

Getting Back To The Garden

By L.L. (Don) & Joy A. Veinot

Remember the 60's? No, not the 1860's but the 1960's? If you lived it, you remember it; and you probably were quite influenced by it to some extent at least. There was a real Utopian feel about the whole era, and many idealistic young people were caught up in it. "Peace brother," was the slogan; and it was all about peace—if you can forget about Charles Manson¹ or Ira Einhorn,² men whose "peaceful" Utopian impulses led them down the primrose path to murder and mayhem. In August of 1969, at the height of all the peace and love, there was an outdoor rock music festival known as Woodstock that drew 450,000 to a farm pasture in Sullivan County, New York. Remember Woodstock? One of the most well-known songs to come out of that festival was a tune performed by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, appropriately called "Woodstock."

**By the time we got to
Woodstock
We were half a million
strong
And everywhere there was song and celebration
And I dreamed I saw the bombers jet planes
Riding shotgun in the sky
Turning into butterflies
Above our nation.
We are stardust, we are golden
We are ten billion year old carbon
And we got to get ourselves back to the garden³**

Cool man! Psychedelic! Bomber jet planes turning into butterflies? Far out! Oh, sorry, I was just falling back into the zeitgeist of the era, when "the beautiful people" turned on, tuned in, dropped out, and "let it all hang out," er, sometimes a *little too* literally ... But anyway, trying to get "**back to the garden**" did not begin with Woodstock or the 1960's. It has been an earnest pursuit for mankind probably since Adam and Eve were escorted *out* of Eden and took up residence in the land of heartache, violence, disease, and unfairness—which is the post-

innocence human condition. Utopian dreams and schemes are ubiquitous throughout human history, but the Utopians of each succeeding era seem blissfully unaware of all past vain attempts to reestablish "Paradise on earth." Not

only have all Utopian dreams resulted in utter and abject failure, but also the ones that were the most "successful"—as determined by the number of adherents they managed to catch up in their madness—resulted in the most death, destruction, and disaster. Think Marxism⁴—millions upon millions dead—or on a much smaller scale, Jonestown.⁵

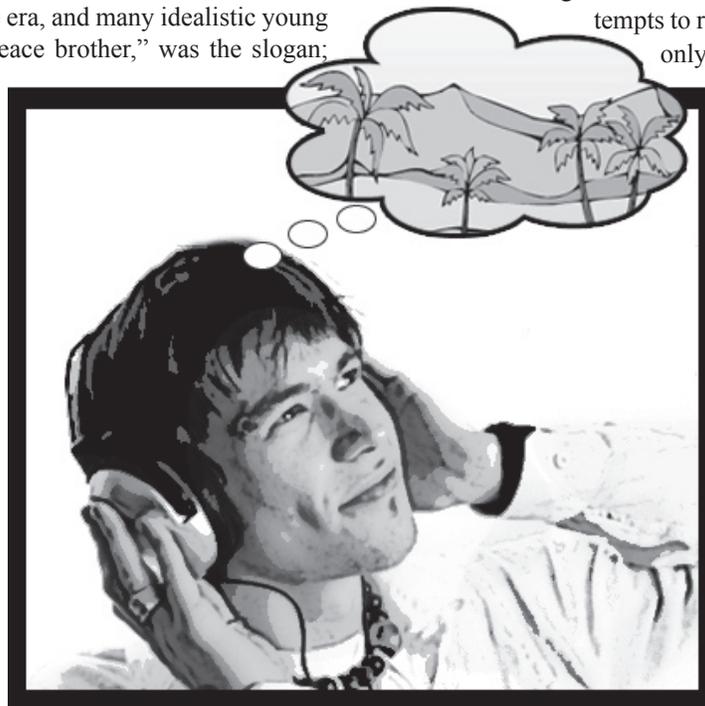
Utopians are nothing if not optimists, I guess, flying in the face of reality time and time again and ignoring the ghastly consequences, time and time again. How many millions have to die before an unworkable idea is discredited? Overwhelmingly, contemporary Utopian schemes leave God out of the equation entirely—man is the center of

the Universe, and man will fix things if God (and His Word and His people) will just stay out of the way! If anything, most Utopian schemes are opposed to God and very opposed to Christianity, although some Utopian schemes incorporate God in an ancillary way. Jones used "God talk" and Scripture out-of-context to ensnare his followers, but he made no bones about his claim that he, himself, was truly the Messiah. And inherent in Utopian schemes that include God at all is the fact that mankind does the real work of restoring mankind to Paradise, perhaps *for* God, in their thinking, or in His name; but there is no mistaking who is going to get the ultimate credit.

There is Hope—Paradise Will Come

We can hardly blame people for longing for peace, universal justice, and an end to human suffering. We ALL long for these

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things—everyone longs for Paradise. And according to the Scriptures, Paradise on earth will come, but it will never be brought about by man's striving. It will be God's doing. It may sound trite to some, but the fact is: There will not be true peace on earth until the Prince of Peace returns and sets up His Kingdom. The disciples hoped the long-awaited Kingdom would become a reality in their lifetimes, and Christ's followers are still waiting for it today. After Christ's Resurrection, and just before He ascended to Heaven, the disciples asked Jesus about the timing of the Kingdom's installation.

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6, NIV)

The disciples' question stems from the understanding that a day will come when God will rule from Jerusalem and not only man, but also creation itself will be at peace. Speaking of this time, Isaiah writes:

... but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth ... The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together, and a little child will lead them. (Is. 11:4 and 6, NIV)

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (Rev 21:4, NIV)

Note that the disciples were looking for something very specific, and it was to be set up by God. That God, Himself, was to set up this peaceable kingdom is abundantly clear by the way they worded the question in Acts 1:6 as they asked the Lord Jesus "... **Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom ...**" Also, Jesus will judge the needy, He will give decisions for the poor, and He will wipe the tears from their eyes. This simple but fundamental point seems to be missed by the various groups who have or who are attempting to create their particular version of "Utopia on earth." In the 1960's, Utopian hopes were voiced in such songs as the Fifth Dimension's "Aquarius," where "**peace will guide the planets,**" and "**love will steer the stars,**" "**harmony and understanding**" and all that other good stuff will happen, without any help from God Almighty. "**Mystic crystal revelation**" along with the "**mind's true liberation,**" and a little help "**when Jupiter aligns with Mars**" was to set things right. Well, it sounded good at the time, I guess. ☺

But the granddaddy theme song of wishful thinkers everywhere has to be the late John Lennon's "Imagine" released in 1971. It is less mystical, but it is no less Utopian than "Aquarius;" and it caught the imagination of a generation around the entire Western world. It seems even more popular today. According to the online information source *Wikipedia*:

"Imagine" is widely considered as one of the greatest songs of all time. In 2004, Rolling Stone magazine voted "Imagine" the third greatest song of all time. Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter said, "In many countries around the world—my wife and I have visited about 125 countries—you hear John Lennon's song 'Imagine' used almost equally with national anthems."⁶

What did Lennon imagine for the world?

**Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace ...⁷**

First, he proposes no countries—no nationalism—hence "**nothing to kill or die for.**" No war. "Cool, man"—"out of sight!" Of course, if there are no countries and no national governments, the world will have to be ruled by some other entity. The Utopian answer is "world government," which would entail rule by the unelected, elite few—the ones who know best for everyone else. Europe certainly has gone that way. There are indisputably some benefits in this arrangement—particularly economic strength in numbers; but individual European countries must subjugate their own national interests to accommodate decisions made from Brussels. As yet, America is holding onto her sovereignty; but how long we will do so remains to be seen. The Utopians, in this country and internationally, are working feverishly to change that; and we don't think it is too harsh to say that they are tearing the nation apart—dividing us by class and race, destroying the family, and infiltrating and/or silencing the church.

And No Religion, Too?

Religions, other than the Secular Humanist religion of the "tolerant" Left, are por-

trayed as “divisive;” and in their view, religious people—especially Christians—stand in the way of progress. At least for now, Muslims are to be given a “pass”—appeased and “protected.” Yes, all religions are equal, but some are more equal than others. Eventually, of course, the liberal Utopians will have to destroy Islam, too, or Islam will destroy liberalism; which sets up an interesting topic for another day. But for now, Muslims are a protected species, feared and molly-coddled. Meanwhile, as aforementioned, Liberal Leftists have a religion of their own; and if the Utopian dream is to be realized, all other religions eventually must become subservient to *it*, just as Christianity is being subdued now in the classroom and the culture. David Horowitz, once a Leftist himself, writes about the Left:

Rhetorically they are secularists and avatars of tolerance, but in fact they are religious fanatics who regard their opponents as sinners and miscreants and agents of civil darkness. Therefore, when they engage an opponent it is rarely to examine and refute his argument but rather to destroy the bearer of the argument and remove him from the plain of battle.⁸

Canada is somewhat farther along the road to secular liberal supremacy, in many respects, than we are here in the US. Canadian ministries are already feeling the heat of liberal oppression of their religious rights and freedom of speech. Part of our responsibility as Christians is to “*contend for the faith*” (Jude 3), which often involves defending the truth of Christianity *against* false religions and cults. In Canada, this defense of the faith is now deemed “**hate speech**,” and ministries are losing their non-profit status for the “crime” of pointing out the falsehood of Islam and other groups. As liberals continue grow ever stronger in this country, those same freedoms will be taken from us here as well, not only for speaking out against cults and false religions, but also for speaking out against homosexuality, abortion, and other important cultural issues. So speak Christians, while it is still legal to do so.

Imagine No Possessions

Imagine no possessions

I wonder if you can

No need for greed or hunger

A brotherhood of man

Imagine all the people

Sharing all the world ...⁹

The next thing that has to go to achieve Utopia is private property rights—our possessions. The “greedy” will be forced to share with the “needy.” As both terms are entirely relative and subject to interpretation, it will essentially be up to the elites to decide who gets what. Can you say, “Marxism,” boys and girls? One thing we learned from Communist rule is that although all men were equal, some were more equal than others. Looking at failed Communist states, there was still plenty of *greed*, and the result was more *need* than ever. The system was and is unworkable, but the Socialist pirates will never give up. They want your booty. Ironically, what the “needy” in this country don’t seem to understand is that *they are obscenely wealthy* compared with much of the world. They are just another *greedy American to be pillaged* in the eyes of the third world! So the victim/oppressor shoe will someday be on the other foot of many of those who “despise the rich” today. If it is *right* to take the property of one American and give it to another, how could it be wrong, especially once we are under international governance, to take the property of all Americans and give it to people who are *truly* “needy” in their perspective? It is not that these Socialist pirates, homegrown or international, really care about the poor; it is that they want to control all of the wealth—putting it into the hands of the elite few—who, then, will dole it out as rewards for right thinking.

But maybe Marxism will work itself out more successfully in the liberal West. How have liberal ideas worked out in this country when they have been tried? Haven’t we achieved success with the “Great Society”¹⁰ and the “welfare state?” No, but abject failure of its policies is not recognized by the Left and never will be. The havoc they have wreaked upon our society and our families is just not considered.

The Pirates Who Can’t Do Anything Right (but never acknowledge failure)

Thomas Sowell, in his book *The Vision of the Anointed*, devastatingly demonstrates what utter failures such Leftist programs as the “War on Poverty,” sex education in public schools, and criminal justice system changes have been. He explains there is a characteris-

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tic pattern that has developed to deal with liberal failure. Sowell labels liberal Utopians the "anointed," which is based upon their self appointment as the righteous savior of mankind, and writes:

A very distinct pattern has emerged repeatedly when policies favored by the anointed turn out to fail. This pattern typically has four stages:

STAGE 1. THE "CRISIS:" Some situation exists, whose negative aspects the anointed propose to eliminate. Such a situation is routinely characterized as a "crisis," even though all human situations have negative aspects, and even though evidence is seldom asked or given to show how the situation is uniquely bad or threatening to get worse. Sometimes the situation described as a "crisis" has in fact already been getting better for years.

STAGE 2. THE "SOLUTION:" Policies to end the "crisis" are advocated by the anointed, who say these policies will lead to beneficial result A. Critics say these policies will lead to detrimental result Z. The anointed dismiss these latter claims as absurd and "simplistic," if not dishonest.

STAGE 3. THE RESULTS: The policies are instituted and lead to detrimental result Z.

STAGE 4. THE RESPONSE: Those who attribute detrimental result Z to the policies instituted are dismissed as "simplistic" for ignoring the "complexities" involved, as "many factors" went into determining the outcome. The burden of proof is put on the critics to demonstrate to a certainty that these policies alone were the only possible cause of the worsening that occurred. No burden of proof whatsoever is put on those who had so confidently predicted improvement. Indeed, it is often asserted that things would have been even worse, were it not for the wonderful programs that mitigated the inevitable damage from other factors.¹¹

Sowell is absolutely right about this; we have seen this pattern put in play time and time again. We recommend Sowell's book as a must-read for anyone interested in a masterful critique of failed Leftist policies.

The New Christian Left

It makes perfect sense that those who are far from God would yearn for and even work hard to create a paradise based on how they *imagine* it ought to be. However, it is bewildering why believers are turning from sound biblical teaching and are enthusiastically joining the pirate band long after it should be apparent that the Marxist/Socialist emperor has no clothes! Moreover, they are allowing themselves to be pawns used by Leftists to achieve the power they seek. Leftists have always USED diverse people groups to further their agenda. Joseph Stalin referred to such people as "**useful idiots**," who would be discarded and trampled underfoot in due time—when their utility had run its course. Just as the Left is discarding Jews (who were once their bedrock constituents) now that the Palestinians are the cause celebre, and just as they will discard blacks if and when they threaten their power, so they will discard the "New Evangelical Left" once their usefulness is past. It is about POWER; not equality, and certainly not justice. David Horowitz writes:

It is not for nothing that George Orwell had to invent terms like "double-think" and "double-speak" to describe the universe totalitarians created. Those who have watched the left as long as I have, understand the impossible task that progressives confront in conducting their crusades. Rhetorically, they are passionate

proponents of "equality" but in practice they are committed enthusiasts of a hierarchy of privilege in which the highest ranks are reserved for themselves as the guardians of righteousness, and then for those they designate "victims" and "oppressed," who are thus worthy of their redemption.¹²

For now, however, the liberal Utopians are finding the New Evangelical Left to be useful—their defection from Christian principles a gift to be exploited. Evangelical Christianity has long been an obstacle to their plans to usher in a Marxist paradise.

Would Jesus Wear a Rolex?

Tony Campolo, professor emeritus at Eastern University, is a charter member of the New Evangelical Left, and he has pressed for years this question to his Evangelical audiences. For many people, this question engenders instant guilt. Not to diminish the plight of the poor, but it seems to us Campolo has a serious scriptural problem. He calls himself and others associated with him "**Red-Letter Christians**."

In his latest book, *Letters to a Young Evangelical*, Campolo calls on all Christians to challenge the "monolithic and doctrinaire" religious right, and also to rethink their political commitments through a return to the words of Christ himself.¹³

The question about the Rolex is meant to point a bony finger of accusation towards our supposed "greed" and "extravagance." By limiting himself to only the "**red letters**" (the words Jesus spoke in the Gospels), he denigrates the words on either side of the four Gospels. Christ spoke in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but since we find few "**red letters**" in the other books, they seem to be irrelevant to Campolo. However, if *all* of the Word of God is inspired, then the *whole* Bible is "**red-letter**," since it is *all God-breathed*. In other words, when we read in Isaiah 44:6, "**Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of Hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me'**" (NASB), we would understand that Jesus Christ is speaking in conjunction with the Father. Campolo's question about the Rolex is answered in quite a different way than he would like, when we take all of Scripture into account.

The fact is that God is not opposed to extravagance per se. One can hardly read Exodus 35:5-19 and not see that God *required* the tabernacle (tent of meeting) to be constructed from the most expensive and extravagant materials. Since Jesus is God, wasn't this done at His direction? We see the same thing in Revelation 21:10-21 about the New Jerusalem, where there is great extravagance on display there as well. For our sakes, Jesus took on frail human flesh and lived in humble poverty while on this earth. (2 Corinthians 8:9; Hebrews 2:17) He suffered in all points as we do, yet He was without sin. (Hebrews 4:15) Yet, when He walked the earth, He did not feed *all* of the poor or heal *all* of the sick, although He certainly could have done so easily. In fact, He limited Himself primarily to healing Jews who came to Him and, again, not all or even most of them! When approached by a Canaanite woman seeking help, He *ignored her pleas*, only responding after the disciples implored him to do something about her, since she was creating a ruckus with all of her cries.

Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." (Matt. 15:23-24, NIV)

As the account ends, she does receive help from Jesus due to her great faith. And this story is about the overriding impor-

tance of faith; but we certainly can see from this “red-letter” passage that Jesus’ priority at that time was not to eliminate poverty and human suffering. Rather, His miracles were *signs*—evidence attesting to the fact that He was Israel’s long-awaited Messiah (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22).

In response to John the Baptist’s question in Luke 7:19, “... *Are you the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else?*” Jesus offered His miracles as proof of His Messiahship, pointing back to Isaiah 61:1:

At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the [John’s] messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.” (Luke 7:21-22, NIV)

All of these signs were *evidences that Jesus Christ was the Messiah* and fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies.

The early Church did not wear Rolex watches, but they also did not convene conferences on issues like AIDS! They did provide for those in need, as they were able and *if the needy person qualified for such help*. Within the Church, the help given was *conditional*—depending upon the *age* and *righteous behavior* of the needy, and taking into account whether the disadvantaged person had *families to help them* (1 Timothy 5:3-16). *The family*, not the Church, and certainly not the government, was God’s preferred agent to provide for dependent widows and children. Families were to provide for their own! And no man who was *able but unwilling to work* was to receive any help from the Church (2 Thessalonians 3:10)! The highest priority of the Church was “... *to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints*” (Jude 3, NIV). It is precisely this priority—this *focus*—which the New Evangelical Left—as represented by Tony Campolo, Jim Wallis, Rick Warren and others—seeks to change today. They wish to take the Churches’ attention off of doctrine, off of defending the faith, and even off of preaching the Gospel. Rather, they seek to prioritize social issues, poverty, and income “inequality” and to impose this non-biblical focus over the entire Church. The real question is not “Would Jesus wear a Rolex,” but rather “Would Jesus abandon his spiritual mission to pursue a worldly, Socialist agenda?” No, Jesus would not; but sadly, Campolo and his “red-letter” compadres have done just that. Contrary to their “red-letter” ideals, the Bible states:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16, NIV)

The Man of Peace

Has eliminating poverty, hunger, and AIDS become priority #1 for Rick Warren? We have said before that Warren may understand exegesis and hermeneutics, but it is not apparent from his books or talks. Even when the points he makes are biblical ones, the passages he cites generally do not support them.

Just about everyone is familiar with Charles Schultz’s “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” Does it seem that Rick Warren and other leaders, who are working hard to refocus the churches’ attention predominately to social issues, subscribe to the “Lucy Brown School of Hermeneutics?” Lucy had told brother Charlie that he was *required* to give her a present. He replied that he didn’t *have* to, whereupon she pulled out the big guns and made

the claim that *the Bible* said he had to. His response was that the Bible didn’t say any such thing, and she couldn’t trick an old theologian. The next scene shows Lucy quickly leafing through the Bible and suddenly beaming in triumph and crying out that she had found her proof text. “**See, here is the word ‘sister.’ That proves it!**” Confused? Well, that’s the point. When context is abandoned, the Bible becomes little more than a tool used to manipulate others into following your agenda.

In Warren’s drive to build Utopia, he often states that Jesus would have us create alliances with *anyone* who is a so-called “**person of peace**” in order to solve the sufferings of humanity on a global basis. The proof text he uses is Luke 10:6 by noting the words: “**If a man of peace is there ...**” Warren points out that at the time this was spoken, there were no Christians; therefore, like the 70 disciples, we simply need to find the “**man of peace**,” even if “**they are a Muslim**,” and enter into alliances with them in order to solve the world’s problems of AIDS, poverty, hunger, and illiteracy. But is that what Jesus is saying? Has the Church gotten it all wrong all these centuries—was Jesus seeking to unite his followers with non-believers to solve intractable world problems, or did he have some other reason for sending out the disciples? As we look at the words *in context*, we need to note several things:

- 1) Jesus was Jewish and was/is the prophesied Messiah to the *Nation of Israel* (Matt. 10:6, 15:24).
- 2) The 70 (v.1) were His *Jewish* followers.
- 3) They were sent “... *in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.*” (NASB) These were *Jewish* villages, containing people who already accepted monotheism and the Old Testament as God’s written revelation of Himself to man.
- 4) They had been sent out to prepare *Jewish* communities for *His coming to them to proclaim the Gospel*.
- 5) When they arrived in a Jewish village, they were to find the *monotheistic, Torah-believing, Jewish “man of peace”* who would *receive their message*, not a Muslim Imam, or a Hindu, nor a Scientologist, for that matter.
- 6) If the “*man of peace*” didn’t receive the disciples and their message, they were to leave and shake the dust off their sandals on the way out as judgment against the village (v.10-11).

AIDS was not the issue; poverty was not the issue. The ministry of Jesus and his disciples was not solving social problems; it was presenting Jesus as the Messiah—the Chosen and prophesied One—the One Who would, in God’s timing, bring in the Kingdom. Unless that basic idea is understood, the whole of Christianity will be misunderstood and the Gospel has no basis.

Am I saying that addressing hunger, poverty, AIDS, and illiteracy is wrong? Absolutely not! Empathizing with and seeking to alleviate the sufferings of others around us as we are able is

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an important part of a believer’s responsibility, they are the good works that we have been appointed to do (Eph. 2:10). But does this passage in Luke demonstrate Warren’s point? Most definitely not! In fact, it actually militates against it; for if acceptance of the message—that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel—is a qualifier for the disciples to remain in the village to minister, then by this passage, the Muslim would have to receive Christ and the Gospel message in order to be considered a **“man of peace”** and partner with the missionaries who came to them.

Solving the World’s Problems

Donald Miller (one of the leaders in the emerging church) like John Lennon wants us to use our imaginations to fire up Utopian sentiments that just happen to line up with Marxist ideals. He writes:

Can you imagine if Christians actually believed that God was trying to rescue us from the pit of our own self-addiction? Can you imagine? Can you imagine what Americans would do if they understood over half the world was living in poverty? Do you think they would change the way they live, the products they purchase, and the politicians they elect? If we believed the right things, the true things, there wouldn’t be very many problems on earth.¹⁴

The Church has a long history of feeding the poor and ministering to the health and other physical needs of people often at great personal sacrifice. Many local churches support missions and missionaries who live in some of the most unimaginably difficult conditions in order to feed, clothe, and provide medical care to many; but such Christian works are to point people to Jesus, Who is the only One able to save them from their sins (which sins are the reason for all the world’s problems in the first place)! Jesus said that our good works were to cause people to glorify God (1 Peter 2:12). Divorced from the Gospel, solving all societal social ills, even were it possible, would not be of long-term use to anyone.

Could more be done to alleviate suffering? Certainly. Could the average believer give up some extravagances in order to share with someone in need? Absolutely! But our giving is to be done *voluntarily* out of love for God and the people He created.

Let’s take a look at the difference between Christian charity and a government-enforced “income redistribution scheme.” Christian charity is *voluntary* and blesses both the giver and the receiver. The giver is joyful over having helped another person and the receiver is grateful for the help given. After all, the giver was not *obligated* to give! Now compare that scenario with taxpayer-funded aid. The “giver” is resentful that his property has been stolen; he has not been able to judge for himself whether the recipient truly deserves his help; and he has been completely robbed of the pure joy of giving, because his participation was compelled. The receiver, in the Socialist model, is completely *ungrateful* (blatantly so)—seeing the gift as his rightful due—and is not embarrassed to demand more and more. After all, the gift is from the *government*—the taxpayer has had no choice in the matter—so there is no one to be grateful *to*.

Ask yourself if you have ever seen anyone who is grateful for having received the taxpayer’s help. Many victims of hurricane Katrina were grateful for the help they received from individuals—even writing letters to newspapers profusely thanking individuals and churches for the help they had received. But, we witnessed lots of other sufferers who were completely UN-

GRATEFUL and even BITTER toward the government, even though the government took *millions* of dollars from taxpayers and gave it to them. Why is that? The help was *expected*—they were *entitled* to receive this money; the assistance wasn’t fast enough in coming, and, in their eyes, taxpayers are faceless, nameless, greedy, fat cats who have plenty to spare.

Donald Miller’s view makes certain assumptions. It assumes all Americans are Christians and share the same world view. It assumes throwing money, food and/or medicine at the **“problems on earth”** will fix most of those problems. It assumes all human problems result from poverty and need. It assumes Miller knows more than Jesus Who said: **“The poor you will always have with you ...”** (Matt. 26:11, Mark 14:7, John 12:8). And doesn’t Miller also assume that *theft* is a lesser sin than *greed* as this quote from his book demonstrates?

The resort we were working at was Black Butte Ranch in Central Oregon, and we were living about a mile off a ridge, beyond the cattle fence, down in a gully where stood stately pines and remarkable aspen. There was also a family of deer and a porcupine. The boys from New York worked at Honkers Café, named for the ducks, and Paul and I would merely have to sit ourselves on the deck off the lake and within minutes we would have a burger or shake or a slice of pie, always delivered with a smile, always for free. They were stealing from the rich to feed the poor. We were eating food from the wealthy table of the white man. This is how I thought about it, even though I was white. 15

Is theft anything less than theft because you steal from **“the wealthy table of the white man”**? Isn’t this twisted thinking nothing more than self justification for Miller? The concept of “redistribution of wealth” from the “unworthy” wealthy to the “deserving” poor is a scheme commonly known as Marxism or Socialism. In fact, that is exactly what John Lennon was trying to get culture to embrace:

In the book Lennon in America, written by Geoffrey Giuliano, Lennon commented that the song was “an anti-religious, anti-nationalistic, anti-conventional, anti-capitalistic song, but because it’s sugar-coated, it’s accepted.” Lennon also described it as “virtually the Communist Manifesto.”¹⁶

Billions of dollars, food, medicine, and other goods have been shipped to many lands by Christian charities as well as the US Government in an effort to help people in truly dire need. Much material good has been accomplished, but human nature remains the same. And sinful man will *always* get in the way of such well-intentioned endeavors. For example, dictators and corrupt government officials have redirected such aid for their personal profit, which leaves the needy still in their need. It is a sad fact of life that poverty, corruption, and disease will continue to be with us until God establishes His Kingdom on earth.

The New Left In Cahoots with the Old Left

Pastor Rick Warren had Hillary Clinton as a featured speaker at his recent conference on AIDS. Why would he do that? We think columnist Joseph Farrah at *WorldNetDaily* has some insight:

Days before she appeared at Warren’s “Global Summit on AIDS and the Church,” Clinton unveiled a \$50 billion spending plan to fight AIDS globally.¹⁷

Hillary Clinton is of the “Old Guard Christian Left.” Many long decades ago, the “Old Guard Christian Left” jettisoned Christian doctrine and the true Gospel in favor of addressing social ills. How is the New Evangelical Left any different from the

Old Guard Christian Left? It's not—it is sliding down the mountain to the same, old, failed Socialism that turned the mainstream, liberal Christian churches into the empty shells of their former selves that we find today. First came the change in focus—from God to Humanism—and then, the loss of the Gospel itself. Warren is simply following their footsteps, and he is taking as many naïve Evangelicals with him as he can. And if Hillary is elected, there will be money to spend on issues Warren has prioritized in his life and ministry:

Asked about his thoughts on Clinton's plan, Warren said the battle against AIDS would require partnership by government, the private sector and the church. The government's main role, he suggested, is in picking up the tab.¹⁸

Since the Federal government isn't a for-profit venture, their resources come by taxation of individuals and businesses. Warren's plan for the betterment of humanity involves confiscating yet more money from Christians and non-Christians alike to pay for programs that by his own admission he believes *the Church* should be carrying out. It amounts to legalized theft. Farah's comments on this are insightful:

The church's job is to minister to people in need to demonstrate the glory of the One they serve. How can the church do that when they are yoked to government's confiscating money by force from people. [sic] Let's face it, that's why the government has so much money. Some even think of government's resources as limitless. It's because government can always take more. It takes whatever it needs or wants.¹⁹

Is stealing from the population at large to finance a pet social project somehow holy and sanctified because a popular pastor thinks it is a good idea? No, it is not.

Politically Correct "Christianity"

The Left has been on a rampage against biblical Christianity since its inception. But now we are witnessing the spectacle of supposed Christian Evangelicals falling into blatant apostasy—surrendering their Christian heritage in pursuit of a Utopia of tolerance. Emergent Church leader Brian McLaren writes:

I don't believe making disciples must equal making adherents to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many (not all!) circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu or Jewish contexts ... rather than resolving the paradox via pronouncements on the eternal destiny of people more convinced by or loyal to other religions than ours, we simply move on ... To help Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and everyone else experience life to the full in the way of Jesus (while learning it better myself), I would gladly become one of them (whoever they are), to whatever degree I can, to embrace them, to join them, to enter into their world without judgment but with saving love as mine has been entered by the Lord.²⁰

The proclamation of the Gospel—that Jesus is the only Savior, and one must believe in Him for salvation (1 Cor. 15:1-4)—is set aside which enables the Left to move on to what they consider more important issues. McLaren suggests it may be "advisable" to leave people "within their Buddhist, Hindu or Jewish" religions, rather than persuade Buddhists, Muslims or whatever to switch their loyalties to Christianity. McLaren states he just wants to help them "experience life to the full in the way of Jesus," whatever that means. They propose it might even help if Christians were to *join them—become a Buddhist or a Mus-*

lim ourselves! By abandoning religious differences, we allegedly can have peace and harmony; and no one will know they should feel bad (about sin) since no "pronouncements" will be made "on the eternal destiny of people more convinced by or loyal to other religions than ours ..." Why, we can just "imagine" away the differences! This undiscerning doctrinal agnosticism extends to areas of biblical morality as well.

For example, McLaren has asserted that we should not be too hasty in thinking or specifically teaching homosexuality is a sin. He also makes the "red-letter" point by arguing that Jesus never spoke out against homosexuality ... as if the rest of the Bible doesn't matter. He has stated that we should declare a "moratorium" on making *any* "pronouncements" about homosexuality until the Holy Spirit gives us a consensus on this—perhaps, in five years or so. These are his words:

Perhaps we need a five-year moratorium on making pronouncements. In the meantime, we'll practice prayerful Christian dialogue, listening respectfully, disagreeing agreeably. When decisions need to be made, they'll be admittedly provisional. We'll keep our ears attuned to scholars in biblical studies, theology, ethics, psychology, genetics, sociology, and related fields. Then in five years, if we have clarity, we'll speak; if not, we'll set another five years for ongoing reflection. After all, many important issues in church history took centuries to figure out. Maybe this moratorium would help us resist the "winds of doctrine" blowing furiously from the left and right, so we can patiently wait for the wind of the Spirit to set our course.²¹

How different this is from the biblical accounts and New Testament epistles. Friends, the Holy Spirit *has already* set our course! The Spirit-led believers of the first centuries did not join non-believers in the cave; they brought the lost out of the darkness and into the glorious light of God's salvation (John 12:46). Alerting and converting sinners from dead works or wanton paganism to faith in the living God was their priority (cf. Acts 14:15). Abandoning Scripture and looking the other way regarding sin while waiting for psychology, sociology, genetics, and other human endeavors to answer the question are the last things we would find the apostolic writers endorsing. They certainly would not have suggested to the lost person that they should be the best pagan they could be! What a travesty to offer sand to a man dying of spiritual thirst! But then, the early believers were looking for that kingdom *which God will bring*, whereas the leaders in the rising Evangelical Left are busy trying to build their man-made Utopian kingdom.

But what of the claim that Jesus never spoke out against homosexuality? It may be true that Jesus didn't speak directly to this issue during His earthly ministry. But then, we should point out that Jesus didn't speak out against either pedophilia or rape. Using their "Lucy hermeneutic," we would have to conclude that adult/child sex and rape are perfectly fine—or, at the very least, we cannot say they are wrong. No, we would need to deliberate for some years, see what psychology, sociology and genetics can tell us about these things to reach a consensus before hastily deciding the morality of these practices.

But, as it turns out, Jesus *did* speak directly about many of these issues in the Old Testament. You may not *see "red letters"* in the Old Testament, but it is the Word of God, nevertheless. And it must be remembered that Jesus affirmed the Old Testament during His earthly ministry. By this we understand that yes,

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Introduction to Rabbinic Judaism, Part II: The Objections to Christianity

By Mariano Grinbank

The previous issue of the *MCOI Journal* introduced us to Rabbinic Judaism. We reviewed various definitions, historical background, introduced their literature, and finally hinted at reinterpretations of ancient concepts and of commentary on the *Tanakh* (Old Testament).

Having mentioned the *Tanakh*, let us take a moment to review the terminology involved in our subject matter:

Torah: Technically refers to the five books of Moses, but it is sometimes indicative of the entire Old Testament.

Mishnah: Oral laws compiled in written form around 200AD.

Gemara: Commentary of the *Mishnah*.

Talmud: Compilation of both the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*. There are actually two *Talmuds*: the *Babylonian* or *Bavli* and the *Jerusalem* (or *Palestinian*) or *Yerushalmi*. They were put into writing between 400-600AD.

Midrash: Compiled homilies including biblical exegesis and sermons from 400-1200AD. Two of the Midrashim are *Midrash Rabbah* (fourth century AD) and *Pesikta Rabbati* (ninth century AD).

This article will present several of Rabbinic Judaism's arguments against Christianity. Our format will consist of point-counterpoint whereby we will present the objection immediately followed by a response. However, this *will not* be presented as a Jewish point with a Christian counterpoint. Rather, we will present the objections of Rabbis and Jewish scholars and respond by exclusively quoting from authoritative Rabbinic writings and the writings of individual Rabbis and Jewish scholars. Therefore, this will be, in a manner of speaking, an in-house debate.

Messianic Concepts

Rabbi Shraga Simmons presents the Jewish messianic concept:

What is the Messiah supposed to accomplish? The Bible says that he will ... Build the Third Temple ... Gather all Jews back to the Land of Israel ... Usher in an era of world peace, and end all hatred, oppression, suffering and disease ... Spread universal knowledge of the God of Israel, which will unite humanity as one ... The historical fact is that Jesus fulfilled none of these messianic prophecies. Christians counter that Jesus will fulfill these in the Second Coming, but Jewish sources show that the Messiah will fulfill the prophecies outright, and no concept of a second coming exists.¹

This is an example of what has become a very popular and generalized Jewish messianic concept. However, throughout history, there have been various Jewish messianic concepts: Some claimed the Messiah would be a "divine agent," some a "mere man," and still others an "impersonal era." Some thought he would work through miracles; some thought he would work through politics. Some said he would bring instant world peace, and some said redemption would come gradually. Some taught one Messiah would come twice; some taught two Messiahs would come one time each. Some claimed he would be a humble suffering servant who would die for our sins, and some claimed he would be a triumphant conquering king who would re-gather Israel and wipe out her enemies.

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon aka the Rambam or Maimonides (1135-1204 A.D.) offers a good example of the variety of messianic concepts even within the writings of one sage.

In *Mishneh Torah* he wrote:

Do not think that King Messiah will have to perform signs and wonders, bring anything new into being, revive the dead, or do similar things. It is not so.²

Yet, in *Epistle to Yemen* he wrote:

How and where will the Messiah emerge? ... An individual will arise who will not be recognized [as Messiah] before his appearance; and the signs and wonders that he performs will prove the truth of his claim and [the truth of] his lineage.³

Christians claim the messianic prophecies in the *Tanakh* can be split into those fulfilled at the First Coming and those that will be fulfilled at the Second. Yet, this is an after-the-fact convenience. We must appreciate what a daunting task it was for those who lived before Christ (and those who still do not recognize His messiah-ship). We must empathize with the difficulty and intricacies of discerning between the two *lines of prophecy*—that of the suffering servant and that of the conquering king.

The *Talmud* (Sanhedrin 98a) presents us with an example of the discussions regarding the various messianic concepts:

R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua opposed two verses: it is written, 'And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven' (Daniel 7:13) while it is written, '[behold, your king comes to you ...] lowly, and riding upon an ass!' (Zechariah 9:9) If they are meritorious, [he will come] with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon an ass.⁴

Midrash Pesikta Rabbati (15:10) presents us with the concept of two comings of one Messiah:

My beloved is like a gazelle [Song of Solomon 2:9]. R. Isaac said: As a gazelle appears and then disappears, so [Moses], the first Messiah, appeared to Israel and then disappeared from them ... R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Levi: Like the first redeemer, so the last redeemer; as the first one appeared before them and then disappeared from them, so the last redeemer will appear to them and then disappear from them.

Midrash Rabbah -Ruth 5:6 states virtually the same thing Gershom Scholem (Professor Emeritus of Jewish Mysticism, Hebrew University, Jerusalem) wrote:

Even as Moses ascended to heaven in body and soul and remained there for forty days, so also this messiah, while remaining unknown to others and known only to himself ... will be hidden away body and soul in the manner of [Moses, of whom the Scripture says] 'and Moses entered into the cloud.' Then he will be raised up to heaven even as Moses ascended to heaven, and thereafter the messiah will reveal himself fully and all Israel will recognize him and gather around him.⁵

We now present some thoughts on the *two-Messiah theory* whereby we get a view of the Jewish concepts of a Messiah who is killed. The Messiahs were named *Messiah ben Yosef* and *Messiah ben David*. We find the following elucidation from Raphael Patai (noted anthropologist and Biblical scholar who taught at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem):

This splitting of the Messiah in two persons, which took place in the *Talmudic* period, achieved another purpose besides resolving the dilemma of the slain Messiah [referring to Dan. 9:24-26]. According to an old tradition, the Messiah was perfectly prefigured in Moses. But Moses died before he could lead the Children of Israel into the Land of Promise. Consequently, for the parallel to be complete, the Messiah, too, had to die before accomplishing his great task of ultimate Redemption. Since, however, the Messiah would not be the True Redeemer of God if he did not fulfill that task, the only solution was to let one Messiah, like Moses, die, and then assign the completion of the work of Redemption to a second Messiah.⁶

Zechariah 12:10 states:

And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for [his] only [son], and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. (NKJV)

Dr. Abraham Cohen, who worked as editor of the Soncino (a Jewish publishing house) *Books of the Bible* and participated in the Soncino translation of the *Talmud* and *Midrash*, comments on this text thusly:

In the *Talmud* the passage is interpreted with reference to the Messianic era, and the martyr who was thrust through is the Messiah the son of Joseph who will fall in battle.⁷

Midrash Pesikta Rabbati (37:1) presents the Messiah as suffering imprisonment and insults (note the references to Psalm 22):

... in the year when the Messiah appears, the Patriarchs will ask him whether he is displeased with Israel because of the affliction he endured on their account ... The Patriarchs will arise and say ... thou didst suffer for the iniquities of our children, and terrible ordeals befell thee, such ordeal as did not befall earlier generations or later ones; for the sake of Israel thou didst become a laughingstock and a derision among

the nations of the earth; and didst sit in darkness, in thick darkness, and thine eyes saw no light, and thy skin cleaved to thy bones, and thy body was as dry as a piece of wood; and thine eyes grew dim from fasting, and thy strength was dried up like a potsherd—all these afflictions on account of the iniquities of our children(1), all these because of thy desire to have our children benefit by that goodness which the Holy One, blessed be He, will bestow in abundance upon Israel ... our true Messiah ... will be shut up in prison, a time when the nations of the world will gnash their teeth at him every day, wink their eyes at one another in derision of him, nod their heads at him in contempt, open wide their lips to guffaw [loud course burst of laughter], as is said *All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head* (Ps. 22:8) [this is JPS* reference, it is Ps. 22:7 in the commonly used translations]; *My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my throat; and thou layest me in the dust of death* (Ps. 22:16) [this is JPS reference, it is Ps. 22:15 in the commonly used translations]. Moreover, they will roar over him like lions, as is said *They open wide their mouth against me, as a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is become like wax; it is melted in mine inmost parts* (Ps. 22:14-15) [this is JPS reference, it is Ps. 22:13-14 in the commonly used translations].

Footnote: (1) "... when Israel's sins exceeded all bounds, God first vented His wrath on the sticks and stones of the Temple ... It may be that after the Temple's destruction the Messiah, by the same token, became a divine whipping boy upon whom God's wrath was vented."

Clearly, these messianic concepts are vastly different from those which Rabbi Simmons presented.

Note there is not a single, clear-cut messianic concept within Rabbinic Judaism. Can it then logically be stated that the *Christian messianic concept* is incorrect? Note carefully that the *Christian messianic concept* was the one held by the Jews who identified Jesus as The Messiah. The *Christian messianic concept* is all-encompassing in that it takes into consideration and applies *all* of the messianic prophecies, not just the ones about the suffering servant or just the ones about the conquering king.

We conclude this section by pointing out that there are circa 558 separate quotations from Rabbinic writings in which 456 Biblical texts are interpreted as messianic. Certainly these do not all speak of a Messiah who is a conquering king who brings instant world peace.

Abrogated and New Commandments?

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan:

In many places, the Bible states that the *Torah* was given forever. It is therefore impossible to say that it has been replaced by a new law or testament.⁸

Rabbi Shraga Simmons:

The Messiah will lead the Jewish people to full *Torah* observance. The *Torah* states that all mitzvahs remain binding forever, and anyone coming to change the *Torah* is immediately identified as a false prophet. [emphasis mine]⁹

Pinchas Stolper (orthodox rabbi and author):

... the *Torah* itself clearly states in many places that its laws are eternal, never to be abolished.¹⁰

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"Judaism" Continued from page 9

The ninth of Maimonides' *Thirteen Principles of the Faith* reads as follows:

I believe with a complete faith that this Tora [sic] will not be exchanged and there will be no other Tora [sic] from the Creator, blessed be His name.

According to these very clear statements the case seems to be closed. Let us begin by noting that the *Torah* is not entirely monolithic but somewhat dynamic. In Leviticus 17:3-7, we learn that when God's people killed an ox, lamb, or goat they were first to bring it:

... unto the door of the tent of meeting, to present it as an offering unto HaShem before the tabernacle of HaShem ... This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations (JPS)

Yet, later in Deuteronomy 12:15 & 21, they were allowed to:

... kill and eat flesh within all thy gates ... If the place which HaShem thy God shall choose to put His name there be too far from thee (JPS)

Clearly, God is being practical; once in Israel, the tabernacle may have been too far from one's home, and meat could not be transported back and forth. Thus, God later allowed certain slaughters to take place at home. But the first command did state that it was "*a statute for ever ... throughout their generations,*" which seems to end up meaning *for as long as it is relevant*. Consider the following:

But if the servant plainly says, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free," then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever. (Exodus 21:5-6, NKJV, also see Deuteronomy 15:17, emphasis mine)

Yet, the servant may still be released due to certain circumstances such as the following:

And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant, he shall let him go free for the sake of his tooth. (Exodus 21:27, NKJV)

Clearly, in these contexts, the word *forever* is time sensitive.

Next, note Jeremiah 31:31-32a, which states:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—"not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt ..." (NKJV)

Rabbinic Judaism's common response to this text is to state it is the people's reaction that will be different and not the covenant itself. Indeed, the text does go on to state:

... My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. "But this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (NKJV)¹¹

Furthermore, note the Messiah is prophesied to be a priest in the order of Melchizedek whose priesthood existed before the Levitical priesthood (cf. Gen. 14:18, Ps. 110:4). The priesthood will change, and a different priesthood necessitates a new law be given just as a new law was given when the Levitical priesthood was established.

Encyclopedia Judaica 15:1244 states:

In the Bible there is no text unanimously understood to affirm explicitly the eternity or non-abrogability [to abolish by formal means] of the *Torah*; However, many laws of the *Torah* are accompanied by phrases such as, 'an everlasting injunction through your generations'. ... the Rabbis taught that the *Torah* would continue to exist in the world to come ... although some of them were of the opinion that innovations would be made in the messianic era ... [Saadiah-Gaon, Dean of Rabbinic School in Babylon, 882-942AD] interpreted the verse, 'Remember ye the *Torah* of Moses ... behold, I will send you Elijah ...' (Mal. 3:22-23) [this is JPS reference, it is Mal. 4:4-5 in the commonly used translations], as teaching that the *Torah* will hold valid until the prophet Elijah returns to herald the resurrection.

Remember the charge that "**anyone coming to change the *Torah* is immediately identified as a false prophet.**" Yet, the *Talmud* itself states that *all of the commandments were reduced to just one*. Take a moment, and see if you can guess which commandment is said to encompass them all? The *Talmud* (Makkot 23b-24a) reduces them to: "**The righteous will live by faith.**" (Habakkuk 2:4—the same conclusion reached in Romans 1:16-17).

Midrash Rabbah-Genesis Vol. 2, 98:9 mentions the Messiah's instructions:

... [the Messiah] will compose for them words of *Torah*(1) ... he will restore to them their errors(2).

Footnote: (1) "Propound new meanings and interpretations of the *Torah*." (2) "He will point out where they have misunderstood the *Torah*."

Jewish Scholars Claude Montefiore and Herbert Loewe wrote:

The reference to the Law in the World to Come raises the question of the immutability of the Law, its expansion, or its abrogation. It was held that in Messianic times, mankind would gradually improve and that certain prescriptions would become obsolete.¹²

They further state:

Some say that in the time to come all the animals which are unclean in this world God will declare to be clean, as they were in the days before Noah.¹³

The *Midrash* on Psalms states virtually the same thing.

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver (prominent religious leader and renowned Hebrew scholar) notes:

Jesus saw his role as that of a prophet announcing the approach of the Millennium. He accordingly did not feel himself restricted to the Pharisaic technique of interpreting the *Torah* ... A prophet was assured privileges under the Law which were not possessed by any other religious teacher. No prophet, of course, could advocate the abrogation of any fundamental Biblical law, such as the prohibition of idolatry, without branding himself a false prophet, deserving of death. But a prophet had considerable leeway in other matters. A prophet whose credibility was well established could, for example, order the temporary suspension of any law of the *Torah* (short of idolatry) in order to meet an emergency, and the people were obligated to obey him [Talmud-Sanhedrin 90a].¹⁴

Jacob Lauterbach (Jewish scholar and *Talmudist*) included a section in his book *Rabbinic Essays*, entitled "Halakah Does Not Hesitate to Abolish Biblical Laws" (*Halakah/Halacha* is Rabbinic Judaism's religious law) in which he wrote:

We now turn to a consideration of those cases, wherein the Halakah found it necessary to abolish certain biblical laws which it conceived to be out of harmony with the spirit of the *Torah*. In such cases they would justify their procedure on the principle mentioned above that: 'When the cause of true religion demands, certain laws may be abolished.'¹⁵

In a footnote to this section, he states:

I cite here only such cases in which the Halakah avowedly declared that it consciously changes or modifies the biblical law for some ethical reason. There are, however, many other instances in which the Halakah, influenced by its higher ethical conceptions, unconsciously, so to speak, explained away or changed biblical laws.

This sentiment is very commonly understood and accepted. Edward Greenstein (Jewish Theological Seminary of America professor):

Rabbinic law, it is true, often directly contradicts the plain meaning of Scripture and relies upon circuitous argumentation to establish its claims.¹⁶

In making reference to *Yemenite Midrash*, Raphael Patai wrote:

And the Messiah will sit in the future in the Yeshiva, and those who walk on earth will come and sit before him to hear his new Tora [sic] and new commandments.¹⁷

Norman Lamm (President of Yeshiva University) makes another commonly understood and accepted sentiment:

In the future, in the messianic time ... the holidays will be abrogated.¹⁸

We end this section by pointing out that Jesus said:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17-18, NKJV).

No Religious Leaders Accepted Jesus

Pinchas Stolper stated,

If Jesus was really the Messiah, why does the New Testament admit that all the rabbis of the time, without one exception, reject his claim? Why was there not one man of learning, nor one prominent leader who accepted him?¹⁹

Rabbi Shmuel Arkush agrees:

He was rejected by the Jews of his time, a generation which included some of our greatest Rabbis.²⁰

It is very telling to note that Rabbi Akiva was the leading Rabbinic authority of his age; and circa 132-135 AD, he proclaimed Simon Bar Kochba/Cochba as Messiah. Centuries later we find that:

Maimonides describes Bar Cochba as "a great king whom all of Israel, including the great sages, were convinced was the messiah."²¹

Bar Kochba was proclaimed and later rejected as Messiah. Thus, with all due respect to those more learned than me, would we have been any better off following the religious leaders' sage advice?

In a way, this is an argument that cannot be won; because if we point to the testimonies of Rabbi Saul of Tarsus (later known as *Paul*), Anna the prophetess, or Sanhedrin members Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the response is that if they accepted Jesus as The Messiah, they became heretics and, thus, do not count as Jewish religious leaders. Yet, in this regard, it does

seem that Jesus is in the same class as the *Tanakh's* prophets. Nearly all of them were rejected by the people, the kings, or the other prophets. It seems that Jesus is in good company.

Lastly, we point out that the *Talmud* (Sotah 49b) states:

In the footsteps of the Messiah(1) ... the wisdom of the learned(2) will degenerate.

Footnotes: (1) "Just before his advent." (2) "Lit., 'scribes.' "

Conclusion

On the surface, Rabbinic Judaism's objections are strongly worded, authoritative, and appear to be logical. However, we find that these and other objections can be conclusively answered by referencing the Rabbis' and Jewish scholars' own literature. 

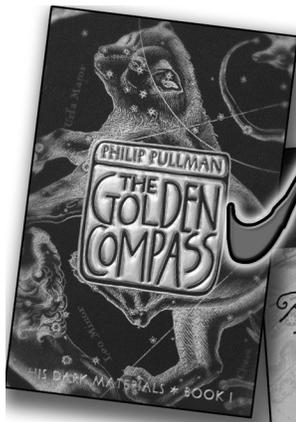
*JPS=Jewish Publication Society. *HaShem* means *The Name*, and it is used in place of the Tetragrammaton (*YHWH* or *LORD* in the commonly used translations).



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ENDNOTES:

- 1) Rabbi Shraga Simmons, *Why Don't Jews Believe in Jesus?*, aish.com, retrieved 2-17-03
- 2) Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader* (NY: Behrman House, Inc., 1972), p.223
- 3) Maimonides, Ralph Lerner trans., *The Empire of Light, Popular Enlightenment in an Age of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p.127
- 4) That he opposed the verses does not mean that he was against them, but that he set them opposite each other in order to understand the seeming contradiction.
- 5) Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi – The Mystical Messiah 1626-1676* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp.51-52
- 6) Raphael Patai, *Messiah Text* (NY: Avon Books, 1979), pp.166-167
- 7) A. Cohen, *The Twelve Prophets, Hebrew Text and English Translations with Introductions and Commentary* (NY: Soncino Press, 1848, 12th ed. 1985), comment on Zech. 12:10.
- 8) Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *The Real Messiah? A Jewish Response to Missionaries* (NY: National Conference of Synagogue Youth, 1976, new ed., 1985), p.8
- 9) Simmons, op. cit.
- 10) Kaplan, (Stolper quoted in) op. cit., p.56
- 11) In order to answer the possible objections that this does not refer to the New Covenant in the Christian sense, we must point out the widely known and accepted concept of a dual fulfillment of prophecy: a prophecy is fulfilled in part contemporaneously and in part at some future point. Thus, the text in question will come to be completely fulfilled at the Second Coming.
- 12) Claude Montefiore and Herbert Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (Greenwich Edition: Meridian Books, Inc., nd), p.669
- 13) Ibid., p.583
- 14) Abba Hillel Silver, *Where Judaism Differs. An Inquiry into the Distinctiveness of Judaism* (Collier Books-NY: Macmillan Publishing Co. and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987), pp.94,92
- 15) Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays* (NY: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1913, 1951 ed.), pp.287-288
- 16) Barry W. Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources – Reading The Classic Jewish Texts* (NY: Summit Books, 1984), p.224
- 17) Patai, op. cit., see pp.140-141,247-248
- 18) Norman Lamm, *The Religious Thought of Hasidism, Text and Commentary* (NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1999), pp.566-568
- 19) Kaplan, (Stolper quoted in) op. cit., p.58
- 20) Rabbi Shmuel Arkush, *Why Jews Can't Be For Jesus* ed.ac.uk/~jsoc/chadash/jesus.htm
- 21) The Temple Institute, *FAQ*, templeinstitute.org/faqs/messiah-or-temple-faq.html, quoting Maimonides, *Hilchot Ta'aniot* Ch. 5 & *Hilchot Melachim* Ch. 11



His Dark Materials, Part 1:

A Dark Adventure

A Spiritual Evaluation of Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* and *The Subtle Knife*

By Marcia Montenegro

Philip Pullman's series, *His Dark Materials*, relays the tale of an 11-year-old girl (**Lyra**), a 12-year-old boy (**Will**), and their adventures in a fantasy where one can cross from one world into another. The first book, *The Golden Compass* (published as *Northern Lights* in the UK), focuses on Lyra and her world; and the second book, *The Subtle Knife*, brings Will into the adventure. Will, who comes from a world other than Lyra's, finds his destiny crossing with Lyra's—their two independent purposes blending—as they gradually learn they each have a special mission in a coming war involving all the worlds.

Most reviewers so far seem to focus on interviews with the author and his agnostic/atheist views. Pullman does not clearly label himself; though it is apparent he does not believe in or want to accept the Christian God. Although comments from the author may confirm what is found in the books, paying too much attention to the author's words outside the story can distort one's analysis and, perhaps, even cause the reader to miss certain elements of the story. For example, with the media spotlight on Pullman's alleged atheism, it seems very few have noticed or written about the trilogy's ubiquitous occultism and mysticism. This esotericism certainly does not harmonize with atheism.

Lyra and Her Daemon

In Lyra's world, all humans have what Pullman calls a "daemon" (pronounced "demon"). The daemon is described but not really explained—the reader must observe and draw his or her own conclusions on daemons. Daemons were guardian spirits and/or good or malevolent spirits in Greek mythology. "In Neoplatonism,* a daemon was more like a demigod rather than an evil spirit."² In Pullman's books, daemons take animal form and are always with or very near their humans. Although in animal form, daemons can speak like people. Children's daemons can change shape; but as children grow into puberty, the daemon takes on one shape. The animal form usually reflects the power, status, and characteristics of its human.

Daemons have names and are always the opposite sex of their human. They are like an outer soul for the human, feeling what the human feels; and the human and daemon share thoughts and experiences. The daemon seems to be both an extension of the human as well as semi-independent of the human—able to warn their human and give advice. When the human dies, the daemon fades

away. Daemons seem not to be mere spirit creatures, since they are embodied and interact with the material world. Lyra's daemon is named "**Pantalaimon**;" and she and "**Pan**," as she often calls him, are completely loyal to each other and closely bonded. The name *Pantalaimon* may come from a saint in the Orthodox churches, *St. Panteleimon* which means *all merciful*.³

The plot involves a beautiful but conniving woman (**Mrs. Coulter**) who is an agent of the "**Church**" directing experiments that involve cutting daemons away from children, leaving the children drained and suicidal, and the daemons in agony. Since daemons are so instrumental in the story, one can only wonder if they represent something more than a companion. A hint is given when "**Lord Asriel**"—an explorer who is seeking the true nature of something called "**Dust**" (who also turns out to be Lyra's father)—reads from the third chapter of Genesis to Lyra. Eating the fruit from the forbidden tree, according to the version read by Lord Asriel, allows Adam and Eve to see "**the true form of their daemons**" and to speak with them.⁴ This implies that God did not want Adam and Eve to see their daemons. Lord Asriel tells Lyra that sin came into the world when the daemons of Adam and Eve became "**fixed**," that is, they could no longer change. However, Lord Asriel also tells Lyra that the Biblical text is "**corrupt**," and that man returning to dust means God has a sinful nature.⁵ At this point, it is difficult to figure out the message about daemons. However, the fact that people who lose their daemons become apathetic and listless indicates daemons are essential to the humans in some way.

In *The Subtle Knife*, Mrs. Coulter (whom Lyra discovers is her mother) says people with no daemons have "**no fear and no imagination and no free will**."⁶ In Will's world, humans do not have visible daemons, and it is assumed by the characters in Lyra's world that Will's daemon must be internal. The reader could conclude from all this that daemons represent, at least in part, the free will of the human. If this is true, then Adam and Eve seeing their daemons would imply that the Fall resulted in the discovery of their free will. This view matches the Gnostic and Luciferian belief that Satan was really an angel trying to awaken man to a wisdom intentionally withheld by a cruel God.

The Alethiometer and Magical Tools

Lyra is given a large, round, compass-like object—called an "**alethiometer**"—with hands like a clock that move and point to various symbols engraved on its surface when one asks questions (this is the "**Golden Compass**" of the title). Lyra discovers

she has a natural gift in “reading” the meaning of these symbols. Lyra becomes adept at this, and this compass gives her vital information on her journey as well as helps her to rescue children captured for Mrs. Coulter’s cruel experiments in the far North.

The alethiometer is clearly a divinatory device—an object used to elicit answers or information beyond natural means. The description of Lyra reading the alethiometer—**“I just make my mind go clear and then it’s sort of like looking down into water”**⁷—eerily evoked my experiences reading astrology charts for many years, which almost always took me into an altered state where I “connected” with the chart through its symbols. Lyra is even told that the scholar who invented this object was trying to measure the influence of planets **“according to the ideas of astrology.”**⁸ Lyra does, indeed, go into a type of trance while reading the alethiometer: **“... she found that she could sink more and more readily into the calm state in which the symbol meanings clarified themselves”** and describes it to someone as a **“different kind of knowing”**⁹ Indeed, the word **“trance”** is even used to describe this state.¹⁰ In the second book, Lyra talks about her mind **“going blank”** in order to read the alethiometer; and she is able to help Will learn to use the subtle knife because of her experiences with trance states with the alethiometer.¹¹

This altered state or **“trance”** is not only something found in occult practices, but it is often promoted and taught by occult teachers as part of **“divination”**—whether it is astrology, Tarot cards, reading objects (psychometry), using psychic abilities, or other similar practices. The late Sybil Leek (a well-known psychic witch) wrote that a psychic, while concentrating on a crystal during a reading, induces a trance both in the client and in the psychic in order to release **“dormant psychic awareness.”**¹² Another writer on occult techniques emphasizes the need for **“centering”** (another term for occult meditation and getting in the trance state) and advises that centering **“may become more important than the reading itself.”**¹³ An expert in crystal healing urges the readers of her book to use the crystal to help achieve **“an altered state of mind to access information which you otherwise wouldn’t know”** and advises that this state is also called a **“trance state”** which can allow one to **“see’ the future or past.”**¹⁴

When Will is being taught how to use the subtle knife, he is told Zen-like things by the previous knife bearer such as **“it’s not only the knife that has to cut, it’s your own mind,”** and **“You become the tip of the knife.”**¹⁵ The knife, like Harry Potter’s wand, has an innate intelligence or consciousness: **“the knife knows when to leave one hand and settle in another.”**¹⁶ This is the occult concept of a magical tool.

In the second book, when Lyra sees some symbols on the door to Dr. Mary Malone’s office, she is told that they are from the I-Ching (an actual, ancient, divinatory device from China). **Dr. Malone** (an ex-nun and scientist) has been trying to communicate with some responsive **“dark matter”** or **“Shadows”** using a computer. Lyra succeeds in getting some information from them by visualizing the alethiometer; and she tells Dr. Malone that contacting the Shadows can also be done with the I-Ching, which is only one of many ways of communicating with these dark particles. Dr. Malone later converses with the particles and learns that they are **“rebel angels.”** It is *these angels* who respond through divination in this book; it is *they* who give answers when Lyra consults the alethiometer. This is actually in sync with Biblical principles that divination elicits responses from *fallen angels*.

Witches and Shamans

In the book, there are witches—both good and bad—who live very long lives. Although they have daemons, which would indicate they are human, they have supernatural powers such as flying (using tree branches), not feeling cold, seeing things other humans can’t see, dealing with spirits, casting spells, and possessing **“powers”** who speak to them, who have powers above them, **“and there are secrets even from the most high”** (said by witch **Serafina Pekkala** to Lyra).¹⁷

As with witches in the real world, these witches use spells and herbs for healing.¹⁸ The witches appear mysterious, charismatic, wise, and powerful; and, except for one witch who kills a former lover, they play the role of good—and even heroic—characters, who often risk their lives to help or protect Lyra and Will. As the witch Serafina chants a healing spell over Will: **“Will thought he could feel all the atoms of his body responding to her command.”**¹⁹ The witches also have known about an ancient prophecy foretelling a special child (who turns out to be Lyra), who has a destiny that will affect all the worlds.

Just as Lyra seeks Lord Asriel, whom she learns in the first book is her father; so in the second book, Will is seeking his father—an explorer who disappeared when Will was young. Will’s father went into another world and became a shaman. A shaman is basically a sorcerer—one who allegedly heals and divines by communing with spirits via trance, potent herbs (drugs), and supposedly leaving the body.²⁰ Will’s father is able to summon the wind, control it, and to cause a storm, although this requires a deep trance and much effort.²¹ These actions are taken in order to defeat and kill men who are after one of the characters, Lee Scoresby.

The Church and The War on The Authority

It is clear there is some type of religious organization in Lyra’s world. There is reference to a past Papacy (with a **“Pope John Calvin”**)²² that was abolished and replaced with a consortium of **“courts, colleges, and councils”** known as the **“Magisterium,”** which includes an agency called the **“Consistorial Court of Discipline as the most active and most feared of all the Church’s bodies.”**²³ In our real world, the term *Magisterium* refers to the ruling authority of the Roman Catholic Church and consists of the Pope and the Bishops, so Pullman seems to be referring to this even though the words *Roman Catholic* are not used. By referencing John Calvin, Pullman also covers the Protestant tradition, presumably not to leave them out of the picture.

There is a **“General Oblation Board,”** which is presented at first as mysterious and later as evil. Mrs. Coulter is head of the Oblation Board that is directing the experiments severing children from their daemons. *Oblation* comes from a Latin term meaning *an offering or presentation to God*, and it is also a term used in the Roman Catholic Church.

Lyra has no favorable attitude toward this Church. There is an **“Intercessor”** at Jordan College (**Father Heyst**), who preaches, prays, and hears confessions. He loses hope for Lyra’s spiritual welfare due to **“her sly indifference and insincere repentances.”**²⁴

Lord Asriel acidly tells Lyra the Church used to castrate boys to keep them as singers, sometimes causing death in the process; so it would be nothing for the Church to be involved in cutting daemons away from children.²⁵

Mrs. Coulter’s cruelty and her connection to the Church in
—Continued on page 14

“Dark” Continued from page 13

the story indicate Pullman’s apparent negative view of organized religion, the Roman Catholic Church, and/or Christianity in general. In the second book, we read that the “**Magisterium**” has representatives in the philosophical research establishments “**to act as a censor and suppress the news of any heretical discoveries.**”²⁶

The second book reveals the rebellion against religious authority more clearly. We learn that Lord Asriel is gathering an army to complete “**the war that was fought in heaven eons ago.**”²⁷ A witch who has visited Lord Asriel tells her witch sisters about this army, and how he is planning to challenge the “**Authority;**” and she urges the witches to join him. She speaks of the “**hideous cruelties dealt out in the Authority’s name ... designed to destroy the joys and the truthfulness of life.**”²⁸ For this war, Lord Asriel needs a special knife called “**Æsahætt,**” which one witch says means “**god destroyer.**”²⁹ This is the “subtle” knife carried by Will, who is its special bearer. Much of the second book relays how Will comes to possess the knife, and how he learns to use it to cut into other worlds. He also discovers the knife cuts not only objects in the physical world, but also it is able to tear through the world of the spirit as well.

Ironically, the witch who so admires Lord Asriel complains to witch Serafina Pekkala (a friend of Lyra’s) that “**the agents of the Authority are sacrificing children to their cruel god.**”³⁰ She is referring to the daemon-cutting experiments; but in reality, it is the one true God of the Bible Who condemns the sacrifice of children to pagan gods.³¹ As God says in Ezekiel 16:20: “**Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured**” (NASB). Over and over again, archeology has come across the bones of children found with the sacrificial altars to ancient pagan gods.

Dr. Malone (the scientist and former nun) learns from the rebellious angels that they want vengeance for Satan being cast out. These angels tell her she must play the role of the “**serpent**” to Lyra and Will. As the second book closes, it is revealed that this war on the “**Authority**” will involve a re-enactment of the Fall with Lyra playing the role of Eve. The knife that Will bears is the one weapon that can defeat “**the tyrant. The Authority. God.**”³² Will is told by his father (the shaman) that the rebel angels from the previous war failed, because they did not have the knife. Will is reluctant to join in the fight. However, his father tells him that two powers have been fighting “**since time began;**” and this time, “**the right side must win;**” and he urges Will to take the knife to Lord Asriel.³³ It certainly cannot be accidental that the previous knife bearer who gives Will the “**subtle knife**” is named “**Giacomo Paradisi**” (i.e., Paradise).

The Watchers

The fallen angels take an increasingly prominent role in the story. Interestingly, they call themselves “**Watchers.**” This is not a biblical term; but it is the word used in occult ritual (ceremonial) magic for fallen angels, who are summoned by the practitioners of this occult art. This name seems to have originated with the pseudepigraphical** *Book of Enoch*, which has as its first section, “The Book of Watchers,” describing the fall of these angels. Sixteenth-century occultists John Dee and Edward Kelly developed Enochian magic and the Enochian language of angels based on messages channeled by Kelly from spirits claiming

they had communicated with Enoch. *Watchtowers* (the supposed dwelling place of these guardian spirits) are summoned in modern Witchcraft rituals.³⁴

A group of angels guard Lyra and Will, and two of these rebel angels come to Will in order to lead him to Lord Asriel. More about these angels is revealed in the third book, which will be evaluated in Part Two of this article.

A Word about The Movie:

The Golden Compass

Aside from the violence in this film, there are many frightening scenes; and on the whole, the tenor is harsh and foreboding with themes of fighting, killing, and death.

The word *church* is left out of the movie, although Pullman uses it freely in the book. Instead, the word “**Magisterium**” is used (also used in the book along with “**Church**”), and men from the Magisterium in formal, church-like clothes are the villains. There is talk of an “**Authority**” who has, through the Magisterium, repressed people and waged war on “**freethinking**” and free will—which is “**heresy**” to the Magisterium. Although God is not mentioned, it does not take a genius to figure out this is the “**Authority**” to whom the characters are referring.

As in the book, Lyra uses the divinatory alethiometer. It is interesting that both rebellion against God and a divination tool figure so prominently in the stories, since in the Bible, God tells Saul (through His prophet Samuel in 1 Sam. 15:23) that “**rebellion is as the sin of divination.**” Some Bible versions use the word *witchcraft* here, but the Hebrew term essentially refers to *occult practices that involve seeking answers from sources other than the one true God*; in some cases, the terms translated as *divination* or *witchcraft* are interchangeable.

Suitable Reading?

On *The Golden Compass* web site, there is a “**working alethiometer,**” and the site alluringly states: “**You can meet your daemon.**”³⁵ This invitation is repeated on the popular Neopets site where it says: “**Take the quiz to meet your animal companion. You will be asked 10 multiple-choice questions about your personality. At the end of the quiz, your score will be tallied, and the form of your daemon will be revealed.**”³⁶ At the very least, this idea of cuddly, friendly companions called “**daemons**” may desensitize children to the actual meaning of the word *demons* and to the idea/reality of their evil nature.

These notions—that fallen angels are good, and that Lord Asriel’s planned war on a God-like being called the “**Authority**” is a noble cause—are nothing less than direct attacks on the God of the Bible. The heroes (Lyra and Will) are contributing to this war, and the story is written so the reader will view them as sympathetic characters.

The positive references to divination, trance states, witches, spells, shamans, fallen angels, and waging a war on God are disturbing and ungodly themes and render these first two books entirely unsuitable for children. ☹

**Neo-Platonism*: A philosophical system combining Platonism with mysticism and Judaic and Christian ideas and positing one source for all existence, developed by Plotinus and his followers in the 3rd century AD. (*Encarta Dictionary*)

***Pseudepigraphical*: Anonymous or pseudonymous writings professing to be biblical, but not included in any biblical canon. (*Encarta Dictionary*)

"Garden" Continued from page 7

Jesus was opposed to all sexual immorality.

Responsibility and Blame

The emerging Evangelical Left affixes blame for the suffering of others around the world on America in general and American Christians specifically. Capitalism, in their view, is evil; while Socialism is divinely ordained. As pointed out earlier, Scripture must be abandoned or one must use the "Lucy" hermeneutic to come to these conclusions. The real reason many people are suffering is primarily due to living in a fallen creation, and this will remain the case until God sets it aright one day in the future. Sin has distorted the Imago Dei—or image of God—in man, and evil leaders allow and participate in evil for their own selfish gains.

Also, it seems one large contributing factor to the ongoing poverty of the third world is well-intentioned people who give little or no thought to the adverse consequences of their well-intentioned beneficence. Their "aid" often contributes to the continuing poverty of the very people they are trying to help! Shipping food, clothes, and other forms of temporary assistance are resulting in great harm, or so says Kenyan Economist James Shikwati:

Such intentions have been damaging our continent for the past 40 years. If the industrial nations really want to help the Africans, they should finally terminate this awful aid. The countries that have collected the most development aid are also the ones that are in the worst shape ... Huge bureaucracies are financed (with the aid money), corruption and complacency are promoted, Africans are taught to be beggars and not to be independent. In addition, development aid weakens the local markets everywhere and dampens the spirit of entrepreneurship that we so desperately need.²²

As far as we know, Shikwati is not a Christian; and yet, what he is saying is biblical—at least for us who believe that God has spoken outside of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John:

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. (2 Thess. 3:10-12, NASB)

Thoughtful Africans realize this even if the rising Evangelical Left does not. Or, perhaps, the Evangelical Left's zeal to build Utopia prevents them from giving credence to headlines like **"Africans to Bono: 'For God's Sake Please Stop.'**"²³ Why? Because these misdirected zealots "feel better" about themselves when they see themselves as saviors riding to the rescue of victims of racism and colonialism ... using other people's money, we might add. They do not see third-world people as equals who can raise themselves up from poverty:

For the thousands of foreign-educated lawyers, businessmen, and architects from the Diaspora who are leaving cushy corporate jobs to return home with their skills and their dynamism to open businesses, it's about creating wealth, not reducing poverty. Africa is not a victim in need of saving: it's a land of opportunity.²⁴

Hillary Clinton's 50-billion-dollar AIDS package, however well intentioned, will not eliminate the AIDS pandemic, but it will, in all likelihood, make the problem worse. How can this be?

As Joe Farah notes:

Her proposal would provide health insurance for all HIV patients in the U.S. and promote "evidence-based" prevention programs, which typically means condoms and needle-exchanges rather than emphasizing abstinence from risky sex and drug use.²⁵

In other words, the very thing that could slow down and eventually eliminate this pandemic—refraining from sexual promiscuity and recreational intoxicants—cannot be addressed. The good intentions of the Utopians within and without the Church are disconnected from Scripture and history. The very thing that transformed the culture in the first four centuries of Christianity was Christians living and teaching all of Scripture as though it were all "Red Letter." The transforming power of the Gospel caused the corrupt and hedonistic Roman Empire to abandon homosexuality, pedophilia, abortion, infanticide, drug use, misogyny, and a myriad of other pagan practices (Romans 6:17-18). As Christians increasingly abandon their calling in exchange for the false "Kingdom of the Utopians," we will continue to see these same kinds of vile practices rising up in force again.

But while this is true, it is not unexpected—at least not to God. The Bible teaches us that the end times would be characterized by apostasy and evil—that people would no longer endure sound doctrine, but would empower and listen to preachers who would say the things they want to hear (2 Tim. 4:3).

Canadian Apologist Tristan Emmanuel holds Christian leaders culpable for this, and he sadly comments:

Unfortunately, too many Christian leaders have deliberately made peace with the creeping socialism and the rampant secularism that are all around us. Instead of teaching congregations the important truths that extend beyond the pabulum of having a "personal relationship" with Jesus, the leaders in today's seeker-sensitive churches have avoided inculcating a full Christian world and life view. That's not to say that the "personal relationship" isn't important. Of course it is. It's fundamental. But that "relationship" doesn't exist as an end in itself. It is supposed to bear fruit, including fruits of personal responsibility, public morality and other cultural outworkings.²⁶

But too many of today's church leaders are reluctant to talk about this. We have been repeatedly told that "doctrine divides." But what is really behind this sentiment isn't so much love for the "lost" but fear that the "bottom line" will be affected. Unfortunately, the real horror behind the leadership vacuum is that the modern church has become a "big corporation" in which the standards of political correctness, and not truth, drive the marketing arm of most seeker-sensitive churches.²⁷

Emmanuel goes on to decry that lay Christians are not engaging and impacting our culture:

But the final, and saddest reason people don't engage—as Christians—in the culture wars raging around them is the fact that they don't know how to. They're not getting the training, they're not being "equipped." They don't know how, for example, to counter the argument that Christian thought should have no influence in civil government. They stand with mouths agape when their critics tell them that Christians are no different from the Taliban when they try to "impose their values" on the rest of society. They don't have a clue how to mount a coherent response to the tautological tripe and polemic piffle of poseurs like Richard Dawkins and

his “God Delusion.” I worry for the future of Christianity in North America. While of course I acknowledge that God is in control, the Bible does say that the Lord will not be kind to religious leaders who fail to take their responsibilities seriously. In Hosea, the prophet utters the familiar words: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” But he is addressing the religious leadership of his day when he continues that thought in the very next line: “Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me.”²⁸

We got into this ministry to help people identify cults and teach Christians how to witness to people who have been caught up in cults and new religious movements. We never expected to see in our lifetimes the apostasy that is spreading like a dark cancer throughout Evangelicalism. It is very sad, disheartening even. We never sought a platform to criticize the Church, and we do not enjoy doing it. No, that is an understatement. We *hate* having to do so, but we have no choice. If we do not criticize blatant heresy, false teachings, and false prophecy *within* the church, we shall have to apologize to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses) and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)! Never in our wildest dreams did we suppose that apostasy would overtake Evangelicals as fast as it seems to be doing. Some Evangelical leaders who were once solid Bible teachers are turning from the truth and towards fables (2 Tim. 4:4). Doctrinal illiteracy within the Church is astounding and growing. The Church has turned away en masse from the Bible and turned to Psychotherapy in order to address our emotional and spiritual needs. Deliverance ministries allegedly cast out of Christians demons of poverty and obesity; and very popular so-called Christian “revivals” often involve people barking like dogs and getting “drunk in the Spirit.” Word-Faith pastors promise us all health and wealth; and others go merrily along making false prophecies that are then merely “forgotten” when they do not come to pass. Many Christians always seem to be looking for the next “big new thing”—hence we have the emerging church, which, unfortunately, is emerging *out of Christianity and into something else entirely*. And Mysticism and New Age thought has gained a large foothold in Evangelical churches. It is sad to watch, but Praise God, it is not universal. There are good teachers, good preachers still, who labor long and hard to faithfully and biblically fulfill their calling. And God is still in His Heaven.

... evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have been convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 3:13-15, NIV)

To all of our brothers and sisters who are fighting the good fight: Keep the faith, and don’t waver in your personal commitment to the true God and the true Gospel. Your faithfulness is known to God, and your reward will be worth the effort.

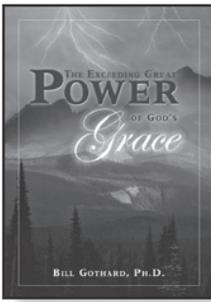
I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:7-8, NIV) ☐



Don and Joy Veinot are co-founders of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., which is a national apologetics ministry and mission to new religious movements based in Wonder Lake, IL. He and Joy, his wife of 37 years, have been involved in discernment ministry as missionaries to New Religious Movements since 1987. Don is on the Board of Directors for Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR), a consortium of discernment ministries. In addition to being staff researchers and writers for the *Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Journal* and co-authors of *A Matter of Basic Principles: Bill Gothard and the Christian Life*, they have been published in the *CRI Journal*, *PFO Quarterly Journal*, *Campus Life Magazine* and other periodicals. Don was ordained to the ministry by West Suburban Community Church of Lombard, IL at the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, Israel in March of 1997. They have two adult children and three grandchildren.

ENDNOTES:

- 1 For information on Manson, see http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/notorious/manson/murder_1.html
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Bill Gothard's

The Exceeding Great Power of God's Grace

by Pastor Barry D. Black
with contribution by
L.L. (Don) Veinot, Jr.

A litmus test of Biblical theology is what a person believes concerning grace. One's view of grace will determine what they believe concerning salvation and daily Christian living. This was one of the main arguments between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformers. The Reformers argued that *grace* was *God's favorable attitude toward the undeserving* or, as we say it in short hand: *unmerited favor*. Roman Catholicism rejected this idea, and in "Canon XI" declared it "**anathema:**"

Canon XI.—If any one saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost,¹ and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favor of God: let him be anathema.

As we read through *The Exceeding Great Power of God's Grace*, we did note one positive point. Bill Gothard certainly knows how to use a Bible concordance! In fact, he states in the "Introduction:"

Every single verse in the New Testament on the subject of grace is included in this study.²

He then organizes the verses under nine categories (which are the nine chapters of this 78-page book)—each of which "**explains an aspect of the power of God's grace.**"³ This is a book review and, as such, is not intended to be an exhaustive critique. That likely would require a book at least as long. Rather, we will highlight some of the biggest issues.

During the 1980's and early 1990's, we attended no less than half a dozen of Bill Gothard's "Basic Seminars," and no less than two "Advanced Seminars." we distinctly remember during that period, Gothard defined "grace" as "the power and desire to do God's will joyfully." That definition is far removed from the orthodox, Biblical definition of *grace* which, again, is: *God's unmerited favor*. The English word *grace* comes from the Greek word *charis* meaning *gift*, and it was in common usage among the pagans in the culture in which the epistles were penned. They certainly would not have understood it to mean "the power and ability to do God's will joyfully;" and if they had, the question then would have been, "Which god or gods?" since the word was in use prior to Christianity. Rather, the apostles employed the word commonly used to denote "*unmerited favor*" or "*God's favorable attitude toward the undeserving;*" and they applied it to God's attitude toward undeserving sinners, because it is something not deserved, and it cannot be earned or merited.

With that in mind, the problems immediately begin as we read the "Introduction" which is titled, "**God's grace: an attitude or a power?**" As he often does, Gothard will begin his teachings with an "either/or" fallacy. For example, in regard to grace, Gothard quotes a portion of Romans 6:14 "... *not under*

the law, but under grace" (KJV). He continues:

These words have been taken from their context and given a meaning that is virtually opposite to the intent of Scripture. To many people today, the phrase means that they are not under any obligation to fulfill the righteousness of the Law of God but are under a blanket indulgence called grace so that they can do whatever they think is right and receive God's approval.⁴

In Gothard's view, Christians are categorized into one of his two views: (1) We either must be obligated "**to fulfill the righteousness of the Law of God,**" or (2) we place ourselves "**under a blanket indulgence called grace so that they can do whatever they think is right and receive God's approval.**"

Why does he only give those two possibilities (i.e. those two "either/or" arguments)? He apparently ignores any other possibilities and sets up a straw man argument which is fairly easy to kick over. In doing so, he seems to ignore the obvious problems with his "either/or" options of "fulfilling the righteousness of the law" or "a blanket indulgence." First of all, where does the Scripture tell us that we are obligated to fulfill the righteousness of the law? It doesn't; and strangely, he doesn't quote any verse(s) to prove this is even a possibility. The closest he comes is in quoting the first part of Romans 8:4, which states:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (KJV)

What happens when we back up and include Romans 8.3 as it leads into verse 4?

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (KJV)

It is evident from the context that this verse concerns our position in Christ. Gothard made the verse apply in the *practical* sense. In other words, his view is basically that God gives grace to the Christian (that is as long as the Christian is *eligible* or *willing* to receive God's grace), in order to enable them to fulfill "***the righteousness of the law.***" Are we hearing the faint sound of Rome in the pages of this book?

Secondly, a student of the Scriptures will realize the Bible *never* encourages the Christian to sin. Grace *does not* give us a "**blanket indulgence.**" The Apostle Paul was horrified at the prospect and declared in Romans 6:2, "***May it never be!***" (NASB) God does not bestow grace to those who *do deserve* it. In fact, the opposite is true. He bestows grace to those who *do not deserve* it, and could *never deserve* it (according to Romans 3:23, "***... all have sinned ...***"). That is why it is called *grace*, that is why it is offered to everyone, and that is why it includes any and every sin. The Bible has numerous warnings for the disobedient believer; however, God's grace certainly covers every sin (cf.

1 John 2:2). To add insult to injury, Gothard provides no evidence that some define *grace* as meaning a believer could “do whatever they think is right and receive God’s approval.” He simply makes the assertion. Gothard is obviously misrepresenting those who hold the Biblical, orthodox view of grace.

The most important aspect concerning grace is what a person believes concerning eternal salvation. In chapter 3 “**Qualified by Weakness for Salvation by the Power of Grace!**” he quotes Ephesians 2:8-9:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. (KJV)

He then makes the following statement:

... the activating power of salvation is the grace of God mixed with our faith, both of which are free gifts of God.⁵

The problems here start with the claim that something is needed for “the activating power of salvation.” That would mean that salvation is dormant until ignited by a spark of something—in this case, the combination of two things called “grace” and “faith.”

Here again, we hear the echoes of Rome who goes out of her way to use words like “free” and “undeserved” and even “favor” when they define *grace* as “favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God ...”⁶ But then, only three pages after this definition, the *Catechism* turns right around and discusses the Catholic doctrine of “Merit,”⁷ which completely obliterates any notion that grace is “free” or “undeserved” in Catholic theology. In reality, faith is sinful man’s response to the offer of salvation which is extended solely because of the grace of God, “God’s attitude of favor toward the undeserving.” When it comes to salvation, if a person believes what God has said—which, indeed, is the response of faith—the believing sinner is born again. The power of salvation is always present and active in the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). If a person rejects what God has said (in this case concerning salvation), then he or she has rejected God’s grace and the free gift of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. In fact, when a person attempts salvation by works (i.e. anything other than or in addition to faith), then he or she rejects God’s favorable attitude toward the undeserving (grace) and the appropriation of the free gift (i.e. eternal life).

Finally, in chapter 4 entitled, “**Enabled With Power Over Sin Under the Reign of Grace!**” after quoting Romans 8:2-4, Gothard states:

Based on this passage and other important passages, grace does not free us from the righteousness of the Law. Instead, it gives us the power to carry out God’s righteousness so that sin does not reign in our lives.⁸

Again, he repeats the error of trying to make a positional passage (Romans 8:2-4) apply as a practical passage (a passage for daily living). The problem is that “the righteousness of the Law” (to which Gothard often refers) is fulfilled in Christ and is applied to us when we receive eternal life (i.e. salvation, born-again, etc.). Grace—the favorable attitude toward the undeserving—is the very reason that the righteous fulfillment of the Law by Christ is applied to those who believe.

Then on page 29, Gothard makes an astounding statement: “There is no reason or room for carnality in the Christian life,” (and then he quotes Romans 8:6-8). The Apostle Paul, a chapter earlier, refutes this claim as he makes a statement concerning his own condition in Romans 7:14-25. Paul leads up to this comforting proclamation:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1, KJV)

In addition, Paul confronts the problem of carnality (living in the “flesh,” or “old nature”) in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. Carnality is a very real problem that can happen to any believer at any time. Gothard could have more accurately stated that carnality in a Christian’s life will result in consequences (chastisement, reaping that which is sowed to the flesh, etc.).

After reading this book, we think it is safe to say there is no room for the Biblical view of grace in Bill Gothard’s theology. The man certainly can give numerous references, but in *The Exceeding Great Power of God’s Grace*, Bill Gothard either misrepresents grace or demonstrates that he has no idea what it is. ☒



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ENDNOTES:

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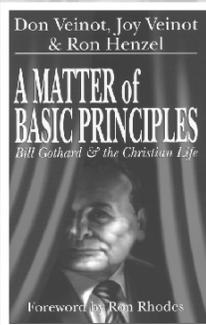
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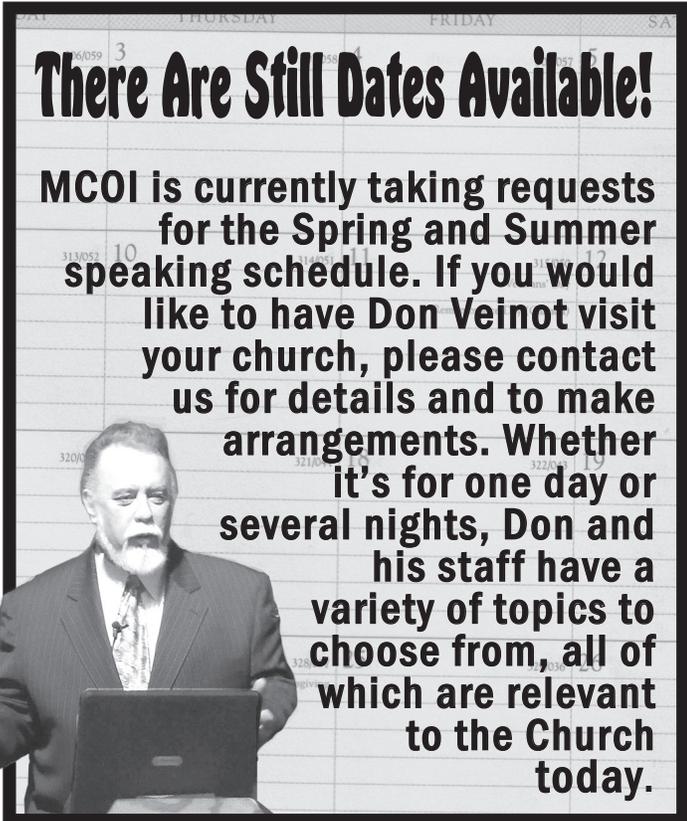
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