

(Continued from page 3)

from the present state of things under sin, projected back onto original creation and eternity. And if true, of course, it would constitute sin an eternal necessity, and prove God a (former) sinner. More poppycock!

Rob: I was also upset about his last statement about how it's always better to win a friend rather than an argument. Greg affirmed this is what "we" say, but then Greg said something different when he said, "It's not always better to win an argument rather than winning a friend."

Timothy: I am very concerned about the presuppositions on which Bob and Greg's relationship appears to be built, and which we are supposed to swallow as justification for their relationship and their taking it on the road and to the airwaves.

It is an ungodly, worldly definition of love that says love must never offend, and that the beloved's sense of being loved must define the relationship. But that is essentially what we were told on

the first broadcast. Was Jesus guilty of being unloving every time the Pharisees took offense? If I loved you and you were an idolater I would owe it to you to tell you straight up, "You are an idolater, and idolaters will be punished for eternity in hell." What kind of "friendship" is it, how deep can it be, if it cannot bear up under the truth? If Bob really loved Greg, he could hear that from Greg and not take offense. And he could tell Greg he thought the same about him. And if Greg really loved Bob he could hear that from Bob as well. True friendship doesn't avoid or downplay hard truths. And avoiding the hard truths does not produce true understanding, but confusion, even deception.

Their repetitious statements that they did acknowledge that they still had doctrinal disagreements, even serious ones, is no help, so long as it is never acknowledged and affirmed that those differences are so serious as to actually exclude one or the other of them from the pale of Christianity, and from eternal life.

Failing to say that, or, to say otherwise, eliminates any possibility of true understanding. And I cannot believe that either one of them is really unaware of that. So they both agree that they cannot convert the other, and that they are not there to "win" by converting the other. Big deal. The fact remains that BYU professor and Church Public Affairs Manager of Outreach and Interfaith Relations Millet is there *on the job*, and is there *to win*. The win is not to convert Greg or any listener to Mormonism—that can come later. The win is simply to get people to think Mormonism is a species of Christianity. Yes, they have serious doctrinal differences. So do Baptists and Lutherans. So if Baptists and Lutherans can disagree and both still be Christian churches, why can't Mormonism disagree and still be a Christian church?

Assuming Millet to be an informed and committed Mormon, then saying Bob and Greg both believe in Christ, but simply with some serious doctrinal differences, is just a

flat out lie. *Neither Millet nor any other true blue Mormon believes in Christ.* They believe in a *mythological construct*, into which they have incorporated some biblical data, mostly historical, but excluded other biblical data, and added a mountain of not merely extra-biblical data, but anti-biblical data. It's not just "additional information," but *contrary* information over against the Bible's information. The fact that they have tagged their mythological construct with the Bible's name for the true Deity does not make them worshipers of Christ in any sense of the word or the Word.

Rob: I'm happy that Millet is on a Christian show in which almost all the viewers are Christians so that Millet can get evangelized by people like you!

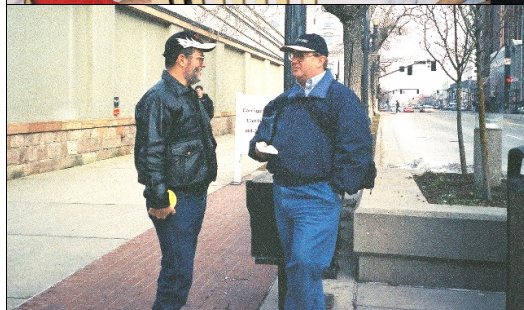
Timothy: I have no illusions of being able to evangelize him. They control the microphone, for one thing. I had to be almost rude just to get out what I wanted to say. I doubt it will be long before they stop taking my calls.

Odds and Ends

Shortly after her return from SE Asia, Suzie was able to visit her sister Molly in TX so they could enjoy a bit of family Chinese New Year's traditions. One evening they were also able to have some of our best friends and fellow-workers over for a dinner. These are people with whom we can say we enjoy the beauty of a spiritual bond.



We have recently heard from a young woman Suzie knew in Singapore. She called us for help once before when we lived in TX. She was involved with some demon worshipers and wanted out. However, she did not receive Christ at that time and her life has not much improved. But every time she saw a church she thought of Suzie. When they finally were able to talk again



The Big Chill: Witnessing outside a "modern temple" in February.

Suzie shared the gospel with her and we think she may have been born again. Please pray for Meng Yuet that that would be true, and that God will put her in a local church and keep her growing. We pray for all of God's best to all of you! *Timothy & Suzie Oliver.*

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The Garden Or the Cross?

Our Lord's sufferings—the pain, torture, crown of thorns, scourging, and final crucifixion—which he endured between the night of the Last Supper and his death on the cross are collectively spoken of as the Passion of Christ. The sectarian world *falsely suppose* that the climax of his torture and suffering was on the cross...yet the great pains were endured in the Garden of Gethsemane...It was there he underwent his greatest suffering for men, *taking upon himself, as he did, their sins on conditions of repentance*" (Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p.55: emp. added).

For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23a.)

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2.)

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14.)

And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Colossians 1:20.)

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14.)

And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24.)

No Christian denies that Christ suffered horribly in Gethsemane. As He left the Garden, however, He indicated He had not yet drunk the bitter cup prepared for Him (John 18:11). He had not yet atoned for sin, because the wages of sin is *death*. Sin may result in suffering, but its punishment is death. Making suffering its punishment results in a low view of sin, a low view of the atonement, and a low view of God's holy righteousness. Jesus atoned for sin on the cross; his sufferings were simply the route, what He had to go through, to get Himself on the cross. Had He suffered all that He did, but not died, we would still be every bit in our sins. Had He suffered nothing but death, we would be redeemed.

Notorious Street Preacher Insults Religious Leaders

A notorious street preacher lacking any recognized credentials or authority invaded the very Temple precincts with his rag-tag group of followers early this week. They created a riot, driving many people out of the Temple, turning over the tables of the moneychangers, apparently with no regard for the poor who need their services, and even driving away innocent animals consecrated for the divine service.

Later in the week they returned, and the unlicensed street preacher engaged in hot debate with the faith's most respected spiritual leaders, again right within the temple precincts.

Even one member of the ruling council rumored to be sympathetic to the street preacher expressed distress: "Supposing the leaders deserved the excoriations dealt them by this man, still, if he truly wants to reach them, then he must realize there is a time and a place for everything. This kind of activity isn't glorifying to God, and it certainly doesn't build bridges."

The street preacher is reputed to be a teacher of love by his adoring, albeit uneducated devotees. But he did not appear interested in cultivat-

ing friendship so much as simply winning his argument, as he hardly paused for breath (or a rebuttal) while hurling one curse and denunciation after another upon his hapless opponents with a rapid, spit-fire delivery.

Little love seemed evident as the street preacher repeatedly called our spiritual leaders hypocrites. He warned the people not to follow their example. He accused them of laying heavy burdens on the people that they themselves were unwilling to move with so much as a finger. Apparently claiming to be able to read men's minds and hearts,

he even said all their religious service was motivated simply by the desire to receive glory and honor from men.

Not content with pointing out their supposed foibles, he began coupling his criticisms with curses, calling down woe over and over again, upon the objects of his wrath.

According to eye-witness testimony he actually said: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."

(Continued on page 2)

San Antonio Temple Evangelical Outreach

An evangelical outreach is being planned for the San Antonio temple open house, scheduled for April 16–May 7, 2005. A local Christian group, Evidence Ministries, has spearheaded the efforts. Plans are underway for billboard advertisements, literature distribution throughout the temple neighborhood before the open house, and at strategic points during the open house. Other ministries nationwide are planning participation. We



also will be participating, during the entire time of the open house. Please pray for our safety and effectiveness. We will give you a report in our next newsletter.

(Continued from page 1)

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, *that* is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’ You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold?

“And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, *that* is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.’ You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering?

“Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears *both* by the altar and by everything on it. And whoever

swears by the temple, swears *both* by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. And whoever swears by heaven, swears *both* by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

“You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. So you, too,

outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure *of the guilt* of your fathers.

“You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?”

Not content with criticism, cursing, and name calling, with an unbounded audacity he went on to threatening:

“Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall *the guilt* of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the

blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.”

Anyone familiar with the Law and with our customs could not have leveled a greater insult than his comparison of our spiritual leaders to a whitewashed sepulcher full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness—unless by his later calling them snakes, the very emblem of Satan himself!

Even some of the people, professedly his followers, were heard to complain: “I was so disappointed. He never even smiled. This is not the Jesus I know. My Jesus would never say things like that.”

Indeed, such insults to our leaders are insults to each of us. No wonder, then, some of the leaders are urging action be taken to *silence* the man. While some might ask, “Why not simply answer him?” his ideas are too insulting, not to mention too dangerous to the faith, to be countenanced by so much as a hearing. Away with him—and any like him!

Update On Mr. Wong

As most of you know from our last newsletter, Suzie returned from her trip to southeast Asia a week late, due to being detained because her green card date had expired. During her extra time there she had opportunity to visit and share the gospel with Mr. Wong, the father of Ivy, one of Suzie’s daughter’s friends. Mr. Wong was in the final stages of terminal cancer, and had been sent home to die.

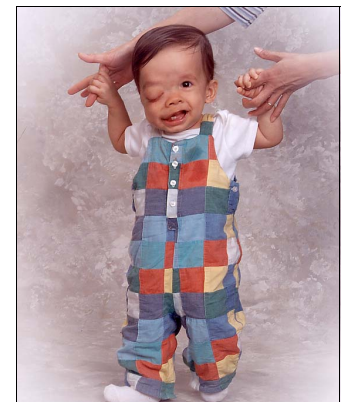
When Suzie shared the gospel with him, Mr. Wong received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. Other members of the family were invited to do

likewise, but they declined at the time. So far we know of no others to have followed his example, but we are praying for them and ask you to do the same.

Mr. Wong passed away Feb. 8, 2005. Between his receiving Christ and his decease, he told his daughter that he was no longer afraid of dying. He also witnessed to his family members sufficiently clearly that, despite most of them being Buddhist, they honored his request to be given a distinctly Christian funeral service. It was beautiful, and the gospel was preached clearly.

Update On Ethan

Our nephew Ethan D’Amato is growing. Despite his condition of neurofibromatosis, he is a happy little boy, and relates well to the rest of his family and even strangers.



You can learn more about him at his website: <http://www.geocities.com/pdamato@sbcglobal.net/index.html>.

His brothers and sister were also recently baptized, and the whole family was received as members at their church.



Bob and Greg In Conversation

A new show is airing in Utah on Tuesday evenings on Channel 20, an ongoing dialogue between BYU professor Bob Millet, and Greg Johnson, representing evangelical Christianity. The show has caused concern among some Christians that Millet is being less than honest about Mormon belief and that Greg is letting him get by with it.

The second program discussed “The Fall.” According to Mormon doctrine, God gave Adam and Eve two commandments in the Garden of Eden. The first, and greater commandment was to bear children. The second, lesser commandment, was not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. However, according to Mormon scriptures, they could not bear children before having eaten the fruit.

The text below is an email conversation I had with Rob Sivulka after the second program.

Rob: I’m still not getting how Millet gets out of God’s command to reproduce prior to the fall, and since ought implies can, why couldn’t Adam and Eve reproduce prior to the fall? Do you get it?

Timothy: No reason for why they could not have children before the fall has ever been given by any official Mormon source so far as I know. It is simply asserted, without proof, on the authority of the BoM and PoGP passages. At one point Millet at least implied that it was not because of any actual physical inability or disability, but because of their state of naive innocence. In other words, it took sin to figure out sex. The

whole doctrine is just pure nonsense.

First, you really do have two contradictory commands. Millet tried to play this down by saying the command not to eat was really not a commandment but a statement of fact that consequences would follow eating the fruit. But the consequences were not simply contingent facts, cause/effect relationships, like, “Step off this cliff, you’ll go down.” The consequences were not only loss, ruin, broken relationship, etc. They included *punishment*, imposed not merely by the nature of things, but by God, personally. A just God does not punish the non-guilty. Adam and Eve were punished, and most certainly, therefore, were guilty. Objective guilt is not the result of eating fruit, but of violating a direct command. God gave them a commandment not to eat that fruit. Had there been no such commandment there would have been no guilt for eating it, and therefore no punishment. Moreover, had there been no actual commandment not to eat the fruit, then their eating it would not have been sin, and could not possibly have brought sin into the world, as affirmed in Rom. 5:12. The

Fall, then, if real in any sense, would have been purely chemical. Second, because there were two contradicting commands, they were “living in sin” no matter what they did. Millet tried to explain the absence of punishment for their sin of omission in not having children as due to the fact that they could not have any children. Since they could not do it, they were not guilty. But

later he implied that the reason they could not have children before the Fall wasn’t a matter of actual inability at all, but naive innocence. It besmirches the character of God to say He would give a commandment to Adam and Eve and never explain to them what was necessary for them to do in order to keep that commandment.

What’s more, there is the implicit assumption that they had no sexual drives that would be stimulated or aroused by the sight or touch of the other. Sexual arousal is not sinful, nor the result of sin. So even if they had not been told *how* to fulfill the commandment to have children (given before the Fall, Gen. 1:28) they most assuredly would have discovered it if the only factor inhibiting it were “naive innocence.” So, Millet’s explanation of why they were *not* punished for breaking, by omission, the supposedly more important commandment to have children, but then *were* punished for breaking the lesser commandment (which he had earlier implied wasn’t really even a commandment), is, again, just pure nonsense.

Rob: And did you really understand his take on Lewis reaffirming the BoM “falling upward”?

Timothy: Lewis taught the biblically sound principle that the glorified state of the redeemed will be greater and more glorious than the state of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. That is far from stating that they could not possibly have been elevated from their Edenic state if they had never sinned. But that is the

spin Millet puts on it, wanting to make it a justification for saying the Fall brought about benefits. It did not. God brings about benefits, in spite of the Fall. Is redemption a benefit? Yes! Would we need redemption if not for the Fall? No! But we have no reason to say that fall and redemption was the only means by which God could have elevated Adam and Eve above their Edenic state. That would be mere speculation. To say they certainly would have been so elevated is also speculation. But it certainly is reasonable. Sin and sinning were not required to make their freedom real and their choices meaningful, but only the possibility of such. And there is no reason to assume that the possibility of sin made sin inevitable. That would be to justify sin, and sin would be no more sin. *There is no natural explanation or justification for the appearance of sin.* Why couldn’t they have obeyed God perfectly? And why should we think perpetual endurance in such perfect obedience, when they could at any time choose otherwise, would not have warranted and been rewarded by greater glory than their original state? That the glory of the redeemed in eternity is greater than the Edenic state simply does not justify the idea that the Fall was a good thing that brought benefits. Millet also quoted the passages from 2 Ne. 2 and Moses 5 which teach the impossibility of doing good or having joy without having sinned or experiencing misery. Poppycrack! There is no such logical necessity whatever. It is all reasoning

(Continued on page 4)