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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

The Fading Light Of Pop-Christianity

By Chris Saenz/Post Christian Era September 10, 2019

Many Christians were shocked in August when longtime Hillsong songwriter, Marty Sampson announced that he was "losing his faith".

In a Twitter post (that has since been removed), Marty claims that he is "not in anymore" and wants "genuine truth. Not the "I Just Believe It" kind of truth". His list of reasons that Christianity is "not for me", according to Sampson, read like a laundry list of teenage rebellions to Christianity during youth group:

- Christians are judgmental
- Science disproves Christianity
- Preachers fail morally
- The Bible has contradictions

Many Christians will read this news and wonder how God's power fits in to a Christian leader walking away from the Faith. Christians may wonder how someone so influential to modern Christianity can reject the faith he led others through.

Is God losing His elect to the powerful forces of modernity?

In one of Marty's most popular songs, Oceans, one lyric reads:

"Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders"

Did God fail to lead Marty into an unfailing trust?

Not in the least.

You see, its obvious from his recent apostasy announcement that Marty's faith rested in a form of Christianity that reflects the spirit of our age, rather than a faith led by the Spirit of God.

The Hillsong brand of Christianity is one marked with pursuing earthly treasures, entertainment, celebrity, and sensationalism.

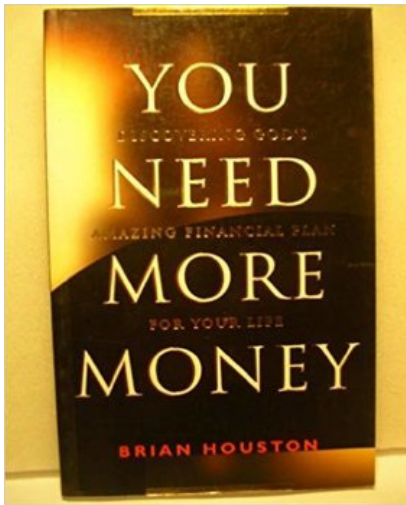
I like to call it "pop-Christianity". Drawing from all the entertainment and commercial successes of the 21st century, pop-Christianity appeals to the temporal at the expense of the eternal.

This, however, is not unique to Hillsong-Christianity. It was the sociologist Christian Smith in his book *Soul Searching* whose research formulated the most popular beliefs that today's professing Christians hold to.

Through interviewing hundreds of Christians, his research revealed that professing Christian's most important beliefs about their faith are:

- God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other
- The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about one's self
- Good people go to heaven when they die

Smith coined the term *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD)* to describe this form of Christianity. It is moralistic, in that there are rules; deistic in that there is a god, and therapeutic because the goal of this faith is happiness.



Just look at the title of Brian Houston's (founder of Hillsong Church) book and you'll see a form of Christianity overly concerned with the one's material condition. Add to that the Hillsong worship experience that is more of a psychological experience than communing with the divine, and you have a faith that makes no sense to questions of morality, holiness, and truth.

As if right on cue, I talked to a high school aged boy this week who grew up in the church. He chuckled as I suggested that God is not primarily concerned with us being happy, as if to say "you're joking, right?"

It is not difficult to see why a successful person like Marty Sampson would walk away from Christianity. His life is more secure than most; why wrestle with difficult topics like morality, which is essentially asking the question "how would God have me live" and "which actions are holy and good, and which are unholy and do damage". He claims that the Bible has contradictions; why wrestle with the writings of 2000+ years of Christian thinkers who have made sense of it.

The disheartening thing is that the sensational and prosperity-focused forms of Christianity are extremely prevalent. Even in historic churches and denominations, MTD is the result of modernity's philosophies at work within the hearts of their parishioners.

Making A Mockery Of Christianity

The Hillsong phenomena may be a very visible and organized form of pop-Christianity, but any time you see a church losing focus on holiness, wisdom, truth, and beauty, and trade it in for entertainment, gimmickry, and focusing on the present world, it is making a mockery of Christianity. Unfortunately, our culture is full of pop-Christianity vying for members and donors instead of disciples.

We mentioned here the mockery of Christian art, supported by the New York Cardinal. Hillsong Gold Coast might have been trying to top that when it literally turned its service into a circus.

Hillsong Gold Coast has all the fun and fascination of a circus:



<http://www.prophecynewswatch.com/images/recent/circussept10.jpg>

Not to be outdone, the historic Norwich Cathedral in England had a helter-skelter installed. The Rev. Jonathan Meyrick delivered a sermon atop the carnival ride, saying, "God is a tourist attractions," and "God wants to be attractive to us... for us to enjoy ourselves, each other, and the world around us and this glorious helter-skelter is about just that"



<http://www.prophecynewswatch.com/images/recent/heltersept10.jpg>

A sacred cathedral becomes a joke

This after the Anglican church also installed a mini-golf course in another UK cathedral.



<http://www.prophecynewswatch.com/images/recent/golfsept10.jpg>

But perhaps the circus is too yesterday for you. Well, if games are your thing, the Roman Catholic Church has designed a PokemonGo-style app for you to play. With "Follow JC Go", you can "catch" all the saints of the Church for your pilgrimage.

A church in Texas had a basketball theme for March Madness, where an entire court was installed on the altar -- err... stage.

<http://www.prophecynewswatch.com/images/recent/basketballsept10.jpg>

If you are looking at these examples of pop-Christianity and wondering "what is wrong with making Christianity attractive?", the answer is that Christianity is attractive. What is being done by pop-Christianity is clouding truth and beauty with sensation and indulgence. Pop-Christianity is to spiritual health what Fast Food is to physical health; a cheap alternative that simply appeases the appetites.



The Christian faith rests upon the fact that God is beauty, and all His works and His ways are full of His beauty. The Christian is simply left to soak up that beauty; to bask in the light of God's goodness. This requires obedience, relationship, reflection, and dedication to the God who dwells with His people. No amount of buzzing sounds and flashing lights will sustain a lifelong faith.

Get In Or Get Out

Pop-Christianity does offer something that may seem appealing: a foot in both worlds. Pop-Christianity has all the sensation and spectacle of popular culture, which is inarguably dedicated to feeding whatever passions and desires one might have. Yet, simultaneously speaking the language of and seeking for the divine.

But Christianity does not fill the same voids as popular culture. Pop culture fills desires for momentary pleasure. Christianity fills the desire for meaning. So like all popular culture fads, pop-Christianity fades away. Or its followers walk away.

Pop-Christianity also leaves its followers open to ridicule even from those on the outside. The outsider observes that pop-Christianity is an attempt to live in two worlds; like one who says they are a "baller" (slang for "basketball aficionado"), yet never dedicates any time to improve the skills and knowledge needed for the game. In other words, its easy to see the attempt to live devoted to one's professed lifestyle (pop-Christianity or being a "baller") isn't a serious one.

Although the outsider may not agree and indeed detest ones disciplined obedience to the Christian faith, the outsider's reaction is a validation that he is reacting to something genuine; a faith taken seriously.

Abandoning Pop-Christianity

By now we should see that Marty was a victim of the pop-Christianity that he facilitated for years. A faith that relies upon covering truth and beauty with sugar to make it more palatable is one that is easily given up in the face of adversity; even to the one's pouring the sugar.

What surprises me is how a person with such a limited understanding of the Christian faith gathers such a large following of people who desire that understanding. But if our culture is one that is desperately seeking moments of sensation and indulgence, then perhaps it is understandable that a figure with a talent for satisfying such appetites would ascend to such a position.

The job of the Christian today is to see the Christian faith as more than a hobby or part-time job. It doesn't just inform a person, it directs their every step and the paths they choose. The problem I see very often is that churches and ministries take their cues from the entertainment and commercial practices of pop-culture. And individual Christians try to fit cultural values into the way of Christ. It must be clear that the worlds ways are not Christ's ways.

Our faith directs what is valuable (sacrifice, servanthood, holiness), and so does pop-culture (fulfilling desires, having intense experiences).

Our faith directs what is wise (living simply, unaffiliated with the world), and so does pop-culture (living lavishly, and taking cues from the world).

Our faith directs what we use our time on (spiritual disciplines, serving one another, worship of Christ), and so does pop-culture (seeking sensational experiences, personal goals, making one's life comfortable).

Our faith directs which temperaments we should foster (meekness, patience, peacefulness) and which we should limit (selfishness, quick to speak, sporadic), while pop-culture encourages

Christianity and popular culture pull the individual in different directions. Its time to sever the ties. Its time to abandon Christian methods and ministries that are too entwined with the ways of pop-culture. Its time to stop letting fast-food Christianity be the main part of our diet.

Lest we have more Marty Sampsons leading, then leaving our churches.

The Mark of the Beast Goes Mainstream

Todd Strandberg

raptureready.com

9.8.19

One of the most helpful tools I use in the analysis of Bible prophecy is a comparison of how people perceived events years ago, and how they view these same events today. In the 1960's the government believed that people with homosexual tendencies were mentally ill.

Here in the 21st century, gay is the way. You've probably heard about state officials who try to compel florists or bakers to violate their religious beliefs and participate in same-sex weddings. In Minnesota the state claims the authority to do the same to filmmakers. A Christian film company was told to add gay couples to its film to show the normalcy of same-sex marriage.

Another huge change in perception has been how people view technology that could compromise their privacy. I still remember when any news story about software or machines that could track your movements was viewed in a negative light. Today, people are blind to technology that can observe and track everything you do.

Employees at the Three Square Market in River Falls, WI, actually celebrated by wearing "I Got Chipped" T-shirts after they were implanted with microchips by their bosses. The firm's Operating Officer Patrick McMullan dismisses any concerns that microchipping his employees is akin to Big Brother. He told detractors to "take your cell phone and throw it away" to defend this invasive practice.

Three Square Market is looking to drastically expand the technology and make it standardized, showing how it can already be used to open doors, buy food items, and turn on computer portals. The company's CEO Todd Westby demonstrated how the microchips can effectively store biometric information as well. "I scanned my hand and here's my driver's license information," Westby said, holding up his phone.

One of my neighbors has their house wired with Amazon's Alexa device. You can ask Alexa to turn on the lights or play music. You can ask Alexa a silly question like: "Do you have a boyfriend?" or "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" If you ask "Where can I hide a body?" or "What would be the best location to explode an improvised nuclear bomb?" there is a possibility that the FBI might pay you a visit. The internet provides the government with vast powers in controlling the population. One example of this danger is the number of times authorities shut down the internet to control or stifle. Typically used during times of civil unrest or political instability, a shutdown allows officials to stifle the flow of information about government wrongdoing or to stop communication among activists, usually by ordering service providers to cut or slow their customers' internet access.

When Zimbabwe turned off the internet during a recent crackdown, Obert Masaraure, a prominent

government critic, had no way of knowing when it was safe to emerge from hiding. The Indian government employs the practice more frequently than any other. In 2018, there were at least 196 shutdowns in 25 countries, up from 75 in 24 countries in 2016, according to research by Access Now, an independent watchdog group that campaigns for internet rights. In the first half of this year alone, there were 114 shutdowns in 23 countries.

The horrifying vision of the future described by George Orwell in “1984” has been neutralized by the convenience that technology provides us. You can use your cell phone to watch the house, track the weather, and monitor the stock market. The apps on your phone also allow a dozen different companies to track your physical movement.

China has started ranking citizens with a sinister ‘social credit’ system. It gives a credit score for every citizen based on big data analysis. This surveillance system rewards and punishes people based on their behavior.

The global community should be outraged that China has become an Orwellian state. Many governments are viewing the social credit system as something to emulate. Last week there was a news story on the Drudge Report that discussed using the China model to control people’s access to guns.

When I was a kid, I remember reading a Christian publication that described the mark of the beast as the product of a world gone mad. The world has collectively lost its mind, and it is clear that the introduction of a 666 device would be welcomed by the vast majority of people. During the tribulation we may have individuals wearing “I Got Marked” T-shirts. We have had the ability to create the mark for at least two decades. The lack of any meaningful opposition to this type of technology tells us that the tribulation hour is very near.

“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:16-17).

The Biblical town of Emmaus, which is linked to Jesus’ resurrection and the Ark of the Covenant, may have been found

By James Rogers | Fox News

Archaeologists in Israel may have discovered the Biblical town of Emmaus, which is linked to Jesus’ resurrection and the Ark of the Covenant.

Haaretz reports that archaeologists have uncovered the remains of a 2,200-year-old fortification at Kiriath-Jearim, a hill on the outskirts of Abu Ghosh, a village near Jerusalem.

The fortification dates back to the Hellenistic period when ancient Greek influence in the region was strong. Tel Aviv University Professor Israel Finkelstein told Haaretz that the walls were repaired during the later period of Roman rule in the first century A.D.

Finkelstein and his fellow researchers suggest that the site could be the famous Biblical town, or village, of Emmaus. According to Christian tradition, Jesus appeared to two of his apostles on the road to Emmaus after his crucifixion and resurrection.

In Luke 24:13-35 Emmaus is described as being about 7 miles from Jerusalem. This corresponds with the distance between Kiriath-Jearim, Abu Ghosh and Jerusalem.

Emmaus is also described in ancient histories as being a fortified town west of Jerusalem. The Kiriath-Jearim site is west of Jerusalem.

Kiriath-Jearim is also mentioned in the Bible as one of the places where the Ark of the Covenant stood. Last year Finkelstein and his fellow researchers reported that the site of Kiriath-Jearim is the hill on the outskirts of Abu Ghosh.

The disciples of Emmaus, Gospel of Luke, engraving from *Evangelia Arabice et Latine* (Gospels in Arabic and Latin), Tipografia Medicea, Rome, 1591.

The latest research is described in a forthcoming paper published in the journal "New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region."

Other locations, however, have also been suggested as the site of Emmaus, such as the ancient Byzantine town of Emmaus Nicopolis and the modern village of Motza, according to Haaretz.

The dig at Kiriath-Jearim is a joint project of Tel Aviv University and the College de France, supported by the Shmunis family in San Francisco. Finkelstein, who leads the project with Thomas Romer and Christophe Nicolle of the College de France, told Fox News that the latest discoveries offer a fascinating glimpse into the site's role in the ancient world.

"The finds at Kiriath-Jearim hint at its long-term role as guarding the approach to Jerusalem," he explained, via email. "This can be seen in the Iron Age, Hellenistic and early Roman periods. The Hellenistic and Roman period remains shed light on the much-debated issue of the location of the New Testament's Emmaus."