



ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΟΥ

“In the Nick of Time”



Occasional Essays
and Other Stuff
for Christian Students

Presented by the
President of

Central Baptist
Theological Seminary
of Minneapolis

American Christianity needs leaders. American Christianity needs *Christian* leaders. Christian leaders explain the Scriptures, bringing them to bear upon life’s urgent questions. Christian leaders exemplify the life of faith, finding their ultimate satisfaction in God alone. They unite intellectual discipline with ordinate affection, turning their entire being toward the love of God. These essays are dedicated to the task of inviting today’s Christian students to become tomorrow’s Christian leaders.

—Kevin T. Bauder

“...Be instant in season,
out of season;
reprove, rebuke, exhort
with all longsuffering
and doctrine.”

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January 20, 2006
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That’s Entertainment!

It’s been a bad fortnight for biblical Christianity in the world of popular entertainment.

To begin with, NBC has launched *The Book of Daniel*, a situation comedy about a pill-popping Episcopalian priest. Troubles surround him: one son is homosexual and another is sleeping with the bishop’s daughter. His daughter gets arrested for dealing drugs. A sister-in-law has become a lesbian.

Through all difficulties, Daniel (the priest) is sustained by conversation with a smarmy character who is supposed to be Jesus. This “Jesus” gushes inclusivism and spouts wisecracks (“you can quote me”). He is a paragon of liberal (or postliberal) nonjudgmentalism.

One description of comedy is that its purpose is “*castigat ridendo mores*,” to “correct morals with laughter.” The expression is used for the tactic of dismissing an idea by ridiculing it. Such dismissiveness allows the comedian to avoid any responsibility for understanding and interacting with the idea.

That description neatly fits *The Book of Daniel*. It begins with a debased version of Christianity (liberal Episcopalianism). It then reduces even that version to an object of ridicule, not in order to restore a pure and strong version of the Christian faith, but rather to dismiss all Christianity as merely goofy. Christians have become accustomed to milder versions of this treatment: network television rarely uses Christianity for anything except comic relief of the depiction of bigotry.

The Book of Daniel, however, is more than an attack upon the faith. It offers a trivialized and comic depiction of the Lord Jesus Himself. This program directly attacks the person and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot think of a time when the networks have done anything more offensive.

By way of comparison, consider what would happen if NBC subjected a Muslim Imam to the same sort of treatment, perhaps showing him in conversation with an unctuous Mohammed. Muslims around the world would respond with more than protests and boycotts. Network executives would be tripping over themselves to issue apologies.

I’ve never been one for promoting boycotts and writing letters of protest. But I do know this: On my local NBC affiliate, *The Book of Daniel* has been sponsored by (among others) Burlington Coat Factory, Dairy Queen, and the Chattem brand Icy Hot. It will be a long time before I can bring myself to give money to these businesses.

As if *The Book of Daniel* weren’t bad enough, *Brokeback Mountain* is in the news again. The movie won, what—four?—Golden Globe awards, including best drama. According to the pundits, this puts the film on the fast track for the Oscars.

Brokeback Mountain is a dramatic “love story” about two cowboys (married men, both of them) who are also engaged in a homosexual liaison with one another. Its depiction of this homosexual relationship is dominated by the theme that “love is a force of nature.” In other words, love is love, whatever the object.

What *Brokeback Mountain* is trying to do (to all appearances, quite successfully) is to generate sympathy for the terrible difficulties of men who are swept away by desire for other men, but who are hindered in the indulgence of that desire by social conventions. It smuggles in the assumption that homosexual desire and heterosexual love are similar in quality, differing only in the objects to which they are directed. It also reinforces the contemporary prejudice that love trumps justice, so that the terrible fracture of a man’s sworn fidelity to his wife can understandably and naturally be absolved by his yearning for relations with another man. Rather than showing homosexual activity as the shameful and degrading thing that it is (as reflected in the proper term *sodomy*), the film presents homosexuality as an appealing manifestation of human intimacy and caring.

Nowhere is it more important for Christians to remind themselves of the distinction between sins and sinner than when dealing with homosexuality. All humans must be treated with dignity and respect simply because we recognize in them the value that derives from being made in God’s image. This applies even to sinful humans (all of us), including homosexuals. We must never allow the demonstration of human respect, however, to imply that we approve or condone sin. This is particularly true in the case of homosexuality. We must not forget that Scripture classifies homosexuality as “vile affections” and condemns it not only as wrong, but “against nature.”

We ought to have compassion upon homosexuals just as we ought to have compassion upon all sinners. What *Brokeback Mountain* is pleading for, however, is not compassion on those who have gone astray. This movie depicts homosexuality in such a way that it can no longer be rejected as an unnatural, vile affection. Rather, it informs us that “love is a force of nature.” The message is that sodomy is not shameful and degrading, but a loving way for one man to treat another. With this production, Hollywood has reached a new moral nadir. Even those who refuse to watch the movie will be affected by the cultural backlash.

It is disappointing enough when unsaved, worldly culture-mongers cannot see clearly on basic moral issues. It is even more distressing when professing Christians betray complete moral confusion. That is the case with the new movie from Every Tribe Entertainment, *End of the Spear*.

ETE is supposed to be a Christian maker of Christian films. *End of the Spear* is supposed to be the film biography of Nate Saint, the missionary pilot and martyr who gave his life to get the message of the gospel to the Auca Indians of Ecuador.

The problem (well, one of the problems) is that director Jim Hanon handed the role of Nate Saint to a man whom he knew to be a homosexual activist. Chad Allen has been a very public advocate of so-called gay marriage and gay rights, including the putative right of homosexuals to adopt children.

Why would a homosexual activist want to portray a Christian martyr? Here is a recent bit of Chad Allen’s personal testimony, extracted from a recent interview on Larry King Live:

[I]f they’re going to speak about absolute transcendent truth, I need to tell you, I know absolute transcendent truth. I have a deep relationship with God and my understanding. It’s very powerful, and it’s taken its own shape and form. And I am very much at peace in the knowledge that in my heart God created this beautiful [homosexual] expression of my love.... These days I judge all of my actions by my relationship with God of my understanding. It is a deep-founded, faith-based belief in God based upon the work that I’ve done growing up as a Catholic boy and then reaching out to Buddhism philosophy, to Hindu philosophy, to Native American beliefs and finally as I got through my course with addiction and alcoholism and finding a higher power that worked for me.

Allen goes on to discuss his willingness to play the role of Nate Saint:

You know, I made this movie with a group of conservative Christians who do not agree with my expression of sexuality. But we said to each other, I will walk with you accepting your differences and we can create together. I will give you your space to respect you fully. They don’t need to take away from my freedom, I don’t need to take away from theirs. And I am so proud to have done that. That’s the kind of bridge-building I think we can get to.... You know, I had to sit down with that same God today and say, “Do you want me to go on this show? Do you want me to speak the things that are in my heart? And if not, I’m happy not to go. Do you want me to make this movie?” It’s the same God that I go to for every decision.

For Chad Allen, *End of the Spear* is an opportunity to advance his agenda of homosexual advocacy by “bridge-building” to a community that disagrees with him. It is an opportunity to “speak the things that are in [his] heart.” It is an opportunity to present the syncretistic, relativistic message of a New Age gospel.

People who have seen the film have said that it contains little or no presentation of the Christian gospel. In other words, there is little in the film that would contradict Allen’s position. People who already know the story of Nate Saint will probably read their pre-understanding into it, but non-Christians and naïve viewers are simply going to see Chad Allen. What Every Tribes Entertainment and Jim Hanon have done is to provide Allen with a platform from which to launch an attack upon the faith that is taught in the Bible.

Thanks for nothing.

Once again, I have to say that I am not in the habit of calling for boycotts. I cannot imagine, however, why any reflective Christian would want to pay money to view this debacle. If Every Tribes Entertainment hopes to garner a profit, let them get it from Queer Nation and NAMBLA.

Yes, it’s been a bad two weeks for biblical Christianity in the world of popular entertainment. X



Come, Thou Holy Spirit, Come (Veni Sancte Spiritus) Edward Caswall (1814-1878)

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
Vouchsafe within our souls to rest;
Come with Thy grace and heavenly aid
And fill the hearts which Thou hast made.

To Thee, the Comforter, we cry,
To Thee, the Gift of God Most High,
The Fount of life, the Fire of love,
The soul’s Anointing from above.

The sevenfold gifts of grace are Thine,
O Finger of the Hand Divine;
True promise of the Father Thou,
Who dost the tongue with speech endow.

Thy light to every thought impart
And shed Thy love in every heart;
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.

Drive far away our wily Foe
And Thine abiding peace bestow;
If Thou be our protecting Guide,
No evil can our steps betide.

Make Thou to us the Father known,
Teach us the eternal Son to won
And Thee, whose name we ever bless,
Of both the Spirit, to confess.

Praise we the Father and the Son
And Holy Spirit, with them One;
And may the Son on us bestow
The gifts that from the Spirit flow! X



Pieter Bruegel the Elder. *The Fight between Carnival and Lent*. Detail. 1559.



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