

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

“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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The Cinema

Roy E. Beacham

Christianity is so named for its association with Christ. Christians who believe that Christ is God also believe that Christ is holy. Because of this belief, true Christians are called to genuine Christ-likeness and holy living. Although the nature of true Christian living is deeply spiritual (living in the Spirit of God), the evidence of true Christian living is clearly objective. Faith without deeds is no faith at all and true character is revealed by the fruit of deeds.

Those who live Christianly are called to love Christ and not the world. They are enjoined to yield to Christ's Spirit and not to the flesh. They are to think on things pure, lovely, and of good report; those things virtuous and praiseworthy. They are to bear the fruit of the Spirit and to walk in step with him. They are to abhor that which is evil and to abstain even from any appearance of or association with it. With reference to good, they are to be wise and well-informed; with reference to evil, they are to be unlearned and un-savvy. They are to grow in Christ, follow Christ, and model Christ before God and before others: both believers and unbelievers. They are to be examples of a faith worthy of following both in heart and in deed. This kind of living is the essence of true life in Christ to those who claim true life in Christ.

In opposition to Christianity is antichristian life and culture. The Scriptures speak of this life and culture as worldly, earthly, fleshly, sensual, and demonic. This ethos and this lifestyle are ungodly, unholy, and unfit. Although the nature of this culture is also deeply spiritual (living in the spirit of this age), the evidences of this culture are, likewise, quite objective. There are styles of

personal appearance and dress that purposefully and plainly identify with antichristian culture and, thus, offend both the letter and tenor of God's revealed truth and innate holiness. There are certain genres of language and speech that are clearly antichristian and unbecoming a child of God. There are specific "art" forms and particular "music" styles that are unmistakably identified with godless culture and living. These forms and styles ought not to be embraced by those who claim to be Christ's. To associate oneself with such dress, speech, "art," and "music" is to disassociate oneself with Christ, his ethos and lifestyle.

Besides styles of appearance and dress, modes of language, and forms of so-called art and music, I would submit that there are particular *places* that are so imbued with godless antichristian culture and character that it seems obvious that Christians should avoid them. Brothels, drug dens, strip clubs, bars, nightclubs, dance halls, gambling tracks, and casinos are, in my opinion, some of those places. These kinds of places have no purpose or function beyond the promotion and practice of antichristian lifestyles and culture. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the "place" itself, i.e., the property or the buildings. What is wrong is that which is promoted and practiced in the place and, thus, that which is commonly and clearly associated with the place. To go to, much less to frequent, those places is, in my mind, as antichristian as the innate purpose and explicit practice of the place itself. To associate oneself with such a place, and thus its reason to exist, is to disassociate oneself with Christ, the nature of his ethos, and the practice of his lifestyle.

I would further submit that the cinema is one such place. Movie theaters stand at the forefront of the promotion and practice of the culture of Hollywood, and the culture of Hollywood is at the vanguard of antichristian living. The movies that are shown in these theaters are in vast measure godless, immoral, base, violent, and spiritually unfit. They portray, promote, and glamorize profanity, alcoholism, drunkenness, sensuality, nudity, lust, lewdness, adultery, homosexuality, aggression, abuse, lawlessness, bloodshed, murder, rape, mutilation, materialism, avarice, drugs, abortion, rebellion, and virtually any other form of godless thinking and behavior imaginable to fallen man. This is crass atheism packaged in titillating storylines gilded with cutting-edge sensate technology. This is the primordial stuff of Hollywood, and movie theaters are the principal outlet.

Can a person go into a cinema only to see a "good" (i.e. God-honoring, non-offensive) movie? In theory it could be possible. One can also go into a bar only to drink sodas, or go into a brothel only to engage in conversation. Would these actions be advisable? I personally think not in light of the clear teaching of Scripture regarding true Christian living as summarized in the initial paragraphs above. Is it *necessary* to go into a movie theater to see a "good" movie? Of course not. No more than it is necessary to go into a bar to drink a Coke. Do most professing Christians who attend movie theaters go into theaters only to see "good" movies? Probably not, if the Scriptures are allowed to define the meaning and nature of "good." It seems, rather, that professing Christians are more and more enticed by the storylines, and more and more enamored by the technology, thus becoming more and more willing to "tolerate" the godlessness, all the while becoming more and more comfortable with it if not conformable to it. Where should a believer draw the line with regard to antichristian places? I would suggest that the best place to draw the line is just outside the front door. I can think of no "good" reason for going in. ✕

This essay is by [Roy E. Beacham](#), professor of Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

O Sacred Head Now Wounded

Attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux (1153)
trans. by Paul Gerhardt and James W. Alexander

O sacred Head, now wounded,
with grief and shame weighed down,
now scornfully surrounded
with thorns, thine only crown:
how pale thou art with anguish,
with sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish
which once was bright as morn!

What thou, my Lord, has suffered
was all for sinners' gain;
mine, mine was the transgression,
but thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
'Tis I deserve thy place;
look on me with thy favor,
vouchsafe to me thy grace.

What language shall I borrow
to thank thee, dearest friend,
for this thy dying sorrow,
thy pity without end?
O make me thine forever;
and should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never
outlive my love for thee. ✠

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