

Red Pill Gospel¹ ***Christianity, before it was ruined*** ***by Christians, by Forrest Maready***

Book Review by Barbara Buzzard

I will say at the outset that this is a remarkable book. The author admits it is dangerous in that it might make one uncomfortable and that it might actually force one to examine his faith as never before. (But I promise you that it is worth it.) The author details a fascinating journey from being a struggling atheist to struggling with Christianity's inconsistencies and contradictions. Mr. Maready saw Christian doctrine as "pitting the nature of God against not only his children, but himself," i.e. "the things he was supposed to have caused, or allowed to happen to his children, seemed infinitely worse than anything I would ever wish on mine."² I so hope some readers can identify with this; it was a thought I too tried to stifle.

We are asked to consider what we now know about the massive corruption and deceit in government, pharmaceuticals, and news outlets and then to consider whether similar deceptions have taken place in Christianity. "Is it possible that you and I have been deceived into believing an interpretation of the Bible which has benefitted those in power and has rendered the original 'good news' of the Gospels as something much different? Something which causes uncertainty and anxiety, rather than joy and contentment?"³

Maready says, "It is the purpose of this book to explore this possibility. It is my belief that we as Christians have indeed been manipulated — the truth revealed throughout the Bible purposefully hidden from us in an attempt that others might have leverage, power, or control. I don't believe this to be a cabal, mind you, a secret sect of an evil race that has conspired together against Christians for hundreds of years, but the natural, organic result of human sin, probing and exploiting weakness wherever it occurs."⁴

And so the willing and the brave will soldier on, much to their advantage. If you hold a position

contrary to that of the author, you can only be strengthened if you are correct, but if you could possibly have swallowed that blue pill and been deceived — you have much to gain. Proceed with caution — but do proceed. These matters are too important to let others determine them for you.

"It is my position that the faith we call Christianity is nearly unrecognizable from what the earliest followers of Jesus believed — completely different in many ways — and if you are willing to explore, I want to show you."⁵

Surprising Controversy

Mr. Maready bravely tackles first the doctrine of the Trinity, educating his readers as to its violent past, the many people put to death for questioning it. "One of the reasons the Trinity was so controversial is because the concept of God as three specific Persons was a new idea. It wasn't mentioned in the Old Testament and really didn't get much attention until hundreds of years after Jesus was crucified."⁶

In fact, in a recent interview Richard Rubenstein, author of *When Jesus Became God*, was asked, "When did Jesus become God?" He replied, "381 A.D."⁷ Truth is a remarkable thing, is it not?

Maready takes us through the monotheistic theme of the Scriptures and says that it is impossible to miss. However this biblical monotheism has been distorted, explained away, nullified, and basically sabotaged.

"Suffice it to say, throughout the Old Testament emphasis was placed on God being *one*. It was the most important, the most central, the defining belief that God insisted on above all other things...Ask yourself a question: Was Jesus a Trinitarian?...He was so careful in other areas — he instructed many of those he had healed not to talk about their recovery. In secret, he spoke of his impending death with his disciples. How then might he have made known this revelation of dynamite — one that would be so controversial it would kill so many people hundreds of years later?"⁸

A Life of their Own

"Unfortunately, doctrines carry a lot of risk. They tend to take on a life of their own as time passes

¹ This book takes its name from the movie *The Matrix*, where the main character is offered two choices: taking the blue pill and continuing to live in a beautiful but fictitious prison world, or the red pill which will reveal the truth to him.

² Forrest Maready, *Red Pill Gospel*, p. 10.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 13

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19

⁷ Richard Rubenstein interview with Carlos Xavier, July 14, 2020, [youtube.com/restorationfellowship](https://www.youtube.com/restorationfellowship)

⁸ *Red Pill Gospel*, p. 21

and others come along and add to them. People begin to believe doctrines over that which originally gave them meaning. Inevitably, systems form in which those who profess belief in certain doctrines may be rewarded with status. Those who refuse them might be penalized or, as we have seen, even killed. With enough time and the weight of consensus behind them, many doctrines become dogma — accepted blindly as indisputable truth beyond any shadow of doubt...My concern — indeed, the reason I have written this book — is that doctrine has taken over Christianity. It has supplanted the revelation of God, told plainly throughout history, and replaced it with a sequence of man-made beliefs that bear no resemblance to what God initially revealed. It has exchanged the obvious gospel for a convoluted mystery that only a few gifted men might fully comprehend. My desire is to pull back the gossamer edifice man has created around it, and allow the raw, tender message of the Bible to shine forth.”⁹

Mr. Maready makes the important point that even at the end of his ministry, Jesus reveals nothing about any Trinity. Rather, he speaks about going to *his* God and *our* God. Clearly, with the rational mind that God has given us, we can see that anyone who *has* a God is *not* God.

Likewise, the late Dr. Colin Brown from Fuller Seminary said, “Indeed to be a Son of God one has to be a being who is not God.”¹⁰

Danger Where We Thought There Was Safety — Gatekeepers

Maready’s discussion of this phenomenon is extremely interesting: “One of the most common signs of Christian pride is what I call the gatekeeper mentality. It is the notion that a certain person or group of people controls access to a special revelation or understanding of God. Very few others are capable of this comprehension — only the gatekeepers. Their hearts swell with pride with the confidence that God has gifted them with something others did not receive...Being a *gatekeeper* or *one of the chosen ones* short-circuits the negativity we’ve come to associate with pride and tells us — even if only subconsciously — ‘it’s okay this time. God wants this for you.’”¹¹ *The truth is* that the death of Jesus did away with all of the gatekeepers and

chosen ones — to God’s delight (Isa. 1:11-13). The truth is that the church put the laity “under guardians,” and those guardians have not always been upright, God loving believers.¹²

This is a powerful explanation and summing up of Christian history: “Throughout the centuries that followed the death and resurrection of Jesus, man-made doctrines began to replace the Bible’s good news. Just as weeds will overtake the most beautiful mansion if it is not cared for, the gospel message began to be overcome by the gatekeepers and status seekers which inevitably sprouted around it, clawing their way inside with conjured doctrines wildly divorced from scriptural intent.”¹³

Maready asks us to reflect on the chasm that now is between the glad tidings that had the hearers singing and shouting ‘Hosanna in the highest!’ (when Jesus declared himself the Messiah) and the current thinking of ‘heaven is my home’ and a kind of get-me-out-of-here mentality. “Like the Trinitarian concept of God, it was borrowed from neighboring cultures and their pagan philosophies. It was a promise, of sorts — one that had worked like magic elsewhere. It was quite literally, hell.”

Hell

The “Christian” hell of eternal suffering is the next concept which Maready chooses to examine, not he says as a rogue discovery of his but with both Old and New Testament Scriptures to rethink. Maready leaves us with this vexing question: “Where did this concept come from, if not from the Bible? How did the temporary, corrective punishments of the Old Testament become the never-ending agony of the modern church’s hell?”¹⁴

Surely the church couldn’t have used the concept of never-ending torture to its advantage, to control and to terrify — or could it?¹⁵ And this is where hell was truly weaponized: “As the pagan belief in an eternal hell of suffering began to creep into the church, baptism began to take on a very different tone...The church would take this beautiful observance and distort it into a superstitious sacrament, conducted out of fear rather than joy...Infinite hell had proven to be a greater evangelizer than the church could ever have imagined.”¹⁶ And we can only imagine what this

⁹ *Red Pill Gospel*, pp. 25, 26

¹⁰ *Ex Auditu*, 1991, no. 7

¹¹ *Red Pill Gospel*, p. 35

¹² Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. 3, p. 10.

¹³ *Red Pill Gospel*, p. 58

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62

¹⁵ The famous writer John Stott who wrote an article called “Stott on Hell” received such flack from colleagues that he chose not to allow a wider publication of his article. Perhaps he had received quite enough “hell” from them.

¹⁶ *Red Pill Gospel*, p. 73

terror would have done to parents, therefore directly leading to infant baptism. The fact that critics of infant baptism were tortured and executed is hard to get our minds around, but that was the church's attempt to silence dissent (gatekeepers at work).

Hellish

Maready gives us a valuable clue to John Calvin by stating this: "Much of Calvin's initial direction could be traced to him *having lost faith in the kingdom promise*. Like many others, he had come to believe that the prophecies about restoration and the future reign of the Messiah were not literal but had, in fact, already begun."¹⁷ This toxic thinking eventually led to his belief that with enough force and fear he might enforce godliness. "As a result, absolute moral control was enacted by Calvin. Officials made regular house calls, quizzing the occupants not only about their commitment to the great Reformer's doctrines but minute details such as the specific quantity of certain colored clothing or the number of dishes they were using during mealtimes. One poor woman faced jail simply for 'arranging her hair to an immoral height.'"¹⁸

But it gets worse, much worse. And the fact is that Calvin's beliefs are so horrifying that most people do not know about them.¹⁹ Maready says that they distort the nature of God and Jesus so badly that we could not even recognize them from Scripture. "As we will soon see, Calvin — at his core — represents the most twisted portrayal of Christianity you are ever likely to see. I can think of no one who could top him. What he clearly laid out in his voluminous writings — the components of what he felt were crucial to the understanding of God, the Bible, and Christianity — represents a horrific depiction even most Calvinists are unable to contemplate."²⁰

Maready makes an astute point when he points out that Calvin's logic is so inverted that it frustrates the rational mind. For example, God has called on all people everywhere to repent, and yet Calvin's God would say that we are in our depravity incapable of doing just that. This depravity is so basic to Calvinism (Reformed is a code word for Calvinism)

that even though Scripture speaks of "if" in a conditional way hundreds of times, they say we could never respond by our free will.

"Why would God have spent so much of the Bible clearly expressing what he desired of us if we were not at least capable of doing it? Again, the God that Calvinism paints feels like a disturbed deity, tormented by indecision and illogical thinking. What kind of God would strive so hard to instruct his children in hopes they would listen to him if he knew all along they would always despise him and were incapable of loving him?"²¹

And consider this: if all of Calvin's dreadful theories were true, it would make God responsible for our salvation and not ourselves. Surely then in the parable of the talents the Master should congratulate himself rather than saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant"! (Matt. 25:21).

Why is a denunciation of Calvin's theology so important? Because we often come in contact with those who have inherited such desperate thinking. They may not even recognize that it comes from Calvin, but it is wounding, can be paralyzing and always misleading.²² This is because it makes God's awesomely wonderful character seem monstrous in the extreme; because we are not to believe lies; and because it says "God does not love everybody."²³

"It suggests that God purposefully condemns most of humanity to hell. In an effort to take the edge off such horror, some Calvinists will say that God 'passes others by' or perhaps he chooses to 'hold back his tender mercies.' They will soften the tone so that the good character of God does not seem impugned. But the stark reality of Calvin's election is this: God, with full intent and knowledge, chooses that some would suffer eternal torment in hell — there is no way around this...You may feel God to be incapable of such unimaginable cruelty, but according to those who created the Westminster Confession of Faith, the most revered document in all of Calvinism, they seemed to have no problem with it: 'some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.'"²⁴

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 82, Emphasis mine.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 83

¹⁹ I can attest to this as I shall never forget the first time I heard what Calvinism involved. I still shudder with horror.

²⁰ *Red Pill Gospel*, p. 88

²¹ Ibid., p. 99

²² *Christianity Today*, Jul/Aug. 2020 includes an article, "Getting Born Again Backwards," which urges these same concepts, without even using the word "Calvinism." But the writer emphasizes the depravity of man, insisting that we cannot repent until we are born again.

²³ A.W. Pink, *Sovereignty of God*

²⁴ *Red Pill Gospel*, pp. 114, 115

Following this ghastly parody of Christianity, Mr. Maready's response is enormously heartening: "If God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth...then so, too, do I." Amen.

Let us sum up the results of this twisted thinking: the following is a very partial summation of Calvin's dictates: "Seven men and twenty-four women would end up being butchered at Calvin's direction, some of whom killed themselves in prison rather than face the skilled torturers he employed. Although his thoroughness and religious zeal drove Calvin to attempt the creation of a man-made heavenly kingdom like no other, in the end he would follow directly along the twisted path of his Catholic forefathers, their superstitions obscuring the gospel of Jesus, their wickedness leading them to kill en masse."²⁵

"The reality is that Satan, on his very best day, could not come close to causing the agony and suffering as does the Calvinist God — according to his 'good pleasure.' Give yourself a moment to think about this. What could Satan do — what lives could he perpetually destroy? None, because Satan does not have the power of God and, according to Calvinism, God has decided the ultimate fate of everyone long before Satan even had a chance to tempt anyone. Therefore he is unable to affect anyone's ultimate destination in any way. He is simply an annoyance along the journey because in the end, all of his tricks and temptations have no bearing on whether one goes to heaven or hell."²⁶

And Now for the Good News

Mr. Maready describes being told as a child that heaven will be so wonderful. He was unimpressed. When he studied theology at university he was equally unimpressed. In fact he thought heaven sounded horrible, and he has me saying, "Me too!" He says that "The mythological depictions of both hell and heaven worked *to drive me away* from the gospel message for much of my life." And he concludes that the immortal soul idea steals the joy from the Good News of the Bible *as nothing else can*, which is an important insight.

"As we have seen over the course of this book, the good news of the Bible is much grander than anything most Christians have ever been taught or imagined. Our refusal to worship and honor God as he is depicted throughout scripture has led to a distortion of his mercy and goodness that is a

complete inversion of his true nature. Our tendency to pluck words and scripture out of the context in which they appear has allowed us to create all sorts of boils, blisters, and carbuncles upon Christianity, man-made doctrines that were never, ever close to reflecting what the Bible — when viewed from high above — intended."²⁷

"Do you believe? This is the capital-g Gospel — not just a promise of the forgiveness of sins but something much more significant. If you have only ever understood the gospel to mean accepting Jesus Christ dying on the cross for the forgiveness of your sin, you may have never fully understood the profound hope and joy the gospel entails. *This* is what it means to be a Christian: believing in Jesus as the messiah, lord of the coming kingdom of God with creation restored and the promise of eternal life and the blissful reunions that will follow — embrace that hope and have faith that it will one day arrive. Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest! Shout it now! Even the stones will cry out if you don't."²⁸

Author Maready has done the Christian world a great service, and the unbelieving world perhaps an even greater service as he invites them to come and have another look at a more honest and kinder faith. He holds out to them a more unadulterated form of the faith and says, Have a look at what God has promised, not what men have distorted. He invites them to come to know a Father and a Son who you would actually love to meet. Perhaps as has been said, it is not that Christianity has failed, but that Christianity has never been tried.

This is a brilliant book, bold and honest, and revealing of a Christian culture that is tragically lacking in authenticity. It seems that we have a crisis in Truth telling. ✧

²⁵ Ibid., p. 84

²⁶ Ibid., p. 126

²⁷ Ibid., p. 173

²⁸ Ibid., p. 51