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Jubilee

recovering biblical foundations for our time

REMEMBERING CANADA'S CHRISTIAN PAST

Dr. Michael Wagner

LIVING IN SIN...WELL

Jeffery Ventrella, ESQ

FORMING A CHRISTIAN CULTURE

Dr. Michael Haykin



CHRIST & Culture

THE **meaning** OF CULTURE *Joe Boot*

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JOSEPH
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Founder of EICC

IN THE SECOND CENTURY A.D., Bishop Ignatius of Antioch in Syria was hauled across Asia Minor and Thrace to be torn apart by beasts at Rome for the entertainment of the mob. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of the Apostle John, was arrested and burned to death about 156 A.D., The relative of the magistrate who arrested him was also Christian, and had tried to persuade Polycarp to save himself by saying, “Caesar is Lord”; he refused and perished in the flames. The question that this raised then, just as it does now, is why should Christians make such a big issue of so trivial-sounding a matter as merely speaking some series of words? Church historian Roland Bainton writes:

The Christians added to the Jewish formulation, “Hear oh Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord” the further confession, “Christ is Lord.” Not only the God of heaven and earth but a malefactor crucified by the government of Rome was declared to have an authority exceeding that of the emperor of Rome. The cult of Christ and the cult of Caesar were incompatible.¹

That statement needs to be reflected on and absorbed. To understand the nature of the present cultural crisis in the West and the challenge it represents to Christians, we must go back to antiquity and the religious policy of Rome that led to the persecution of the church. The Roman emperor considered his military victories to be the victories of Roman gods over other gods. The clear implication of this was that, “The warfare of peoples was considered to be a warfare between their gods.”² The ‘culture wars’ here were indeed warfare between cults; someone’s god would be victorious! This did not mean a lack of official ‘toleration’ for other religions (gods) for, “all religions were to be tolerated in the lands of their origin, provided their practices did not contravene the laws of Rome.”³ But the law of Rome must be supreme since the various cults of the period lacked the universality to be the glue for the empire. Thus the central requirement of law in Rome, from which the pagan social order

naturally followed (for then religion and politics were no more separate than they are today), was the recognition of the emperor as the ultimate object of worship and allegiance – the source of all sovereignty. Pliny, the proconsul in Bithynia, wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan in the year 112 A.D, which makes clear that,

the sole offense for which the Christians were put to death was their refusal to worship the emperor ... and the test is whether the accused refuses to curse Christ and worship the emperor.⁴

State worship, personified in the emperor, was thus required of all Roman citizens and conquered peoples.

How does this historical reality help us understand our own cultural moment? It is certainly true that in Canada today (as well as most of Europe, and the United States) Christians are not being executed for their faith in the Lordship of Christ. Nonetheless, whilst we are not being tossed to wild beasts, we are now largely under an official state doctrine of tolerance, which in the name of equality and compassion, is viciously determined to censor, in the public and increasingly in the private sphere, the preaching of the gospel, the moral standards of scripture, the prayers of citizens in the schools and corridors of power, as well as free speech that challenges in anyway the pagan and secular ideology of our time. This cultural shift is due to a revived ‘cult,’ a form of humanism (paganism) expressing itself sociologically as cultural Marxism. In this worldview the Christian faith is portrayed as a regressive, patriarchal and draconian form of oppression which serves the self-interest of white, male, wealthy and middle class misogynists, using the private family and repressive Christian morality as a weapon for the promotion of capitalism and class domination. Consequently the war being waged against the Christian faith presently in the West is a culture war in the realm of ideas that is as real as the violent war waged against the early church.

There is nothing new about this current strategy. In 261 A.D., Gallienus issued the first ‘Edict of Toleration’ in the Roman Empire, the purpose of which was not to favour Christianity but to oppose it with a strategy other than murder and violence – targeted strategic propaganda! As an emperor soaked in Hellenic culture, Gallienus preferred to contest Christianity in the field of ideas.⁵ Today, the propaganda war against the faith is powerful, well-resourced, and has infiltrated every public and many private institutions. Sometimes the propaganda is framed in terms of the political ideals of multi-culturalism that dominate our society, and at other times it has centred on the official state policy of political correctness (or cultural Marxism), as it relates to restrictions on free speech and liberty. Interestingly this strategy is steadily being exposed and periodically resisted. For example, in March 2010 a debate in the Senate of the Canadian Parliament took place around a motion moved by Senator Doug Finley concerning the “Erosion of Freedom of Speech.” Finley urged his fellow senators to recognise the extent to which the state-sanctioned doctrine of political correctness in Canada had placed free speech under siege through official censors in the Human Rights Commissions, media, and universities – a direct violation of the tradition of free speech inherited from Great Britain and France. We see weekly examples of this censorship too numerous to mention, from the cancellation of a speaking event for Anne Coulter at the University of Ottawa, to the banning of pro-life groups and debate on a number of university campuses, to fines, gag orders and sensitivity training requirements for clergy, Christian groups, or charities that dare speak against certain sexual practices or new state policy on ‘marriage.’ It is not surprising that these attacks come to focus almost exclusively on Christians and the odd Jewish social conservative. It is once again the Judeo-Christian tradition that is under assault and in our time, this agenda is no longer hidden. Part of this “freedom freeze” in Canada has happened gradually

through the use of mechanisms like the Canadian Human Rights Act (section 13.1), which forbids any material or speech likely to cause offense to people on the ground of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation – here proof of intent is not required and truth or reasonable belief in the truth is no defense!⁶ It is obviously difficult to see how a Christian view of the family or even basic Christian evangelism could avoid falling afoul of this religious policy of state, since the proclamation of the gospel requires the calling of all men and women who reject the salvation and Lordship of Jesus Christ to repentance, faith, and a changed life that eschews anything the Bible considers sinful and idolatrous.

What then is the calling of Christians in the midst of this culture war being waged against us – this is the subject addressed here, in our fourth edition of *Jubilee*. First, we cannot distance ourselves from culture, or hide from it. Christ is over and transcends culture as creator, redeemer and king. All things have been made subject to him and he remains the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8); his truth, gospel, and law are not culturally relative. The Apostle writes, “the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever” (1 Pt 1:24). Since Christ’s purpose is the restoration and reconciling of all things to himself (Col 1:20), the transformation of culture by faithfulness to the gospel and the total-word of God is central to the Christian’s calling.

Second, we must be mindful that,

the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5).

Our battle is spiritual and it is a struggle for the minds and hearts of people. Thirdly, to wage this spiritual war, we must be faithful in every area of life to apply God’s word. Only in this way will we see the gospel transform us, our families,

communities, and therefore cultures. This means recognizing and living in terms of the relevance of God's word to every area of life. As the legal scholar John Warwick Montgomery writes,

How tragic if we compartmentalize our lives, restricting biblical understanding to local church activities and personal relationships, never recognizing that every substantive aspect of our legal discipline can and should be seen in the light of Christ.⁷

What is true for the legal discipline is true for every discipline and every part of life – we must see all of it in the light of Christ. Until we recover this understanding of the faith we will not be able to comprehend, much less emulate, the martyrdom of the great Fathers of the church who could not treat as trivial the words, 'Caesar is Lord,' but instead died for the confession, 'Jesus is Lord.' Indeed, without this comprehension we will remain irrelevant to the crisis of our age and the faith of our forebearers will pass like wind in the prairies, driven by the propaganda of idolatry – the worship of man and state. David Klinghoffer argues that when a culture makes this turn away from God and his law,

... we have inevitably, by definition, turned toward idolatry. The Bible recognises only these two states of existence: You have either cast your lot with God or with the idols. The greatest codifier of biblical law, Maimonides, put the idea in stark terms: "All who affirm idolatry reject the whole of God's teaching, all the prophets, and that which was commanded to the prophets from Adam till the end of the world" ... since both liberal religion and secularism deny traditional norms of behaviour as rooted in the Bible, both equally represent a turn toward paganism.⁸

Each of our essayists in this edition of Jubilee recognize that we face a great challenge; yet with it, a tremendous opportunity. We hope you are encouraged and motivated by their contributions. The question of culture-making ultimately is a question of lordship - idolatry or true worship. Is Jesus Christ lord, or is some other god? The character and shape of our culture depends upon the answer. ■

¹ Roland H. Bainton, *Early Christianity* (New Jersey: D. Van Nostr and Company, 1960), p. 23

² Bainton, *Early Christianity*, p. 21

³ Bainton, *Early Christianity*, p. 21

⁴ Bainton, *Early Christianity*, p. 22

⁵ Bainton, *Early Christianity*, p. 27

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Human_Rights_Commission_free_speech_controversy

⁷ John Warwick Montgomery, *Law and Gospel: A Study Integrating Faith and Practice* (Edmonton: Christian Legal Fellowship, 1994), p. 1

⁸ David Klinghoffer, *Shattered Tablets: Why We Ignore the Ten Commandments at Our Peril* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), p. 39

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REMEMBERING

Canada's Christian Past

**This is an excerpt from a larger work by Dr. Michael Wagner, called Christian Citizenship Guide*

IS CANADA A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY?

Was Canada ever a Christian country? What does it mean to say that Canada was a Christian country? Clearly, no one would argue that all Canadians have been Christians. Indeed, in their heart-of-hearts, perhaps only a small number of Canadians have been sincere believers. We cannot know. To claim that Canada is (or was) a Christian country is not to claim that most Canadians have had a deep personal commitment to Christ.

But the dominant philosophy or worldview for most of Canada's history has been Christianity in some sense. Sure, there have been people of other religious groups here for many years, but they have had little if any discernable influence on Canadian law and society, at least until recently.

No one would seriously argue that Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism have been major influences on Canada throughout its history. What, then, has been the major philosophical or religious worldview underlying Canadian society? Viewed in this light, it is easy to see Christianity, or at least the Judeo-Christian worldview, as the dominant influence for most of Canada's history. Recently, however, it seems that secular humanism has become largely dominant.

The fact that Canada has a Christian history matters in many of today's social debates. The views advocated by conservative Christians, such as opposition to abortion or same-sex marriage, are not just the peculiar perspective of a narrow "interest group." Conservative Christians do not constitute an "interest group" in the sense of most other politically active groups; they are not advocating on behalf of their own "interest." Rather, conservative Christians are advocating for the moral perspective that guided Canada

for most of its history. This perspective should receive a privileged position as our forefathers would have expected.

THE POLITICAL ROLE OF HISTORY

Many people seem to assume that the study of history is boring and irrelevant. "So what if such-and-such an event took place in 1944? Who cares? It doesn't affect us now." As a matter of fact, it likely does affect us now. And not only do past events still affect us, but even what we believe about past events has a significant effect itself.

What we believe about the past is an important part of how we think about ourselves, i.e., who we are in relation to the rest of the world. Do you see yourself as being a member of an ethnic group or ecclesiastical tradition that has historically accomplished great things? That, for example, will influence your own self-image in a positive way.

Similarly, what people believe about the past—about history—strongly affects their political views. This point has perhaps best been expressed in a fiction book, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As you may recall, this book is about life in a future totalitarian state. Society is ruled by an entity called "the Party," which controls everything, including the minds of the people. One of the Party's slogans is especially insightful: "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell 1954, 31). And so the Party "controls the past" by having books, as well as back issues of magazines and newspapers, constantly rewritten to fit with its political program. When a newspaper article was found to contain information that was out-of-step with the Party's current views or activities, it was rewritten, and

“a number of social movements have seen the political significance of history and have begun using it to promote their agendas.”

the original article itself disposed of down a refuse tube called a “memory hole.” There would be no indication given that the article had been rewritten, and the information in the original article would be lost forever.

So the Party was able to control the past by having it rewritten to fit their political agenda. Historical evidence would always support the Party's current position. “Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date” (Orwell 1954, 36). Because history has political implications, it had to be altered to suit the Party. “All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary” (Orwell 1954, 36).

In our country there is, of course, no central agency directing the rewriting of history to fit a political program. However, a number of social movements have seen the political significance of history and have begun using it to promote their agendas. One of Canada's most prominent political scientists, Alan Cairns, has written about the use of history in conflicts over the constitution in *Reconfigurations: Canadian Citizenship and Constitutional Change*. What has been happening is that certain groups, such as women (read: feminists), First Nations peoples, some ethnic minorities, etc., have carefully studied their histories to uncover injustices done to them in the past. These past injustices can then be used as the rationales providing support for policies that will rectify the mistreatment. In this way, particular historical accounts become the basis, or the fundamental reason, that justifies desired political change. Cairns refers to this use of history as the “search for a new past” (Cairns 1995, 27), that is, an account of the past that will support the group's current political goals.

In its most extreme form, history is used to demand reparations and restitution.

This is adversarial, accusatory history. It challenges the majority society through its government to reprove what are now viewed as nefarious acts committed by its ancestors. The admission of intergenerational guilt, or vicarious responsibility, followed by absolution, will wipe a moral stain from the past (Cairns 1995, 24).

If group A can use an account of history to convince group B that group B's ancestors harmed group A, then group B will be more likely to make restitution. In constitutional politics, the restitution can take the form of the recognition of certain rights. For example, First Nations peoples have used their account of the injustices they have historically suffered to argue for a more explicit recognition of their desired rights in future constitutional change. History provides a powerful impetus for particular political goals. Or as Cairns himself puts it, “How we interpret yesterday, therefore, is integrally linked to our search for a better constitutional tomorrow” (Cairns 1995, 25).

As mentioned earlier, our view of history can affect our self-image depending on how we view the history of our own “group.” Cairns refers to this kind of thing in the context of discussing how group members feel about their group's status in society. “The past,” he says, “exists as memory, as a key source of our identity, and as a contributor to whether we feel valued or unrecognized. The past is the raw material from which senses of pride or alienation derive or are fabricated” (Cairns 1995, 25). If we feel good about our group's status in the political order we are likely to defend that order, whereas if we feel our own group is alienated, we will more likely demand political change. But this perception, whether good or bad, is largely grounded on history.

Because of the political significance of history, then, political conflict can take the form of conflict between rival historical accounts. Groups with competing political claims will offer divergent historical accounts to justify their demands. This phenomenon is discussed in an article by Anne Norton, “Ruling Memory,” in the prestigious journal *Political Theory*. The specific focus of her writing is nationalist movements in former European colonies in the third world. These movements understand the important political role of history. As she puts it, “Nationalist movements are born with the knowledge of history as contested terrain, they recognize the writing of history and the constitution of memory as means to political power” (Norton 1993, 459).

Hence the conflict between rival historical accounts. "Histories will be challenged, contested, countered with other histories" (Norton 1993, 459). Or, as Cairns puts it in a specifically Canadian context, "History is one of the many battlegrounds on which the struggle to control the future takes place" (Cairns 1995, 15).

Is history boring and irrelevant? Far from it. Aside from other considerations, history has significant political implications. Particular historical accounts can (and sometimes do) undergird political programs or agendas. What you believe about the past affects what you believe is politically necessary for the future. Thus from a political perspective, history fulfills a very important role. In other contexts, such as the study of theology, history also plays an important part. But it is enough to understand the political significance of history to see the need for considering the central role of Christianity in Canada's history.

PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

It's not unusual for Americans to think of their country as a Christian nation. Often political candidates or elected officials in the US speak about their faith in God and the importance of prayer, and the media follow some politicians to church. Many presidents and other high level officials have spoken of the importance of Christianity to the US, and hearing such statements is not considered to be remarkable. Even prominent liberal politicians such as Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton publicly profess the importance of Christianity in their lives.

In Canada political leaders usually do not make an issue of their religious beliefs. When a politician is considered to be unusually religious, like Stockwell Day, the media seem to portray that as a black mark and a potential threat to other Canadians. It's as if Christianity is a threatening feature in a public leader, as if being a committed Christian is an alien concept to most Canadians.

Viewing public Christianity in such a negative light is a relatively recent phenomenon in Canada. Like the United States, Canada has histori-

cally been considered to be a Christian nation. To say that Canada is a Christian nation, or at least was a Christian nation until recently, is not a radical notion from an historical perspective.

Christianity and the British Connection

Canada's Parliament is an off-shoot of the British Parliament since Canada was originally a British colony. There can be no doubt about the explicitly Christian nature of the British Parliament earlier in its history.

In 1643 the Parliament of England made a covenant with God, called the "Solemn League and Covenant," following the example of Israel's godly kings in the Old Testament. King Josiah, for example, made one of these national covenants with God in 2 Kings 23:3. Among Protestants in the seventeenth century, it was commonly believed that nations could covenant with the Lord, following the example of Israel in the Old Testament.

Much of the first part of the Solemn League and Covenant deals with issues facing England, Scotland, and Ireland in the mid-1600s. But the final paragraph reads as follows:

And, because these kingdoms are guilty of many sins and provocations against GOD, and his Son JESUS CHRIST, as is too manifest by our present distresses and dangers, the fruits thereof; we profess and declare, before GOD and the world, our unfeigned desire to be humbled for our own sins, and for the sins of these kingdoms: especially, that we have not as we ought valued the inestimable benefit of the Gospel; that we have not laboured for the purity and power thereof; and that we have not endeavoured to receive Christ in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of him in our lives; which are the causes of other sins and transgression so much abounding amongst us: and our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour for ourselves, and all others under our power and charge, both in public and private, in all duties we owe to GOD and man, to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation; that the Lord may turn away his wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these Churches and kingdoms in

"There can be no doubt about the explicitly Christian nature of the British Parliament earlier in its history."

truth and peace. And this Covenant we make in the presence of ALMIGHTY GOD, the Searcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the same, as we shall answer at that great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; most humbly beseeching the LORD to strengthen us by his HOLY SPIRIT for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with such success, as may be deliverance and safety to his people, and encouragement to other Christian churches, groaning under, or in danger of, the yoke of antichristian tyranny, to join in the same or like association and covenant, to the glory of GOD, the enlargement of the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST, and the peace and tranquillity of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths.

This Solemn League and Covenant was a major document of seventeenth century Britain. "The Solemn League was first taken by the Lords and Commons, legally assembled in Parliament, then by the generality of the people of England. It was sworn and subscribed by Charles II, on his ascending the throne, and was placed on the Statute book, as British law throughout all future time" (Lawson 1884, 16).

That is to say, the legitimate governing authorities of England bound themselves and their nation to follow and obey the Lord God of the Bible.

Unfortunately, King Charles II was a covenant-breaker and subsequently led an effort to overturn the Solemn League and Covenant. But the fact remains that England had bound itself to God by covenant, and there are a few Christians even today who believe the Solemn League and Covenant is in some sense still binding upon Britain and the countries that descend from Britain, such as Canada.

For much of its history, including the period during which Canada was settled, Britain considered itself to be an explicitly Christian country. Indeed, the Church of England is still the formally established church in England, and Queen Elizabeth, Canada's Head of State, is also the Head of the Church of England. This is not just a coincidence. It testifies to the institutional connection between Christianity and the state.

"That is to say, the legitimate governing authorities of England bound themselves and their nation to follow and obey the Lord God of the Bible."

CHRISTIANITY HERE IN CANADA

More directly at home, historians have often commented on direct Christian influence on the development of Canada. A book edited by Paul Knowles states that

it is truly astounding how many of the significant figures of Canadian history were, or are, dedicated followers of Christ. And those Christian founders of this country, its institutions and its cultural traditions, had an immense impact on the development of Canada (Knowles 1982, 124).

He goes on to point out,

There is not a province...probably not a community...whose roots are not deeply anchored in Christian principles and traditions. There are few if any Canadian educational institutions which do not owe their origins to the Christian church. The entire system of Canadian law stands upon Biblical concepts of justice (Knowles 1982, 125).

One of the most prominent historians of religion in North America is University of Notre Dame professor Mark Noll. His book *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* not only describes but compares the religious development of both nations. His conclusion would shock many people today: "Canada has an even better objective argument for being considered a 'Christian nation' than does the United States" (Noll 1992, 546).

In the last 30 or 40 years, Canadians have rapidly forgotten the dominant role of Christianity in so much of the country's history. This has played into the hands of the secular humanists who want to portray Canada as much more secular than our neighbours to the south. But our past cannot be changed even if it is forgotten.

As fewer Canadians attend church regularly, the immense Catholic and Protestant contributions to Canadian history are fading from sight, and so also from memory. But the prominence of Christianity in both English- and French-speaking regions constitutes a remarkable historical legacy (Noll 1992, 547).

Recovering that legacy will enable Christians to obtain a more genuine perception of what being Canadian has meant historically.

Christian Influence in Canadian History

By the mid-1700s a relatively significant number of French-speaking settlers were living in what is now Quebec. Roman Catholicism was a central feature of their lives. Until the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, the politics, society, and culture of Quebec was decisively influenced by the Roman Catholic Church.

The first significant wave of English-speaking settlers largely consisted of the Loyalists who were basically refugees from the newly independent United States in the late 1700s. The Loyalists were those who had opposed independence for the American colonies. Together with immigrants arriving directly from Britain, the English-speaking population of what would become Ontario and the Maritime provinces grew steadily. Although most of these people were Protestants, they were divided among different denominations, especially Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist.

At the time of the American War of Independence, Quebec encompassed territory that included what would later become Ontario. With the arrival of the Loyalists into that area, the English-speaking settlers requested from the British Parliament a separate political administration from the French-speaking population. Thus with the Constitutional Act of 1791, Upper Canada (Ontario) was divided from Lower Canada (Quebec). Furthermore, "provision was made for state support of religion and for the designation of tracts of land for that support (later called the Clergy Reserves)" (Noll 1992, 130). Income generated from leasing or selling these lands was used to fund first just the Anglican Church, then the Presbyterian Church as well, and finally the other Christian denominations. The Clergy Reserves were a source of much controversy between the denominations, and so were ultimately abolished in 1854.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Clergy Reserves had been established by law demonstrated that

officially Christianity had a more privileged position in Canada than in the United States.

Part of loyalism in Upper Canada, as also in the Maritimes, was the belief that the institutions of the church had an official public role to play in a responsible civilization. For these Canadians, freedom was meant to protect traditional values as well as to provide for individual opportunity. The sharp separation of church and state was an American, but never a Canadian, principle (Noll 1992, 130).

To the first waves of English-speaking settlers in Upper Canada, Christianity was a vital part of life. "It was axiomatic to almost all who settled in Ontario after the American Revolution that Christian faith was essential to public well-being" (Noll 1992, 267).

Dedicated Christians from both language groups would subsequently move West to settle Canada's frontier regions.

Canadian believers mobilized to preach the gospel in new settlements spread over a vast frontier. Canadians also linked the progress of Christianity with the advance of civilization. And they succeeded in bequeathing a Christian tone to the institutions, habits, and morals of public life (Noll 1992, 246).

Although Canada as a colony (or a number of colonies) was under British rule, and Britain had an established church (Anglicanism was established in England and Presbyterianism was established in Scotland), Canada itself did not have a formally established church. Roman Catholicism had a privileged position in Quebec, but English-speaking Canada (despite the Clergy Reserves) did not really have a comparable arrangement. Nevertheless, that certainly did not signify that Christianity was of less importance to English-speaking Canada than it was to Britain or Quebec. The purpose of leaving Canada without an established church

was not to deny the nation's allegiance to the Christian God but merely to allow equal opportunities to all denominations. The status of Canada as a Christian nation was never in question, and in practice the churches were regarded more as

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public than as private institutions. This belief in the existence of Christendom and in Canada's place within it was a common presupposition that made possible mutual understanding and occasionally even collaboration among Christians of various denominations (Grant 1998, 213).

The idea that Canada was a Christian country was not confined to one or two denominations. This was an assumption that all of the churches shared. “Churchmen of all parties assumed that it was their responsibility to impart a Christian content to Canadian nationhood and to ensure that this content would be passed on both to future generations and to newcomers to the country” (Grant 1998, 215).

Christianity was an inescapable aspect of English-Canadian life. By the middle of the nineteenth century, *The Canadian Encyclopedia* describes the situation as follows:

There arose a public rhetoric that was often biblical (eg, Canada was called a “Dominion” because the term is found in Psalm 72:8) and laws pertaining to personal morality reflected popular Christian standards. The public calendar was marked by Christian holidays, particularly Christmas and Easter, and Sunday was traditionally a day of rest (Faulkner 1999, 468).

The 1800s has been described as a period where “Canadians transformed a wilderness into a significant Christian civilization” (Noll 1992, 284). Christianity was arguably the dominant cultural force at the time.

The nineteenth-century may properly be regarded as a “Christian century” in Canada. Both in Quebec, where Roman Catholicism provided the dynamism and the institutions for an entire way of life, and in English Canada, where Protestants enjoyed a cultural influence even greater than their counterparts exercised in the United States, the Christian faith provided the foundation for personal and corporate existence (Noll 1992, 284).

CANADA AS A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY

Brian Stiller has perhaps been the most prominent evangelical leader in Canada for the last generation or so. In answer to the question, “Was Canada ever Christian?” he points out that there are different ways of defining a “Christian country” and so the answer to that question

depends on which definition is chosen. Clearly, from a Christian perspective Canada has had many failings in its past. Thus, as he points out, “we cannot look back to any one time in Canada's history as some kind of Christian golden age” (Stiller 1997, 43).

Nevertheless, the dominant influence of Christianity on Canada's history is unmistakable. “Christianity is considered by many scholars to be the most formative influence on Canadian society” (Stiller 1997, 23). And like Noll, Stiller points to English Canada in the nineteenth century to demonstrate this fact. Consider the following information he provides:

In the late 1800s, the church in Ontario was at the centre of community life: in 1871 the three largest Protestant denominations—Methodists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans—made up 70 per cent of the population. Ministers had influence. Most Ontarians attended church, including politicians. The church spoke to and for the people. Sunday was a day for reading religious books or periodicals, and newspapers carried devotional columns. Underlying these practices was a profound belief in God's order: church life shaped not only belief, but the way people lived.

But it did not end there. Churches played an important role in education, health care, and social-reform movements, for Christian faith was the basis for social order. “Family life, educational institutions, many philanthropic and voluntary organizations, the drive for moral and social reform, and the understanding of civilization and human nature were all somehow dependent on Christianity,” observes historian David Marshall. Canadian sociologist S. D. Clark said that “there are few countries in the western world in which religion exerted as great an influence” in shaping the social and cultural life as in Canada (Stiller 1997, 45-46). ■

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LIVING IN SIN ... *Well*

WHAT HAS 2011 BROUGHT us thus far?: The normalization of homosexual behavior in the US Military; religious exercise being deemed “hate speech” by various pundits and not less than a few lawmakers; Frankenstein bioethics and the continued promotion of a “culture of death.” And our culture rejoices! Really?! You may be discouraged. And, you are not alone; the world is messy as the great philosopher, Mr. Incredible noted:

No matter how many times you save the world, it always manages to get back in jeopardy again. Sometimes I just want it to stay saved! You know, for a little bit? I feel like the maid; I just cleaned up this mess! *Can we keep it clean for... for ten minutes!*

But, to the sensitive Christian, this raises a question: if the world is so messy, how do we, how should we, live a faithful life? How should we love God and neighbor? In short, how do we live in sin? If it's any comfort, God's people have been here previously.

Think of what it would have been like to be a faithful Jew in 597 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem. Here is the Reader's Digest version:

- In 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army captured Jerusalem
- The invaders took King Jehoiachin prisoner, plundered the temple, & carried off 10,000 captives (2 Kings 24.14) to spend the rest of their lives in a foreign land along with Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego who had been taken in an earlier invasion
- The captives were likely ushered into the city through the northern gate—the greatest gate of them all: The Ishtar Gate. The gate opened

into a paved street called appropriately Processional Street. The street lead up to Nebuchadnezzar's palace and the Temple of the god Marduk

- In the 6th century BC, Babylon was a cultural & architectural wonder of the world

But it was not a place for a devout Jew. It was a foreign, idolatrous place, a place for the enemies of the Jews, who had plundered Jerusalem. How then to live here? How then to live in sin?!

God, as the transcendent and immanent One, cares so much for who they are—His children—that He provides specific directions for living where they are—Babylon:

⁴Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.

⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare¹.

The Lord essentially gives them three key lessons: (1) Theology; (2) Ethics; and (3) Eschatology. Each will be briefly discussed.

THEOLOGY: WHOM SHALL WE TRUST, WORSHIP, SERVE, AND OBEY?

God's answer: Look upward. While Israel no doubt grumbled “this is not where we want to be,” the Lord comes to them and emphasizes, in effect, “this is exactly where I want you to be.” In doing so, He stresses that while Nebuchadnezzar is morally culpable for this captivity, (v. 1), the Sovereign God is the one who directed them

there, a point He emphasizes four times in the narrative (v. 4, 7, 14).

This implies both rejecting nostalgic living and instead affirming the present validity of their current mission and station in life—in Babylon.

The notion of pining for some supposed prior golden age is thus both foolish and contra-missional. It is God, not history, who is to be the Christian's plumb line. (cf. Eccles. 7:10)

ETHICS: HOW THEN SHOULD WE LIVE?

God's answer: Look outward. Rejecting all dualism, the Lord directs them to intentionally engage and transform the culture, Babylon's sin-saturated culture. In verses 5-7 He gives them marching orders:

- Discard the squatter mentality, and instead, lay foundations: Babylon is not Israel's place, but it is God's place for them. They are not vacationing, nor camping. They are called to live faithfully, even in this moral abyss
- Discard world flight, and instead engage the prevailing culture as it exists: They are to enter the seasons of Babylon because life is not, as Tim Keller aptly notes, "Theatre for conversion narratives."² God not only saves people from something, but He saves them for something (Eph. 2:10), and Jeremiah says, in effect, live like it. This implies that a Christian living in sin must live not only piously, but competently
- Promote society's core building block: Marriage. The foundation for transforming a culture lies in promoting and defending marriage, which is exactly what John the Baptizer did—and he lost his head doing so, though not his mind. Theology and ethics correlate and one cannot faithfully proclaim Jesus is the Redeemer unless one also proclaims that He is the Lord and Law Giver. Marriage does both because the husband-wife marital structure provides moral direction and restraint as well as mysteriously depicting redemption: Christ and the Church
- Promote intergenerational strategies: Houses are for homes and, homes are for children with an eye toward one's children's children. When living in sin, one must resist the temptation of

apocalyptic hysteria as if today is the "terminal generation." Contrary to today's "contraceptive mentality," even among Christians, fertility is not a pathology, but a blessing, especially in Babylon

- Pray for Babylon: Far too often, when facing morally inclement weather, believers gripe and grumble, rather than praying for the situation. Yet, this is exactly what Christians should be doing, including praying for the pagan leaders of the public square (1Tim. 2:1-4)
- Seek Babylon's welfare: The notion of seeking is quite strong: making this pursuit a focused and intentional whole hearted effort with the goal of shalom, that is, a harmonious, vibrant society. Christians living in sin are to be communitarians, not isolationists. Put differently, the church is not to be a bomb shelter; rather, it ought to be an ammunition depot which equips Christians to "develop a countercultural way of looking at all reality under the Lordship of Christ."³ In fact,

[D]oing good to the city, [Jer. 29] doing good to all people . . . is part of our responsibility as God's redeemed people in this time of tension between the "already" and the "not yet."⁴

"Far too often, when facing morally inclement weather, believers gripe and grumble, rather than praying for the situation."

ESCHATOLOGY: IN WHAT SHALL WE HOPE?

God's Answer: look forward, to His perfect plan for the future. Israel's exile was temporary: 70 years, and yet, their experience was nevertheless significant. Why? Because the God they worship and trust, the God who dictates their conduct, is also the God who promises to provide a certain and good future, even in, especially in, Babylon:

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jer. 29:11. The security of the future is safeguarded by the sovereignty of the Savior, and this Savior delights in expressions of public justice—the ethics of cultural engagement—seeking the city's welfare. (Jer. 9:23, 24). This is why spiritual reformation correlates with legal/cultural reformation, as Machen cogently noted:

[A]s a matter of fact God usually exerts [his re-

“The security of the future is safe-guarded by the sovereignty of the Savior, and this Savior delights in expressions of public justice – the ethics of cultural engagement – seeking the city’s welfare.”

demptive power] in connection with certain prior conditions of the human mind, and it should be ours to create, so far as we can, with the help of God, those favorable conditions for the reception of the gospel. False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.⁵

The world is not a playground for frolicking; it is a battlefield for fighting and our marching orders are clear: Look upward; look outward; and look forward. This is how we love God and man while living in Babylon. After all, as one man noted synthesizing Augustine: “The loves of a few men move the lives of many.”⁶ What do you love when you live in sin? ■

¹ Jer. 29:4-7

² Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God—Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith*, (NY, NY: Dutton, 2008) p. 110

³ D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, at 217, 218, footnotes omitted.

⁴ *Christ and Culture Revisited*, at 217, 218, footnotes omitted.

⁵ J. Gresham Machen, *Education, Christianity, and the State* (Hobbs, NM: The Trinity Foundation, 1995 [2nd ed.]), p. 51)

⁶ David K. Naugle, *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives—Learning the Deep Meaning of Happiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), p. 52.

CHRIST & *Culture*

THE **meaning** OF CULTURE *Joe Boot*

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WHAT IS CULTURE?

The historian Jacques Barzun was acutely aware of the difficulty with our contemporary use of the term *culture* when he wrote:

Culture – what a word! Up to a few years ago it meant two or three related things easy to grasp and keep apart. Now it is a piece of all-purpose jargon that covers a hodge-podge of overlapping things ... How did ... a simple metaphor from agri-culture, lose its authority and get burdened with meanings for which there were other good words?¹

This bewildering array of applications leads to a good deal of confusion. In Christian social analysis, especially amongst those aping the liberal intelligentsia, the term culture has been so over-used and ambiguously applied that it has become a very slippery piece of lingo. We speak of urban culture, sub-culture, business culture, organizational culture, arts culture, gay culture, multi-culturalism and on and on, to the point that we are not sure what we mean, and are therefore uncertain about how biblical faith relates to this 'catch all' concept.

The original and primary definitions of culture, a word derived from *cultivation*, have been almost forgotten. The Latin verb *colere*, from which we derive the term, refers to tilling the

ground in order to grow things. Older dictionaries, therefore, render the noun *culture* as a 'state of being cultivated' and 'a type of civilization' respectively. Here, cultivating individuals creates a *type of civilization* that grows as a result of this intellectual and moral tilling. Traditionally, then, an educated, mature and civilized person was considered 'cultured,' that is, cultivated in terms of a particular ideal. A person's ideal *state of being* is thus a profoundly religious question and we retain this basic association in our use of the related term *cult*, to refer to a system of religious belief. *Culture* has consequently been accurately described as 'religion externalized,'² or more simply, applied beliefs.

Go to Saudi Arabia and you will experience Islamic culture, specifically manifest by its law and education. Go to certain parts of India and you will witness Hindu culture with its mythology and the resulting caste system. Come to the West and you now witness humanistic culture with strong remnants of Christianity in people's language, literature, beliefs and other cultural artefacts, like architecture.

Civilizations (the communal development and application of beliefs) or cultures rise and fall as beliefs take concrete shape, then under various stresses, collapse and fail. The widespread capture of the West by the humanistic cult of state sponsored polytheism (philosophical pluralism)

“It is impossible for any social order to be neutral – that is, neither one thing nor another. Every civilization is and will be inescapably committed, through the spheres and institutions of family, academy, law, art, and government, to a religious or cultural consensus”

sociologically expressed as multi-culturalism, concurrent with the evident encroachment of an opportunistic Islam, is producing radical decay and social collapse, from economic meltdown to family fragmentation, to rioting increasingly seen in our cities. It is in the midst of all this that Christians must ask how they are to relate the gospel of the kingdom to the decaying culture of our age.

CULTURE AS PREJUDICE

First, we must recognise our context: That no culture can be *neutral*. It is impossible for any social order to be neutral – that is, neither one thing nor another. Every civilization is and will be inescapably committed, through the spheres and institutions of family, academy, law, art, and government, to a religious or cultural consensus, be it humanistic, Islamic, Hindu, Christian or any other. The illusory idea of a neutral order or *prejudice free* space for an equal toleration of all views (or gods) is a myth utilized only to facilitate the establishment of a new intolerance. The noted social critic Theodore Dalrymple illustrates this well when he says:

To overturn a prejudice is not to destroy prejudice as such. It is rather to inculcate another prejudice ... When George Bernard Shaw characterised marriage as a legalised form of prostitution, he was not so much demanding justice and equality for women, as he was encouraging the dissolution even as an ideal, of permanent bonds between a man and a woman. Unfortunately, mass-bastardy is not liberating for women.³

The removal of one prejudice, such as the Christian concept of marriage, leads not to a neutral approach to marriage, but rather to a considered prejudice against the Christian conception of the family as the new cultural norm—a prejudice very evident in our time. Simply put, the idea that one can *cultivate* a prejudice free civilization, one without real value commitments, is a dangerous lie that has been used by secular humanism as a precursor to the marginalization and persecution of Christianity. Political scientists and historians understand that dissent in any civilization can be tolerated only to a certain degree, beyond which that

social order dooms itself. This is why treason always has been considered a serious crime, and historically has been severely punished, even in the West. This is also why conversion to Christianity is illegal in many parts of India and it is a crime in most Islamic states. Likewise, a *free church* is illegal in communist countries, remaining under a cruel persecution in China and North Korea. These pagan governments logically fear (in terms of their cult) the cultural and social transformation that mass conversions would inevitably produce, and they naturally resent the swift demise of their power in such a scenario. However, once cruelty and mass executions are resorted to, such suppression is almost certainly too late to salvage the pagan social order, whether ‘democratic’ or dictatorial, fascist or communist. We are gradually seeing, in Asia, Africa and South America, Christian cultures beginning to emerge, despite the suppression and persecution of believers in many of these contexts.

CULT AND CULTURE

The Roman imperial cult in the early centuries of the church saw the claims of Christians concerning the *Lordship* of Christ (i.e. Acts 4:12; Eph 1:15-23; Col 1:15-20) not simply as ‘religious’ in the modern sense—separated from the real *secular* world into a limited sacred realm—but as socio-cultural and political in their scope. The Roman emperor and senate did not pretend (like many Christians today) that religion and politics were unrelated matters, but knew they were inextricably tied together. Caesar was ‘Lord’ and thus the ‘saving’ state had a priestly function as a god to the people. However, in Phil 2:9-11, St Paul challenges the priestly state when he says:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The pagan world saw this apparently audacious claim and the church’s claim to a freedom and ambassadorial status in Christ (1 Pt 2:16; 2 Cor

5:17-20; Eph 6:20), as a threat to the survival of the pagan establishment – and they were right as history shows. Notice the passing remark (with astonishing implications) that St Paul makes in his final greeting to the church at Philippi, a letter in which he has declared Christ’s name (or authority) to be above every other name: “All the saints greet you, especially those of *Caesar’s household* (Phil 4:22).” Already at this early point in the life of the church, Caesar’s own household had been invaded by a new Lord, a new Priest and a new King. The Christ of Psalm 2 was already being made manifest and pagan Rome’s days were numbered. When Constantine came to power during the colossal emergence of the Christian faith throughout the empire, under the influence of that faith, he abolished the blood-letting of the Roman arena, reformed the law toward a more Christian perspective in a number of important ways, built churches and hospitals, and funded poverty relief. Since the arena ‘was Rome’ and was basic to the pagan concept of sacrifice, its abolition proved to be a revolutionary and vital step in a Christian direction.⁴

Applied biblical faith inescapably transforms those who embrace and are influenced by it and this has far-reaching consequences for family, vocation, law, art, state and, therefore, *culture*. Counter revolutions away from Christianity have concomitants equally radical, and since they are anti-Christ, invariably evil. Knowing the implications of the biblical claims concerning Jesus, Robespierre and his French revolutionaries could not tolerate a *free church*—murdering thousands in the name of a new religion based allegedly on ‘reason’—nor could Hitler, Stalin or Mussolini, murdering their tens of millions in the name of their various *cults*. Of particular relevance today, and in the same spirit, our humanistic thought police of the politically correct brigade, along with the new atheists, would love to silence all Christians. In many cases attempts have been made to ‘legally’ asset-strip believers in the name of human rights, remove them from academic positions or deny them tenure, arrest them for preaching openly, or even seek prison terms for the expression of biblical views.⁵

This cultural shift in lands of formerly Christian consensus has not happened overnight. The utter contempt for the Christian faith established now for decades amongst the Western cultural elite is well expressed by Bloomsbury novelist, Virginia Woolf in a 1928 letter to her sister penned at the news of T.S. Eliot’s conversion to Christianity:

I have had a most shameful and distressing interview with poor dear Tom Eliot, who may be called dead to us all from this day forward. He has become an Anglo-Catholic, believes in God and immortality, and goes to church. I was really shocked. A corpse would seem to me more credible than he is. I mean, there’s something obscene in a living person sitting by the fire and believing in God.⁶

Ironically, what was ‘obscene’ to Virginia Woolf has been the undeniable source and principle of liberty in the West, a liberty that permitted her to express her revulsion and disbelief. Whilst we must readily grant historical exceptions to this generalisation, seen in times of political upheaval and church-state conflict—usually *over* the issue of religious freedom and freedom of conscience as in the English Revolution⁷—nevertheless, freedom of conscience and speech have flourished *only* in Christian dominated societies. These cultures have granted the greatest degree of liberty to individuals within biblical bounds: liberty to believe a set of doctrines or values or *not* to believe them; liberty to express non-violent dissent, so long as the law is obeyed (since law and culture cannot be neutral). That freedom and equality under Christian law is disappearing fast⁸ as the cultural elite reform law and seek to use the humanistic state’s bureaucracy to increasingly control and regulate the thinking, speaking and practices of ordinary citizens in almost every area of life.⁹

The critical point here is to recognise that there are no *neutral cultures*. A society may be full of competing claims, but it is impossible for it to be neither one thing nor another. The culture shapers are tilling the minds of others with a specific worldview in mind. *Someone’s* morality will be legislated, *someone’s* philosophy taught in schools, *someone’s* vision of beauty and reality

“These cultures have granted the greatest degree of liberty to individuals within biblical bounds; people being free to believe a set of doctrines or values or not to believe them and express non-violent dissent, so long as the law is obeyed.”

“Culture is therefore a question of religion, because we are talking about values and ideals. St Augustine saw this readily when he identified only two seeds and kingdoms in history, the city of God and the city of man, true and false worship.”

idealised in art. As John Frame puts it, “People make things, because they already have a plan in view – a purpose, a goal, an ideal. The ideal comes first, then making things. First the norm, then the cultivation, then the culture.”¹⁰ Culture is therefore a question of religion, because we are talking about values and ideals. St Augustine saw this reality when he identified only two seeds and kingdoms in history, the city of God and the city of man, true and false worship. Idolatry leads to a corrupt culture based on false worship. The worship of the living God in Jesus Christ will lead to a radically different (though imperfect) culture.

CULTURE AND THE FALL

As well as recognising the religious source of culture, we need to grasp a biblical vision of culture and its theological underpinnings. It is easy to get lost in the vast array of Christian cultural analysis available today, all pointing to a variety of ‘turning points’ in making their case against (or sometimes shockingly for) present-day culture. For some, the turning point is a given philosopher or modernism in general; for others, it’s the counter-culture of the 1960’s; for others it’s the industrial revolution; and for others still, it’s the now somewhat passé post-modern criticism. There have also been influential utopian cultural dreamers and ‘planners’, idealised by pagans and Christians alike, who are looked to as pivotal, from Plato’s communist order in the *Republic* to the revolutionary, Ernesto Guevara, concerning whom Dalrymple observes, “If it hadn’t been for the photograph taken by the Cuban photographer Alberto Korda, Ernesto Guevara would have been recognised by now as the arrogant, adolescent, power-hungry egotist that he undoubtedly was.”¹¹ In each case, a great deal of weight is placed upon a particular time, person, or event as pivotal in bringing us to our cultural moment. Whilst these historical developments are very interesting subjects for analysis and are important in a limited sense, they are not the *starting point* for examining the nature of the Christian’s relationship to culture and our route out of the current crisis—a crisis that many non-Christian commentators readily admit we are facing.

The primary turning point for us to understand is the fall of our first parents in the garden of God. All rebel cultures in history since that time have merely been a replay of that initial rebellion. The basic sin of humanity is the attempt to be one’s own God, to assert one’s autonomy, and to be the source of truth and reality, independent of God. By recognizing this, we will be less inclined to chronological snobbery, assuming that we live in the most unprecedented or ‘pivotal age’ in history; and we will be less enamoured with passing fads and borrowed intellectual constructs that allegedly pave the way to the future via a new ‘paradigm’ or ‘technique’ for the church to follow in achieving ‘cultural relevance’ (whatever that means). We can blame the rationalists or irrationalists, the moderns or post-moderns, the industrialists or Marxists, capitalists or the proletariat, but in the end, Adam and Eve were both rationalist and irrationalist, modern and postmodern in their response to temptation: Irrationalist in rejecting the authority of God’s self-attesting word and attempting to reason in terms of a neutral, ungoverned reality; rationalist in thinking they could construct and define reality and truth for themselves by the reach of their own minds. Western history has not been a linear movement from the heights of Greek culture and its rationalism to the lows of modern existentialism and nihilism (themes, in fact, present amongst Greek philosophers called cynics). It has always been an interplay between these two ideas, both of which are an attempt to escape the claims of God:

So the problem is not history; the problem is sin. Culture is bad today, but Sodom and Gomorrah were probably not any better, nor were Tyre, Sidon, Nineveh, Babylon, Rome, Capernaum, Chorazin, or Bethsaida¹²

So we face fallen cultures (beliefs externalized) in every age. What are we to do in our own? We can begin by recognising that the cultural task was given by God and mandated for humanity – theologians call this the cultural mandate (Gen 1:28). The *filling of the earth* presupposes the family, the home and multiplication; and to *rule* means the development of

the earth, to bring out its potential and to turn the *creation into a culture*. We are not slaves to our environment or our DNA; neither are we victims of fate: we are given a regal role as God's vice-regents on the earth, spreading his glory throughout the world by fulfilling his purposes. Since culture is commanded by God, it is always, in scripture, tied to his commands, desires, and norms. As we go about our family life, vocational life, church life and every other aspect of life, we do so in terms of obedience to God, as St Paul tells us, "whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col 3:17).

Since the fall we see culture after culture that, instead of doing all for the glory of God, acts and builds out of a hatred toward the living God. Indeed, St Paul tells us this is inescapably true for unregenerate man (Rom 8:5-8). This does not mean non-believers can do nothing good or useful in culture, art, and science – they can, but not in an ultimate sense (that is, directed toward God's glory) and only by borrowing unacknowledged capital from God, by virtue of being creatures made in his image. However, when we are born anew into Christ, our whole life changes and is reoriented in thought, word and deed, so that whatever we do, it is to be done, with delight and excellence, for the glory of God and in terms of his kingdom purpose. This must and does have a dramatic impact upon culture, because *culture is what we make of God's creation* in terms of an ideal - cultivating in terms of an ultimate belief. Here, what the early church called the 'third race,' Christ's new society, family, nation or covenant community, declares and lives a new way of life, and consequently manifests a *new culture*; it cannot help but do so. This means that everything in our lives expresses the totality of the reign and purposes of God. We must recognise, like the early church, that Jesus Christ is still *Lord* and so by the Holy Spirit, faithfulness to him in sharing the gospel and obeying his commands will make *new creatures* out of people (2 Cor 5:17), gathering a new race (1 Pt 2:9-10), who build new cultures (1 Cor 10:23-31; Is 51:1-5; Ps 2). This is not by revolution,

but by regeneration, faithfulness, and obedience. Sin and the fall did not remove the cultural mandate; in fact God repeated it to Noah in Genesis 9:1-7. Moreover, Jesus restates it for his church in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20). This, like the cultural mandate, clearly calls for a new culture:

All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

We are told here to comprehensively teach the nations to obey everything that Christ has commanded and the word *teach* in the Greek language means literally 'discipline'. John Frame sums up its significance:

The Gospel creates new people, who are committed to Christ in every area of their lives. People like these will change the world. They will fill and rule the earth for the glory of Jesus. They will plant churches and establish godly families, and they will also establish hospitals, schools, arts, and sciences. That is what has happened, by God's grace. And that is what will continue to happen until Jesus comes.¹³

CONCLUSION

We are called to spread the culture of Christ to all creation. It is interesting that the Lord Jesus Christ likens himself to a farmer *planting and cultivating* his seed of the kingdom of God throughout the world (Matt 13:1-30). He sends out his church as bearers of the imperishable *seed* of his word (1 Pt 1:23) and he equates the results of our sowing faithfully to the reaping of a harvest (John 4:35-38), the transformation of people's lives, and finally of all creation (Col 1:20; Rom 8:19). The gospel of the kingdom which we are commissioned to make known, clearly concerns our state of being. We are either regenerate, redeemed people in Jesus Christ, or we are lost in the kingdom of darkness. The Christian state of being, like the mustard seed, grows and creates, as it has done wherever it has been in history, a type of civiliza-

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*Wherever
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and
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kingdom of
God is.*

tion, which, seen first in the church, spreads to impact all those around it, as leaven transforms the whole loaf. Wherever God is served, worshipped and glorified, there the kingdom of God is. Wherever God's children are faithful in preaching the gospel and pursuing the cultural mandate, to apply God's truth to every area of life, civilizations and cultures are re-created because people's state of being is actually transformed. We are God's new humanity in Jesus Christ and wherever God's people are, by the power and mighty working of his Spirit, the culture of Christ inescapably flourishes around them. ■

¹ Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 1500 to the present: 500 years of Western cultural life* (St Ives: Harper Collins, 2000), pp. xiv-xv

² Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1959), p. 200

³ Theodore Dalrymple, *In Praise of Prejudice: The Necessity of Preconceived Ideas* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007), p. 25

⁴ That is not to say Constantine was a consistent biblical Christian, but he was not the mythological bogeyman of contemporary missiology, nor was he simply bad news for the church with his part in the emergence of a Christian order. For an excellent study regarding the impact of Constantine on the demise of the pagan empire to the beginnings of Christendom see, Peter J. Leithart, *Defending Constantine: The twilight of an empire and the dawn of Christendom* (Illinois: IVP, 2010)

⁵ See Janet Folger, *The Criminalization of Christianity*

⁶ Virginia Woolf, cited in, Peter Hitchen's, *The Rage Against God: How atheism led me to faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), p. 24

⁷ See, J. C. Davis, *Oliver Cromwell* (India: Arnold Pub, 2001)

⁸ See the Harvard Scholar, Harold J. Berman's massive study *Law and Revolution*, in which he demonstrates the demise of the Western Legal Tradition.

⁹ This phenomena in Canada has been almost exhaustively documented in, William D. Gairdner, *The Trouble With Canada Still: A Citizen Speaks*

Out (Toronto: Key Porter, 2010)

¹⁰ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life: A Theology of Lordship* (New Jersey: P&R, 2008), p. 857

¹¹ Dalrymple, *In Praise*, p. 8

¹² Frame, *The Doctrine*, p. 887

¹³ Frame, *The Doctrine*, p. 862

DR. MICHAEL
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Forming A Christian Culture: *Wisdom From the Letter to Diognetus*

BY AND LARGE, the writings of the New Testament era as well as those from the period immediately following, the works of the so-called Apostolic Fathers, are concerned with establishing the faith and discipline of Christian communities. They are works that generally address those within the fold of Christianity. After 150, though, there is a noticeable shift in the orientation of Christian literature. There is now a significant stress on what we call apologetics, that is, the presentation of reasons for holding to the Christian faith, the attempt to answer the ridicule and objections of unbelievers, and the attack on alternative world-views in the Græco-Roman world, exposing their inadequacies and problems for belief.

The Letter to Diognetus, a spirited, stirring defence of the truth of the Christian worldview, is one of the most attractive of these second-century apologies. In fact, Avery Dulles, in his *A History of Apologetics*, describes it as “the pearl of early Christian apologetics.” It stems from the joyous faith of a man who stands amazed at the revelation of God’s love in his Son and who is seeking to persuade a Graeco-Roman pagan by the name of Diognetus to make a similar commitment to the Christian faith.

As to who wrote this marvelous Christian treatise—it is really more a treatise than a letter—we do not know. From the elegant Greek of the treatise it can be observed that “the author was a Christian of cultured mind, with a Classical training, who was possessed of considerable literary skill and style.” Nor is the identity of Diognetus, the recipient, known, though some have speculated he may have been one of the tutors of the philosopher-emperor, Marcus Aurelius (r.161-180). And beyond the fact that this masterful apologetic was written within the bounds of the Roman Empire, very possibly in the eastern portion of the Empire, the exact geographical location of its author is also unknown. However,

we do have some idea of its date. There is evidence within the text that would place it in the final quarter of the second century.

One further aspect of the text of the treatise should be mentioned. There are three major gaps in the text, the last of which is the most serious for it comes right at the end of the treatise, and so we do not know how the text actually ends.

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES: COMMUNITIES OF LOVE

In the first chapter of the treatise, the author notes that Diognetus is interested in learning about the Christian faith. In fact, he has three specific questions that he wants answered:

I have noticed, most excellent Diognetus, the deep interest you have been showing in Christianity, and the close and careful inquiries you have been making about it. You would like to know what God Christians believe in, and what sort of worship they practise which enables them to set so little store by this world and even to make light of death itself—since they reject the deities revered by the Greeks no less than they disclaim the superstitions professed by the Jews. You are curious, too, about the warm fraternal affection they all feel for one another. Also, you are puzzled as to why this new race of men, or at least this novel manner of life, has only come into our lives recently, instead of much earlier.⁶

The first question is basically an enquiry about who is the Christian God and is rooted in the fact that the Greeks and Romans regularly accused the early Christians of being “atheists” since Christians refused to worship the Greek and Roman gods. The final question has its basis in the Roman reverence for antiquity. What was true had to be ancient. If it was recent, it was suspect. If Christianity was true, why had the culture’s ancients not known of it? The recent origin of Christianity thus posed a major stumbling-block for acceptance of its truth claims.

It is the second question—why do Christians love each other the way they do—that is especially noteworthy with regard to the formation of Christian culture. Many pagans were struck by the way that ancient churches were communities of love, something very different from their own experience of social relationships. Here is the way that Lucian of Samosata (c.115–c.200), a pagan satirist, portrays the Christian church in his satire *The Passing of Peregrinus*, which deals with the career of a shyster by the name of Peregrinus. For a while in his career Peregrinus pretended to be a Christian and became a teacher in a Christian community in Asia Minor (now modern Turkey). Finding himself in prison for his professed faith, Peregrinus was soon the centre of attention from members of the church. “First thing every morning,” Lucian wrote, “you would see a crowd of old women, widows, and orphans waiting outside the prison” bringing him “all sorts of food.” In fact, Lucian went on to say, Christians “are always incredibly quick off the mark, when one of them gets into trouble like this—in fact they ignore their own interests completely.” And why do they do this? Well, Lucian explained to his pagan audience, the Christians’ “law-giver,” by whom he means Christ, “has convinced them that once they stop believing in Greek gods, and start worshipping that crucified sage of theirs, and living according to his laws, they are all each other’s brothers and sisters.” Coming from a pagan author not at all well-disposed towards Christianity, this is a remarkable testimony to the way in which many early Christian communities were centers of love.

Pagan life was characterized by passions quite different. “Living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another” (Titus 3:3) is the way that Paul depicts the social fabric of the Empire in the first century. No wonder, then, Christian communities stood out like brilliant lights in a dark firmament (Philippians 2:14). And no wonder, according to the first chapter of this letter, Diognetus had asked, “what is the warm fraternal affection they [i.e. believers] all feel for one another?”

FORMING A CHRISTIAN CULTURE

The first three chapters of the letter after the opening chapter contain a vigorous attack on

both Græco-Roman paganism and Judaism, and essentially emphasize that Christians are really neither Gentiles nor Jews, but a new race of men and women. Then, in what have probably become the best known sections of this letter, chapters 5 and 6, the author stresses that Christians are not to be distinguished from their culture by virtue of their geographical location, language, or customs of dress, food and other matters of daily life (5.1–2, 4). In these things they lived like the other citizens of the Empire. Yet, their Christian commitment did draw certain lines of demarcation between themselves and their surrounding culture, and thus made them like foreigners in their own land.

They live in their own native lands, but as sojourners; they share all things as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is a fatherland for them, and every fatherland a foreign land. They marry, like everyone else, have children, but they do not expose their infants. They share a common table, but not the marriage bed. They are in the flesh, but do not live according to the flesh. They spend [their days] on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.

Here the New Testament language of sojourning, foreignness and heavenly citizenship, is pressed into service to affirm the paradox of Christian existence. Christians did not seek to escape from involvement in their society. Yet, their worldview did draw certain lines of demarcation between themselves and their surrounding culture. The fact that they were destined for “a world of holy love,” to quote a later Christian author, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), meant that their lives in this world were ordered differently from those of their pagan neighbours. In essence, they lived in the world, in various communities scattered around the Mediterranean basin, but they did not live their lives in accord with this world’s standards (5.5, 8–9). In particular, this paradoxical relationship to their society is well seen in their attitude towards child exposure and sexual expression.

In common with the rest of Graeco-Roman society, Christians married and bore children (5.6). Unlike their culture, however, they utterly refused to engage in the practice of child exposure: “they marry and beget children, though they do not expose their infants.” This practice of plac-

ing unwanted babies out in the streets or on the edge of town near the garbage dumps was all too common throughout the Graeco-Roman world. The wealthy did not want to share their worldly wealth among too many heirs; the poor had too many mouths to feed. A frank statement of this practice has been found recently in a letter written around the year 1 B.C. by a man who was away on a business trip. His pregnant wife in Alexandria, who was about to give birth, was instructed by her husband as follows: “When you give birth, if it is male leave it, if a female, cast it out.”

A second area where the Christian communities differed radically from their culture was in the area of sexual ethics: “Any Christian is free to share his neighbour’s table, but never his marriage-bed.” Sexual immorality was rampant within the Empire, but Christians were firm in their stand against it.

A THEOLOGICAL ROOT OF CHRISTIAN CULTURE

However, although the differences between the Christian culture and its surrounding cultural context have been illustrated here in chapters 5 and 6 from the realm of ethics, it can be seen from the final extant chapter of the Letter to Diognetus, chapter 10, that the ultimate root of these differences is theological. In this chapter, the author returns to the second question that we have looked at already: why do Christians love one another the way they do? The author now answers:

God loved the race of men. It was for their sakes that he made the world; it was to them that he gave dominion over everything in it. On them he bestowed reason and understanding, and they alone received permission to lift their eyes to him. He formed them in his own image; he sent his only-begotten Son to them; he promised them the kingdom of heaven, and to those who have loved him he will surely give it. Once you have grasped these truths, think how your joy will overflow, and what love you will feel for him who loved you so.

Christians love one another because God first loved them and showed that love through the sacrificial gift of his own beloved Son. Embracing the Son’s death for one’s sins by faith alone—

earlier the author had stated that God “has only revealed himself to faith, by which alone are we permitted to know God” —leads to a desire to imitate God, the great Lover of mankind. And it is in the mutual love of believers for one another and for their neighbours that evidence will be seen that “God lives in heaven” (10.7). The Christian understanding of divine love is thus central to the building of Christian culture, as well as a key piece of evidence for the truth of the Christian worldview.

¹ A portion of this essay was given initially as a paper, “The Church in the Second Century” for *The Fellowship for Reformation and Pastoral Studies*, 26, no.7 (March 9, 1998).

² *A History of Apologetics* (New York: Corpus Instrumentorum/Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 28.

³ L. W. Barnard, “The Enigma of the Epistle to Diognetus” in his *Studies in the Apostolic Fathers and Their Background* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), 172. For a list of possible authors, see Barnard, “Epistle to Diognetus”, 171–172.

⁴ See the discussion of Dulles, *History of Apologetics*, 28–29.

⁵ For this dating, see Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 178–179. W.S. Walford, *Epistle to Diognetus* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1908), 7–9 and Barnard (“Epistle to Diognetus”, 172–173) would date it no later than 140.

⁶ *Letter to Diognetus* 1 [trans. Maxwell Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968), 142, altered]. There are various translations of the *Letter to Diognetus*. This translation by Staniforth is one of the more recent and very readable.

⁷ Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), 21–22; Wolfram Kinzig, “The Idea of Progress in the Early Church until the Age of Constantine” in Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *Studia Patristica* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1993), 24:123–125.

⁸ *The Passing of Peregrinus* 11–13 [trans. Paul Turner, *Lucian: Satirical Sketches* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961), 11].

⁹ *Diognetus* 5.5–9 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 145).

¹⁰ See Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 3:20; 1 Peter 1:17; 2:11; Hebrews 11:13. See also Judith Lieu, *Neither Jew Nor Greek: Constructing Early Christianity* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 178–184.

¹¹ See Bruce Fawcett, “Similar Yet Unique: Christians as Described in the Letter to Diognetus 5”, *The Baptist Review of Theology*, 6, no.1 (Spring, 1996), 23–27.

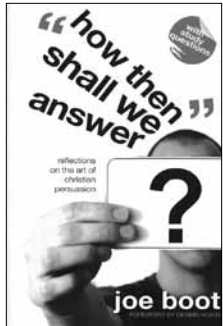
¹² *Letter to Diognetus* 5.6 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 145).

¹³ *Papyri Oxyrhynchus* 4.744.

¹⁴ *Letter to Diognetus* 5.7 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 145).

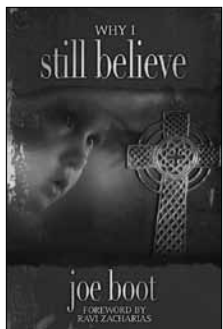
¹⁵ *Letter to Diognetus* 10.2–3 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 148, altered).

¹⁶ *Letter to Diognetus* 8.6 (trans. Staniforth, *Early Christian Writings*, 147, altered).



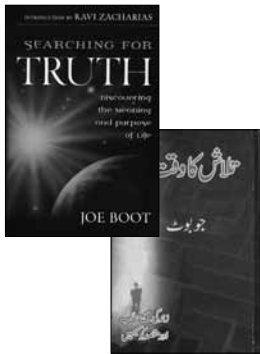
How Then Shall We Answer - Hardcover

This book represents Joe Boot’s summa apologetica. Bold, imaginative and instructive, it is written for a general audience rather than for a specialized one. The prose is remarkable not only for evident wisdom in the field of apologetics but also for the distinctive way the author does it. With various imageries and anecdotes, Joe provides a clear, engaging articulation of a fresh set of perspectives on several topics. Full of biblical and theological insights, and written with an evangelistic heart, this book serves to nourish the faithful, stimulate good arguments for the seeker and build a strong rational basis for the causative relation between faith and reason, the former being the presupposition of the latter. With rigor and relevance, Joe constitutes a seminal apologetic that enables readers to grasp the signs of divine transcendence, and to apprehend, or rather to be apprehended by the beauty of Christ. (Dennis Ngien PhD, from the foreword)



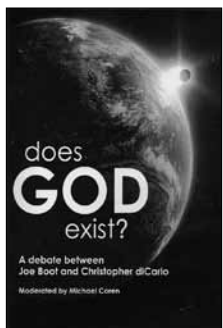
Why I Still Believe - Softcover

In Why I Still Believe, apologist Joe Boot provides a readable introduction to presuppositional apologetics for the average layperson. This approach assumes that the Christian and non-Christian come to the discussion of faith with worldviews--sets of presuppositions--that are miles apart, so that there is little common ground on which to build an objective argument of rational proof. In this conversational survey of his own intellectual and spiritual journey, Boot invites the non-believer to step inside the Christian worldview to see whether or not it makes sense. Along the way he builds a coherent argument for the truth of Christianity. He also examines the non-Christian worldview, showing how it ultimately fails to make sense of the world.



Searching For Truth - Softcover (also available in Urdu)

This book provides reasonable answers to questions asked by people who have vague but deep longings to know God. Starting with basic human convictions about the world and moving ultimately to the need for salvation through Jesus Christ, Boot also addresses questions about suffering, truth, morality, and guilt. He offers answers to those asking for a credible and logical explanation of the Christian faith



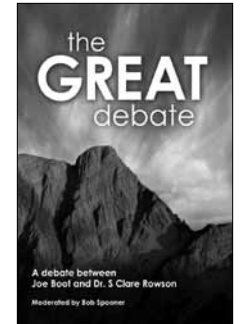
Does God Exist? - DVD

On January 22, 2009 The University of Ontario Institute of Technology hosted a debate on the topic “Does God Exist?”. Moderated by Michael Coren, over 3000 university students attended this dialogue between Joe Boot and Christopher diCarlo.

Note: audio and video are not of professional quality

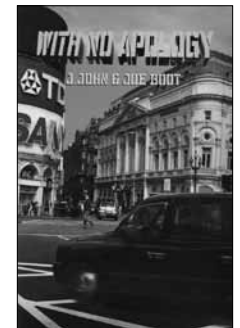
The Great Debate - DVD

On January 30, 2010, in Cobourg, Ontario, Rev. Joe Boot and Dr. S Clare Rowson met for The Great Debate. Moderated by Bob Spooner, long time member of the Cobourg Municipal Council. The Great Debate examines the existence of God and the meaning of life.



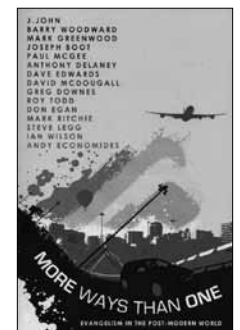
With No Apology - DVD

With No Apology is a fast paced series of five intriguing taxi journeys filmed in London England. Interviewer J. John asks Canadian apologist Joe Boot how to answer life's hardest questions, such as What about the Truth and the Bible, What about Jesus, What about other faiths. With No Apology is ideal to watch in groups or on your own. It raises tough issues, and provides the tools to help you develop you own response. An easy-to-use booklet (enclosed) offers helpful summary of sessions - plus questions for further discussion, a glossary of definitions and suggestions for further reading. This is one cab ride we're sure you won't forget in a hurry...So fasten your seatbelts!



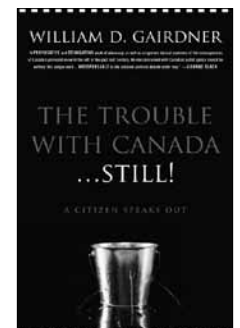
More Ways Than One - Softcover

Some commentators have remarked that Christians and non-Christians have one thing in common - they both hate evangelism! But it doesn't have to be like that. When it comes to evangelism, there really are more ways than one. In this book Joe Boot joins 14 other evangelists to illustrate that maxim. Each chapter focuses on a particular type or method of evangelism, such as: evangelism through preaching, illustration, testimony, humor, worship, social action, signs and wonders, healing and prayer; evangelism in an age of pluralism; people-sensitive evangelism; 1-2-1 evangelism; evangelism through the local church; evangelism that culturally connects; evangelism in the open air; evangelism in a cross-cultural context; evangelism and follow-up. The goal of the contributors is that evangelism become a way of life, both for the individual Christian and for the local church.



**The Trouble with Canada...Still!
A Citizen Speaks Out**

Canada suffered a regime-change in the last quarter of the twentieth-century, and is now caught between two irreconcilable styles of government: A top-down collectivism and a bottom-up individualism. In this completely revised update of his best-selling classic, William Gaidner shows how Canada has been damaged through a dangerous love affair with the former. Familiar topics are put under a searing new light, and recent issues such as immigration, diversity, and corruption of the law are confronted head on as Gaidner comes to many startling—and sure to be controversial—conclusions. This book is a bold clarion call to arms for Canada to examine and renew itself...before it is too late.



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PAGE NO.

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Randall
Currie

Board Chair

DEAR FRIEND,

We trust that this edition of Jubilee, “Christ and Culture,” has been of value. It is our fourth, with previous editions addressing the often misunderstood relationship between faith and science, the biblical view of family, and, finally, the critical issue of education and the impossibility of neutrality in it. Our purpose in producing Jubilee is to help pastors and leaders, students and families, to grasp and apply the life-transforming realities that are the gospel, and to encourage and refresh them in their service to Christ in these challenging days. If we have succeeded in this purpose, we would be humbled to know that the Lord has blessed our efforts in this way.

In the short time that we have been publishing Jubilee, and without the benefit of any marketing effort, distribution has expanded such that 3000 readers from diverse settings and geographic locales now receive the journal. We rejoice in this, as it reflects the Lord’s unceasing faithfulness to his word (Is 55) and to his people as they serve him (Jas 1:25).

Our challenge is that, finances permitting, we could almost certainly distribute 4000, perhaps even 5000, copies of Jubilee per issue. I say this because supplies of the previous issue were depleted a full six weeks prior to this current print run. This is while interest in distribution at the district office level of various denominations appears to be developing. It has to be said that it is disappointing to turn away requests for resources from Christians whose desire is to better equip themselves for faithful service, and from skeptics who are examining the claims of Christ. This demand for resources, however, comes as no surprise, as it is just consistent with our experience in our engagements with people from all walks of life, and at all stages of Christian maturity.

Friend, there is a hunger within the Church of Jesus Christ, the “ekklesia”, the called out people of God, for a full-orbed gospel, with application in every sphere of human experience, that would bring glory to the name of the Lord by reflecting and embodying the good news. And what is this good news? It is that, in Christ, God has revealed himself in history (Isa 53, John 1:34, 18:37); that all governance, authority, power and dominion belong to him (Eph 1:21-22); that even now, by the blood of the cross, he is reconciling all things in heaven and on earth, to himself (Col 1:20).

And so the Apostle Paul can proclaim that the gospel, of which the manner of our lives must be worthy (Phil 1:27), is the gospel of Christ. It is that “...Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:11); that he alone “...is the blessed and only Sovereign, King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim 6:15b). Therefore, Paul declares, “... as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we are to walk in him” (Col 2:6a).

That’s the gospel...I hope you never grow weary of it.

At the time of this writing, the EICC’s “How Then Shall We Answer - 2011” conference is set for November 12, 2011 at City Centre Baptist Church in Mississauga. This year’s theme is “Christ and Culture” and it promises to be a terrific day of teaching and fellowship. Speakers include Joe Boot, EICC Founder; Dennis Ignatius, Christian statesman and ambassador; and Jeffery Ventrella of the Alliance Defense Fund. As was the case last year, our partner in this event is the wonderful team at City Centre led by Pastor Deric Bartlett, who is a friend of the EICC.

This past summer the EICC provided key note addresses from Joe Boot to the Fairhaven’s summer camp and to the Creation Ministries International Super Conference, which was held at Muskoka Bible Conference (MBC), near Huntsville. Joe spoke twice to a standing-room-only audience, an audience that included 35,000 online viewers! The EICC also co-hosted a summer fellowship study on Ephesians in Toronto, which included some of our Fellows. There are also four new books in the works, all of which are planned for release during the next twelve months.

We continue to covet and rely upon your prayers and support as the means by which the EICC can develop its programs for the equipping of pastors, church leaders, and lay persons, whose desire is to formulate, articulate and defend a cogent, credible, biblically faithful exposition of the gospel in our day.

We sincerely appreciate and want to express our deep sense of gratitude to those of you who have chosen to partner with us. We are trusting the Lord for many more workers, so that the burden will be light for all.

For the Increase of His Government,
Randall Currie
Board Chair

