

RELEASE IN PART B6

**From:** H <hrod17@clintonemail.com>  
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**Subject:** Fw: A new writer/thinker for us...

Pls print.

**From:** Burns Strider [mailto: ]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 29, 2011 06:33 PM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** A new writer/thinker for us...

B6

I'm not sure if I shared that a couple of weeks ago I was up on the northern shore above Boston at Gordon College. They installed a new President, Michael Lindsay. We became friends when he interviewed me several years ago while writing an excellent book entitled "Christians in the Halls of Power." He was at Rice University at the time.

At his inauguration I was captivated and moved by the chapel speaker... Reverend John Ortberg of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in CA. You may already be familiar. I wasn't and want to intro him to you... His bio says he started out at Willow Creek with Bill and Lynn... this guy was remarkable in passion, depth, intellect... you name it... the number of stories and themes he wove into his presentation while not losing sight of his thesis was pretty remarkable... I've discovered a rich collection of books he's written... and I've perused several of his sermons on the Internet... the funny narrative I just sent Minnie and you (When are we brothers and sisters, which is my title) is in the sermon below...

I know we're all busy and quotes and quick thoughts serve our purposes... but I am including a full sermon of his about the church and injustice... I hope you have a chance read thru... really powerful...

### **"Why is the Church Responsible for So Much Injustice?"**

**John Ortberg**

A couple of words by way of greeting. I want to say hi to everybody at this service and who are joining at 9:30 and at eleven o'clock at the campus on 950 Santa Cruz. I'm actually going to be leaving right after this service to go down to Mountain View. Our Mountain View campus is celebrating its third anniversary this weekend. Yeah, that would be very appropriate to celebrate. Fabulous stuff going on there. Wonderful stuff going on at San Mateo and at the video cafes.

Just by the way, if you have not visited some of our other sites, God is at work in great, great ways these days. It would be a *really* good thing to do. So anyway, as soon as I'm done with this talk, I have to get out of here, so that's why I'll be leaving. Also, I wanted to add a thank you for the Boy Scouts. Can we just for a moment tell them all we're so grateful? Some of you will know this; some of you may not. Our Directional Leader, Blues Baker, was an Eagle Scout... not just a Boy Scout. He was an Eagle Scout. Then he became an admiral. Then he became a Presbyterian. So just a straight upward climb for him.

Now we're in this series called *The Reason for God*. Today we're looking at a really important topic, a question a lot of people have... *Aren't churches filled with hypocrites?* Don't you usually have a lot of people who claim

to be loving but are not, and hasn't this been true historically? Hasn't the church been responsible for atrocities like the Crusades, the Inquisitions, burning of witches? Doesn't history demonstrate that Christianity is a defective product? Why would I become a Christian when the church is filled with so many hypocrites and deeply flawed people?

This issue of hypocrisy is a really serious problem when it comes to faith in our day. A book called *Unchristian* written a few years ago is based on a research study that shows eighty-five percent of unchurched young adults believe Christians to be hypocritical. Eighty-five percent say Christians say one thing, do something else. Forty-seven percent of young adults *inside* the church say the same thing.

Now a couple of preliminary observations. First, just because people don't live up to a message does not mean the message itself is wrong. Stephen Nordbye writes, "At a recent annual meeting of the American Heart Association in Atlanta, 300,000 doctors and researchers came together to discuss the importance of low-fat diets in keeping our hearts healthy.

But during meal times, they consumed fat-filled fast food, bacon cheeseburgers and chili fries, at the same artery-clogging high rate as people from any other conventions would. One cardiologist was asked, 'Aren't you concerned that your bad eating habits will be a bad example?' He replied, 'Not me. I took my nametag off.'"

Well, if you follow Jesus, you never get to take your nametag off. That's the way it works, but the presence of hypocrites within a movement does not show that the movement itself was in error.

Also, every belief system, any ideology or movement, will attract people who do not live up to it. Scott Dudley used to be on our staff, and he talked about a department from a nearby university, which shall remain nameless. He said everybody in this particular department were self-proclaimed Marxists. They were committed to opposing capitalist materialism and conspicuous consumption, but one time they went on a department junket, and they ended up renting a big yacht with an open bar and all kinds of highend luxury pleasures that they were supposed to be against. They ended up being called Neiman Marxists, which I thought was very funny. I just think that's a wonderful phrase.

You know, if you want to find a movement or a belief system which does not attract anybody who doesn't live up to the standard, good luck with that, okay? But, if a religion, if a faith, produces a lot of hypocrites, it raises some really serious questions. That's what we want to talk about today. In fact, a lot of people do not know this. Our modern ideas, notions, about hypocrisy actually come from a very stinging critique of religious hypocrites.

There's a very interesting work on hypocrisy. It's in the *Encyclopedia of Ethics*. It's by a scholar named Eva Kittay. She notes that the word itself, our word for *hypocrite*, comes from a Greek word *hupokrites*. It was most commonly associated with the theater. Those were the people who were actors on a stage, and so kind of by extension, it came to refer to people who might assume a pose or play a role. She notes that in classical Greek, in Plato or Aristotle, the word did not have the sting that it came to have for us.

Here's where it gets interesting. Again, it's used primarily of actors on a stage. In the first century, one of the great theaters of the day was built in a town called *Sepphoris*. You're actually looking at it. It has been excavated over the last century. It seated between 3,000 and 4,000 people. I was part of one of the big, big building projects going on in Galilee. Sepphoris was less than an hour's walk away from guess what tiny little town? Nazareth.

In fact, there is a very good chance (most scholars will say now actually a *probability*) that a craftsman from Nazareth by the name of Joseph and his young apprentice Son, Jesus, would have found work helping to construct the great building projects going on in Sepphoris. For sure Jesus from young boyhood (because you could see Sepphoris from Nazareth) would be familiar with the stage and the *hupokritai*, these actors.

It was this Man Jesus who critiqued religious hypocrisy in a way that shaped history. Many people are not aware of this. When Jesus is going to talk about this dynamic, He uses this word that would be a very vivid image for people of actors playing a role that wasn't really them on a stage. Kittay says it's the New Testament usage that most shapes our thinking about hypocrisy because of the unique emphasis on the condition of the inner person as opposed to mere outer behavior.

The idea is that there is a *public* me, and that's visible to everybody in my world. That tends to be a big emphasis among folks, including among religious folks. Then there is a *private* me, and that may not be visible to the world. In fact, I may not know the depths of the private me because this has to do with my heart, and this is known fully only to God. This is what matters the most. This is a big emphasis in the New Testament writings. It is concern for the heart, for that which is visible, knowable to God alone that made the ugliness of hypocrisy, posing, acting in the public realm, so vivid. This is what made the New Testament teaching about it so compelling that it entered into the moral vocabulary of the human race. The word *hypocrite* is used 17 times in the New Testament. Every single time it's used, it is used by Jesus. I know of no other word that is so singularly His. Dallas Willard writes, "It is clear from the literary records that it was Jesus alone who brought this term *hypocrisy* and the corresponding character into the moral record of the Western world. It is ironic that even when, precisely when, we criticize the church for producing hypocrites, we pay tribute to this Man Jesus whose teaching gave us the picture of hypocrisy that shapes our moral understanding 2,000 years later."

What a remarkable Teacher! What He thought of hypocrisy is so painfully clear that I do not know of any address, any talk, any writings by any enemy of religion that is more stinging in its rebuke. Matthew, chapter 23... the whole chapter that is given over to Jesus' analysis of hypocrisy. We're going to read some of these statements right now.

Jesus says, "*Woe to you...*" "Trouble is coming! Judgment is coming!" "...*teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!*" Pause here for just a moment. In our day, the word *Pharisee* has become kind of a caricature. We often think they had problems that we don't, but the reality is they were the most admired spiritual faith leaders of their day. Plus, notice Jesus also is addressing teachers of the law... Bible teachers we might say.

In other words, Jesus is talking about a condition that is a hairs' breadth away for anybody who takes faith in God seriously. Jesus knew this condition would infiltrate any movement of faith, including His. Just look at Judas. So when we read these words, we do not pretend we are exempt. We do not pretend the Pharisees were the bad guys, and of course we're the good guys. We try to read Jesus with repentant and humble spirits.

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in peoples' faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you... Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites – you blind men! Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tithe of your spices... But you neglect weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness... Woe to you [trouble is coming], teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence... Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs... Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites... You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"*

The courage of this Man! Can you imagine the tension? No wonder they killed Him! Now according to Jesus, hypocrisy is not just the failure to live up to what we aspire to. Of course everybody does that. This is part of what made His teaching on hypocrisy so formative to the moral vocabulary of the Western world. What's at the core of hypocrisy is deception... mean-spirited, and selfish, although sometimes even unconscious deception. "I'm trying to get people to think I am who, in fact, I am not." This is what He talks about. The problem is not just that the inside of the cup is a mess. It *is* a mess, but that's not the whole problem. In addition to that, they clean the outside to make everybody think the inside looks great when it doesn't. It's not just that they are

tombs. They are whitewashed tombs. Why would you whitewash a tomb? To make people think there's life in it, not death. It's not just that they neglect justice and mercy and faithfulness. On top of that, they tithe on their spices, this little tiny area of their financial lives, to convince other people, maybe even to convince themselves how just and merciful and faithful they are.

See, in hypocrisy, it's not just that, "I don't live up to the standard." It's that, "I spend this. I manage this. I deceive you in this area to get you to think this is better than it is. I hide my secret dislike for you behind a polite smile. I pretend to help you when I'm hoping you fail. I portray myself as loving when inside I'm full of judgment or selfishness. I like to give the impression that I'm bravely committed to God when inside I'm full of fear. I may even convince myself I'm devout or loving or kind. I can be hypocritical without knowing it."

This is why Jesus says the hypocrites are blind, see? Part of the danger of it. You may see it in me (a lot of times you will) way clearer than I see it in myself. This is part of why the Bible commands... By the way, this is really critical for us as a faith community, as followers of Jesus. Let's read these words together. This is from James, chapter 5. "**Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other.**" By the way, this is a command. Can we be a place where it is safe to say, "I am working on loving Jesus, but I have brought a whole bunch of sin with me into the process"?

A couple of weeks ago, Nancy and I were having an argument. It was over a goofy subject. Do you ever notice how arguments can just blow up over really dumb stuff? One of us got so mad, they said to the other one, "I love you, but right now I would like to throw a rock at your head!" Now you may be wondering, *How mad do you have to get to want to throw a rock at somebody's head?* Well, the one of us who got that mad is not here right now. I asked Nancy, "Is it okay if I tell this story?" She said, "Sure. Tell the whole church. Just wear a helmet when you come home afterwards."

See, the gospel... forgiveness by grace... ought to make this the safest and most honest place in the whole world. If there's any place where people ought to be able to come and say, "I'm just going to let the public me mirror the truth about the private me," it's the place where we believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins so we don't have to pretend they don't exist. This ought to be the most honest place in the world.

Sometimes it's not. Sometimes I think because we want to aspire to a higher standard, we're tempted to make other people think we've arrived when the reality is we haven't. Jesus says the great motivator behind hypocrisy is simply this, and this is where the Evil One takes, "Well, it's not a bad thing to want to be loved" and twists it into something that has very, very dark results. Again, this is where Jesus' teachings on hypocrisy have shaped the moral conscience of the Western world.

Here's the great motive behind hypocrisy. Jesus says of hypocrites, "**Everything they do is for people to see.**" Or another place where He is teaching on hypocrisy (the sixth chapter of Matthew), "**Be careful not do your 'acts of righteousness' before others, to be seen by them.**" Part of the good news of grace, of the gospel of Jesus, is we do not have to live for the approval of any person. It doesn't matter. I don't have to hide from criticism. I don't have to dismiss it. In fact, to actually have life with God, we will have to die to living for approval.

These are words from Dallas Willard that I thought were so powerful. This is what he says: "Whatever our position in life, if our lives and works are to be of the kingdom of God, we must not have human approval as a primary or even major aim. We must lovingly allow people to think whatever they will." Now there's freedom. "We must lovingly allow people to think whatever they will." Now I want to look at another phrase Jesus uses for hypocrites to get into some of the historical issues that concern folks. Jesus says again of hypocrites, "**You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.**" That's a striking image. In the Middle East, bugs are everywhere. People eat outside. They swallow them at every meal. It just always happens. The picture here is of hypocrites who want to convince people of their moral sensitivity, how their conscience would never let them

do anything wrong. It's like somebody pouring wine through a cheesecloth to strain out the gnats so people would say, "What an exquisitely developed sense of taste this man has that he would be so careful about what goes into his mouth!"

"Meanwhile," Jesus says, "it's like there's a camel sitting in their glass, and they drink it down without even noticing." I want to talk about a few of the camels in the history of the church. People will ask questions like... *How do you defend the Crusades or the Inquisition or the burning of witches or modern day evils like sexual abuse committed by members of the clergy?* The really short answer is... you don't. They should be confessed, repented of, wept over, and brought as fully into the light as possible, learned from.

Now, it is also true that there are debates among historians about causes of events like the Crusades, how much they were religious, how much they were political or economic. These are sometimes, you know, complex historical matters we will not get into in this talk. There is a lot you can read about that. It is also true there have been regimes that do not believe in God and yet do enormous evil. Stalin, Hitler, and Mao, just between the three of them, are thought to have caused between 70 and 100 million deaths in the middle of the twentieth century.

Within a four-year period of the late 1970's, the Khmer Rouge eliminated approximately one-fifth of the total population of the nation. Everybody I know, whether they would call themselves Christian, atheist, whatever, would condemn this. My own conviction is that if people cease to believe they were created and will be held accountable by a just God, it opens the door for what would otherwise be unthinkable.

There's a famous line from Dostoevsky. This is what he says: "If God does not exist, then everything is permitted." It is also true that followers of Jesus have been responsible historically for hospitals, education, movements in art, reform, the expression of compassion, generosity (we talked about this a couple of months ago) that have changed history. But, I think the question that matters *most* is this one... *When people who claim to be followers of Jesus do bad things, is it because of His teachings, or is it in spite of His teachings because Jesus is at the root, at the heart, of what we're talking about?*

Now in His Sermon on the Mount where Jesus talked so much about hypocrisy, He contrasted His way from the normal human way. We'll start with the normal human way. "*Jesus said, 'You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'"* Let's talk about this dynamic. We all tend to put people into an *in* group or an *out* group. We all tend to divide the human race into *us* versus *them*. This goes on for religious reasons but also could be ethnicity, culture, language. Two of the most powerful words in the human race are *us* and *them*.

If somebody is in my *in* group, I will tend to magnify their good qualities, overlook their negative qualities. If somebody is in the *out* group, if somebody is one of them, I tend to do just the opposite... look for bad stuff and overlook good stuff. I tend to view everybody who is one of us as a unique individual. I tend to look at everybody who is one of them as they all kind of look alike, seem alike. This dynamic is so powerful. How do you treat them? How do you treat them? Well, not as good as you treat us. A lot of studies are around this whole area and what a grip it has on the human heart. A classic one... Researchers did this. They divided a group of boys at a camp into Group W and Group X just to look at the power of *us* versus *them*. They would take one kid, give him a little bit of money, and tell him he was going to divide it up between two boys from two different groups. So like take a kid from Group X. Say, "Give some of your money to this boy from Group X, and then give some to this boy from Group W."

Now their plan was to get a baseline initially and then after they'd get a baseline to introduce some antagonism between the two group and see how much antagonism was required before kids started giving more money to the boy in their group. They could not even get a baseline. Researchers were stunned! They said, "Our clearest

finding is that boys will discriminate against other boys as soon as they are randomly assigned to a different group."

In other words, immediately, before there was even any tension between the groups, boys would give less to boys in the other group. If you're thinking girls would do any better, it's because you *are* a girl, and you're assuming your *in* group is superior, and that just confirms what we're talking about. Okay? We do this thing on the basis of gender, exclusivity, and all kinds of ways.

Anybody aware of a big game that's going on today? It's *us* versus *them*. Man, I grew up... Bart Starr. Vince Lombardi. I love the Green Bay Packers, so they're the official team of our church. We're praying together that the Packers will win the Super Bowl. Have you ever known Christians to divide people up into *us* versus *them*? Have Christians ever done that, followers of Jesus?

Old story. It's been around for a while. A man was walking along San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge when he saw a woman standing by herself feeling lonely. He ran up to her, just told her God loved her. A tear came to her eye. Then he asked her, "Are you a Christian, Jew, Hindu, what?"

"I'm a Christian," she said.

He said, "Me too! Small world. Protestant or Catholic?"

"Protestant."

"Me too! What denomination?"

"Baptist."

"Me too! Northern Baptist or Southern Baptist?"

"Northern Baptist."

He said, "Me too! Northern Conservative Baptist, or Northern Liberal Baptist?"

"Northern Conservative Baptist."

"That's amazing! Me too! Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist or Northern Conservative Reformed Baptist?"

"Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist."

"Remarkable! Me too! Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region or Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Eastern Region?"

She said, "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region."

"A miracle," he said. "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1879 or Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912?"

She said, "Northern Conservative Fundamentalist Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912."

He shouted, "Die, heretic," and pushed her over the rail.

Okay?

You know, our capacity... *our* capacity... to do this *us* versus *them* thing is staggering. Again, the big question is not simply... *Has that happened in history?* It has. The dynamics around it. Some people who have an ax to grind will over exaggerate that historically. Some folks who have an ax to grind will try to underestimate it or explain it away. We don't want to do that. The real question is... *Did Jesus' teachings lead to this us versus them kind of thing, or did they lead away from it?*

This is what Jesus taught. He offers deliverance from the *us* versus *them* dynamic like nobody ever had. Jesus says, "*But I tell you, love your enemies.*" "*You have heard it said, 'Love those who love you and hate your enemies.'* *But I tell you, love your enemies and bless those that persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*" Then He goes on to explain this command is rooted in the nature of God because God cannot help Himself. God just loves everybody. He sends the rain that waters and gives life to the earth on the just and the unjust, the deserving and the undeserving.

So Jesus says, "Now you be like Him." "*Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.*"

Here's the thing about Jesus. He didn't just teach this. See, this became manifest in His life. His life is part of what inspired this movement of people who would die for Him. One of the things He says about hypocrites in Matthew 23, when He is talking about religious leaders, He says, "They sit in the seat of Moses, so listen to them. Do what they say when they speak about the law of God, but do not what they do for they do not practice what they preach." Jesus practiced what He preached, and they killed Him for it.

One time when He was on His way to Jerusalem to die, He wanted to stop in a Samaritan village, but the Samaritan village did not welcome Him. No surprise there. I mean, if there was a classic *us* versus *them* in Jesus' world, it was Israel and Samaria. So His disciples are really offended. They say to Jesus, "Lord, do You want us to call down fire from heaven to destroy them?" This is a question. They really asked Jesus this. They thought Jesus would be pleased by this offer. They thought they would be defending His honor. They thought, *We're going to take a stand, boy. We're going to be on Jesus' side.*

Jesus' followers sometimes do this. Jesus turns and admonishes them. He is protecting the Samaritans, and He is rebuking His followers! What an odd little story! By the way, if they were just making up the New Testament, they would not put a story like this in it. You go through the New Testament. There are all these odd little Samaritan stories because Samaritans are supposed to be *them*, but Jesus befriends an adulteress Samaritan woman, and she becomes a great evangelist of His.

He heals ten lepers. One of them is a Samaritan. The Samaritan is the only one who comes back and says, "Thank you," and that's the one He commends... Samaritan leper. He tells a story about an Israelite and a priest and a Levite and a Samaritan. The hero is the Samaritan. He treats people on *their* side like they were people on *our* side. He doesn't just love us. In the oddest, strangest ways He seems to love... It's like He actually loves Samaritans, and it's not just Samaritans.

Strange story about the last miracle Jesus ever performs. Jesus is in the garden with some of His disciples, and the soldiers come to seize Him, to take Him away, to have Him crucified. One of Jesus' disciples, Peter, picks up a sword and cuts off the ear of a man named Malchus. Jesus tells Peter to put his sword away. He picks up the ear and puts it back on Malchus' head. "I'm sorry about my disciple Peter. I've been working on him for three years, haven't gotten very far. I apologize about the ear thing."

Can you imagine when Malchus got home for dinner that night and his wife asked, "How did work go today?" "Well, my ear got cut off, but the strangest thing happened. The Man who I came to have crucified on a cross, He healed me. He loved me. I helped to have Him arrested. I helped to have Him killed. Why would He do that?" This odd little story was regarded as so important that it was included in all four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Dale Bruner put it like this. I love this observation. "Jesus' enemies are not His only problem." Isn't that a fabulous line? "Jesus' enemies are not His only problem. Jesus' over-zealous followers have historically been as painful to Him." See, for Jesus, the categories break down like this. It's not *us* and *them*. It's *perfect* and *not perfect*. It's *holy* and *sinful*. Question... *Who is on the perfect and holy side?* How long is that list of names? Okay, take a guess, everybody. You're in church. This is pretty much a free shot. What name goes on this list? Jesus, and that's it. So, who is on the *sinner* side? All the rest of us.

Now the good news is the whole human race as it ends up turns out to be on the same side of the one division that really matters. The bad news is we're on the wrong side. The good news is Jesus comes from this side over to this side and becomes one of us. He who knew no sin took on the weight and the burden of sin on the cross for our sake. He who was perfect took on all of the broken imperfection, darkness, including the hypocrisy of the human race.

See, this is what will just kill you about the story of Jesus. The story of Jesus is not just the story of Someone who died at the hands of His enemies. It's the story of Someone who died *for the sake of* His enemies. Now and now and now and now and now there is no more room for *our* side and *their* side. No more! No more! Not Jew, Greek, male, female, slave, free. No more of this business. It's just sinful human beings and a sinless Savior who took on the sins of the world and says to us, "Now, you go love the human race I died to save."

So if hypocrisy has been keeping you from coming to Jesus, just know He hates it more than you do. He hates it so much that He drew the picture of it that has enformed the human race for 2,000 years. If you're battling this sin of hypocrisy, Jesus can deliver. He really can. That's good news. Then next week we're going to look at this very, very deep question folks have... *Could a loving God send people to hell?* So be here, and be a part of that. Now let's pray.

**Mark Swarner:** Gracious God, thank You that though we all fall short of the glory of God that we're also all justified freely by Your grace through Jesus Christ. God, we all struggle with hypocrisy. We all want to present a whitewashed exterior that will win praise and acclaim. Yet, God, we know how deep inside we all need Your grace. We all need Your healing, we all need Your transformation. God, thank You that You know us better than we know ourselves.

Thank You that You no longer count us as strangers or aliens or outcasts, but through Jesus and through His grace, You welcome us into Your family. You calls us sons and daughters of the living God. God, thank You that You're always at work in us to renew us, transform us, make us new, and to make us more and more into the image of Your Son, Jesus. It's in His name that we pray, amen.