



Eternal Perspectives

We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen...

*When you look at
a watch,
you assume
there was a
watchmaker.*

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Ten Major Flaws of Evolution by Randy Alcorn and Jim Darnall

I wrote the following article many years ago, but it needed to be thoroughly revised and updated. Thanks to Jim Darnall for adding some important new information.

1. The complexity of living systems could never evolve by chance—they had to be designed and created.

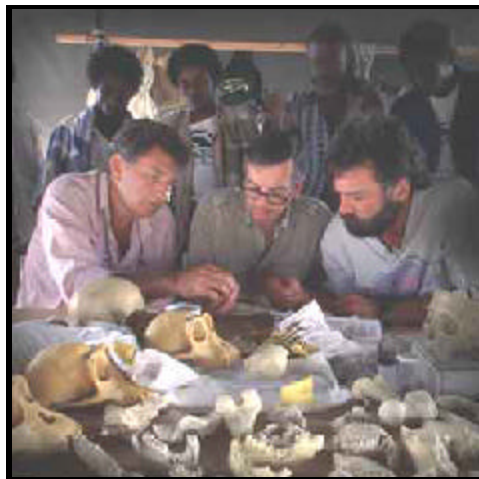
A system that is irreducibly complex has precise components working together to perform the basic function of the system. (A mousetrap is a simple example.) If any part of that system were missing, the system would cease to function. Gradual additions could not account for the origin of such a system. It would have to come together fully formed and integrated. Many living systems exhibit this (vision, blood-clotting, etc.). When you look at a watch, you assume there was a watchmaker. A watch is too complex to "happen" by chance. Yet such living systems are almost infinitely more complex than a watch. They could not be random—they simply had to be designed and created.

2. The high information content of DNA could only have come from intelligence.

Information science teaches that in all known cases, complex information requires an intelligent message sender. This is at the core of the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI). DNA is by far the most compact information storage/retrieval

system known. A pinhead of DNA has a billion times more information capacity than a 4-gigabit hard drive. Ironically, evolutionists scan the heavens using massive radio telescopes hoping for relatively simple signal patterns that might have originated in outer space, all the while ignoring the incredibly complex evidence of superior intelligence built into every human's DNA. While we're waiting to hear signs of intelligence behind interstellar communication, we're ignoring those built into us.

3. No mutation that increases genetic information has ever been discovered.



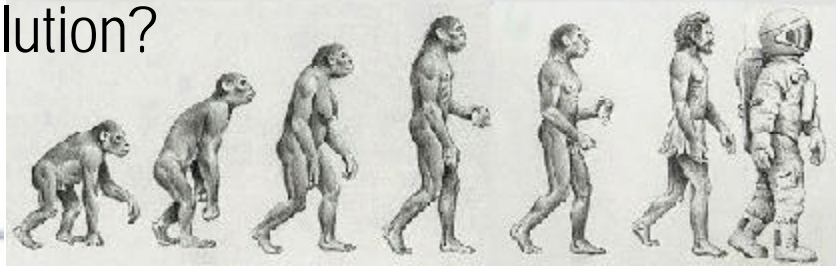
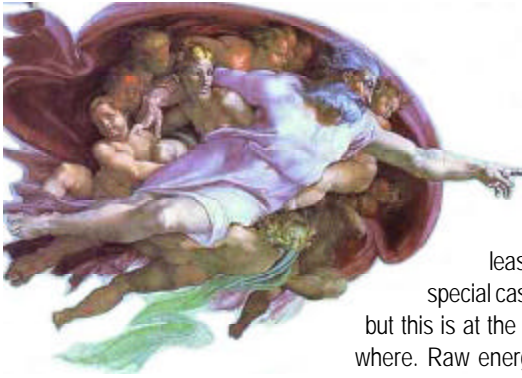
Mutations which increase genetic information would be the raw material necessary for evolution. To get from "amoeba" to "man" would require a massive net increase in information. There are many examples of supposed evolution given by proponents. Variation within a species (finch beak, for example), bacteria which acquire antibiotic resistance, people born with an extra chromosome, etc. However, none of the examples demonstrate the development of new informa-

tion. Instead, they demonstrate either preprogrammed variation, multiple copies of existing information, or even loss of information (natural selection and adaptation involve loss of information). The total lack of any such evidence refutes evolutionary theory.

4. Evolution flies directly in the face of entropy, the second law of thermodynamics.

This law of physics states that all systems, whether open or closed, have a tendency to disorder (or "the

Creationism or Evolution?



Raw energy cannot generate the complex systems in living things, or the information required to build them.

least energetic state"). There are some special cases where local order can increase, but this is at the expense of greater disorder elsewhere. Raw energy cannot generate the complex systems in living things, or the information required to build them. Undirected energy just speeds up destruction. Yet, evolution is a building-up process, suggesting that things tend to become more complex and advanced over time. This is directly opposed to the law of entropy.

5. There is a total lack of undisputed examples (fossilized or living) of the millions of transitional forms ("missing links") required for evolution to be true.

Evolution does not require a single missing link, but innumerable ones. We should be surrounded by a zoo of transitional forms that cannot be categorized as one particular life form. But we don't see this—there are different kinds of dogs, but all are clearly dogs. The fossils show different sizes of horses, but all are clearly horses. None is on the verge of being some other life form. The fossil record shows complex fossilized life suddenly appearing, and there are major gaps between the fossilized "kinds." Darwin acknowledged that if his theory were true, it would require millions of transitional forms. He believed they would be found in fossil records. They haven't been.

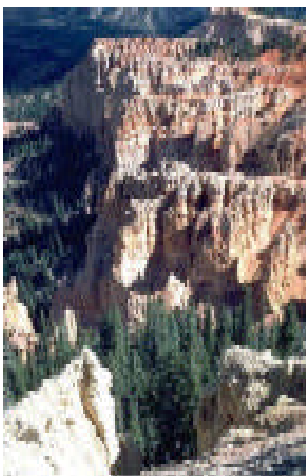
6. Pictures of ape-to-human "missing links" are extremely subjective and based on evolutionists' already-formed assumptions. Often they are simply contrived.

The series of pictures or models that show progressive development from a little monkey to modern man are an insult to scientific research. These are often based on fragmentary remains that can be "reconstructed" a hundred different

ways. The fact is, many supposed "ape-men" are very clearly apes. Evolutionists now admit that other so-called "ape-men" would be able to have children by modern humans, which makes them the same species as humans. The main species said to bridge this gap, *Homo habilis*, is thought by many to be a mixture of ape and human fossils. In other words, the "missing link" (in reality there would have to be millions of them) is still missing. The body hair and the blank expressions of sub-humans in these models doesn't come from the bones, but the assumptions of the artist. Virtually nothing can be determined about hair and the look in someone's eyes based on a few old bones.

7. The dating methods that evolutionists rely upon to assign millions and billions of years to rocks are very inconsistent and based on unproven (and questionable) assumptions.

Dating methods that use radioactive decay to determine age assume that radioactive decay rates have always been constant. Yet, research has shown that decay rates can change according to the chemical environment of the material being tested. In fact, decay rates have been increased in the laboratory by a factor of a billion. All such dating methods also assume a closed system—that no isotopes were gained or lost by the rock since it formed. It's common knowledge that hydrothermal waters, at temperatures of only a few hundred degrees Centigrade, can create an open system where chemicals move easily from one rock system to another. In fact, this process is one of the excuses used by evolutionists to reject dates that don't fit their expectations. What's not commonly known is that the majority of dates are not even consistent for the same rock. Furthermore, 20th century lava flows often register dates in the millions to billions of years. There are many different ways of dating the earth, and many of them point to an earth much too young for evolution to have had a chance. All age-dating methods rely on unprovable assumptions.



8. Uses continue to be found for supposedly “leftover” body structures.

Evolutionists point to useless and vestigial (left-over) body structures as evidence of evolution. However, it's impossible to prove that an organ is useless, because there's always the possibility that a use may be discovered in the future. That's been the case for over 100 supposedly useless organs which are now known to be essential. Scientists continue to discover uses for such organs. It's worth noting that even if an organ were no longer needed (e.g., eyes of blind creatures in caves), it would prove devolution not evolution. The evolutionary hypothesis needs to find examples of developing organs—those that are increasing in complexity.



9. Evolution is said to have begun by spontaneous generation—a concept ridiculed by biology.

When I was a sophomore in high school, and a brand new Christian, my biology class spent the first semester discussing how ignorant people used to believe that garbage gave rise to rats, and raw meat produced maggots. This now disproven concept was called “spontaneous generation.” Louis Pasteur proved that life only comes from life—this is the law of biogenesis. The next semester we studied evolution, where we learned that the first living cell came from a freak combination of nonliving material (where that nonliving material came from we were not told). “Chemical Evolution” is just another way of saying “spontaneous generation”—life comes from nonlife. Evolution is therefore built on a fallacy science long ago proved to be impossible.

Evolutionists admit that the chances of evolutionary progress are extremely low. Yet, they believe that given enough time, the apparently impossible becomes possible. If I flip a coin, I have a 50/50 chance of getting heads. To get five “heads” in a row is unlikely but possible. If I flipped the coin long enough, I would eventually get five in a row.

If I flipped it for years nonstop, I might get 50 or even 100 in a row. But this is only because getting heads is an inherent possibility. What are the chances of me flipping a coin, and then seeing it sprout arms and legs, and go sit in a corner and read a magazine? No chance. Given billions of years, the chances would never increase. Great periods of time make the possible likely but never make the impossible possible. No matter how long it's given, non-life will not become alive.



10. The scientific method can only test existing data—it cannot draw conclusions about origins.

Micro-evolution, changes within a species on a small scale, is observable. But evidence for macro-evolution, changes transcending species, is conspicuous by its absence. To prove the possibility of anything, science must be able to reproduce exact original conditions. Even when it proves something is possible, it doesn't mean it therefore happened. Since no man was there to record or even witness the beginning, conclusions must be made only on the basis of interpreting presently available information. If I put on rose-colored glasses, I will always see red. I accept the Bible's teaching on creation, and see the evidence as being consistently supportive of that belief. When dealing with origins, everyone who believes anything does so by faith, whether faith in God, the Bible, himself, modern science, or the dependability of his own subjective interpretations of existing data. I would rather put my faith in God's revealed Word.

Recommended books on evolution:

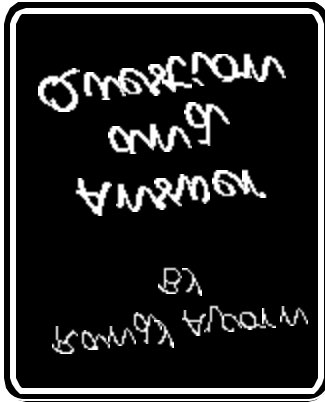
- Refuting Evolution I and II* (Dr. Jonathan Sarfati)
- The Answers Book* (Revised and expanded by Ken Ham, Dr. Jonathan Sarfati, Dr. Carl Wieland)
- Not By Chance!* (Dr. Lee Spetner)
- Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (Dr. Michael Behe)
- In the Beginning was Information* (Dr. Werner Gitt)
- Darwin on Trial and Defeating Darwinism* (Phillip Johnson)
- A Case Against Accident and Self-Organization* (Dean L. Overman)
- The Creation Hypothesis* (J. P. Moreland)
- The Case for a Creator* (Lee Strobel)

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EPM Information:

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Randy's Response to a Jewish Boy's Position on Abortion

Dear Mr. Alcorn,

I am a 13-year-old Jew. In performing research regarding denial of the Holocaust, I stumbled upon your page. While I disagree vehemently with your anti-abortion position, that is not about what I am concerned. The contents of the article were very helpful, and I wanted to commend you on your efforts to chastise the atrocious belief that the Holocaust never occurred.

Sincerely, Daniel
(name changed to protect identity)

Daniel,

Thanks for your thoughtful note. How kind of you to write. I'm always glad to get letters from someone your age. Quite a few young people read my books, especially my novels, and I like hearing from them. I wanted to share with you some things to consider.

On the abortion issue, I take no offense at your disagreement, but I would encourage you to take a closer look. I will not try to be critical of you, but I will just express my convictions, in the same way that you are free to express yours. Perhaps you and I can both learn from each other.

Several years ago I spent time with a national prolife group in Israel, where Israeli citizens expressed their concerns that preborn children are being dehumanized in the way that Jews were in Nazi Germany.

Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg argues that the key to the destruction of the Jewish people was the use and acceptance of such terms as "useless eaters" and "garbage" that blind society to the once-obvious fact that these were real people. Well, even though they're now demeaned and dehumanized by terms like "product of conception," it was once obvious to everybody that preborn children were real people.

In my book *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments*, I cite page after page from prominent scientists, from medical school textbooks, affirming each human life begins at conception. Do you really believe all these scientists are wrong?

Daniel, I don't think people should be discriminated against for race, gender, size, age, or place of

residence, do you? So when people say of preborn babies, "They're just a few inches big," or "They're just a few days or weeks or months old," or "They're still living inside their mother," I don't discriminate against them because of their size, age, or place of residence. (It's like saying, "He's just a Serbian," or "He's just a Muslim," or "He's just a Gypsy," or "She's just a woman.")

Because of your Jewish heritage—which you are right to treasure, I highly recommend that you read Robert Jay Lifton's powerful book, *The Nazi Doctors: Study in the Psychology of Genocide*. As a Jewish scholar, he documents how normal and intelligent medical professionals endorsed and participated in cruel and deadly surgeries with shocking ease. Well, that is exactly what has happened in America (and many other places, including, tragically, Israel) regarding abortion.

I hope you have not been influenced to accept abortion just because it is legal. Remember, the law once protected unborn children, but was changed in 1973. As Jews had their legal rights stripped from them in Nazi Germany in the 1930s, so preborn children were systematically stripped of their rights in the late '60s and early '70s. But just because the laws protecting them were changed in Germany, doesn't mean the Jews became subhuman. Just because it became legal to kill Jews doesn't mean it became

right. And just because killing preborn children was legalized, doesn't mean it became right. Legality and morality are not the same thing. Those who fail to see that become collaborators in the atrocities of their place and time.

The slippery slope starts with the concept that some lives have more worth than others. Historically, this has always slid society into further human exploitation. Dr. Leo Alexander was a consultant to the Secretary of War at the Nuremberg Trials. Writing in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, he points out that the Holocaust began with a subtle shift in medical ethics:



Whatever proportions these crimes finally assumed, it became evident to all who investigated them that they had started from small beginnings. The beginnings at first were merely a subtle shift in emphasis in the basic attitude of the physicians. It started with the

As Jews had their legal rights stripped from them in Nazi Germany in the 1930s, so preborn children were systematically stripped of their rights in the late '60s and early '70s.

acceptance of the attitude . . . that there is such a thing as life not worthy to be lived. This attitude in its early stages concerned itself merely with the severely and chronically sick. Gradually the sphere of those to be included in this category was enlarged to encompass the socially unproductive, the ideologically unwanted, the racially unwanted, and finally all non-Germans. (Leo Alexander, "Medical Science Under Dictatorship," New England Journal of Medicine (14 July 1989):39-47.)

Dr. Josef Mengele, the notorious "butcher of Auschwitz," epitomized the Nazi ideal of fastidious devotion to research and medicine, killing innocent people in the name of bettering humanity. I'll never forget reading the papers several years ago when they first opened Argentine files concerning Dr. Mengele. It turns out he spent his postwar years...what would you guess?...performing abortions. I admit, Daniel, I did not find this in the least surprising. Those who commit atrocities against one group of innocent people should be expected to commit them against another.

I read that Hitler killed 275,000 handicapped people before he started killing Jews—when you kill one group of people, it makes it easier to kill another. Did you know that child abuse has risen dramatically in America since abortion was legalized? Think about it—if it's fine to kill a child before birth, what's the big deal about beating up the same child after he's born?

In 1948, with the Holocaust still fresh in its memory, the World Medical Association adopted the Declaration of Geneva that said, "I will maintain the utmost respect for human life, from the time of conception; even under threat, I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity." In 1949 the World Medical Association also adopted the International Code of Medical Ethics which said, "A doctor must always bear in mind the importance of preserving human life from the time of conception until death."

History has given us a perspective that at the time few people had. I believe one day history will give us a perspective on the killing of unborn children that few have today. It is relatively easy in retrospect to see the evil of American slavery or Nazi cruelty, but at those times and places few saw them because they were being nationally accepted and defended and people became gradually desensitized. The real trick is seeing the horrors being committed in our own day that are nationally accepted and defended. We have

become desensitized to the truth of the humanity and worth of the unborn, and the moral evil of abortion. We need to break out of the political correctness of our time and look with fresh and sane eyes to see if we too have bought into the propaganda that says killing some group of people—in this case, the unborn—is perfectly fine and right and moral.

Did you know that every doctor doing an abortion violates the fundamental historic creeds of the medical profession? The fifth-century B.C. Hippocratic oath was a resolution intended to forever separate killing and healing in the medical profession. Previously killing and healing had been incongruously wedded together in the practices of pagan "doctors," who were more like witch doctors. In the Hippocratic oath, which was taken routinely by doctors for centuries, physicians swore they would never participate in inducing an abortion.

Daniel, let me appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures that I think we both believe. Proverbs 31:8-9 says, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

In our organization we stand up for those who are persecuted for race, gender, religion, age, size, you name it. And if anyone falls into the category of people who "cannot speak for themselves," I think it is preborn children, created in the image of God.

Martin Luther King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." By accepting injustice to the unborn, we open the door to those who perpetuate injustice to women, Jews, and the handicapped, among others. Just as there were those who were so indoctrinated with the anti-Semitic rhetoric and assumptions of their culture that they embraced them without ever analyzing their inaccuracy or their evil, there are many today so indoctrinated with the anti-preborn rhetoric and assumptions of their culture, that they embrace them without ever analyzing their inaccuracy or their evil. Frankly, I am pro-baby for exactly the same reasons I am pro-Jewish and pro-black and pro-woman. I think it is entirely inconsistent to pick and choose which humans' rights we will defend and which we will deny.

One last question to consider: the issue of choice.

Laws against false advertising restrict a businessman's right to free speech. Laws against discrimination infringe on the freedom of choice of those who would treat minorities unfairly. When others' rights are at stake—and particularly when their very lives



The slippery slope starts with the concept that some lives have more quality than others.

The prochoice position always overlooks the victim's right to choose. The women don't choose rape. The blacks didn't choose slavery. The Jews didn't choose the ovens. And the babies don't choose abortion.

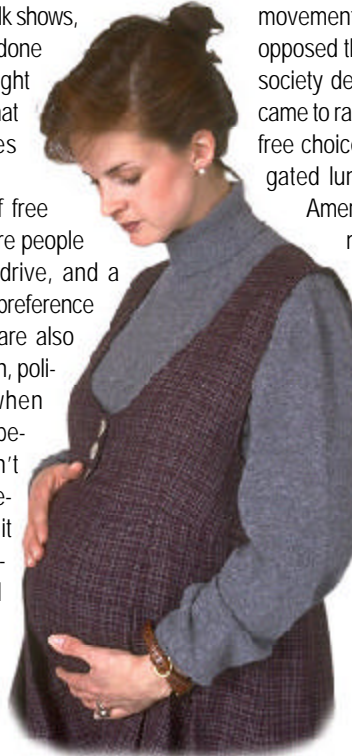
are at stake, any decent society must restrict the individual's freedom of choice. Is an innocent person being damaged by a woman's choice to have an abortion? If not, no problem. If so, it is a major problem that society cannot afford to ignore.

"Freedom to choose" is too vague for meaningful discussion; we must always ask, "Freedom to choose *what?*"

It's absurd to defend a specific choice merely on the basis that it is a choice. Yet if you read the literature and listen to the talk shows, you see that this is constantly done by prochoice activists. "The right to choose" is a magic slogan that seems to make all choices equally legitimate.

All of us are in favor of free choice when it comes to where people live, what kind of car they drive, and a thousand matters of personal preference that harm no one else. We are also prochoice in matters of religion, politics, and lifestyle, even when people choose beliefs and behavior with which we don't agree. But most of us are decidedly not prochoice when it comes to murder, rape, kidnapping, armed robbery, child abuse, and genocide. When we oppose the "right to choose" rape or child abuse or the right to kill people because of their race or religion, we aren't opposing a "right," we're opposing a "wrong." And we're not narrow minded and bigoted for doing so. We're just decent people concerned for the rights of the innocent. Do you see the point, Daniel? To be prochoice about someone's right to kill is to be anti-choice about someone else's right to live.

Whenever we hear the term *prochoice*, we must ask the all-important question, "What choice are we talking about?" Given the facts about abortion, the question really becomes, "Do you think people should have the right to choose to kill innocent children if that's what they want to do?"



Nearly all violations of human rights have been defended on the grounds of the right to choose.

The slaveowners in this country a century and a half ago were prochoice. They said, "You don't have to own slaves if you don't want to, but don't tell us we can't choose to. It's our right." Those who wanted slaveholding to be illegal were accused of being anti-choice and anti-freedom, and of imposing their morality on others.

The civil rights movement, like the abolitionist movement one hundred years earlier, vehemently opposed the exercise of personal rights that much of society defended. It was solidly anti-choice when it came to racial discrimination. Whites historically had a free choice to own slaves, and later to have segregated lunch counters if they so chose. After all, America was a free country. But the civil rights movement fought to take away that free choice from them. Likewise, the women's movement fought to take away an employer's free choice to discriminate against women.

Nearly every movement of oppression and exploitation—from slavery, to prostitution, to pornography, to drug dealing, to abortion—has labeled itself prochoice. Likewise, opposing movements offering compassion and deliverance have been labeled anti-choice by the exploiters. At least with prostitution, pornography, and drugs, the victim usually has some choice. In the case of abortion, the victim has no choice. He is society's most glaring exception to all the high-sounding rhetoric about the right to choose and the right to live one's life without interference from others.

The prochoice position always overlooks the victim's right to choose. The women don't choose rape. The blacks didn't choose slavery. The Jews didn't choose the ovens. And the babies don't choose abortion.

If you ever want to talk about this—or about the question of who Jesus was and is—I'm here, Daniel. Best wishes, my friend. You are obviously a very intelligent and articulate young man. I pray that God will use for his glory—and for the good of others—the gifts he has given you.

Randy Alcorn



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Son of Martyr Ed McCully Responds to *Safely Home*

March 11, 2004

Dear Mr. Alcorn,

I wanted to write to let you know how much I have enjoyed reading your books and to thank you for the time and energy you spend in your writing. Your writing is inspiring, motivating, and challenging lots of people in their walk with God, and also introducing many to God and reaching some for God, and my prayer is that you are encouraged in your service and that you know the Lord is using you.

My wife and I just got back from a vacation that included our first ever cruise and a visit to Panama to see a little bit of the filming of the movie "Walk His Trail" which is the life story of Mincaye, who was one of the killers of the Nate, Jim, Ed, Pete and Roger that you mentioned near the end of *Safely Home*.



Barb Younderian and daughter Beth, Marilou McCully and son Steve, Marge Saint and son Steve, Olive Fleming, Elisabeth Elliot

Mincaye accepted Christ about 4 years after he took part in killing those 5 men and has been walking God's trail ever since, and is now one of the leaders of his tribe's Church. I'm sure this movie will reach lots of folks for Christ!

Anyway, when we left on our trip I wanted some good stuff to read, and my brother recommended *Safely Home* and I was hooked as soon as I read the dedication, and was fascinated, challenged, motivated and inspired every page of the way.

I was totally moved and inspired *before* I got to page 384 where Li Quan is in heaven meeting Graham Staines and his 2 sons and Juan Coy and Hudson Taylor and the first martyr Stephen, and the

tears started flowing when he met Nate and Jim and Pete and Roger and my dad, Ed McCully.

I've been proud of my dad my whole life, although I was too young when he died to remember him, but reading page 384 of *Safely Home* without having any idea that was coming was one of the most touching moments of my life. It meant more to me than I can ever express on paper, but I wanted to thank you for including my dad and his four buddies with all of those other folks. What a thrill it is to think of all those folks hanging out together in heaven. I read that part to my mother and she was very moved as well, so I'm writing to thank you on behalf of our whole family.

Thanks again for all you do serving our Lord, and don't feel like you have to respond to this letter. I know you must be a very busy guy—just keep on doing good for God.

Gratefully, Steve McCully
P.S. I loved *Deadline* also!

On 5/3/04 Steve added another note:

My dear, sweet mother has died and gone to heaven, and we are caught between rejoicing for her and how happy she is being in the presence of her Lord and Savior and reunited with my dad after over 48 years, and crying every time we turn around from missing her so much already.

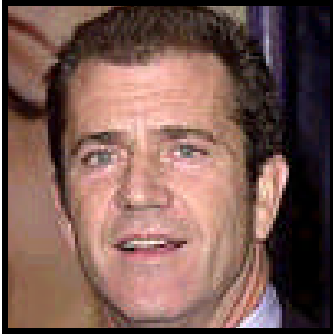
My mother had lived with my wife and I for the last eight and a half years, and she just died after her fourth different cancer...first 1988, then 2000, then 2002 and finally this one. It just happened that I chose to read *In Light of Eternity* first from the pile of books you sent us, and I'm still not through, but he had me crying again where he described the death of his mother and telling his daughter about it. I am learning a lot about heaven from Mr. Alcorn, and I'm already eager to read the book he is working on. Heaven is sounding better and better.



Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, Jim Elliot

On January 2, 1956, five missionaries were massacred by the Auca tribe in Ecuador, while bringing the knowledge of Christ to them.





An Apology and Clarification About Mel Gibson

by Randy Alcorn

I unwisely included a sentence that was unnecessary and which undercut an important point I was trying to make. I sincerely apologize.

Warning: Don't ever take an email you wrote to a small group of friends and turn it into a printed article, unless you first edit it very carefully, or ask someone else to.

I made that mistake in the last *Eternal Perspectives* when I included "Reflections the Day After Seeing *The Passion of the Christ*."

I praised the movie, despite its minor inaccuracies, saying, "The essentials of the Gospel were preserved" and "There is no doubt in my mind that seeking hearts could come (and are coming) to a genuine faith in Christ through this movie." As I stated, "To say that of a popular box-office mainstream movie in this culture is nothing short of astounding."

I then expressed my sincere appreciation for Mel Gibson's labors, but offered a caution about putting him on a pedestal. I said, "Let's align ourselves wholeheartedly with the central truths this movie powerfully portrays—precisely because they are true to Jesus and God's Word—but let's be very careful and cautious when it comes to joining the Mel Gibson fan club. If Mel Gibson is discredited, and we have failed to maintain a separation between him and the biblical content of the movie, then the gospel will be discredited. (And even if this doesn't happen—and I pray it won't—elevating celebrities still isn't healthy, for us or them.)"

I also said, "I think Mel Gibson is genuine, and I'm certain that God has used him with this film. But celebrity-worship is idolatry and is a dangerous game, already too rampant with our own evangelical celebrities. It is unworthy of the bride of Christ, who should have eyes only for Jesus."

All this I believed and still believe. Unfortunately, I clouded this by including one line that began, "We could find out tomorrow he is..." and gave three examples of sins that are very common in our society, and particularly common in Hollywood. I emphatically stated, "I have no reason to believe any of these things." I didn't and I don't. By asking "What would happen if?" I was trying to alert us to how important it was to separate the movie's message from the director.

Many celebrities exalted by Christians have in fact fallen, and the gospel has been maligned as a result.

Though particularities are usually more helpful than generalities, in this case it was the opposite. In

retrospect, I should not have given examples of the kind of sins that could result in scandal, even though I stated I had no reason to believe they would happen. I received a half dozen letters from people who were offended, and likely their letters represented many more who didn't write. It's common for me to offend people because of stating the truth, but in this case, I unwisely included a sentence that was unnecessary and which undercut an important point I was trying to make. I sincerely apologize.

My positive words about Mel Gibson's work on this movie were completely eclipsed by that single sentence, so much so that the disclaimer was overshadowed. An editor would probably have caught this. I should have asked someone to read it over before printing it, but I didn't.

One writer said, "Adding a disclaimer in parenthesis didn't make it OK! Warning people not to elevate Mr. Gibson and to focus on Jesus was great advice, but you should have stopped there." I agree. She was absolutely right.

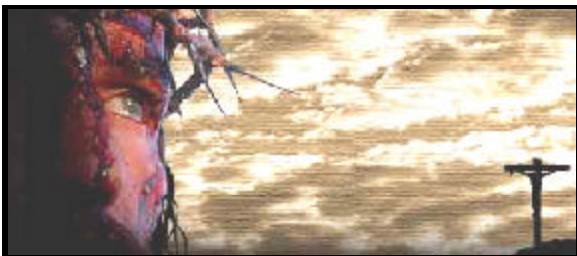
Another said, "I don't find either grace or truth in this section of your review." This response illustrated how I managed to bury my comments, which were 95% positive, under my unwise statement.

Having sincerely apologized, I will now quote from the letters of two readers whose words, I fear, illustrate exactly the concern I was raising:

"You can never make me think like you do, that Mel Gibson will someday cause a scandal...I see nothing but goodness coming from this man. Please do not write about people you do not know and think they are just like anybody else."

Personally, I think Mel Gibson would say that he is like anybody else, and that he would never say of himself—any more than I would say of myself—"I see nothing but goodness coming from me." I saw Mel Gibson interviewed and heard him freely acknowledge that he's an unworthy sinner. So am I.

Another woman wrote, "When I read your article, I was very upset...Mel Gibson is a great man who truly the dear Lord Jesus has chosen as his instrument to spread His message. Mel is very humble and more mature than almost anyone in recent years...You must want him to fall...Mr. Gibson is following Jesus in the way Jesus wants all of us to follow Him. Instead of tearing him down, we should (if we're truly Christian) support him. I would suggest you look into your own motives for writing the article. I read envy and jealousy into it."



In reality, I did not tear down Mel Gibson. My article expressed strong support and respect for him for this undertaking. And I certainly don't want him to fall. On the contrary, I've prayed that he would not fall, but would grow in grace and enjoy a closer walk with Christ. I wish you would pray the same for me. I will be delighted if Mel Gibson continues to grow and becomes a powerful long-term ambassador for Christ, as, for instance, Chuck Colson has. (Colson is a celebrity convert who has stayed true to Jesus.)

As for envy and jealousy, I'm fully capable of either. But the truth is, I wouldn't trade places with Mel Gibson for all the money and fame in the world—indeed, those are crosses I would not want to bear. I pray God will give him the grace and strength to stand true.

So, I ask for two things: first, please forgive me for including that ill-advised sentence. Second, please treat Mel Gibson as he wants to be treated, and should

be treated even if he didn't want to—a sinner saved by Christ's unfathomable grace, demonstrated on the cross.

I repeat what I said in the article: "Pray for him, absolutely, selectively agree with and support him, yes, but don't make him—or anyone else—Christianity's poster boy or spokesperson...Every time Christians get mesmerized by and try to capitalize on fame and celebrity, it ends up hurting them, biting us and undermines rather than elevates our Lord."

I end by repeating my summary concerning *The Passion of Jesus Christ*: "Because the central and dominant message of the movie is true to Scripture—to the most vital core of the gospel—we are right to respond in profound gratitude to God for bringing the person and work of Christ to theaters and secular talk shows across the nation, and around the world."

... The central and dominant message of the movie is true to Scripture...



Randy Alcorn Speaking at Cannon Beach Conference Center

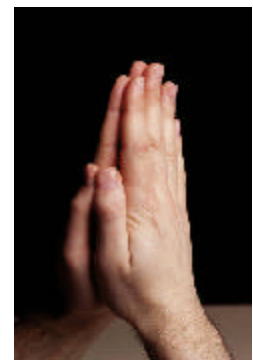
Randy Alcorn will be speaking at Cannon Beach Conference Center in Cannon Beach, Oregon, August 28-September 3, 2004. He'll be bringing 10 different messages on a variety of subjects including the New Earth. To register or for more information, call 800-745-1546 or visit their website at www.cbcc.net

Prayer Requires Christian Living by Saint Augustine

My brothers and sisters,
Let us be wary of praying to Christ with our mouths
But remaining mute in our life.
Who is it that prays to Christ?
The person who spurns worldly pleasures.
The person who says—
Not in words but in conduct—
"The world has been crucified to me
and I to the world" (Gal 6:14).
The person who lavishly gives to the poor (Ps 112:9).

Rest assured, my brothers and sisters,
You will receive.
Ask, seek, knock;
You will receive and find,
And it will be opened to you.
However, do not ask, seek, and knock
With your voice alone
But with your life as well.
Do the works your life should never be without.

Saint Augustine: Sermon 88



It Is Time to Take a Stand: *Four ways Christians can respond to the same-sex marriage debate*

by Dennis Rainey, *Director, Family Life*



The battle over same-sex marriage will redefine marriage and family and therefore redefine our nation.

Rosie O'Donnell, the former television talk show host turned gay activist, shared an interesting personal story with Diane Sawyer on ABC's "Primetime Live." Rosie told how her 6-year-old son, Parker, asked, "Mommy, why can't I have a daddy?"

Stop for a moment and consider the implication of little Parker's question. Here's a boy who will never know the joy of being raised by a father. He'll never experience a dad tucking him in bed at night, reading him a book, wrestling him to the ground, or tossing him a football. Why?

Rosie—and those who advocate the reckless move toward same-sex marriage—appears to be more concerned about a personal agenda rather than what is best for the child. Rosie's son longs for a father but has two mothers instead.

Rosie's response to her son's question? She said, "Because I'm the kind of mommy who wants another mommy."

Rosie's gain is her son's loss.

Tragically, America is standing on the threshold of raising a generation of children in same-sex homes where there will be either no father or no mother to love, care or provide a model for masculinity or femininity. This is indeed about "human rights"—a child's "rights". A boy and a girl ought to have "the right" to feel the whiskers of a father and the soft, smooth skin of a mother when he or she gets a good night kiss on the cheek.

The battle over same-sex marriage will redefine marriage and family and therefore redefine our nation. As the moral standard bearer of the culture, the Christian community dares not to be silent. We cannot abdicate our responsibility to be "salt and light" by allowing a vocal few to steam roll the masses. I believe now, more than ever, is the time for the church to let its light shine before men in such a way that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

There are those who think this issue does not affect them or their families. This notion is unfortunately inaccurate. Let me give you just three examples how I believe life in America will change in the months and years ahead:

First, expect educators who will insist that the pictures in your child's textbooks be changed to show same-sex couples as "normal." Your child will likely be required to attend "sensitivity training" classes to relate to children who are raised in same-sex homes. I believe private schools will *not* be exempted from this process.

Second, churches and pastors will legally be restrained from taking biblical stands against the practice of homosexuality. Such prophetic pronouncements will be declared intolerant and discriminatory.

There could be a day in the not-too-distant future when churches are forced to provide same-sex weddings.

Third, same-sex marriage will not be the last stop on this runaway agenda of those who would socially reconstruct America. As Americans adjust to the new reality of gay marriage, these social engineers

will lobby for polygamy, group marriage, and open marriage.

At this rate, we are going to experience the deconstruction of the most basic unit of our nation—marriage. Dr. Carl Zimmerman studied the civilizations of history and in 1947 wrote a powerful book, *History and Civilization*. As a Harvard sociologist, his research documented that *what took place in the family also impacted the civilization at large*. When the family began to fall apart, that civilization unraveled. He noted that the last phase of a family was marked by sexual perversions of all kinds and a redefinition of marriage. This generally represented the final stage of societal disintegration.

We're already seeing this downward spiral in Scandinavian countries. Marriage has fallen out of favor as a trusted institution. Statistics report that 60 percent of all the children being born in Scandinavia *are born out of wedlock*. These children will not know



what it means to grow up in a home that has a mommy and a daddy in a committed relationship called marriage and family.

I confess, I used to be one of those who thought I wouldn't see the deconstruction of the family in my lifetime. But after talking to a few friends across the country and taking the time to learn more about the issue, I can see the snowball is rolling downhill and picking up speed. This progression of a decomposing family structure will have a *profound* impact on my family and yours.

There will be no escape for our children and grandchildren. Or you.

◆ What are you going to do when your new same-sex neighbors and their kids begin to call your kids to come over and play at their house?

◆ What will you do when the evening news shows two men or two women kissing, again as though it is normal?

◆ What will you do when your child is forced to take classes that teach tolerance and acceptance of a wide range of alternate lifestyles?

◆ What will you do when your daughter brings home a young man she's in love with who grew up in a home with a lesbian couple?

As a young man, how could he possibly know how to treat his wife?

Now is the time for the Christian community to take clear, courageous action.

First, **if you're not fully informed about what's happening, get informed today.** In many regards, the battle for marriage has just begun. Learn how this watershed moment in our history is going to impact your children, your communities, and your nation.

Second, **help educate others.** We at FamilyLife have created a brochure that you can hand out to friends and insert into your church



bulletin. The brochure explains God's design for marriage and why the definition of marriage should not be changed. It also provides direction on how to respond to the same-sex marriage movement.

We have also provided a downloadable PDF file of the brochure on our website with printer-ready art that you can share with your pastor to put in the bulletin. Let me challenge you to download the information now, and take it with you to your church on Sunday and ask your pastor to use this information as a bulletin insert.

Third, **pray.** The message of the Bible from beginning to end has always been that our God is the God Who's in charge. He is the Sovereign Lord of the universe. Isaiah 59:1-2 says,

Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between

you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

As we pray, some of us may need to begin with a prayer of repentance over our attitude toward the sin of homosexuality

and people who practice it. There has been hatred, anger, a failure to be compassionate, and a lack of proactive love in reaching out to victims of AIDS who are in the homosexual community. Ask the Lord for forgiveness and then ask Him to show us how to be compassionate and to love those who do not yet know Him.

Finally, **we need to step up and stand for the truth.** Isaiah 59:14-15 warns,

Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the street, and uprightness cannot enter. Yes, truth is lacking; and he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey.

If we do not press back against that which is evil, and if we do not lovingly and compassionately confront the darkness with the truth, we (our marriages, families and children) will be preyed upon by the very evil that we were meant to conquer. Indeed, it is time to take a stand.

Will you join me?

(Used by permission of Family Life, a division of Campus Crusade for Christ. "Preserving The Family Brochures" [20 pack] can be ordered at the Family Life website, www.familylife.com/familyroom or call 1-800-FL-TODAY)

Websites Ministering to Homosexuals:

www.desertstream.org

(Desert Stream Ministries, ministering the life of Jesus to the sexually & relationally broken)

www.exodus-international.org

(Exodus International, the largest Christian referral and information ministry dealing with homosexual issues in our world today)

www.lifeguardministries.org

(LifeGuard Ministries, offering freedom from homosexuality through Jesus Christ)

www.livehope.org

(Living Hope Ministries, extending information and services to help understand homosexuality from a redemptive Christian Perspective)

www.loveinaction.org

(Love In Action, finding freedom in Jesus Christ)

www.wheregraceabounds.org

(Where Grace Abounds, guiding and supporting men and women who seek to understand sexuality and relationship and to inspire all people to know and personally appropriate God's plan for their sexuality and relationships)

www.settingcaptivesfree.com

(Setting Captives Free, providing Christ-centered hope and freedom)

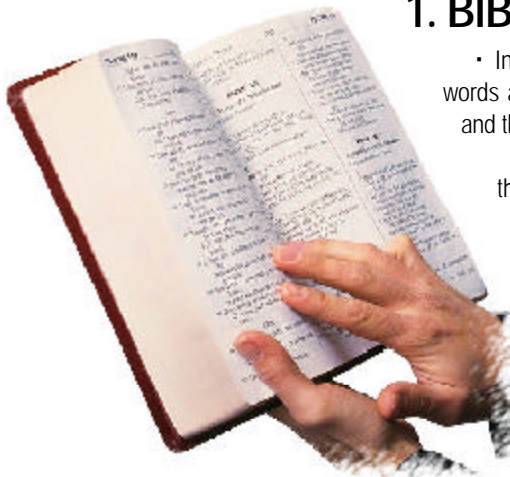
www.sbministries.org

(Stephen Bennett Ministries, a pro-family organization led by a former homosexual)

Distinctive Teachings of Biblical Christianity

by Randy Alcorn

I was asked some years ago to state "the essentials" of Christian beliefs. Much could be added and some subtracted, but this is what I came up with.



1. BIBLE:

- Inspired by God ("God-breathed"); words are the expression of God's mind, and therefore trustworthy
 - Writers used own style and thoughts but God revealed, guided, and protected from error
 - Solely and finally authoritative; all else is subordinated to it and judged by it, including personal experience, human wisdom, or supposed new revelation (spoken or written)

2. GOD:

- Creator of all things in their original form
- Personal—thinks, feels, chooses
- All-knowing, all powerful, infinite, unchangeable, sovereign
- One God, existing in three persons (the Trinity)
 - Distinct from all that He created
 - Everywhere present and vitally concerned with human affairs
 - Self-revealing; communicates to men
 - Loving and gracious
 - Holy; separated from and committed against all that is contrary to His character
 - His character is the basis of all morality.

3. MAN:

- Created in God's image
- Personal—thinks, feels, chooses, communicates
 - Unique, different from other creation—not simply in degree, but in kind
 - Created to have intimate relationship and fellowship with God
 - Since the Fall, man is committed to rebellion against God in thought and action.

4. SIN:

- All that is contrary to God's character and command ("missing the mark")
- Severed man's relationship with God
- All men are sinners.
- Death (separation) is the necessary consequence of sin.
 - Because of sin, man is destined for eternal death (Hell, i.e., separation from God).
 - Man is left with a "hole" in his heart that only God can fill; but he attempts to fill it with power, pleasure, possessions, religious activity, etc.—all are dead-end streets that can't bring fulfillment.

5. CHRIST:

- Second person of the triune God (Son)
- God in the fullest sense of the term
- Sent to earth, born of a virgin—man in the fullest sense
 - Holy and perfect; only sinless man
 - Willingly took upon Himself the sins of all men; suffered ultimate punishment for their sins (death penalty)
 - Rose from the dead, conquering sin and death
 - Ascended to heaven, where He is now
 - Coming again to bring: 1) judgment on sin and rebellious humanity; 2) deliverance for His people
 - Christ is unique—not just a great teacher or one in a string of prophets.
 - The central figure of God's plan of human history
 - Provided eternal salvation for all who will know Him

6. SALVATION:

- Recognizing God's holy character and one's own sin and guilt before God, and asking Jesus Christ to forgive his sin and bring him into right relationship with God
 - According to His promise, God forgives.
 - Takes place immediately upon accepting Christ—fruit confirms this
 - Is purely a gift of God—cannot be worked for, earned, or achieved; can only be gratefully accepted
 - Man could never have salvation apart from Christ.

Biblical Christianity is fundamentally a relationship with Christ, not a religion about Christ.

• Christ is the *only* way of salvation—not “a way,” but “*the way*”—salvation is in no one or nothing else.

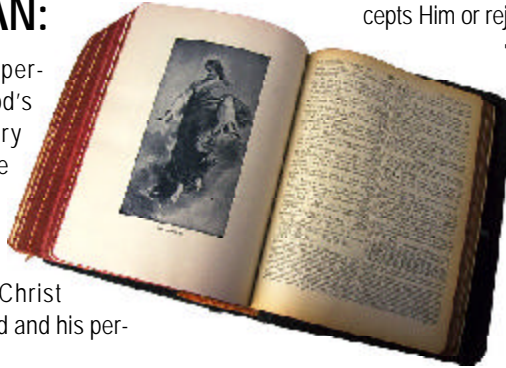
but *only* by actively trusting in Christ for his salvation.

- Anyone who wishes may become a Christian, as empowered by God’s Spirit
- God has offered the gift to all—everyone accepts Him or rejects Him

7. CHRISTIAN:

• One who has personally embraced God’s gift of substitutionary atonement in Christ, one who has recognized and repented of his sin and put his faith (belief and trust) in Jesus Christ alone as the Son of God and his personal Savior from sin

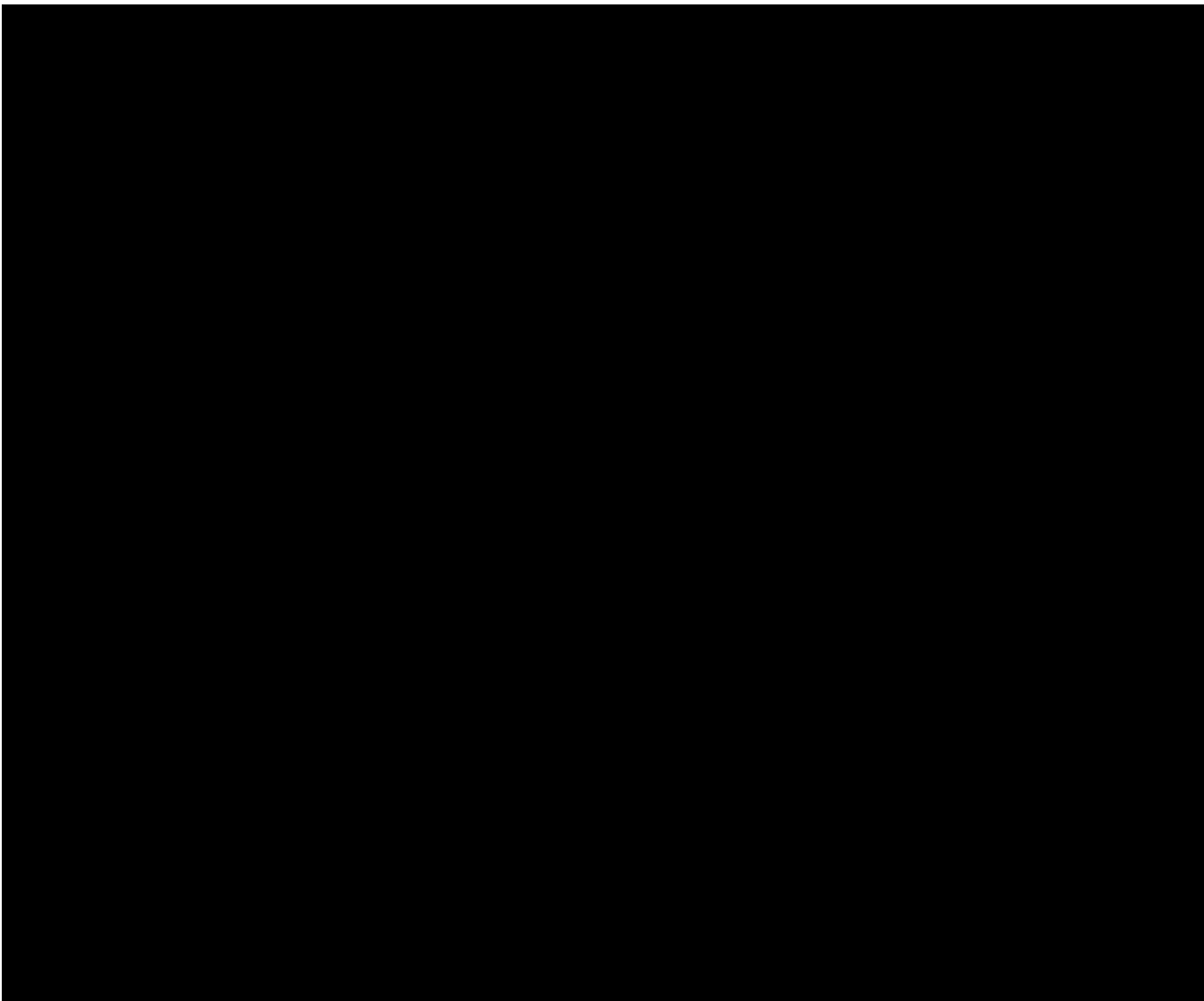
• One does *not* become a Christian by doing good things, going to church, being baptized, or being raised in a Christian family or country,



- There is no middle ground—to not *accept* Christ is, in fact, to *reject* Him. Rejection is by choice or default
 - Becoming a Christian is accepting a *Person*, not a package or a religious system.

NOTE: All of the above statements are clearly taught in the Bible. Specific references can be supplied upon request.

Christ is the only way of salvation—not “a way,” but “the way.”





...Ideas that come through reading give us the privilege of the sovereignty of our own imagination, unlike pictures which enforce sovereignty upon us.

Bring Me the Books by Ravi Zacharias

The Old Testament millennial motif was portrayed as “Each man under his own fig tree.” I have often needed my father-in-law that with his confessed minor vice; for him it would be better stated, “Each man in his own donut shop.” We both wholeheartedly concur that as a culinary delight, a donut has a ring of innocent pleasure to it, albeit brief. But that is not all my father-in-law and I have in common. We also speak to each other in wistful terms of the finest used bookstores in the world that we have visited. It gives the nostalgic mood a whole new lump in the throat. I must concede, however, that the most unforgettable story he recounts of his bookstore experiences has all the others I have heard soundly beaten.

He tells of the time he was doing his usual perusing in a sophisticated used bookstore in Toronto, which caters to the academic community, rich in classical tradition. Suddenly, into that silent, reflective setting, strode a rugged and roughshod individual in his greasy overalls, and full-throatedly inquired of the man behind the counter how much it would cost to buy 128 feet of books. Somewhat confounded by this oxymoronic request—for never before had he sold such scholarly works by the foot—the owner betrayed his bewilderment and asked the purchaser what exactly he had in mind. As he eagerly awaited the answer, he was keenly aware that every reader within earshot had paused from his or her reading, ears pinned in hopes of new enlightenment.

The mystery was unraveled as the buyer revealed that he had been hired by a group of trade union leaders, who were to be hosting their educated counterparts in management in an effort to break a deadlock in some highly volatile negotiations. To decorate their offices, and convey the intimidating air of being literary and ideological heavyweights, they had ordered books by the length that would adorn their walls and terrify the opposition.



Solomon reminds us that there is nothing new under the sun, and so I suspect that this was not the first such scenario in history. Somewhere, somehow, it has been lived out before with different details, but identical intentions. After all, jockeying for literary superiority is as old as the printed page. In fact, we

have all had occasion to purchase as classics, books that have served ulterior purposes. It is said that a lady once wrote to Dr. A. W. Tozer, the famed mystic, and thanked him for his Christian journal, for it perfectly fit her bird cage. Groucho Marx once responded to a friend turned author, “From the moment I picked your book up until I laid it down, I was convulsed with laughter. Some day I intend to read it.” I suspect there are books like that in our experience, which, while not quite generating hilarity when held in hand, have nevertheless never entered the mind. One critic of

Stephen Hawking's best-selling book, *A Brief History of Time*, which shattered all records on the best-seller list in the United Kingdom, said that it would be the most bought and least read book in recent memory.



I recall four years ago, when our family was visiting John Bunyan's home in Bedford, England, being so overwhelmed by the worldwide impact of his book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Outside of the Bible, no book in history has been translated into so many languages and enjoyed such voluminous sales. As I left his house, now a museum, I remarked to the woman at the ticket desk how thrilling it was that an ordinary tinker had told the story of salvation in such lucid and imaginative terms—possibly better than anyone else in post-biblical times. Even our little boy, Nathan, then 8 years old, had read *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the children's version. She looked up somewhat embarrassed and said, “I suppose it is a great book; I have never read it.” That statement should make Ripley add another anecdote to his limitless publication. And so it is, that even one surrounded wall-to-wall by one of the bestselling books of all time could leave it unread.

I am absolutely convinced that the books one reads possibly help mold one's life more purposefully and eternally than we ever realize, and that it is the humiliation of the word in our time that has beggared us more than any other factor. May I propose three vital strengths that reading imparts to the life of a person, and the cautions that pertain.

First of all, our Lord Himself reminded us of the superiority of the word, even to that of the

miraculous event. We are prone to tenderly set a halo on the forehead of the supernatural, ever exaggerating its value. Yet, of the surviving five brothers after the death of the rich man, our Lord said they had sufficient grounds for accountability, as they already had Moses and the Prophets. Indeed, raising one from the dead would evoke no different a response from he whose will was wantonly wrongheaded. Reading entails accountability, and an informed mind, though not a guarantee for wise living, is nevertheless indispensable to it. Reading becomes even more important as modern communication goes for the sound bite and misses the larger context.

Second, ideas that come through reading give us the privilege of the sovereignty of our own imagination, unlike pictures which enforce sovereignty upon us. It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but it took words to pay such a compliment to the picture, and oft times a word can engender a thousand pictures. The memorable words of Alexander Pope come to mind, as he described the miracle at Cana of Galilee: "The conscious water saw its Master and blushed." What bliss those words evoke, stirring even the slumbering spirit. And it is still words that link our lives each day as vehicles of our thoughts, our intents, and our promises. In his autobiography, Charles Darwin said that when his life played itself into his scientific hypothesis, he experienced the staggering impoverishment of losing all appreciation for music. The melody, in effect, had left his life, and his scientific theories struck a discordant note in the face of life's romantic symphony. To that note he sold his being. So it is, I believe, when we lose the power to read; life becomes monotonous and imprisons us in the desolation of our own little sounds.

Finally (and this is more a hazard than a gain), reading merely as a conduit for impressing other people is somewhat akin to a sprinkler in a garden that sends forth distant drops of nourishment, but leaves the immediate terrain hard, dry and unproductive.

I began this article linking the idea of pleasure to the bite of a donut bringing momentary delight. I dare suggest that a good book is as delectable as a slice of infinity, lasting a lifetime. Let me explain. C. S. Lewis in his book, *Screwtape Letters*, has an incredibly powerful exchange take place between a senior and a junior devil. The junior one is being urged to go and lure an individual suspended between going God's way or the devil's way. "Go get him away from the

Enemy," says the senior devil. Sometime later the young imp returns and says, "We lost him, he has gone all the way over to the Enemy's side." "How did that happen?" inquires the evil one. "Well," comes the answer, "he started to take a long walk every morning, just for the pleasure of it, and on these walks, the Enemy became more audible to him. Further, he read a good book, just for the pleasure of it, and the Enemy found him more receptive." "That's where you blew it," comes the response. "If you had only had him

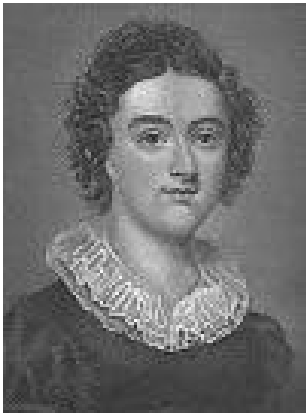
walk for the sake of exercise, it would have become dreaded and tedious, devoid of pleasure. If you had only had him reading so he could parrot the contents to someone else, reading would become burdensome and boring rather than pleasurable. We could then have easily snared him."

The application is obvious. The nearer we are to legitimate pleasure the nearer we get to God's voice, and one of the greatest pleasures of all is a good book. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy from prison, "Bring me the books," for a book could break the mind out beyond the walls and spell freedom. Charles Dickens reminded his children to read well, but above all the books in the world to read the scriptures, for the Bible alone was supreme, the Book of books. To that I add, God Himself must believe in books or he would not have given us one.

Maybe someday, someone may meet up with those union leaders and gently remind them that while many books around us may convey the impression of being well read, only the Bible gives to us the ultimate guidelines of what it means to read well. The heavenly motif may not be out of line, envisioned as each person in his or her own bookstore, especially when graced by the greatest Author of all. What a book signing that will be! It would be great to see our friend in his overalls there.



The nearer we are to legitimate pleasure the nearer we get to God's voice, and one of the greatest pleasures of all is a good book.



Ann Hasseltine Judson: *America's First Female Foreign Missionary*

How do you explain a God who is eternal to a people who have never heard such a concept, let alone have words in their language to accurately describe God, Heaven, and eternity?

What would make a twenty-one-year-old, single Massachusetts girl want to travel half-way around the world to live in a society that had no knowledge of God?

After accepting Christ as her Savior at the age of sixteen, Ann Hasseltine experienced the New England religious revival of 1806, prompting her to dedicate her life to God. By the age of twenty-one (1810), she knew she wanted to be a missionary in a foreign land. While attending a missionary meeting hosted by her father, she heard four young students from Andover Theological Seminary petition to be sent as foreign missionaries. One of them was Adoniram Judson, who was invited to the Hasseltine home for dinner. They were soon engaged.

On February 5, 1812, they were married. The next day they started on a four-month ocean journey for Calcutta, India, with six other missionaries. At the time, both the government of India and the East India Company were opposed to missions. Soon the missionaries were ordered to leave the country.

So on July 13, 1813, they began their work in a land that had never heard the gospel, the seaport of Rangoon, Burma (located between India and China).

After learning Burmese, they began translating the Scriptures, but ran up against roadblocks. How do you explain a God who is eternal to a people who have never heard such a concept, and have no words in their language to accurately describe God, Heaven, and eternity?

As they worked among the people, they hoped that their lives would convince the Burmese people of their need for Christ. But after nine years, they had only eighteen converts.

Ann became part of the culture, adopting Burmese traditional dress, and forming a society of Burmese women who met together to pray and read the Scriptures. In her own way, she sought to overcome

a society that didn't allow women many rights, education, or say in who they were to marry.

In 1822 bad health drove Ann back to America. She used this time to write a history of the Burmese mission, *American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire*, which inspired many to become missionaries, especially women.

The year 1823 brought Ann back to her home in Rangoon, and also war between Britain and Burma. The Burmese associated Americans with the British, and thus threw Adoniram into prison, assuming he was a spy. They also detained Ann, who was pregnant, making her a prisoner in her own home. She was able to secretly provide Adoniram and other prisoners with supplies and food, and dedicated her time trying to influence the governor to free her husband.

Three months after their daughter was born, Adoniram caught a tropical fever. Ann cared for him until the guards secretly moved him to another prison eight miles away. Ann followed, but became seriously ill with smallpox and spotted fever.

When the war ended, Adoniram was freed and joined his wife and daughter after being imprisoned for eighteen months. But because of the weakness brought on by the illnesses, Ann died of a fever at the age of thirty-seven. Her daughter died six months later.

Was their sacrifice worth it? After twenty-four years, Adoniram had translated the entire Bible into Burmese. By the time of his death in 1850, Burma had sixty-three churches with 163 missionaries and native church leaders to carry on his mission.

(This article was compiled and edited by Bonnie Hiestand using the following sources: Glimpses: Ann Hasseltine Judson: First American Woman Missionary; Christian Biography Resources [www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biorpanjudson.html]; History's Women: The Unsung Heroines [www.historyswomen.com/AnnJudson.html].)

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