddenly the instrumentation boomed loud as the worship leader suddenly took on the role of cheerleader.

After we had been standing well over a half an hour, a young lady appeared up front and centre and began to dance. It appeared that her dance moves came from choreographed dance routines seen on TV. It mostly consisted of the excessively loud electronic music. In the end, thankfully they closed with *Amazing Grace*. For me, it saved the evening. The melody line of this old favourite is catching, appealing and easy to sing. The drummer and the electric guitar players sensed that they should cease, and the words poetically and clearly announced the full-orbed message of salvation. For this classic everyone stood up and sang the words with great gusto. There are hundreds of gospel songs that are in the same class as *Amazing Grace*, but they have been mostly discarded. Too often I come out of services feeling a bit jarred, as if I have just been to a rock concert. I come away feeling bombarded and I wonder if anyone else feels the same. But to even suggest displeasure would not be seen as good evangelical etiquette.

Recently I was in the car and a fine Christian youth was listening to a Christian radio station. He was apologetic to us older folk, saying he knew we weren't into it. No one could possibly hear the lyrics because of the blaring electric guitars. Apparently the initiated have learned the words so they don't have to hear them any longer. There was basically no tune line. It sounded to me like someone holding down a car horn. But then out of the din came a very different number. It had some instrumental accompaniment, but only in the background. It was a clear and crisp voice singing the gospel song:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
look full in His wonderful face,
and the things of earth will grow
strangely dim.

It was more beautiful than normal because of the context. But alas! That was enough of that kind of clear praise music and it was back to the "car horn" music once again. In between these offerings there were announcements of special services at the local Baptist church,

etc., etc. Some churches still successfully present a good mix of hymns, gospel songs, choruses, and the new genre. They employ some of the familiar scripture choruses, which are very "singable" and have great melodies. In each case the base guitar and drums are relatively muted. Those congregations are to be commended. But all too often, in too many places, congregational music is similar to that described above.

It is the melody and the tune line that seems to be missing—the essence of a melodic song presents itself in pleasurable configurations of sounds. One musicologist asserts that there are three elements of

The sign of
new music
can already be
seen
on the horizon

song writing: melody, melody and melody. Scripture actually employs the word "melody" in many places. Isaiah 51:3 refers to "the voice of melody", and the only text in the NT regarding congregational worship, Ephesians 5:19, refers to "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs", which are intended to be "melody" in our hearts.

Psychologist Matthew Schulkind asserts that music is made up of a group of about six notes that encapsulate a single music idea (a melodic tune). These notes are short enough to stay in the short-term memory, and they are also complete and self-contained, just like phrases in language. Do any of you remember the radio/TV program "Name that Tune?" First just two notes of a song were played on the piano. More notes were added until someone could "name that tune". Since the new genre of music is very weak in melody, it would be nearly impossible to name that tune.

So how did this happen? Did some pastors and theologians get together and decide on these songs? Did the people in the pews call out for contemporary congregational music with ear-splitting drums and blaring electronic guitars? No, the driving force is money. Large financial forces market this music, and large musical corporations spend huge sums of money to promote their songs. As good marketers, they then receive a huge profit in return. In the highly competitive nature of evangelical church growth, when one successful church uses the latest music, other worship leaders clamour to not be left behind. The local music ministry, lest they appear to be behind the times, wants to keep up with the times and introduce the latest on

the praise and worship hit parade.

Let's also remember that congregational music probably was never meant to be a \$4-\$5 billion-dollar retail bonanza. Let us never forget that drummers and electric guitar players were never meant to supplant the clear voice of believers singing in harmony. There is a place for instrumentation, but it should focus on the melody and allow people to hear the lyrics.

Finally, for whatever reason, most of the lyrics in these new songs are overly repetitive. A farmer from the country went to a big city and attended a church with a contemporary worship service. When he returned home, his wife asked him to describe the congregational singing. He thought for a moment and then said, "It's like this: Martha, Oh! Martha, Martha Oh! Martha, the cows are in the corn, the cows are in the corn, and the cows are in the corn. Oh! Martha, Martha, Oh! Martha, Martha the cows are in the corn". This was his impression of praise and worship in the big city.

Church music is not a theological issue. But it is an important matter nevertheless. Gospel music should be a melodic expression, of more than a few repeated phrases, that includes a number of verses. Someone recently called praise and worship 7-11 music: 7 words repeated 11 times. Congregational music should also be designed for the young and old to sing together. Instrumentation should stay in the background and loudness should not be the point of the music.

Obviously, I have pretty definite opinions on the matter. Many churches have attempted to blend the old with the new and have done a great job. Not every church has imported loud instrumentation, but some have rather tried to use the best of the past and the best of the present. I am not calling for turning the clock back to the fifties. But I do think Christians old and young deserve melodic music that they can all sing together. I don't think that loud instrumentation is the point, but the human voice should be the focus. Congregational worship music should fit within the boundaries of a psalm, a hymn or a spiritual song, with accompaniment. It should EASILY allow us to make MELODY in our hearts to the Lord.

About the Author



ORREL STEINKAMP is director of Plumblin Ministries, publishing the Plumblin newsletter. He has served as a missionary to Vietnam, professor and pastor in Australia and most recently pastor of an AOG church in Redwood Falls MN, USA. He received his MDiv and DMin degrees from Bethel Theological Seminary in St Paul, MN. He has written many articles addressing a wide variety of issues, including the restored apostles and prophets, lying signs and wonders, evangelisation by political power, and exorcising works of the flesh. His main focus being on the new doctrines that have morphed from the Latter Rain movement of the 50s and crept into the Charismatic movement, then Pentecostal denominations and now finally into the broader confines of evangelical circles.

Roman Catholic Pontiff to visit Australia for 23rd World Youth Day

Arrives Sydney Tuesday 15 July. Event July 15-20 2008

WE urge our readers to petition their pastors and other church leaders to avoid association or supportive statements about Roman Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) does NOT represent orthodox Christianity. On April 21, 2005 Brian Houston, president of AoG-Australia issued an official press release regarding Benedict XVI's papal appointment,¹ which included the following statement:

We pray too that this papacy, like those before it, is marked by a commitment to seeing the Christian message continue to go forward and people changed by the power and truth of the Gospel.

Obviously, as protestants, our views are considerably different to the pope's on a number of issues however, we share a common desire to exalt Christ and serve our community to the best of our ability.

At best the statement is misleading. In our opinion it constitutes treachery of the highest order against the protestant ethic. Thankfully there are those who are making a strong stand as the following bears witness (footnotes added by CWM):

Email dated 13/10/2007:

Dear Philip, Greetings. Thank you for ongoing information for action and prayer. You may be interested in the decision made by our recent September General Assembly of Australia.

In the light of the Statement by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Roman Catholic Church, ratified and confirmed by the "Supreme Pontiff" Benedict XVI and published on the 29th June 2007²; and in the light of the Confessional position of the Presbyterian Church of Australia; declare, that no Office bearer, or any other person, is authorised to represent the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia at any function or any other activity associated with the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Australia in 2008.

May the Lord bless, keep and use you to his glory.

—**Robert Benn**
Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA)



This photo symbolises the real power behind the European Union.

Protest Letter handed to the Archbishop of Canterbury in Toronto:

The following is the text of a letter of protest which was handed to the Archbishop of Canterbury on Monday, May 15, 2000, while he was attending the ARCIC³ negotiations in Mississauga, Toronto, Canada.

— **AN,**
Free Presbyterian Church

Your Grace,

We, the undersigned, representing various international and national constituencies, do vigorously and solemnly protest your presence, and that of other Anglican prelates, at the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) negotiations, currently being held at the Queen of the Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

We consider your presence as a most serious betrayal of the historic Protestant faith, and call upon you, in your exalted position as Archbishop of Canterbury, to honour your Church's doctrine and history

and, above all, the Christian Church's only Head, our Lord Jesus Christ, by withdrawing from these talks aimed at acknowledging a mere man, the Bishop of Rome, as universal primate of the whole church.

For the Anglican Church to pursue these negotiations to their ultimate conclusion of acceptance of the Roman Catholic pontiff will invite disaster, and will be viewed historically as a betrayal of the Protestant faith in the following areas:

1. A betrayal of Jesus Christ, the Great King and sole Head of the Church, Who Himself said that His church would not have an earthly head. (Luke 22.:26.)

2. A betrayal of the scriptures, the tenor of which is opposed to **any system of hierarchical government** that exalts a mere man to such a position of authority as claimed by the Bishop of Rome.

3. A betrayal of the doctrinal base of the Anglican Church, as defined in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, at least seventeen of which are **directly opposed to the erroneous Doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.**

4. A betrayal of the ordination vows taken by Anglican ministers who answer that *"the holy scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ"*, whereas the Roman Catholic Church has obscured that truth under a mass of human traditions.

5. A betrayal of Biblical authority by the Anglican leadership, which has enabled it to proceed in re-unification talks when **there is no substantive change in any cardinal Roman Catholic doctrine and when such doctrinal change is impossible**, being described by Pope John Paul II as *'irreformable'* in *'Ad Tuendam Fidem'* (1998, p.15).

6. A betrayal of the illustrious history of the Anglican Church, which produced many great men and women of God who, by their scholarly and spiritual insights, were totally opposed to any re-unification with the Roman Catholic Church.

7. A betrayal of the Anglican martyrs, such as Archbishop Cranmer, and eminent bishops Latimer, Ridley, Hooper and Ferrar, who were **burned at the stake for adherence to Christian truth** and Anglican principles, and who sealed their testimony with their life's blood for **rejecting what present day Anglicans are now preparing to accept** in these Mississauga negotiations.

¹ The original letter is filed at our CWM Office
² http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-07-10-pope_N.htm?csp=34

³ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)

8. A betrayal of the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury who steadfastly maintained, in the hour of his martyrdom: "[...] and as for the Pope, I refuse him as Christ's enemy, and Antichrist, and all his false doctrine".

9. A betrayal of the nature of true Anglicanism, which was defined and developed by its founding fathers. The modern leadership has dragged the vessel from its solid moorings into the stormy waters of an **unscriptural ecumenism that heralds impending shipwreck**.

10. A betrayal for those Anglicans, who are loyal to the 'old paths' of true Anglicanism, but who are totally opposed to the pathway on which the modern Anglican leadership is leading them.

11. The betrayal, by the British Anglican contingent, of the Monarch of the Realm, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who is at present the titular Head of the Anglican Church in England.

12. A betrayal of the Coronation Oath of the British Sovereign, who must reply positively to the question: "*Are you a faithful Protestant?*" administered **by the Archbishop of Canterbury who himself**, by reason of his involvement in reunion talks with Rome, **could not honestly answer that question**.

Your Grace, the godly Bishop Latimer, when being burned at the stake, said: "*We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out*".

We fear the candle is now almost extinguished. You and the other Anglican prelates will answer to God for your deliberations in Mississauga this week. Ponder well what you do. (Isaiah 2:22.)

Respectfully submitted by:

Brian Green, General Secretary, the British Council of Protestant Christian Churches

Rod Bell, President of the Fundamental Baptist Association of North America

Jonas Shepherd, General Secretary, the Canadian Protestant League

John McKnight, Vice-President, the American Council of Christian Churches

William Beattie, for the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster

Alan Cairns, for the Free Presbyterian Church of North America

Frank McClelland, for the Free Presbyterian Church of Canada

<http://www.ianpaisley.org>
Email: eips_info@yahoo.co.uk

Further CWM Editorial Comment: CWM intends to publish additional material in opposition to false Roman Catholic doctrine and in support of our Protestant heritage up to and including the time of the papal visit to Australia. We invite you to join us in this honourable crusade. God bless you.

John Welsh

preached his last sermon at Ayr, Scotland – 23 July 1605

By the **STAFF OR ASSOCIATES** of Christian History Institute

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"J

OHN Welsh, you are to report to the King's Council in Edinburgh."

When John Welsh stepped out of his pulpit in Ayr, Scotland, on July 23, 1605, the King's men came for him with that order. The Scottish pastor had preached that morning on the heart-warming promise that there is no condemnation for God's elect, concluding with the words,

"Now let the Lord give His blessing to His word, and let the Spirit of Jesus, who is the author of this verity [truth], come in and seal up the truth of it in your hearts and souls, for Christ's sake."

John had expected this arrest. Earlier that year, King James VI of Scotland forbade any pastor from attending a convention in Aberdeen. Like many Scottish pastors, Welsh believed no king had the right to stop preachers from conducting God's business. He had never been one to buckle in face of danger. Needless to say, he had gone to the meeting. Now it was pay day.

Welsh said good-bye to his crying family and weeping church folk. "God send you back soon," they prayed. But it was not to be.

John was given a mock trial and jailed. At first he was held in the prison known as the Tollbooth, where many Scottish preachers served time. Later he was taken to brutal Blackness Castle. According to tradition, he was lowered into a dungeon pit that could be reached only through a hole in the floor. Its rough floor was uneven and slanted. There was no flat place on which to lay and no smooth spot on which to get comfortable. One could not sit, stand or lie down without misery. John spent ten months at Blackness. Well-known for his prayer-life (he averaged seven hours a day in prayer), John no doubt continued his earnest pleas for Scotland. Like his father-in-law John Knox, he pleaded, "O God, will you not give me Scotland!"

Perhaps he also remembered his hard years of service for Christ. At his first pastorate, in Selkirk, the local folk rejected the gospel completely, even cruelly cutting his horse so that he could not ride to nearby villages to preach. His next position was in a Roman Catholic region. The previous minister was killed for preaching reformation. At neither

place did he have much success. But in his third pulpit, at Ayr, many people came to know Christ.

Ayr was a rough town. Duels and fights were so common, people feared to step onto the streets. Whenever John heard that a fight was brewing, he rushed to the spot and urged the rowdies to sit down to a peace-meal together. He did this so often that the town became quieter and safer. James did not have the best interests of Ayr in mind when he arrested John. He felt that if he allowed Scotland to abolish bishops, they would want to abolish the king too!

James banished John to France. John quickly learned French and served as a preacher among the persecuted Protestants there. When his health broke, John's wife pleaded with King James to let him return to Scotland's air. The king said John could—if he submitted to the bishops. John's wife was made of the same heroic stuff as her husband. She held out her apron and replied with spirit that she would rather have his head cut off and placed in her apron than have him betray the truth!

Resources

1. Roberts, Maurice. "John Welsh of Ayr." *Revival Library*. (www.revival-library.org/index.html).
2. Smellie, Alexander. *Men of the Covenant*. (Revell, 1903).
3. Taylor, James. *The Scottish Covenanters*. (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., no date).



The Tollbooth, where John Welsh spent some of his prison time.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Christian freedoms under attack

The following is a transcript of a talk given by Mark Mullins during his 2007 tour of Australia. He plans to visit New Zealand during the first two weeks of October 2008 immediately after the CWM Conference Camp—September 21 to 27, 2008. Those who are interested in hosting a meeting should contact the CWM-New Zealand coordinator Lester Fensom—thelesters@xtra.co.nz or the CWM-Fellowship administration office—info@cwmfellowship.org

By MARK MULLINS

MY experience over the last year or so has been to see, within the United Kingdom, that the increasing influence of equality legislation is having a negative impact on the ability of Christians to live out their lives with a clear conscience.

I fear that the reality is that our politicians wish to see a privatisation of religion so that all members of society accept the Government's moral code in the name of diversity and multiculturalism.

Up until recently it has been the argument of the homosexual lobby that changes to the law (including the repeal of a law to ban local authorities from promoting the teaching in schools that homosexual couples are to be treated as a pretended family unit; the reduction of the age of consent from 18 to 16; and the legalisation of same-sex adoption) have been needed in order to promote tolerance of their lifestyle, on the grounds that their rights should be recognised.

Conscience

However, consistent with this demand, should be a recognition of the rights of those who do not accept this lifestyle to be entitled to act in accordance with their conscience.

Recently, however, anti-discrimination regulations on the grounds of sexual orientation have come into force in Britain. They represent a further worrying development because they now place Christians—who cannot in conscience provide certain goods and services to homosexuals—on the wrong side of the law.

It goes without saying that Christians, as a general rule, will treat those of a different sexual orientation in the same way as any other non-Christian neighbour. However, the difficulty comes when a Christian is required to provide a service that requires them implicitly to accept or even appear to condone their behaviour.

Let me give you some examples:

- A Christian registrar cannot refuse to register a civil partnership.
- A doctor is not allowed to refuse to approve same-sex adoptions.
- A bed-and-breakfast owner or Christian hotelier is not allowed to refuse to provide a double-bed to a same-sex couple.
- Religious adoption agencies, receiving government funding, and accounting for only 8 per cent of UK adoptions, will not, in about a year, be able to refuse to allow same-sex couples to adopt children.

There has been a recent challenge to the Northern Ireland version of these regulations. Two important results came from that challenge.

Provisions outlawing harassment on grounds of sexual orientation were struck down: they would have allowed an individual to bring a complaint if his dignity had been violated. The judge found that these provisions were too widely drawn and would conflict with freedom of speech and religion.

It was also held that there were limits to what a person should be required to do where it involved a direct conflict with his religious beliefs.

In July 2004, I was sent a brief requiring me to represent a homosexual male seeking to join his homosexual partner in the UK under the immigration rules which allow for a person who has been in a relationship akin to marriage for two years to join his partner in the UK provided they could show that they intended to continue the homosexual relationship and were able to meet the financial and housing requirements.

I felt that I could not represent this person because to do so would involve me facilitating the continuation of sinful conduct. The Bible tells us to take no part in another man's sins (1 Timothy 5:22). By representing him in court I considered that this was just what I would be doing: I would be putting forward a case for him to be allowed to continue his sinful conduct by demonstrating that he had been engaged in this relationship for the last two years, that this relationship was permanent and should be allowed to continue. I would therefore have been a party to his sinful conduct.

Sexual Orientation

I found another barrister to do the case which he went on to win. However, the solicitors brought a complaint against me that I had discriminated on the grounds of the person's sexual orientation.

Christian freedoms are under increasing attack in today's society from so-called human rights and religious vilification laws, London barrister Mark Mullins warned Australian audiences recently.

The Bar Council took up the prosecution and added further charges. The other relevant charge was that I had broken the cab-rank rule by refusing a brief in a case, in which I was capable of acting. They also claimed that I had provided an inadequate professional service by failing to read the papers sooner.

The hearing took place last July and was heard by a retired judge, two barristers, and two distinguished lay-persons. The judgment made interesting reading. I was acquitted of providing an inadequate service but convicted of sexual-orientation discrimination and breaching the cab-rank rule.

The court did not consider that my rights to freedom of religion had been interfered with because, even though the immigration rule had come into force after I became a barrister, I had always been subject to the cab-rank rule.

It was a pleasant surprise to be told by the tribunal that it was a tragedy the case had come before them and that I was a man of the highest integrity. They sentenced me to a reprimand.

The signal seems to be that the tribunal did not consider that the case should have come before them; but, as it had, they had no option but to find me guilty. However, they would impose the least sanction they felt they could in the circumstances.

Consider the case of Christian magistrate Andrew McClintock who, on January 24, 2007, became the first "judge" in the UK to take the Lord Chancellor to court in an unprecedented employment tribunal in Sheffield.

Andrew McClintock, 63, who has served 18 years on the South Yorkshire bench, stated that he was forced to resign as a member of the family panel after 15 years of service, as court managers failed to make reasonable accommodation of his religious and philosophical beliefs. Mr McClintock is a married father of four, with four grandchildren.

Since the implementation of the UK's Adoption and Children Act 2002, same-sex couples now have the legal right to be treated as equal to married couples in their bid to be awarded care of children. Mr McClintock told court managers that this statutory requirement conflicted with the legal requirements placed on him to act in the best interests of a child; he did not believe a child's best interests would be served by being brought up by a same-sex couple.

The employment tribunal rejected Mr McClintock's claim that he had been discriminated against because of his religious beliefs.

The case is on appeal to the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

But the problems do not just stop in the professions. Our universities are now the next battleground for Christian freedom. We must of course remember that today's students are tomorrow's political leaders, and what happens in the universities today may well reflect what will be happening throughout the country in 20 years.

- At Exeter University the Christian Union was suspended from the guild of students after the guild claimed that the CU constitution and activities did not conform with its equal opportunities policies. The CU was told it could only be reinstated if it agreed to waive any restrictions on membership.

- Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland, is refusing Heriot-Watt CU's application to affiliate to the student union on the basis that membership of the CU is restricted to those who are able to sign the declaration of faith.

The university and student union are targeting Christian students who simply want to have the same rights as any other university society, to freely meet, self-define and elect leadership.

- Edinburgh University, following pressure from the campus's Gay & Lesbian Society, banned the university Christian Union from running its PURE course, which presents the biblical basis of personal relationships. After originally being banned, the Christian Union has now been told it can run the course, but that the university should be free to put material representing a different view in the room where they meet. Such restrictions are not being imposed on other societies within the university. For example, homosexual and lesbian groups are not being forced to promote Christian views on sexual purity.

Second-class Status

This case once again highlights how Christianity is being afforded only second-class status, and religious rights are being trumped by rights relating to a homosexual lifestyle.

The trend we are seeing in the UK is being repeated throughout the world.

By contrast, the British Labour Government launched a report on June 4, 2007, initiated by Bill Rammell, Minister of State for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), that recommended the following:

- 1) Universities should employ Muslim scholars to teach Islamic theology.

- 2) All universities must employ Muslim chaplains or advisers to deal with the growing number of Muslim students on campus. More prayer rooms for Muslims should be provided.

- 3) Islamic student societies should be better recognised and encouraged.

- 4) Universities should co-operate with Islamic schools and colleges (dar al-ulum) to break down the divisions between British society

and the Muslim community. Universities should help madrassas¹ and dar al-ulum² because they play a key role in Muslim communities and in the training of future community leaders. They need a formal link to higher education qualifications.

- 5) Islamic studies should be linked to job opportunities such as teaching, chaplaincy and Islamic banking.

- 6) Universities should provide add-on modules in Islamic studies for all students.

- 7) Guidance should be given to all universities on Friday prayers, Ramadan and halal food. All university staff should receive awareness-training on Muslims and Islam.

An analysis of these recommendations reveals that the report is in fact asking for a privileged position for Islam in the universities. It would seem to aim at transforming Islamic studies in Britain into a Muslim monopoly, a Muslim enclave in which the vast majority of staff and students are Muslim.

It is implied that non-Muslim scholars cannot teach Islam because they do not unquestioningly accept its basic premises regarding the revelatory nature and divine authority of Qur'an and hadith. Should these premises be accepted, the teaching faculty will be limited to traditional Muslim and Islamist lecturers.

Should this report be implemented, education will be handed over more and more to Muslims, who will train and shape the next generation. This means a further move towards the establishment of Islam in the UK as a religion of state.

This article is an abridged version of a speech that English barrister Mark Mullins delivered to the Australian Family Association in Melbourne on September 25, 2007. He was then acting on a brief to bring a criminal action for blasphemy against the BBC for broadcasting Jerry Springer, the Opera two years ago.

1 A madrasa is an Islamic religious school

2 The Egyptian Dar al-Ulum was founded in 1871 as an educational institution designed to produce students with both an Islamic and modern education on the secondary level.

About the Author



MARK MULLINS became a Christian at the age of 19 in his first year at Durham University. After graduating Mark joined the army where he spent seven years, leaving in 1993 to study for the bar. Mark has been a barrister since

1995, specialising in crime and immigration. Until 1994 Mark attended a large charismatic anglican church in central London but left as a result of the Toronto blessing to attend a small traditional pentecostal assembly in north London where he is now an elder. Mark is on the council of Christian Alliance Ministries which is an umbrella organisation for pentecostals/charismatics who seek to follow simple Bible-based Christianity.

The Prize

By **JACK KINSELLA**

<http://www.omegaletter.com/>

WHEN somebody dies, it is always an occasion for grief, even among Christians. I know that when a Christian dies, he goes home to be with the Lord, and it is cause for celebration, his suffering is past, and all that. But I've been a Christian for more than half my life, and in that time, many of my loved ones have gone home to be with the Lord. I have to admit that I grieved their loss, in each and every case. For some whom I particularly loved, that grief is only diminished, but not gone, even after many years. Paul was writing of physical death when he penned:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that you do not sorrow, even as others who have no hope (2 Thessalonians 4:13).

Does that mean I am ignorant? Or faithless? I don't think so. I believe in the certainty of salvation, the literal existence of a loving God and the literal existence of a place called "Heaven". My grief isn't for the person who has gone to be with the Lord. My grief is for my own loss. Knowing I will see my loved one in the 'sweet by and by' is a source of immense comfort, but it isn't the same as seeing him/her now.

You don't fully appreciate the measure of comfort offered by the certain knowledge of salvation until someone you love dies without that hope. When that hope is absent, the grief is magnified beyond measure. Your personal loss is now inconsequential to the complete and permanent loss of the hopeless. Your grief isn't for yourself, it is truly and tragically for that lost one. Your loss is over! His or hers is just beginning.

Let's take a brief look at what the Bible tells us awaits the Christian on the other side.

Is Heaven a real place?

In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also (John 14:2-3).

This is a proof text for the rapture. Jesus promises that He will come again and receive us personally to Himself. That isn't the Second Coming, where He comes astride a white horse, with ten thousands of His saints, wielding a sword and exacting judgment on a rebellious earth. The purpose of this secret 'coming' is to take the church, the Bride of Christ, to the honeymoon mansion prepared for us.

But note also that He is speaking of a

real place. Heaven is His Father's house; within which are contained ancillary houses, (mansions) and "if it were not so, I would have told you," Jesus promises. Elsewhere, Jesus teaches:

Do not lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Matthew 6:19-20).

That could only apply to an actual, literal, real physical place.

What does Heaven look like?

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Since the Bible says it is beyond our capacity to imagine, those images we are shown are simply that—images. John describes it in Revelation 21 and 22, streets of gold, inlaid with precious gems, but I like the picture in Revelation 22:1 of a "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal," with the Tree of Life growing on its banks, "and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations . . . and there shall be no more curse". Heaven is a place of indescribable beauty, but it appeals to me as a place of perfect peace.

Do the saved go to Heaven immediately?

Emphatically, yes. 2 Corinthians 5:8 says: "to be absent from the body," [is] "to be present with the Lord." Paul wrote:

For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better (Philippians 1:23).

Man is not 'a body', but rather, man has a body. My body is not me, it is my possession. These are my arms, my legs, my eyes, and my hands. This is also my keyboard, my monitor and my computer. They are in all cases, my possessions, they are not me. When I leave this body behind, I leave behind a possession, but that part which is 'me' is the eternal part, that which was created in the image of God.

But from body to disembodied?

There is considerable scriptural support for the conclusion that we already have some kind of temporary, physical body awaiting us in Heaven—even before the resurrection of the dead in Christ at the Rapture. Paul writes to the Corinthians:

For we know that if our earthly house of this tent were dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens . . . Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: . . . We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8).

Paul reveals here that when our bodies die there awaits us a "new building from God". Since our resurrection bodies are our actual physical earthly remains, reformed in the image of Christ's resurrected body, the 'building from God not made with hands' that awaits us in Heaven cannot be one and the same.

Further, Luke 16 teaches that Lazarus had a finger to dip in cool water, that the rich man had a body to be tortured by the flame, and that the rich man recognised the forms of both Abraham and Lazarus. Chronologically, this all took place prior to the death and resurrection of Christ. But they had bodies of some description, notwithstanding.

If Heaven is a real, physical place, where is it?

We tend to think of Heaven as 'up' and hell as 'down'—but the earth is a sphere. If, when I die, I (living in the United States) go 'up' to Heaven, does that mean that a person in China who dies at that same moment goes 'down'? The idea of Heaven being 'up' is derived from the points on a compass. Straight up is 'north'. Christians often refer to the passing of a loved one into Heaven as a 'promotion'. Many obituaries announce one's 'promotion to Glory' rather than a death announcement. The Psalmist reveals:

For promotion [exultation] comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south (Psalm 75:6).

Isaiah recorded the indictment of Lucifer as follows:

For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north (Isaiah 14:13).

Heaven, therefore, is a fixed location in "the sides of the north" from our universe, orienting due north from our North Pole and somewhere north of the highest star.

Will we know each other?

Undoubtedly, we will. Jesus told the Pharisees:

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out (Luke 13:28).

Obviously, if they can see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets, they will also recognise them for who they are. Otherwise, why the weeping and gnashing of teeth?

At the Mount of Transfiguration, both Moses and Elijah were there. Moses and Elijah had never met. (They knew each other and they still had the same names.) The rich man recognised Abraham and Lazarus. Paul writes:

For now we see through a glass, obscurely; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Paul expected to be known when he entered Heaven. So do I.

Assessment

Heaven is a real, literal, physical place that we will inhabit with real, heavenly, physical bodies that we begin to inhabit at the moment our physical bodies are die. According to the Bible, we will know and be known by our loved ones who have preceded us in death. Although the literal, physical Heaven is beyond our capacity to imagine, we are assured by our Maker that it will exceed our most optimistic hopes (He should know), that it will be a place of eternal peace, and that our existence there will be one of unimaginable joy. The curse will be lifted; man will no longer exist by the "sweat of his brow"; there will be no more sickness, no more death, and all our "tears will be wiped away".

We began this article talking about grief and loss. We went on to examine Paul's admonition that "we do not sorrow, even as others who have no hope"—yet we know that we do sorrow at the death of a loved one, blessed assurance notwithstanding. But Paul began by saying, "I don't want you to be ignorant". We can't imagine Heaven, but we can be certain that it exists, and that every single Christian who ever lived and died is still alive and well and physically in the presence of God. And we can be equally certain that they will still be there, waiting, when we get there.

If Heaven is such a great place, why is it that we can't really imagine it? Think that through. God put us on this earth with a mission. It is our job to spread the message of Heaven and the path that leads to it. We are given to know just enough to fulfil that mission.

There is an old saying to the effect that "everybody wants to go to Heaven, but nobody wants to die". It's only true because we really can't imagine the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. How good and important is the message that we carry? So important that God can't trust us with too much information about the prize that awaits us at the end of the race.

For now, we'll just have to take His Word for it. On faith.

Maranatha!

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1 A word of Aramaic origin meaning the Lord will come – cf. 1 Corinthians 16:22

About the Author



JACK KINSELLA, a Baptist minister, is publisher and editor of *The Omega Letter*, which commentates on news and current events from a Bible prophecy perspective.

<http://www.omegaletter.com>