

CogentNotion

Thoughtful Christian Commentary & Review

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FEATURE ARTICLE

What is a Thinking Christian?

by Bill Moller

Extremist groups, or “cults”, generally develop and grow through carefully orchestrated schemes of manipulation, deception and outright fraud. However, even the most well intended Christian organizations, exhibiting no cult-like methodology, may inadvertently encourage their members to accept certain beliefs and practices which are both short-sighted and ultimately harmful. Often, the result of such encouragement is a group of followers who not only stop questioning what is taught, but also the one teaching. These listeners are not expected to think for themselves, but instead are encouraged to follow a particular pattern set before them. Considering that most role models have at least a few chinks in their armor, this process can be quite destructive. When conformity of this type is the unspoken rule in a church, lemming-like behavior follows and independent thinking perishes. The cure for both the extremist groups and their more subtle counterparts, is a Thinking Christian!

The naive believes everything, But the sensible man considers his steps.

Proverbs 14:15 (NAS)

Have you ever visited a church and noticed how most all the members seem to use the same Christian jargon, read the same books and follow the same "gurus"? Have you been in attendance at a Christian conference and watched

how the participants passively accepted what the presenter was saying as though it had been spoken by the Apostle Paul himself? Or, consider those Bible studies where questioning the leader's interpretation of a passage is neither expected nor encouraged? Why is it that we seem to just fall in line without checking whether what we're hearing or saying is biblical, or even accurate? Please do not misunderstand, questioning every word that comes out of a leader's mouth would be disruptive and probably counter-productive, but, we do need to make sure the information we are receiving is valid.

(Continued on page 2)

NEW ON THE WEBSITE



If you haven't visited our website recently, you may be surprised to see some new additions, including links to RZIM (Ravi Zacharias), Christianity Today's *FilmForum*, and Chuck Colson's *BreakPoint*.

Be Aware that the “Featured Website” link changes every time you visit the site and the pop-up list of websites is constantly revised to include great new Christian resources.

Finally, if you haven't already done so, sign our website Guestbook and receive a FREE GIFT.

www.ThinkingChristians.com

BOOK REVIEW



Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives
by Richard A. Swenson, M.D.

At a recent Renovaré conference (www.renovare.org) featuring Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith, this book was mentioned as one which should not be overlooked. Although it has been over 12 years since it was initially published by NAVPress, the insights and advice offered by the author prove astoundingly accurate and profoundly motivating.

Swenson's education in physics and medicine, his private practice as a doctor, a successful career as a university professor, and his devout faith in Jesus Christ provided a

robust background and a prosperous lifestyle from which to take note of the fact that too many Americans are living their lives with no room to spare in time, finances, emotions and health. This is what he terms a lack of “Margin”.

The premise on which Swenson builds his case is that “Progress”, while bringing the obvious benefits we see in “affluence, education, technology and entertainment”, has also accelerated our lifestyles exponentially. It is true that progress has helped cure disease, reduce travel time, and increase manufacturing capacity. However, as Dr. Swenson states, “...somehow, we are not flourishing under the gifts of modernity...”.

In his book Dr. Swenson systematically spells out, in a three part format, the physical, social and spiritual issues involved in...

(Continued on page 2)

(What is... - cont'd)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1 (NAS)

With that in mind, try to imagine a church where the congregation is urged to check facts for themselves, and where the leaders encourage people to approach them specifically to discuss seeming discrepancies. Then imagine a church where the congregants are expected to visit services of other denominations and attend a variety of seminars to help broaden their knowledge base -- a church where the members look forward to sharing what they've learned at those "outside" events. This is the environment where "Thinking Christians" thrive and everyone benefits.

I'm eager to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours. In this way, each of us will be a blessing to the other.

Romans 1:12 (NLT)

Now we have a picture in our mind's eye of what a Thinking Christian CHURCH might look like. But, what exactly is a "THINKING CHRISTIAN"? Do they have to be seminary trained? Do they have to read Greek and Hebrew? Do they have to be some sort of 21st century "wiz kid"? The answer is unequivocally, NO! A Thinking Christian is, first and foremost, a Christian -- someone who believes that Jesus Christ paid the price for their sins, trusts Him completely as a model for daily living, and is guided by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

But when He, the Spirit of

truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth;

John 16:13 (NAS)

Next, a Thinking Christian is someone who listens attentively, reads carefully and researches thoroughly. He or she applies sound hermeneutics when studying Scripture, and looks beyond the obvious when considering the practical applications of a passage. A Thinking Christian avoids drawing conclusions based on preconceived notions, and doesn't limit the scope of his or her interests to only "Christian" issues. Thinking Christians are careful to hear what is presented and to take into account all the evidence in an effort to improve their understanding.

Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes.

Ephesians 4:23 (NLT)

Finally, a Thinking Christian works at keeping a balance in life, regularly venturing beyond the four walls of his or her home church and

immediate community. They meet with other believers as well as non-believers and discuss a variety of issues. A Thinking Christian is willing to listen to alternate views, especially when they disagree with them. And all of this is done with an attitude of love and compassion in an effort to discern the truth.

The charge of Jesus' Great Commission is to, "...go into the world and make disciples of all nations." If we limit our thinking to the patterns of "our church" or even "our pew" we greatly hinder our ability to fulfill the Great Commission. The goal of a Thinking Christian is to gain a better understanding of Scripture, discover a clearer sense of the will of God, and build a stronger relationship with his or her neighbors in order to be effective in making new "disciples".

Are you a Thinking Christian?

You can find this and other CogentNotion articles on our website:
www.ThinkingChristians.com

(Margin - cont'd)

"marginless" living, and the specific ways to change one's lifestyle in order to regain "margin". The three sections are listed as "The Problem: Pain", "The Prescription: Margin" and "The Prognosis: Health".

While the problems of stress and overload are introduced, and the prescriptions for emotional and physical energy are put forth in great detail, the prognosis for health through contentment, simplicity, balance and rest serves as the driving force throughout the book.

This prognosis isn't simply theory or speculation on the part of Dr. Swenson. He is an actual example of someone who dramatically

altered his lifestyle by deliberately cutting his medical practice in half, changing his fitness routines, and dedicating his life and his resources to the service of others. It appears he is a true believer in the teachings of Jesus in chapter 6 of the book of Matthew:

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matt 6:33 (NAS)

Dr. Swenson's book is both practical and insightful and can truly help the reader restore "margin" to their overloaded lives.

To read an excerpt from Dr. Swenson's book "Margin", visit our website:
www.ThinkingChristians.com

Music Review

All About Love

by Steven Curtis Chapman



Steven Curtis Chapman has written and performed some of the finest Contemporary Christian music available today. His latest release, on Sparrow Records, may be one of his best collections yet!

Written, "...as a gift to the girl of my dreams...", this collection of songs is truly a tribute to "relationships" - those between individuals, and most important, the one between our Maker and ourselves.

Comparing marriage to "*holding a mirror to your heart*", SCC describes how one can see the "bad stuff" but also the potential, which is the result of being "*created in the image of our Maker*."

Starting with the title track, a driving pop tune reminding us to move beyond the "buzz" of the "information age" and remember why we're here, "*to give the love He's given us away*", SCC takes one through the emotional ups and downs of relationships.

In the oddly titled song, *11-6-64*, SCC shows us that he's a romantic at heart. This endearing look at how his life changed the day Mary Beth was born (SCC's wife of 19 years) puts new meaning to the term predestination.

SCC's dedication to God and family comes shining through in, *How do I Love Her*. In this offering the writer prays in thanksgiving for the "gifts" He's been given and then pleads with God to "*teach me what she needs*".

The style of the album is typical

Steven Curtis Chapman - rock 'n' roll roots but with a soft side.

If you're a SCC fan, you won't be disappointed, and if you're new to Contemporary Christian music "All About Love" is a wonderful way to hear how Jesus has affected Steven and Mary Beth's lives and how He can touch yours, as well.

Sprinkled throughout this collection of songs we hear clear reminders that it is truly "*All About Love*".

For more about SCC visit:
www.StevenCurtisChapman.com

WEBSITE REVIEW

Growing Christians Ministries with Dr. David Reid



If you're looking for a website that will enhance your Bible study, Dr. David Reid's *Growing Christians Ministries* has just what you need.

For over 30 years David Reid has reached out to Christians, through his "Devotions for Growing Christians" newsletter - a series of insightful essays on Scripture. Over the years the ministry has grown, and since 1998 it has expanded to the Internet where streaming audio and study guides are available for download. Also, the "Devotions" archive can be searched by topical keywords and Scripture reference.

Dr. Reid is a faculty member at Emmaus Bible College in Dubuque, IA, and produces "Talks for Growing Christians" and "Courses for Growing Christians", a series of messages and lectures consisting of approximately 900 audio messages covering nearly all of the Bible and special topics such as Biblical

Hermeneutics and Christian Evidences. The "Talks" messages can be heard on Good News Radio in select regions of the U.S. and both the "Talks" and "Courses" audio recordings are available on cassette and/or CD, which can be ordered online or by mail, directly from the ministry.

Dr. Reid, who was trained as an engineer prior to his theology studies at Gordon-Cromwell Theological Seminary, provides systematic background information, verse-by-verse doctrinal analysis, and useful practical applications in each of his recorded messages.

In addition to traditional Biblical studies, the website also features "Music for Growing Christians"- a ministry of Dr. Reid's son Ron, a talented musician who plays guitar and produces the arrangements and recordings for "The Light", a contemporary praise band hailing from Westerly, RI.

Growing Christians Ministries, Inc. is a faith ministry and is supported through tax-deductible contributions.

For more about GCM visit:
www.growingchristians.org

WHAT IS **CogentNotion** ?

Cogent

- having power to compel or constrain, appealing forcibly to the mind or reason.

Notion

- an individual's conception or impression of something known, experienced, or imagined.

CogentNotion

- a thoughtful and compelling article written to motivate Christians to think about what they say, do and believe.

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT COGENTNOTION

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WWW.THINKINGCHRISTIANS.COM

THINKINGCHRISTIANS.com

Think about your thinking!

