



"FOR YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE..."

WHAT IS THIS THING:CHRISTIANITY?

BY: TRAVIS W. LEWIS

Will your brand of "Christianity" suffice to meet the challenges of our age? Is there really a supernatural, "spiritual" realm, or is nature all that exists? Is there really solid evidence that this supernatural, sovereign God lives? Is God the ultimate reality, and is the actual sacrifice of one, Jesus, the only redemption that will finally clean up the mess in which most of the world admits that we find ourselves? Are the "truths" that we espouse actually the spoken word of a sovereign God, or are they ideas that we have happened up on or invented for ourselves?

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 in winning only a straggler or two here or there, if we permit the whole collective thought of a nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which...prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion. (J. Gresham Machen)

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BEHOLD THE GOOD TIDINGS ...

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Luke 2:10-12

At the beginning of this essay on JOY, let us assert that we should hold no superstitious regard for times or seasons, and have no reason to base a belief on the ecclesiastical arrangement called *Christmas*. Convenience and superstition have established tradition that fixes the day of the Savior's birth, though it is impossible to discover when it occurred. The fact remains that if there be any day of the year most likely not to be the day of His birth, December twenty-fifth would be a most likely candidate. Nevertheless, during this season when the current of men's thoughts run toward finding joy in the birth of a Savior, we should not ignore an opportunity to laud the good tidings of

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A FAIR WEATHER FRIEND IS ALWAYS THERE WHEN HE NEEDS YOU!!

RUNNING IN THE RAIN

She had been shopping at Walmart. She must have been six years old, this beautiful brown haired, freckle-face image of innocence.

It was pouring rain outside — the kind that comes in sheets, filling up the parking lot drains. We all stood there under the awning and just inside the Walmart doors. Some waited patiently while others became irritable because nature had messed up their day.

Her voice was so sweet as it broke the trance in which the rain had caught us. "Mom, let's run through the rain," she said as she glanced up at her mother.

"Run through the rain?", her mother questioned. "We'll wait until it slows down raining so we won't get soaked."

"No, we won't, Mom.,and besides, that's not what you said this morning."

"Now what did I say this morning about running through the rain and not getting wet?"

"You remember, Mom. When you were talking to Daddy about his cancer, you said, 'If God can get us through this, He can get us through anything!'"

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FATHER, PHILOSOPHER, AND "FIREBALL" PREACHER

BY: TRAVIS W. LEWIS

Jon was born in East Windsor, Connecticut in 1703, the son of a long line of Congregationalist ministers. He entered Yale University at age 13 and graduated at 17. At age 23, he became assistant pastor of a Northampton, Massachusetts congregation at which his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, was pastor. In 1729, at age 26, his church elected young Jon as their pastor, following the death of his grandfather.

During the next twenty years, Jon led a series of revivals that probably had the most profound effect on American religious life in all our history. During that time, his sermons and writings also began stirring the wrath of his entrenched Calvinist friends. As with most who gain popularity by challenging tradition with facts, Jon was attacked by radicals and conservatives alike. By the late 1740's, he was urging his church members to exclude from participation in the Lord's Supper any who had not had a personal religious experience with the Lord. As a result, in 1750, the congregation he had faithfully served for over twenty years dismissed him. Mostly excluded by his lifelong denomination, Jon spent the next seven years doing mission work in an Indian settlement in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. During this final phase of his life, he wrote his major philosophical work, *Freedom of Will*, which discussed in great detail the doctrine of predestination. In 1758, at age fifty-five, he succumbed to death. By the time of his death, Jon and his wife Sarah had raised eleven children. According to Elisabeth D. Dodds in her book, *Marriage to a Difficult Man: The "Uncommon Union"....*, by 1900, Jon's family had over 1,400 descendants, among whom had been 13 college presidents, 65 professors, 100 attorneys, 30 judges, 66 physicians, 3 state governors, 3 senators, and a vice-president of the United States.

Jon left a remarkable family of learning and distinction. His legacy, however, was the mark he left on American religious life. It was possibly like none other, before or since. For during the 1730's, among his other great works, God had inspired this Yale graduate with a special sermon that he called, *Sinners In The Hand Of An Angry God*. It was possibly the most effective discourse this side of the apostolic age. He delivered it repeatedly, and with recurring results. In massive numbers, listeners would fall in place and cry for mercy as they saw themselves convicted before an angry God. Whether to a brush arbor or an open cow pasture, people flocked to his revival meetings. And many would experience not only a changed mind, but a truly

WHO,WHAT, WHEN, WHERE??

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changed way of life. The hope born by their experience attracted others to Jon's meetings. Being visually impaired, he would preach by reading his sermon almost verbatim with the paper within a few inches of his face.

Radical changes in religious practices resulted from the meetings led by this young revivalist, the likes of which America had not seen before, nor have we experienced since. He was obviously of keen intellect and factually inclined, yet the spirit with which his messages were delivered was powerful beyond measure. No wonder the series of revivals, which Jon led, is still remembered as *The Great Awakening*. WHO WAS THIS FATHER, PHILOSOPHER, AND "FIREBALL" PREACHER?

(The name of this revivalist is found on page 4)

BEHOLD THE GOOD TIDINGS ...

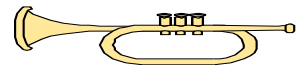
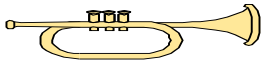
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God's great gift **"to all people"**.

In the beginning text of this article, we find part of the sermon by the first evangelist. Its preacher was an angel, and his keynote was "joy", **"Fear not: I bring you good tidings of great joy.."** In a contemporary world, possibly more filled with fear than ever before, this assurance is a reminder that it need no longer be a dreadful thing for man to approach his Maker. Neither need any to dread the sight of God sitting as Judge on a throne of terror; for these **"good tidings of great joy"** are that, because of this gift incarnated at Bethlehem, we can come to Him as a beloved child before its faithful father. Even the greatest joy offered by earth and men is sporadic, trivial, and terminal. These good tidings are unique in the strictest sense. Their strains of joy have rung through the ages, and their echoes will be heard until the trumpet brings the resurrection; and they will reach fullness only in eternity. This joy, constantly at our disposal, can be experienced at any level we choose, and it perishes not with our mortal flesh. Not really knowing Christ, men seem to imagine that in Him is found only a level of seriousness that renders us weary,

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*****BOREN'S FIRST LAW: WHEN IN DOUBT, MUMBLE.*****



RUNNING IN THE RAIN

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The murmur of the impatient crowd stopped dead silent. As we all stood there in silence, her Mom paused, obviously thinking about what to say or do. Some might have expected her to just laugh it off or scold the little girl's silliness, or maybe ignore what the child had said. But her wiser instincts prevailed, for Mom knew this was a time when innocent trust could be nurtured so that someday it will bloom into faith.

"Well, honey, you are absolutely right. Let's run through the rain. If God lets us get wet, well maybe we just needed a washing." And off they ran, darting past the cars and through the puddles — and they got soaked just like the few others who followed, screaming and laughing all the way to their cars.

It is reasonable to believe that somewhere down the road, Mom will reflect back on these moments they spent together, captured like pictures in the scrapbook of her cherished memories. Maybe when her heart fills as she watches her daughter graduate; or if Daddy is still able to walk her down the aisle on her wedding day. Then she will laugh again. Her heart will beat a little faster as her smile tells the world they love each other. But only they will share that precious moment when they ran through the rain believing that God would get them through.

And, yes, I did. I ran with them that day. And deep within, what a washing I received! For I remembered that people can take away my money, and circumstances can take away my health, but no one can take my precious memories. So don't forget to take the opportunity to make good memories every day.

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POWER TENDS TO NURTURE THE IDOLATRY OF SELF; IT TENDS TO CORRUPT AND ALMOST NEVER APOLOGIZES. *Dr. John Woodbridge*

WHAT IS THIS THING:CHRISTIANITY?

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Mr. Machen was speaking of a typical approach taken by many Christians to their religion. With all the energy and resources directed toward "Christianity", are we not, comparatively speaking, picking up a mere one or two true converts here and there? Are we confident that our professions of being "Christian" are supported by truths spoken by God and proven by history? Are they the guiding lights of our lives that others yearn to understand, or are they mere dogma to be stored for use mostly on Sundays, Wednesday nights, and funerals? Does our daily practice of Christianity really correspond with the written word that we proclaim as rule and guide? Is our paradigm of Christianity much more than a nostalgic image of the old hometown and an active church; or is that paradigm molded more by imagination than how things actually were? The degree of our failure to seek and understand the solidity of genuine Christianity will be the same degree that our neighbors around the globe regard our faith as the "harmless delusion" of which Mr. Machen speaks.

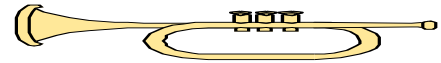
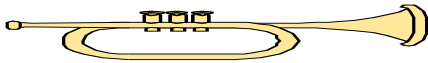
Lasting, true faith, intrinsic to true Christianity, is not just a personal matter that is harbored and hidden within. If it is genuine, it becomes the framework for every sector of life. The Apostle James was approaching the twilight of his life, and as the Holy Spirit warmed his heart and enlightened his mind to record for posterity, he wrote, "What doeth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? ...If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto him, 'depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled'; notwithstanding ye give him not those things which are needful to the body; what doeth it profit? Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:14-17 James was saying that genuine faith is intrinsic and central to real Christianity, and that it surely shows in the works of our hands.

Our choices in life are shaped by what we believe is real and true, right and wrong, good and beautiful. They are reflective of our overall view of who we are, from where we came, how we got to where we are, what went wrong, how we can fix it, and where we are going. To clarify our individual views on these questions is the goal of this article, *What Is This Thing: Christianity?* The measuring stick of our true

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***** ARE YOU AN "ETHNOCENTRIC"? ETHNOCENTRICISM IS A COMMON AILMENT IN AMERICA, AND OFTEN FOUND IN OUR CHURCHES. *****

(See bottom of page 6 for the definition of this deceptive ailment.)



WHAT IS THIS THING:CHRISTIANITY?

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success in life is to discover whatever is permanently real and true, what is right and wrong, and to align our goals and points of view with those realities. If our "brand" of Christianity proves transitional or inconsistent with time-tested truths, then maybe the time for objective personal audit has arrived.

Is the sole basis for our Christian view of life and its values found in the revelations of God in Scripture? If our view challenges, or is inconsistent with, those revelations, then we owe it to self, family, acquaintance, and posterity to reconsider and align with those truths. For if Christianity itself has proven either a failure with mankind or only an equal with other religious sandcastles, then we are logically no more than those considered as barbarians. More particularly, if our "brand" or "belief system" of Christianity fails under the test of likeness to Christ, then we must eventually answer to Jesus for false impersonation. If we reserve real hope of our belief system passing that test, it must be founded on much more than private feelings and experience, though both are byproducts of whatever that system of beliefs is.

If Christianity is no more than just "another good idea", then it will eventually, or would have probably already, gone the way of countless other "great ideas" with which history is filled. The basic struggle in which Christianity is involved is not about whether abortion is right or wrong, whether homosexuals should have "rights", the purpose and meaning of water baptism, or even the legitimacy of the pope. Those are particular skirmishes in a much larger, more cosmic conflict. The real war is about who we as mortals are, why and how, if at all, we own a genuine tie with an omnipotent, omniscient, and sovereign God. I am convinced that lifetimes are spent fighting in these skirmishes without clarity in mind of what the war is actually about; and such ignorance dooms our best efforts. The great divisions on our planet are no longer geographic or language barriers. The most formidable partitions are differences in views of who man is, how we should relate to one another, and how, individually and collectively, we relate to God -- or if we relate to this "God" at all. The Apostle Peter tells us to always be prepared to answer anyone who would ask the reason for the hope we have. *1 Pet. 3:15*

The first section of this effort is dedicated to a review of who we actually are, and whence we came.

If we hope to prove Christianity to be the world's realistic hope, we must internalize the Scriptural facts regarding who we are and how we got here. Much of my edu-

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WHEN THE ROAD TO SUCCESS IS CALLED FAMINE

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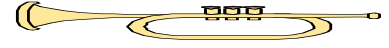
Meanwhile, his brothers had dismissed any qualms they may have had about their brother's uncertain fate. They were sure that he was long gone from their lives. As long as their pastures were green and their herds flourishing, they were happy; as long as their valleys were covered with corn and the reapers were singing, his brothers were unconcerned and content. Then their security was crushed. Famine came, and it hit hard. Soon, their storage was consumed, and they were forced to their neighboring nation to buy food. And whom would they find in charge? Though unsuspecting at first, they soon recognized the administrator, with whom they must deal, was none other than their own brother, the one who, twenty years before, they had conspired to exile.

Hopefully, by now you have discovered the brother who went from favorite son to castaway to leading citizen to prisoner, then to second head of state, was Joseph, the son of Jacob. His beautiful story can be read in Genesis, chapters 30-42.

Sometimes, God deals with us in much the same ways. Like Joseph and his brothers, he breaks up our nest and loosens our roots that He might put us to a nobler use. Not only may He disturb our security, He may cut away our incomes or our means to provide; or He may crush our inflated pride or bring to light our hidden sins. Then, and maybe only then, weary, worn, saddened, and with crushed egos, are we prepared to confess our wrongdoings and heed the words of Christ, **"Come unto me, all of you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."** Ω

WE ARE NEITHER GLORIFIED NOR MODIFIED MONKEYS; WE ARE NOT JUST RANDOM MISTAKES.. *Dr. J. P. Moreland*

KNOW SOMEBODY WHO JUST CAN- NOT SEEM TO SHUT UP, WHO IS CONSTANTLY RUNNING OFF AT THE MOUTH? IF YOU WANT TO EXPLAIN HIS HABIT ELOQUENTLY, YOU CAN SAY HE EXPLATERATES.



BEHOLD THE GOOD TIDINGS ...

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common garments and the gospel that He bore, and that even today is the only hope for all men.

No scene more absent of pomp and pageant could be imagined. And yet, how filled with joy! And it is still so today when we approach Him! As we still find Him, He promises neither riches in which men take pride, nor does He expect the same as a price for His friendship. So as we feel the rub and tear of our daily lives, He invites us all to come in full humility and simple faith. To the children, He says "Come", for He was once a boy himself. To the young women, who, like Mary, are still in the morning of your beauty, He says "Come", bear Him in your hearts and find joy in Him. To the young men still in your prime days of strength, He says "Come", and, like Joseph, sanctify your strength to His service. To the older matrons and widows, He says "Come", and, like Anna, praise Him that you have seen His salvation. And to those to whom the passing of many days has brought the hoary head and approaching sunset, He invites you "Come", and, like Simeon, take Him in your arms and adore Him as your departure draws ever nigh.

He still stands, as He has for two-thousand years, and invites one and all, "**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden ... and you will find rest for your souls.**" Regardless of color or creed, whether rich or poor, however outcast or applauded by men, He still brings news that is truly "good". And those "**good tidings**" still affords a peculiar joy that men cannot rifle, and the world cannot take away! **Ω**

D **EA**LING WITH FAULTS: DO YOU DEAL AS GENTLY AND PATIENTLY WITH THE FAULTS OF OTHERS AS YOU DO WITH YOUR OWN — HUH?

☆ We suffer from **ETHNOCENTRISM** if we view our own group as the center of everything... It's a close cousin to **BIGOTRY**. ☆

THE BEST WAY TO GET EVEN
.... IS TO JUST FORGET....

RUNNING IN THE RAIN

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The author of the above story is unknown. It is condensed and adapted for use in REVEILLE, and was contributed by Brenda Kelly, Lexington, Tennessee.

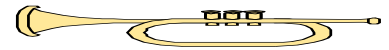
IF THE GRASS IS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE, YOU CAN BET THAT THE WATER BILL IS HIGHER!

BETTER DO IT.. NOW!!

Sitting where you are, if somehow it were revealed to you that you only had three hours to live, what would you do? Would you have some phone calls that would just have to be made, or maybe a note of encouragement to write, or an apology to make, a small debt to pay, or possibly a matter of forgiveness that would clear up an old grudge before the final goodbye? Maybe some thanks to express? Or would you want to make sure someone knows he or she truly does mean a lot to you?

Well, the time is steadily drawing nigh when each of us does have only those final three hours to live — maybe those three hours are in progress right now, or maybe about all gone!

SO WHY ARE YOU WAITING?



SIEGEL'S LAW: A MAN WITH ONE WATCH KNOWS WHAT TIME *IT IS; A MAN WITH TWO WATCHES CANNOT BE CERTAIN.*****

WHAT IS THIS THING:CHRISTIANITY?

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cational process, especially relating to religion, has progressed under the theory that even the most objective science and Christianity must remain at odds regarding our origin. That is a false theory. That assumption is what Lincoln Barnett wrote about our origin and the findings of Albert Einstein, an essential atheist, in **The Universe And Dr. Einstein**, “*..the inescapable inference is that everything had a beginning: somehow and sometime the cosmic processes were started, the stellar fires ignited, and the whole vast pageant of the universe brought into being.*”

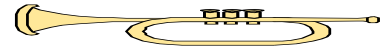
The first law of thermodynamics (the conservation of matter) implies that matter cannot just appear into existence or create itself. So if the universe, which is certainly “matter”, had a beginning, then something external to the universe must have caused it to come into existence. That something, or someone, had to be transcendent to the natural world. The idea of creation is no longer merely a matter of religious faith. It is a conclusion based on the most straightforward reading of scientific evidence. British physicist Paul Davies, himself not a professing Christian and a proponent of the still questionable “big bang theory”, acknowledges that modern science can trace our existence only back to a certain point, and that point is the “*one place in the universe where there is room, even for the most hardened materialist, to admit God.*” Even if the big bang theory is fact, it would have had to explode with an unimaginably precise degree of vigor for our present universe to have formed. Physicists agree that had the explosion been the least bit weaker, the universe would have collapsed back in on itself as a result of gravitational forces; and if the explosion had produced too much velocity, the particles of matter would have immediately escaped any gravitational influence with each other and sped away to a permanent disassociation. Similar arguments could cover such topics as the miraculous makeup of the atom and the unexplainably precise balance between the proton and electron. In itself, the atom offers the undeniable conclusion that our most base makeup was a product of a willful choice, a thorough plan, and a perfect design. In his book, *A Cozy Cosmology*, physicist Heinz Pagels concludes that if the universe appears tailor-made for life, the most straightforward conclusion is that it actually is tailor-made for life.

Mathematician William Dembski offers a “filter” giving logical form to the fact that we are here as a result of immaculate design. Dembski says that when we try to explain any natural phenomenon, we can filter it through three possibilities: **chance, law, or design**. If it is irregular, erratic, and unspecified, we classify it as a random event – **chance**. If it is regular, repeatable, and predictable, we conclude it to be a result of natural forces – a **law**, i.e., changing of the seasons, or the appearance of daylight and darkness. However, if it is unpredictable yet highly specified, we must conclude that it has specific **design**. Could any rational mind conclude that the Eiffel Tower, or Westminster Abbey, or Mount Rushmore resulted from a mere random event? Or could the imagination be so creative as to believe that they were a result of some natural law and would be in place without the effort of design?

“Science” has used Darwinianism as a theory to explain how life began with an accidental mixing of chemicals forming a one-cell organism, and over hundreds of millions, maybe billions, of years, life evolved from butterflies to bees and finally to little boys. Intelligent men have spent lifetimes mixing their chemicals and manipulating their experiments, attempting to retrace steps that brought us from turtles to toddlers. We have built Epcot Centers that blend imagination with just enough truth to create a sharp, concise paradigm of the journey that brought us to where we are. We have been party to, or cooperated in, populating the minds of our children with visions from science-fiction mutants in the likeness of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Harry Potter; all of which promote the theory that, given enough time and opportunities to mutate, life evolves into forms far beyond imagination. But with all the experiments, with all the real and imaginary attempts at mutation, facts stand in cold contempt of man’s efforts at defying God’s title to being Supreme Architect of our universe. Birds may be bred to grow longer beaks or fewer feathers, but not to grow fur; neither can a mouse be evolved to grow feathers, nor can a pig ever grow wings. And true science admits to such.

Both friends and foes of Christianity acknowledge that its claim to any credibility stands or falls on the doctrine of creation. Christianity is not merely a religion, recognized by projected piety or corporate worship. It is an honest, informed perspective on reality. It is an ever up-to-date road map that directs the way we act if we are to live peacefully and rationally in the real world. Creation is the first element of the truly Christian worldview.

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Creation is the foundation on which everything else is built. Unless our species was created by a Supreme Creator, and unless mankind is the crowning act of His creation, then our claim to human dignity is wholly imaginary. Our origin tells us who we are, why we are here, and how we should treat one another. False views of our origin spawn strife. Unless we understand from where we came and why we are here, then we misunderstand how to treat one another, and what this thing, "Christianity", really is.

See the next two issues of REVEILLE as we explore (1) How we got to where we are, and what went wrong, and (2) How we can fix it, and where we are going.

As 2001 slips into history, our family wishes for you and your family a healthy and prosperous 2002. May the new year open doors to the Lord's service of which we have not yet dreamed, and may we seize every opportunity to learn more of Him and to be more like Him. From our family to yours, have a wonderful, happy, and holy holiday season.

Dean Nowell, Tressie Lewis, Laura Lewis, Nathan Lee Lewis, John Lewis, Cindy Bryson, Donald Travis Cozart, Kay Lewis, Travis Lewis, and Vernon Bryson. ☆