

TEACHER BACKGROUND

Introduction: Postmodernity, malls and worship – an extract from "The Worship Mall"

One of the problems with the word 'culture' is that everyone lives in one, or several, and does so quite happily without being able to define and explain it. It has been likened to speaking one's native language. We just do it, and do not agonise over the grammar. Indeed, the best English grammar books, for example, have been written by foreigners who have had to learn the language as outsiders. Why, though, should we want to stop and ponder culture? John Drane asks:

Are our efforts at cultural analysis truly describing what is there in any objective sense at all, or are we merely deluding ourselves with the thought that, if we are able to name a thing, we can also be in control of it, and therefore it becomes less of a threat to our familiar systems and lifestyles?

The title of Drane's book is inspired by one dominating influence in the contemporary world, which is American in origin but is now part of global culture – McDonald's. He, in fact, took it over from a book by George Ritzer, *The McDonaldisation of Society*. Drane says that McDonaldisation is 'the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world'. And he lists the characteristics as efficiency, calculability, predictability and control – all four of which are crucial ingredients in a Consumer-based society.

But McDonaldisation is taking place in what is now commonly called either late modernity or postmodernity. Like the word 'culture', 'postmodern', 'postmodernism' and 'postmodernity' are slippery terms that can be dropped into conversations, learned papers and books, but that conceal far more than they reveal. Stanley Granz cited Charles Jenck's claim that 'Postmodernism was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on July 15, 1972, at 3.32pm'. This was when the Pruitt-Igoe housing project, a landmark of modern architecture, was razed to the ground with dynamite, because the functionalism of modernism had failed as an experiment. In fact the terms postmodern and postmodernism had been around for some time in the art world, and in the world of architecture and design. Later they would creep into linguistic analysis and textual studies, and then into historiography, and be associated with the names of Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Frederic Jameson, Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard (to name but a few), and in between would embrace more popular cultural art forms such as pop music and fashion. All these are intellectual expressions. Most people do not throw the word postmodernity into their conversations, but, like speaking one's mother tongue, just live in its popular everyday expressions without agonising reflection or analysis. In the more popular culture of the internet and computers, of cell phones, iPods, BlackBerries, DVDs, MTV, Disney make-believe, virtual worlds, music, and contemporary fashion with teenage markets. But it is a culture where the methods and legacies of modernity and tradition still find a place. Furthermore, in so far as it is based around consumerism, it is a global corporate culture. The majority of those who do reflect on the change suggest that between the 1960s and the 1990s a crucial shift in how we feel about things began to occur. Drane gives a helpful, but rather general summary:

we are discovering that the rational-materialistic worldview handed down to us from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has led to lives that are fractured and broken, and has created personal dysfunction on the grand scale.

This, of course, is an oversimplification. At the risk of further oversimplification, the following characteristics of modernity and postmodernity are often suggested. Modernity had the belief that progress was unending (a grand or metanarrative), and was optimistic about the ability of the human mind to solve major world problems. It elevated the rational and scientific methods, and also placed faith in 'experts'. It preferred simplified linear connections and relationships, and searched for universal norms. It emphasised mind over body, and concepts and words over the visual and experiential. In contrast, postmodernity is suspicious of grand narratives and denies notions of unending progress. It stresses that meaning is dependent upon relationships, and that there are few universal all-encompassing theories. It questions metaphysical realities and objective truth. It places mind and body together, and prefers the visual and experiential over concepts and words. David Lyon notes that postmodernism is about deposing reason, nature and progress, but 'in everyday life, the postmodern may be seen as a blurring of boundaries between "high" and "low" culture; the collapse of hierarchies of knowledge, taste and opinion; and the interest in the local rather than the universal'.

Two crucial ingredients of this culture – be it popular or the more intellectual reflection – are simulacra/simulation, and bricolage. Simulacra – things look real, but are not – and we can list here things ranging from virtual reality on computer screens to theme parks, where castles are not castles; and bricolage or eclecticism – things from different cultures and different epochs placed side by side without any feeling that such things are out of context. (Spinks, 2010, pp. xiii-xv)

Spinks, B. (2010). *The Worship Mall*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

The Nicene Creed: Symbol of the Catholic Faith

By David Bennett

The Nicene Creed, also called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, presents the basic Catholic teaching about the nature of God. Catholics, Orthodox, and many Protestants accept the ancient Nicene creed.

The current form of the creed was written at the Councils of Nicaea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381). Over 300 bishops from all over the world gathered to write the creed, in response to Arianism, a form of Christianity that denied Jesus was fully God. The Nicene Creed ultimately explains the Church's teachings about the Trinity, but it also affirms historical realities of Jesus' life. Even though the creed does not directly quote Scripture, it is based on biblical concepts. I have broken the creed down line by line with explanations. This article uses the current official English translation of the Nicene Creed, from the U.S. Catholic Mass.

I Believe in One God

Christians, like Jews and Muslims, believe that only one God exists. The creed states the assumption of the ancient Shema: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. The former English translation of the creed began with "we" believe, while the Greek, Latin, and current English translation begin

with "I" believe. The latter is more accurate, because reciting the creed is ultimately an individual confession of belief, although the creed also expresses the collective beliefs of the Church.

The Father Almighty

Jesus frequently calls God "Father" in the Scriptures, and this usage tells us that God is a loving God active within His creation. God the Father is the first person (Greek hypostasis, "individual reality"), or distinction, within the Godhead. The Father is the "origin" or "source" of the Trinity. As such, God the Father is often called "God Unbegotten" in early Christian thought.

Maker of Heaven and Earth of All Things Visible and Invisible

Catholics believe that God created the visible world (created matter) and the invisible one (spiritual world of angels, etc). Thus, God created everything. Some early sects, the Gnostics and Marcionites, believed that God the Father created the spirit world, but that an "evil" god (called the demiurge) created the similarly evil material world. The creed dispels such a notion.

I Believe in One Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Lord of all. The title Lord means that Jesus is master of all, and has connotations of deity, since the Hebrew word adonai and Greek word kyrios (both meaning Lord) were applied to Yahweh in the Old Testament. However, unlike earthly rulers, Jesus is a friend to the oppressed and a servant.

The Only Begotten Son of God

Jesus is in a unique relationship with God the Father. While Hebrew kings were sons of God symbolically (see Psalm 2), Jesus is the only Son of God by nature.

Born of the Father Before All Ages

Begotten has the meaning of born, fathered, generated, or produced. God the Son is born out of the essence of God the Father. Just as a child shares the same humanness as his or her parents, the Son shares the essential nature of God with the Father. Since God is eternal, the Son, being begotten of God, is also eternal. The Son is often called the "Only-Begotten God" in early Christian literature, including in [John](#) 1:18 in many manuscripts.

God from God, Light from Light

God the Son exists in relation to God the Father. The Son is not the Father, but they both are God. Just as a torch is lit one to another, the Father and Son are distinct, but both light. Some Christians, called Sabellians or Modalists, said that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were one God who changes roles. So when God creates, he is Father, while on earth, he is Son, and so forth. However, the Scriptures have all three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, interacting at the same time, as shown at Jesus' baptism. The language of Scripture also suggests that the Father and Son are somehow two as well as one. In John's gospel, the Father and Son testify as two witnesses, not one ([John](#) 8:17-18). Related to this, St. Athanasius, writing during the Nicene era, reportedly said that the Father and Son are one as "the sight of two eyes is one." Another illustration is the musical chord. Think of a C-chord. The C, E, and G notes are all distinct notes, but joined together as one chord, the sound is richer and more dynamic than had the notes been played individually. The chords are all equally important in producing the full, dynamic, sound of the chord, but the sound is lacking and thin if one of the notes is left out.

True God from True God

God the Son is not a half-god or inferior to God the Father. God the Son is fully and utterly God, distinct from the Father, yet not divided from the Father. The ancient Arians believed that Jesus could be called "god" but not true God. In other words, they believed the Logos (the "Word," a popular title for Jesus in early Christian literature) was the first creation of God, necessary to mediate between the

unknowable distant God (a concept borrowed from Platonic thought) and creation. Because God knew that the Logos would be perfect, the title god could be bestowed upon the Son "by participation," but "true God" was a title reserved only for the unknowable Father. This is the Ante-Nicene "Logos Theology" of St. Justin and Athenagoras taken to an unintended extreme.

Begotten, Not Made

Some Christians today (Jehovah's Witnesses) and in the past (Arians) have suggested that Jesus was a creation of God. The creed tells us that just as when a woman gives birth she does not create a child out of nothing, being begotten of God, the Son is not created out of nothing. Since the Son's birth from the Father occurred before time was created, begotten refers to a permanent relationship as opposed to an event within time.

Consubstantial (Greek: homoousia) with the Father

God the Father and God the Son are equally divine, united in substance and will. Father and Son share the same substance or essence of divinity. That is, the Father and Son both share the qualities and essential nature that make one in reality God. However, sharing the same substance does not mean they share identity of person. While certainly an inadequate example, think of three humans: they share a common nature, the essential qualities and essence of humanity, but are not the same person (although unlike the persons of the Trinity, humans do not share one will).

Through Him All Things Were Made

The Bible tells us that through The Son, as Word of God, all things have been created. As Logos, the Son is the agent and artificer of creation.

For Us Men and for Our Salvation, He Came Down from Heaven

Jesus came from heaven, from a numinous reality other than our own. While the creed says "down," it is important to remember that our language is limited by time and spatiality. Heaven is not "up," just as God is not a biologically male father. However, due to the limits of language, we are forced to describe heaven symbolically and spatially.

And by the the Holy Spirit, Was Incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and Became Man

God the Son became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He was born of a virgin through the Holy Spirit. God truly became human in Jesus Christ. Catholics believe that Jesus of Nazareth was and is a real human being, not simply a spirit or ghost. The incarnation of God in Christ is the ultimate act of love, because rather than sending an angel or good human to accomplish the redemption and restoration of creation, God Himself became human. Some religious groups denied that Jesus was born of a virgin, such as the Jewish-influenced Ebionites. The virgin birth seems to be the first doctrine many modern day skeptics reject. Even today, many who say the creed weekly do not believe Mary was a virgin. However, the Catholic Church teaches that the virgin birth is dogma, i.e. an essential belief.

For Our Sake He Was Crucified Under Pontius Pilate; He Suffered Death, and Was Buried

Jesus died on a cross, suffered as humans do, truly died, and was laid in a tomb. Despite what some critics will level against it, the Nicene Creed is more than just metaphysical speculation, and includes important historical confessions. Notice that in addition to being "true God from true God," Jesus is fully human as well. The early Docetists, named from the Greek word dokeo, "to seem," believed Jesus only seemed to be human, but was not, and simply went through the motions of being human. Thus, when Jesus ate, they said, he only pretended to eat. Docetism was a very early heresy, addressed by the Gospel and Letters of St. John, as well as in St. Ignatius' letters in AD 110.

And Rose Again On the Third Day in Accordance With the Scriptures

Jesus was resurrected bodily as the Scriptures say. Just as Jesus truly died, he truly rose from the dead three days later. The bodily resurrection is the keystone of Christian doctrine and experience. However,

Jesus was not just physically resuscitated (as was Lazarus), but rather his body was transformed at the resurrection. Rejection of the bodily resurrection is a rejection of the foundation of Catholic Christianity. The word "again" is used because Jesus' first "rising" was his birth. To "rise again" is to be alive again.

He Ascended Into Heaven and Is Seated at the Right Hand of the Father

In ancient science, heaven was thought to be "up" and literally situated above the sky dome (notice how on a starry night the sky looks like a dome that one could pierce through, if one could get that high, e.g. by building a large tower). So in the Scriptures, Jesus is said to "ascend" to heaven. Whatever happened that day, Luke had to render the event into his own scientific paradigm, so he said Jesus "went up" to heaven. Again, we are limited by our language and experience of spatiality. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, i.e. sharing authority with the Father, and not literally sitting next to the Father.

He Will Come Again in Glory to Judge the Living and the Dead and His Kingdom Will Have No End

Jesus is coming again to righteously judge the living and dead. His kingdom cannot be destroyed, despite all of humanity's efforts. The creed says Jesus is coming; it does not say when or how, nor does it say to speculate on the date of his return or make money doing so!

I Believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life

The Holy Spirit is also called "Lord." The Holy Spirit sustains our lives as Christians, illuminating us after the new birth. The original Creed of Nicaea simply ended with "We believe in the Holy Spirit." The other additions were approved at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381. However, most scholars believe that the text of the full creed dates prior to this council, and that the bishops simply gave their approval to a local creed already in use. The reason these additions were included in the Nicene Creed is that some Christians of the 4th century denied the full divinity of the Holy Spirit. The names given to these heretics were Macedonians (named after a heretical bishop) or pneumatomachi ("fighters against the Spirit").

Who Proceeds from the Father and the Son

The Son is said to be begotten, while the Spirit is said to proceed. Both words convey that the Son and Spirit are in special relationships to the Father, yet also fully divine. The phrase "and the Son," in Latin, filioque, was not in the original text of the creed, but was added in many Western Churches. The addition likely developed over time as a tool against Arians in the Gothic lands. There are theological and historical justifications for the addition or exclusion of the filioque. The Eastern Churches oppose the addition of the filioque, while many Western churches accept it. Actually, despite current division on the matter, the issue has been pretty much theologically resolved. The Catholic Church acknowledges that the Father is the sole source within the Trinity, and admits that "proceeds from the Father and the Son" means "proceeds from the Father through the Son." Catholics also acknowledge that the procession through the Son is not metaphysical, but economic (i.e. describing the Spirit's actions). Also, Eastern Catholics (those Eastern Churches in communion with Rome) do not say the filioque, and remain in full communion with the Catholic Church. The Eastern Orthodox Churches seem willing to allow the interpretation "through the Son," because it does not destroy the monarchy of the Father within the Holy Trinity. However, the filioque remains a major division between Eastern and Western Christianity, mainly because the Western Church added the filioque to the Nicene Creed without Eastern input. It is hoped that this issue will be resolved in the future, as the current environment is far less political than in the past.

Who With the Father and Son Is Adored and Glorified

Since the Holy Spirit is fully God, like the Father and the Son, He is worthy of the same worship and adoration.

Who Has Spoken Through the Prophets

The Spirit inspired the prophets of old, and inspires the Church today.

I Believe in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church

The creed requires belief in the Catholic (universal) Church, whose origins are ancient and historical, going back to the Apostles themselves. Thus, the Church was built upon the faith and witness of the apostles. This witness survives through Apostolic Succession, wherein apostles appointed leaders, who themselves appointed leaders, a process continuing to this day. This Apostolic line survives today primarily in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The Church is "holy" on account of Christ's holiness and grace, and not because its members or leaders are perfect. In fact, at times throughout history, the Church has remained holy in spite of its members.

I Confess One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins

Catholics believe that sacramentally, through the waters of baptism, God forgives us of our sins, and we are born again. This belief in baptism's saving power is ancient and universally acknowledged in the early Christian writings. If someone has been validly baptized in the name of the Trinity, then that baptism has definitely "taken" and re-baptism is unnecessary.

And I Look forward the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Life of the World to Come. Amen.

Christians always hope for the end of this fractured system, when the universe is fully reconciled to God in Christ Jesus. The Nicene Creed seems to affirm both the existence of a soul-filled heaven and the later resurrection of the dead when soul meets glorified body.

Concluding Remarks

We hope you enjoyed this primer on the Nicene Creed. Remember that the Nicene Creed, besides being rooted in Scriptural concepts, is a product of Christian worship and prayer. For example, even before the Nicene Creed was written, Christians regularly baptized converts into the name of the Trinity, and prayed to the Father in the name of the Son, through the Holy Spirit. Being born from prayer and experience, the creed tries not to define God's nature exactly and precisely like a science textbook would describe something. God's exact nature, such as His threeness and His oneness, is something that we are able to begin to grasp, but never fully comprehend. Just as the mind cannot fully comprehend love or joy, neither can the mind fully comprehend God, whose nature and ways are ultimately beyond our comprehension. As such, while the creed is an authoritative framework, it is rooted in mystery. So if someone says he or she fully understands the Trinity, chances are, that person has no clue what the Trinity is actually about. Since the Nicene Creed is rooted in worship and prayer, besides being believed, it is to be lived out. In this vein, please take a look at Prayers to the Trinity.

Source: <http://www.ancient-future.net/nicene.html>

Films That You Wouldn't Think Were Christian, but Actually Are

The films contained on this list are all intriguing for Christians and non-Christians alike, for one reason or another. Some wear their heart on their sleeve, others keep it hidden beneath several other layers – and precious few of them would turn up on a recommended viewing list for cosy Christian Union socials.

Being a Christian in the 21st century is difficult at the best of times. Even without Mel Gibson constantly putting his foot in it, or Westboro Baptist Church spitting venom at the very people they are supposed to be helping, we have to contend with a media backlash whenever a seemingly 'Christian' film is released.

The problem seems to be that people don't mind Christianity per se: if people are Bible-bashing in the streets, they can ignore them or talk back. What they resent, or appear to resent, are films with Christian undertones – allegories or parables which introduce Christian beliefs or ideas in a supposedly secular context. When *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* came out in 2005, *The Guardian's* Polly Toynbee accused it of "invas[ing] children's minds with Christian iconography... heavily laden with guilt, blame, sacrifice and a suffering that is dark with emotional sadism." Ouch.

What Toynbee and others fail to realise is that Christianity runs deeper through cinema than the obvious allegories of *Narnia*, *The Matrix* and *The Green Mile*. Quite apart from the dozens of films made each year that are set around religion in some way, a select number of superficially secular or humanist films have Christian imagery or ideas coursing through their veins. Crucially, most if not all of them manage to convey these ideas or images without alienating non-Christian viewers.

The 50 films contained on this list are all intriguing for Christians and non-Christians alike, for one reason or another. Some wear their heart on their sleeve, others keep it hidden beneath several other layers – and precious few of them would turn up on a recommended viewing list for cosy Christian Union socials. I love God, and I love film – and I don't believe the two are in contradiction.

We start with a gentle oldie from Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, best known for *The Red Shoes* and *Black Narcissus* (see below). While doing away with the more raunchy aspects of Geoffrey Chaucer's unfinished epic, the film manages to explore the notion of pilgrimage as a process of self-discovery and spiritual fulfilment. As this hapless and eccentric bunch of characters arrive in Canterbury, they gain a new sense of purpose bound up in the spiritual or fantastical connotations of both the location and the occasion it marks.

A Clockwork Orange (1971)

Stanley Kubrick may have been an atheist, but several of his films entertain elements of Christianity. Much of his masterpiece is satirical towards Christianity, whether it's the prisoners being forced to sing hymns, or Alex imagining himself as a Roman soldier, beating Christ on the road to Golgotha. But in his last scene, the chaplain stands up for the condemned men, arguing for their right to choose between right and wrong, even if it leads them to choose wrongly. The film both indicts organised religion and suggests that faith, or at least belief in a higher ideal, can have a purpose.

Alien 3 (1992)

Before David Fincher was hired to direct, Alien 3 was going to be helmed by Vincent Ward. He pitched the film to 20th Century Fox as "The Name of the Rose in space", with Ripley coming to the aid of monks on a wooden planet. Although a little messy in either of its versions, much of Ward's vision survives, and is complimented by Fincher's direction. Ripley is the Christ figure who falls from the heavens to help the prisoners, and at first they do not accept their Messiah. The final shot of Ripley falling into the molten steel with her arms out cements her symbolic position.

Angel Heart (1987)

Alan Parker's stylish and suspenseful noir takes Faust, mixes with Raymond Chandler and elements of The Wicker Man, and serves the whole mixture up via outstanding visuals and very graphic violence. Mickey Rourke is terrific as the fallen angel whom, it transpires, is a lot closer to hell than even he may realise... The film is worth seeing for a creepy-as-sin scene where Robert De Niro talks about the human soul while peeling a hard-boiled egg with his long fingernails.

Bad Lieutenant (1992)

Abel Ferrara's most audacious work is a Catholic redemption tale dressed in enough sex, violence, nudity and drug abuse to make Requiem for a Dream look tame by comparison. Harvey Keitel is outstanding as the nameless lieutenant whose morality has been eroded by too many years on the beat. When assigned to a rape case involving a nun, he sees a vision of Christ in the church where the events took place, and crawls along the floor begging to understand how anyone could forgive such a horrendous act. A powerful film which proves that no-one is beyond redemption.

Being There (1979)

Peter Sellers was Oscar-nominated for what he considered his finest film, Being There. In Hal Ashby's masterpiece he plays Chance, a simple-minded elderly gardener whose employer's death forces him out of his life-long home. Coming into contact with dying billionaire Mervyn Douglas, his childlike comments lead him to advise the president and other people of influence. The film explores the idea of the world not recognising Christ when He was in plain sight, being simultaneously an anti-religious satire and a celebration of childlike faith and hope.

Black Narcissus (1947)

The second Powell and Pressburger entry on this list as a psychological thriller about nuns, and one of the main influences on Darren Aronofsky's lovably bonkers Black Swan. The film explores religious devotion and faith through the language of sexual repression, with Sister Clodagh (Deborah Kerr) having to resist both the amorous advances of Mr. Dean and the increasingly insane wantonness of the

corrupted Sister Ruth. It's a fascinating retelling of the Garden of Eden, which implies that temptation is caused as much by pride or perception as it is by external threat.

Blade Runner (1982)

Although Ridley Scott's masterpiece is most prominently about what it means to be human, its approach to this is bound up in Christian notions of morality, sacrifice and love conquering all. The debate over whether or not Deckard as a replicant as secondary to the film's main message – because, in the end, it is impossible to divide people, the only emotion that can prevail is pure, unconditional love. The tears in rain speech, famously improvised by Rutger Hauer, is a confession of Man's humble place in the universe, and with it a desire to reach the heavens that lie beyond.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005)

The Christian elements of Tim Burton's superior version of Roald Dahl's classic tale lie in one of its most controversial creative decisions. The themes about materialism and excess are there in plain sight, as are the deification of Wonka as the man who can create absolutely anything. But beneath all that we have the scenes between Wonka and his dentist father (Sir Christopher Lee), which are an interesting retelling of the prodigal son.

Cronos (1993)

Like *A Clockwork Orange* before it, *Cronos* is mainly concerned with the failures of the church rather than the faith it claims to uphold. Guillermo del Toro's chilling debut contains many striking images of the threat posed to organised religion by the vampiric device – the most striking being a cockroach crawling out through the eye of a statue of an angel. The film retunes the idea of vampirism as a defiance of God by demonstrating the weakness of the flesh: Jesus Gris (Federico Luppi) recites the Lord's Prayer while allowing the device to bite him a second time.

Dune (1984)

David Lynch has practically disowned *Dune* and continues to dodge questions about it in interviews. But while the finished product is a mess in any of its four versions, there are moments in which its spiritual ideas come together in a powerful way. While most of Frank Herbert's novel is concerned with Zen or Eastern mysticism, there are little Christian motifs throughout, culminating in the revelation of Paul Atreides as the god-like being who will end all wars and unite all peoples.

Eraserhead (1977)

Go a few years back in time, and you will find the Bible's fingerprints all over David Lynch's terrifying debut feature. On one level *Eraserhead* explores the Old Testament concept of the sins of the father

being visited upon the son, with the twisted mutant baby as the manifestation of the darkest and blackest parts of Henry's soul. The man in the moon pulling levers at the beginning and end also suggests God has set all of these events in motion. But it's not all doom and gloom, as the final scene with the Girl in the Radiator points towards redemption, suggesting that in heaven, everything is fine.

Eyes Wide Shut (1999)

Kubrick's last film has been called many things – a powerful commentary on the role of sex in Western culture, a slow-burning character drama, or "the inane ramblings of a man who needed to get out more" (Mark Kermode). But Bill and Alice's romantic odyssey also has an air of Eden about it. Alice recounts a nightmare about leaving a garden, while at Zeigler's party both Bill and Alice are tempted by the advances of the opposite sex. One could argue the film is set just after the eviction from Eden, with the two wandering around in darkness and finally finding each other.

Gladiator (2000)

Gladiator is proof that you can have metaphysics and fist fights in the same film. Beginning and ending in the Elysian fields (the Roman conception of Heaven), Ridley Scott's third masterpiece explores the nature of devotion and sacrifice, with Maximus willing to die in the name of not just what is right, but what he loves. The final confrontation between Maximus and Commodus is both a rip-roaring fight scene and a kinetic exploration of Man's relationship with God, death and the earthly powers, whose presence distracts and obstructs us from our heavenly calling.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Parts I & II (2010-11)

The conservative church will live to regret its opposition to the Harry Potter series of novels and films. Not only are its comments about them "encouraging witchcraft" utter nonsense, but the later instalments rival Narnia as a form of Christian allegory. The last two films find the Christ figure Harry wandering the wilderness, encountering various temptations and trying to protect the people he loves. This first part is preparation for his equivalent of ministry, finally having the strength to confront Voldemort, appearing to die and then

Heartless (2010)

Philip Ridley's back catalogue is littered with Christian imagery, from Brendan Fraser's warped fundamentalist in *The Passion of Darkly Noon* to the post-apocalyptic retelling of Eden in *The Pitchfork Disney*. *Heartless*, like *Angel Heart* before it, reinterprets Faust for the 21st century, blending gritty visuals of London's East End with fantastical imagery which is worthy of Pan's *Labyrinth*. The final scene, involving a death-bed reconciliation between Jamie and his father, is both chilling and heart-breaking.

If... (1968)

Lindsay Anderson's subversive masterpiece is another film in this list to take a stab at the institutions of the church without reviling the teachings of Christ. In a key scene about three-quarters of the way through, the chaplain of College School preaches about fighting the good fight and cowardice being an unforgivable sin. But he is soon forced to eat his words when confronted by Mick Travis (Malcolm McDowell), carrying a loaded rifle. Anderson's film demonstrates how once-noble ideals have been corrupted by institutions to the extent that they now mean the opposite of what was intended.

Logan's Run (1976)

Most of Michael Anderson's camp classic is utterly silly hogwash, with Jenny Agutter wandering around in next-to-nothing and future Basil Exposition Michael York hamming it for all his worth. But the film picks up permanently with the introduction of Peter Ustinov, a senile old man found wandering through the House of Representatives with hundreds of cats. With him on board the Biblical connotations of Logan and Jessica's actions become clear, culminating in Ustinov playing Moses and leading his people out of Egypt and a new life in the wilderness.

Metropolis (1927)

Fritz Lang's masterpiece is Marxist through and through, with its brutal and shocking class analysis and poisonous view of both the workers' city and the heavenly gardens of the upper classes. But its treatment of religion is a departure from the traditional view, with workers' meetings being held not in canteens or factories but in catacombs surrounded by crosses. Maria's observations are rooted in the idea that there has to be reconciliation between the classes, between the heads and hearts of civilisation to create a more fulfilling society for all.

Source: <http://whatculture.com/film/50-films-that-you-wouldnt-think-were-christian-but-actually-are>

Windows on the World: A Comparison of Major Worldviews

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have been born into another home, culture, or religious system? We've all probably questioned what our beliefs and values would look like through different eyes.

Everyone looks at life through a particular window on the world. So I'm pleased to recommend to you the work that RBC research editor Dennis Fisher has done on the subject of world views. In what follows he summarises and compares worldviews and shows how each one attempts to answer certain basic questions of life. Then he examines the biblical world view to help us decide which way of looking at life actually makes the most sense. Mart De Hann

The blind men and the elephant

Nineteenth century American poet John Godfrey Saxe is most remembered for his poem "The blind Men and the Elephant". It was based on his version of an ancient Indian fable about six blind men who were examining an elephant. By touching only part of the elephant, each blind man arrived at a different conclusion of what an elephant was like. Feeling the huge animal's side, one of them said it was like a wall. Another touched its tusk and thought it was like a spear. Holding on to its trunk, one blind man said the elephant was like a snake. Touching one of its legs, another believed it was like a tree. Grasping one of its ears, still another concluded it was like a fan. Grabbing its tail, one of the blind men thought the elephant was like a rope. The poem concludes:

And so these men of Indostan

Disputed loud and long,

Each in his own opinion

Exceeding stiff and strong.

Though each was partly in the right,

And all were in the wrong!

Each one of the blind men was partially right in what he experienced but ultimately wrong in his conclusion. Together they confused their limited viewpoint with the whole of reality.

Not only is this clever parable amusing to read, it also carries an important point about the way we all look at our world. The part of reality that we see shapes our view of what is true. The reality that each of us sees, however, is often fragmented and confused by the different windows of popular media. Just by clicking on the TV remote, we find ourselves leading from one perspective to another. The History Channel reviews past events and analyses their meaning. Discovery Channel takes us to different parts of the globe, examining animal and plant life without explaining their relationship to evolution. The series *Lost* depicts characters on an island, with flashbacks that often redefine each person's identity and relationships. The Oprah Winfrey Show offers free and compelling counsel on spirituality. *Sienfield*

tickles our funny bone but has no unifying plot – only disjointed and absurd life situations. The X-Files traces disturbing evidence that points to the paranormal. And various reality shows film the conflicts of real people in real situations. Interestingly, each of these programs assumes some kind of window on the world, but its perspective is often hidden.

With so many different windows to look through, how do we discern the key ingredients of a worldview?

What is a Worldview?

From the dockworker to the teacher of philosophy, all of us are trying to make sense of life. On the way home from a funeral or when suffering a serious loss of health, we are often prompted to ask the “why” questions. How we answer those questions is likely to reflect our personal philosophy of life and our worldview.

For example, most of us would agree with our five senses that an external world outside of our own awareness actually does exist. After this admission, however, we are apt to believe, with unswerving conviction, that our window gives us the clearest reflection of ourselves and the best view of our world.

A worldview, therefore, is our assumptions about what makes up our world. More often than not, worldviews influence us in ways we may not always be conscious of.

What are the major worldviews?

In an age of global communication and travel, our interaction with other cultures has made us increasingly aware of the different ways we look at our world. Let’s see what distinguishes these worldviews and what they have in common.

MONOTHEISM One God exists who is separate from but involved with the universe	<p>The three great monotheistic world religions are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Together, they believe that God is an eternal Spirit who brought our material world into existence and enables it to operate according to natural law. Their shared beliefs include: the story of the rebellion of the human race against God, His providential guidance of human affairs, His desire for reconciliation, and the promise of ultimate peace and justice. All of these monotheistic systems believe in one God who exists separate from but is involved with the universe.</p> <p>But despite their similarities, they are marked by some profound differences. The major beliefs of Judaism are drawn from the first five books of Moses, often called the Pentateuch. Members of the Jewish faith believe that God has uniquely revealed Himself to them through Moses and the Prophets. Obedience to God’s Law is central to their faith. Their hope lies in the anticipation of a Messiah who has not yet come but will one day usher in a time of world peace and righteousness.</p> <p>The second great monotheistic religion is Christianity. Building on the Jewish Scriptures, Christians believe that the long awaited Jewish Messiah has come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. His followers point to His fulfilment of prophecies as well as a series of very public miracles. According to the New Testament, His mission on earth was to keep the Law of God perfectly and then die upon a cross to pay the penalty for our sins. His miraculous resurrection from the dead is seen as a basis for providing eternal life for all who believe in Him. Just prior to His supernatural ascension into heaven, this same Christ</p>
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	<p>promised to return and to rule over a new heaven and earth. The authoritative Scriptures of Christianity include the Old and New Testament.</p> <p>Islam, the third great monotheistic religion, claims to build upon and supersede the Scriptures of both Jews and Christians. Its central authority is the Koran, which presents itself as the infallible word of Allah (the Arabic word for God). According to Islam, the world we see was created by Allah for His own sovereign reasons. Like Judaism and Christianity, it affirms the rebellion and sin of the human race and the hope of an afterlife. Muslims, as followers of Islam are called, believe that reaching paradise is possible if one submits to the laws of Allah. Although Islam affirms that Jesus was the Messiah, it does not believe that He was equal to God or that He died on a cross as a sacrifice for our sin.</p>
<p>DEISM God created an orderly world to operate on its own</p>	<p>In the 17th century, the progress of science and technology gave birth to a philosophy that stressed the value of human reason over revelation. Great champions of this philosophy were John Locke and Voltaire. Sir Isaac Newton's laws of physics also led to a view that some have called "the clockwork universe". Deism hold that an intelligent Creator set up the world to operate on its own without divine interference.</p> <p>Many Americans honour the founding fathers of the United States as Christians in faith and practice. But some of its finest minds, such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were deists.</p> <p>As a philosophy, deism derives its understanding of God from reason and personal experience – not from revelation. Jefferson, like other deists, rejected miracles and asserted instead that God does not interfere with human affairs or with the laws of the universe.</p>
<p>NATURALISM Matter is all that exists and is best understood through science</p>	<p>During the 18th century, most scientists still believed in a Creator as the First Cause of our universe. But with the publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of The Species, a naturalistic explanation for origins was proposed. The theory of evolution claimed that given enough time and under the right conditions, simple life-forms would spring from nonliving matter. Then, over countless eons, these life-forms evolved into more complex ones until finally man appeared on the scene as a highly developed ape. With this explanation, many in the scientific community began to replace a Creator as First Cause with random chance. Many concluded that matter is all that exists and that the best way to exploring truth is through the scientific method. The naturalistic worldview is widely held today.</p>
<p>NIHILISM Objective truth and positive values are to be questioned and dismissed</p>	<p>Nihilism is more of an attitude than a formal philosophy. It questions the validity of knowing truth and moral values. If man is determined by irrational forces beyond his control, then why trust his rationality? Any certainty of knowledge is clouded by a former non-reflective animal brain. Nihilists believe that objective truth is, at best, arbitrary and relativistic. Because of this assumption, they feel compelled to tell others how inadequate traditional ideologies are. In many ways, nihilists are "anti-philosophy activists" who seek to debunk what others affirm.</p> <p>A nihilistic view is also sceptical about moral values. In the novel Fathers and Sons, Ivan Turgenev wrote: "A nihilist is a person who does not bow down to any authority, who does not accept any principle on faith, however much that principle may be revered."</p> <p>The word nihilism is derived from the Latin word for "nothing". It holds that all traditional values are baseless. In response to religion, it repudiates previously</p>

	held morality and spiritual belief. When it is brought into politics, it favours the destruction of existing traditional social institutions as a means of making way for improvements.
EXISTENTIALISM Life has no objective meaning, so significance must be subjectively created within	There are various existentialist philosophies. Whether atheistic or theistic, each emphasises the meaningless of life and the isolation of the individual. Those who assume there is no God view the objective world as absurd and pointless with no overarching purpose. Despite this grim reality, the committed existentialist must rebel against the objective world and subjectively create his own meaning. When he makes personal choices, he is said to have "authenticated" himself (i.e. created significance subjectively). That which "authenticates" the individual is strictly a personal choice. An act that is meaningful to you may be absurd to me.
PANTHEISM Everything that exists is God (Spirit). Matter is an illusion.	<p>Some of the most ancient religious texts are the Vedas (which comes from the Sanskrit word for 'knowledge'). They form the oldest Sanskrit literature and are the ancient Hindu sacred texts of India. For thousands of years, these religious writings have exerted their influence primarily in the East through Hinduism and Buddhism. With the advent of modern communication and travel, however, their influence has spread into the West. A starting premise of this kind of pantheism is that man's spirit is part of the Soul of the universe. God is Spirit and is all that exists. Therefore, the external world we experience is an illusion. Through meditation, however, one can "become one with the universe". These themes have been popularised in the West by the New Age Movement.</p> <p>A proponent of this view has been Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Born in India in 1917, he became a proponent of the relaxation technique called "transcendental meditation". The medical benefits of such practices began to attract attention from clients in the West. Many in the West who use transcendental meditation seem not to be fully aware of the pantheistic philosophy that lies at its base. For this kind of pantheism, the ultimate reality is Spirit.</p>
PERSONAL COMBINATIONS	<p>Interestingly, many people see the world through parts and pieces of the worldviews we've just described. For instance, some believe in the scientific method as the ultimate guide to truth while using transcendental meditation (a pantheistic practice) to relieve stress. Others think like existentialists, believing that all objective values are meaningless, while joining a social activist organisation to fight for social justice.</p> <p>Yet, in spite of inconsistencies, people hold on to their perception of reality with strong conviction. Why? the answer may lie in how much is at stake in our attempts to answer some of life's most heartfelt questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is real? • Who am I? • Where did I come from? • What is the basis for my values? • What does the future hold?

Source: <http://web001.rbc.org/pdf/discovery-series/windows-on-the-world-a-comparison-of-major-worldviews.pdf>

APPS to support Spirituality, prayer, scripture reflection, and mediation

Bible apps

These apps are all about reading and studying the Bible.

The Bible App by YouVersion

iOS | Android | Web | Desktop

It's the Christian app of Christian apps. YouVersion's app has been downloaded well over 100 million times. It's quick, free, and probably the Bible app your friends use.

From their website: Our focus remains on relevancy as we consistently strive to demonstrate and teach people how God's Word relates to everyone, no matter where they are in life. [. . .] We aren't just building a tool to impact the world using innovative technology, more importantly, we are engaging people into relationships with God as they discover the relevance the Bible has for their lives.

Bible.is

iOS | Android | Web

This family of Christian apps feature text, audio, and video Bibles in 1600+ languages (including multiple international sign languages). According to their site, Bible.is has the world's largest Bible language library.

From their website: Together with the ministry of Faith Comes By Hearing, Bible.is provides a vast library of Bible translations to bring God's church together making disciples from every nation, tribe, language, and people with the tools and technology of today.

Bible Gateway

iOS | Android | Web

Google any Bible reference, and there's a good chance Bible Gateway is your #1 result. But they're more than an online Bible reader: they have mobile apps and lots of supplementary resources.

From their website: Bible Gateway is your rich social and personal connection to freely read, research, and reference Scripture on your desktop, laptop, tablet, smartphone . . . anywhere; in more than 70 languages and more than 180 versions! Its simple yet advanced searching capabilities allow you to quickly find and compare particular passages in multiple Bible translations based on the keywords, phrases, topics, or Scripture references you have in mind.

Olive Tree

iOS | Android | Web | Desktop

The Bible Study App by Olive Tree is a widely-used tool for Christians who like to dig around while they're reading the Bible. Plus, John Piper has said it's his go-to Bible app.

From their app page: Over 4 million people on 6 continents use 'The Bible Study App' to read and study God's Word! This Bible app is more than just an e-reader, 'The Bible Study App' links your Bible reading with outstanding commentaries, maps, and dictionaries for an in-depth study experience. You can take notes, highlight verses, bookmark passages, and sync all of these things between different devices. Install now to explore over 100 free downloadable resources that make 'The Bible Study App' a must have.

Logos Bible Software

iOS | Android | Web | Desktop

Logos Bible Software has been a powerful research library for preachers and seminarians (though they're becoming more lay-friendly). Their intricate tagging system makes Logos an invaluable tool for hardcore Bible geeks.

From their website: With easy-to-use tools and a massive theological library, Logos 6 delivers insight. Pinpoint answers in seconds, study the Word in its cultural context, uncover meaning in the original languages, and answer questions with confidence.

Accordance

iOS | Desktop

Accordance is the elegant Bible scholarship software for savvy readers and ministers. It focuses on speed, ease of use, and building a specialized library of relevant resources for Christians.

From their website: Your time is valuable, so Bible study software shouldn't be cumbersome or complicated. Accordance Bible Software places all the tools you need right at your fingertips in one easy to use, lightning-fast interface. And with a host of amazing new features in Accordance 11, going deeper in the study of the scriptures has never been simpler.

e-Sword

iOS | Desktop

It's the iconic, barebones free Bible study tool. The e-Sword app lets you search and compare various Bible translations, plus some quick original-language lookups (using Strong's numbers). It's well past 25 million downloads.

WORDsearch Bible Software

iOS | Android | Desktop

It's a Bible app that helps Christians search the Word—it might be the most straightforwardly named app on this list! You can also build out a library of Bibles, commentaries, lessons, maps, and more resources from their store.

From their website: WORDsearch Bible Software, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources, has been a provider of premium Bible study software since 1987. WORDsearch is recognized as the leading Bible software "serving those who preach and teach to change lives." WORDsearch offers preachers and teachers over 4,500 Bibles and books that make Bible study faster, easier and more enjoyable. The QuickVerse brand is also a part of the WORDsearch family of Bible software.

Bible Web App

Web

This sleek Web app lets you read Bibles, commentaries, and even Greek and Hebrew texts side-by-side. It's free to access, and its search result graphics are a delightful treat for Christians.

From their website: Online Bible study application with bonus study features for studying Greek and Hebrew. Developed by Digital Bible Society with major contributions from John Dyer and Michael Johnson.

Blue Letter Bible

Web

Another iconic Bible Web app, the Blue Letter Bible has been making the Bible and other reference works free on the Web since 1995. They took the name “Blue Letter Bible” from the fact that way back then, most hyperlinks were blue. Their vision was to link every word of the Bible to supplementary reference works—which would make for a lot of blue letters!

From their website: Blue Letter Bible provides powerful tools for an in-depth study of God’s Word through our free online reference library, with study tools that are grounded in the historical, conservative Christian faith.

Bible memory apps

These apps focus on Scripture memorization using various memory techniques.

Fighter Verses

iOS | Android

Fighter verses pulls together curated lists of Bible verses to commit to memory. And it’s not just for one-off memorization—this app comes preloaded with two 5-year memory plans!

From their app description: The Fighter Verses Bible memory system was created to help believers persevere in the fight of faith by arming them with God’s Word. Designed for children through adults, this system allows individuals, groups, or entire churches to memorize and review at their own pace.

Scripture Typer

iOS | Android | Web | Desktop

Another powerful Scripture memory tool that helps you memorize Bible verses by engaging the Word with your eyes, ears, and hands.

From their website: Scripture Typer is the complete Bible Memory System for mobile devices and the web. Scripture Typer breathes new life into your Bible Memory time by actively engaging three separate cognitive areas: audio, visual & kinesthetic (touch) memory.

Church presentation tools

These apps are all about getting sermon presentations, lyrics, video, and other church communication pieces up on the big screen.

ProPresenter

Desktop

From their website: ProPresenter is a cross-platform (Mac and Windows) lyric and media presentation package built specifically to make high-quality live productions easy — such productions include worship gatherings, sporting events, conferences, or even broadcast television. Taking full advantage of the latest technologies of your computer, ProPresenter operators control a presentation on one screen, while dynamically affecting the visuals and lyrics experienced by an audience on one or more screens.

Sharefaith Presenter

PowerPoint plugin

Here’s an oddball in our list: Sharefaith Presenter isn’t a standalone app. It’s a PowerPoint plugin that builds all the features a church needs right into PowerPoint for you.

From their website: 89% of churches use PowerPoint. Instead of creating yet another presentation software, we decided to re-invent PowerPoint through a powerful worship software plugin. Sharefaith

Presenter lets you add text over any video, build custom countdown timers, access the largest worship lyric database, create your own custom worship set and directly insert over 58,000 worship media and videos straight from Sharefaith. You can also directly add Scripture from the built-in NLT and ESV database.

Proclaim

iOS | Android | Desktop

Church presentation software tends to be geared toward the worship leader. The team at Faithlife made Proclaim: a solution that's more pastor- and sermon-centric. Proclaim integrates with CCLI SongSelect, Planning Center (also on this list), Graceway Media, and Logos Bible Software.

From their website: Proclaim puts everything your services needs on the screen. Cloud-based collaboration lets your team work on the same presentation from anywhere.

Apps for church management

These are the "meta" apps—they help churches stay organized, get to know their congregations, and streamline communication among staff, volunteers, and attendees.

The Church App

App platform for iOS, Android, and Windows

Subsplash's offering isn't so much an app as an app platform, but it's the engine behind many prominent church and Christian organization apps today. Apps for the Billy Graham Evangelical Association, John MacArthur's Grace to You, Matt Chandler's The Village Church, The Gospel Coalition, and R. C. Sproul's Ligonier Ministries have all been created through Subsplash's platform.

From their website: The Subsplash Platform / The Church App is a mobile app platform built by Subsplash that enables you to create high-quality, highly-configurable apps for your church, ministry, or organization. The result is a suite of rich and powerful mobile apps for iPhone, iPad, Android Phone, Android Tablet and Windows Phone. You can present full-length sermon audio and video, articles, images, blogs, and more. Many of these features allow end-users to share your content through Twitter, Facebook, and email. Event listings, maps, and online giving can be presented and integrated.

SimpleChurch CRM

iOS | Web

SimpleChurch CRM is centralized solution for churches to engage their congregations, improve their outreach, keep track of child check-in, and accept donations online.

From their website: [SimpleChurch CRM gives you] the insights and information you need to help your church or ministry reach its full potential, right at your fingertips. All the insights and information you need to help your church or ministry reach its full potential, right at your fingertips.

Breeze ChMS

Web

A Web-based church management software for small to mid-sized churches, Breeze lets churches keep track of members, giving, child check-in, groups, events and more. Plus, they charge a flat rate of \$50 per month for all their features.

Elvanto

Web

This church management software began as one man's rostering system for his local church and has grown to a system used by thousands of churches around the globe. They give a portion of the money they make away to help the worldwide Church.

From their website: We believe in living for a cause greater than ourselves. Our heart pours out to help new church plants, support orphans and widows around the globe, help churches build their own grounds, fund bible colleges and missionaries in developing countries, build orphanages so children can have a home, and support missionaries around the world so that they can pursue their calling.

FellowshipOne

Web

A 100% Web-based church management system that helps churches offer exceptional member care, steward their time and finances, and engage their communities.

From their website: ACTIVE Network's Fellowship One is a 100% web-based Church Management Software (ChMS) for any size church. Ministry data is unified in a single-source, Cloud-hosted database that provides greater flexibility, accessibility, cost effectiveness, and security than self-hosted solutions. Fellowship One provides a complete view of members' involvement, needs, and contact information, available anytime, anywhere with Internet access, so leaders can spend more time on ministry and reduce inefficiencies.

Planning Center (Services)

iOS | Android | Web

One of the most well-known solutions on this list, Planning Center is famous for helping churches plan, schedule, and rehearse services.

From their website: Schedule your teams, manage your music, and revolutionize the way you plan your worship services.

Church apps for giving

Not everyone remembers to bring something for the plate! These apps give Christians convenient, mobile-based giving options.

Pushpay (eChurch giving)

iOS | Android

eChurch is an online giving solution for churches. They focus on reducing barriers to generosity, and their apps make it easy for people to make a donation in 10 seconds or less.

From their website: eChurch's platform is designed to engage and encourage existing and new givers. It allows regular givers to easily give more and helps you engage the 80% not giving regularly...yet.

Kindrid

iOS | Android

A text-based mobile giving solution: Kindrid lets congregants text the amount they want to donate to a church's shortcode. It's another crazy-simple tool from the folks at LifeChurch.tv.

From their website: Kindrid is a new approach to giving rooted in an understanding of generosity. Our goal is to empower you to engage new givers, increase generosity and further your church's mission. The Smart Giving platform by Kindrid equips you to receive donations of any amount with a single text and provides powerful backend tracking and management tools. The Kindrid team also provides you with slides, videos and other resources to help effectively promote mobile giving among your

congregation. Churches we work with have found Kindrid to increase both their total unique givers and total amount of money given.

Church networking apps

From the very beginning, church has happened in community. These apps help people find new church communities and/or connect with their local church families.

FaithStreet

iOS | Android | Web

FaithStreet helps newcomers find and connect with churches near them. FaithStreet boasts more than 16,000 church profiles—plus online giving options for congregants. It's a popular connection tool for Christians.

From their website: Before FaithStreet, there was no high-quality, online service that helped a newcomer to a city (or to a faith) discover and explore faith communities near them. We talked to many other people across the country who shared the same problem, and we thought we could help them.

Later, after talking to hundreds of pastors and other leaders, we discovered that congregations were also frustrated by their inability to reach people using the Internet. We created FaithStreet to help solve both sides of this problem. On FaithStreet, your congregation can create a great-looking profile that newcomers will visit every day.

The City

iOS | Web

The City is a church community platform that began as the dream of Amazon systems architect-turned-pastor Zach Hubert. It's a ministry-oriented way for congregations to engage each other and their communities in ministry. The City is built with the philosophy that people want to be heard, people want to be known, people want to be connected, and people want to make a difference.

From their website: Where church software used to be almost entirely focused on back-office automation, it's now clear that software can play a vital role in mobilizing entire congregations for ministry. And that's why we built The City.

The Table

iOS | Web

The Table is a social network that helps church members get to know one another, stay connected throughout the week, pray for one another, and serve one another.

From their website: The Table is a custom social platform that aims to encourage community in your local church, empower leaders and move people beyond the pews and into authentic, life changing relationships. It enables church to happen between church services.

Church Community Builder

Web

Church Community Builder is a church management system built to empower church leaders through stellar technology, solid coaching, and practical networking.

From their website: At Church Community Builder, we care about church leaders, and our web-based software is designed (and continually being improved) to support the vital work you do. We're known for this software, but believe it or not, software is not our deepest passion. Helping your church staff

(both paid and unpaid) become more effective at how you do ministry is what fires us up! Our software is a powerful tool, but the real magic happens when our software is used to multiply your ministry efforts by combining it with effective process.

Christian curriculum apps

Part of the Great Commission is to teach disciples to follow Jesus' teachings—these apps help Christians pass on the teachings of the Bible and the church through curriculum.

Disciplr

Web

Disciplr is new to the app landscape: it's a Web-based Christian ministry toolbox for teachers in the local church. The way churches select and use curriculum hasn't changed much over the past 40 years—Disciplr gives teachers a "simplr" way to choose what they teach, customize lessons, and manage classroom schedules.

RightNow Media

iOS | Web

A vast selection of video resources for Christians: especially small group studies, kids' media, and sermons.

From their website: RightNow Media is like "Netflix for the church" because we have a huge library with thousands of video sessions that people can access anytime, anywhere. Our creative team films and produces RightNow Media Originals featuring teaching from respected teachers and pastors. We also distribute video resources produced by over 100 other major Christian publishers and ministries.

New City Catechism

iOS | Web

Timothy Keller and Sam Shammas have adapted the Reformation catechisms for today's churches to make the New City Catechism. It combines the typical question-and-answer catechism content with video explanations from Don Carson, Mark Dever, Timothy Keller, John Piper, etc.

From their website: New City Catechism is comprised of only 52 questions and answers (as opposed to Heidelberg's 129 or Westminster Shorter's 107). There is therefore only one question and answer for each week of the year, making it simple to fit into church calendars and achievable even for people with demanding schedules.

Christian media apps

These apps serve up the media that helps Christians evangelize, stay up-to-date on what's happening in the world, and minister to their churches.

Gospel Central

iOS | Android | Web

Another newcomer: Gospel Central is an app for seekers and evangelists. Gospel Central lets people upload video testimonies of how they came to Christ, and tag their testimonies based on their experiences.

From their website: When someone is experiencing a spiritual battle or desperate times, they are often also experiencing profound loneliness. What they need is to know that someone has faced exactly what they are facing, and by God's saving grace have come through it better and stronger. [. . .] Now you can send a two-three minute video testimony from someone who has been there and can meet the person you want to encourage right where they're at. Imagine being able to send someone a video and list of FAQ's and biblical encouragement related to their struggle. Finally, imagine a clear gospel presentation at the end of each testimony that gives them the opportunity to accept Christ on the spot.

Jesus Film Media

iOS | Android

It's the JESUS Film in full-length and segments (plus a few other films), in more than 1,100 languages. Wow.

From their website: Jesus Film Media is the digital expression of The JESUS Film Project®, an extension of the overall vision to reach everyone, everywhere by equipping people to use our tools and resources in new ways! Finding just the right film resource or tool has never been easier.

Christianity Today

iOS | Android

It's the news from the Christian world in app form.

From their app page: Every issue provides insightful commentary, penetrating interviews with leading Christian thinkers, and theological analysis on current issues, trends, people and news events that impact people of faith. Existing print subscribers get complimentary access to all tablet editions, including the iPad app.

RELEVANT

iOS | Android

It's RELEVANT, but optimized, upgraded, and generally all-tricked-out for your tablet.

From their website: Don't miss RELEVANT's industry-leading tablet magazine, featuring interactive design, exclusive audio and video content, and a lot more! It takes the magazine experience to a whole new level.

Ministry Grid

Web

A product of LifeWay, Ministry Grid is an online training library for local churches. In Ministry Grid, individuals and churches alike can purchase or subscribe to training materials. These materials cover the whole nine yards: video lectures, print resources, and even quizzes for assessing progress. You earn cool badges for completing courses, too.

From their website: The Bible teaches in Ephesians 4 that a healthy, unified church is the result of training and equipping the people in the church. Why, then, do only 1 in 4 churches have a plan to train? A lack of time, know-how, and expenses are real obstacles for many churches, but they don't have to be.

Ministry Grid is here to help.

Christian apps for kids

Bible Pathway Adventures

iOS | Android

This engaging Bible storybook app helps parents teach their kids about God and His Word. The interactive Bible stories explore the historical context of each narrative (complete with archeological tidbits) and help kids and parents alike know the Bible better.

From their website: The Bible Pathway Adventures' storybook app is an educational tool designed to help parents and kids spend time together learning about God. Inspired by God's Word, we've taken the timeless biblical stories and added world-class narration and eye-popping illustrations to bring the Bible's most famous characters to life.

We want to encourage the type of discipleship that begins in the home and spreads outwards to the wider body of Christ. That's why we've created the world's first discipleship storybook app – to help parents kick-start this lifetime journey. After all, you'll be the first teacher they'll ever know.

Bible for Kids

iOS | Android

We've already looked at the Bible App by YouVersion—this is its kid sister. The Bible for Kids app is designed to help kids fall in love with God's Word through interactive illustrated Bible stories.

From their app page: Through interactive adventures and beautiful animations, kids explore the big stories of the Bible. The Bible App for Kids is a delight-filled experience designed to encourage kids to return again and again. It's the beginning of a lifelong love of God's Word.

SUPERBOOK

iOS | Android

The app complement to the Christian Broadcasting Network series of the same name, SUPERBOOK gives kids interactive animated Bible content, as well as a list of kid's FAQs about the Bible.

From their website: This [. . .] app for kids is a media-rich experience that helps bring the Bible to life with videos and images from the Emmy nominated SUPERBOOK animation series as well as engaging interactive games.

All content is embedded within scripture, so children can easily interact with it from within the context of the Bible. This app also includes profiles of people, places and artifacts from the Bible as well as providing Biblical answers to questions that are common to kids.

Adventure Bible Memory

iOS

This Bible verse memory tool is especially made for kids who love Zondervan's Adventure Bible.

From their app page: Bible memory is fun for kids with the Adventure Bible Memory iPhone app. Do verse scrambles by filling in the blank, choose easy/medium/hard, and earn cool prizes like adventurous pictures and sounds. Even record your own voice reading your favorite verse. This app includes over 1300 verses from the Bible chosen just for kids.

Bible Coloring Book + Christian coloring pages for kids

iOS

The title of this is self-explanatory: this app serves up Bible-story coloring pages for kids to color in on your iOS device.

From their app page: The app includes one coloring book of 12 stories and people from the Old Testament that you can color with crayons or tap to fill. You can even choose to color with crayons that

magically stay within the lines! It works great on the iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. There are 8 additional coloring books that you can purchase within the app, and from time to time we'll release more. At any time you can upgrade the app to the Deluxe edition with a single in-app purchase.

The Lutheran Insulter

Web

We don't recommend insulting people. But we would recommend visiting the Lutheran Insulter for some hilariously over-the-top burns from the reformer himself. The Lutheran Insulter serves up particularly caustic turns of phrase from Luther's Works for use in playful banter with church historians, seminarians, Reformation geeks, and most definitely not your mother.

From their website: This insult generator presents some of Luther's more crass words in good humor and not as a judgment upon the reformer. [...] Some of his insults are inexcusable; a few are so crass as to make me reluctant to put them on this site (e.g. those to do with whoredom). However, when one reads his works, it becomes clear that these insults, a common rhetorical device in the polemical literature of the sixteenth century, were spoken in hopes of defending the pure faith against impure doctrine and guiding the church of his day back into the faith of the Church.

Christian prayer apps

These apps remind you when to pray and what to pray for. Most importantly, they help you keep your promise when you say, "I'll pray for you."

PrayerMate

iOS | Android

How many times have we told someone we'd pray for them, and then forget to follow through? This Christian app helps you keep track of prayer requests and faithfully pray for the people and causes you care about.

From their website: PrayerMate brings all your prayer points together. Whether it's your personal prayer points for friends and family, regular updates from some fantastic mission organizations, or the latest PDF prayer letter that just arrived in your inbox, PrayerMate puts it all together in one place and helps you get on and pray.

Prayer Calendar by Voice of the Martyrs

iOS | Android

This app helps Christians remember their persecuted brothers and sisters throughout the world, and alerts users to specific requests daily.

From their website: Christians around the world have one primary request: "Please pray for us!" Support the body of Christ through daily prayer for the persecuted Christian church. This free iOS or Android application will help focus your prayer requests and remind you to pray each day.

Praying God's Word

iOS

This Christian devotional app is the accompaniment to Beth Moore's bestselling book of the same name.

From the app page: This app includes 30 prayers on the topic of Overcoming Unbelief that accompanies Beth Moore's best selling book, Praying God's Word. [. . .] Every Scripture reference is linked to an

online edition of the Holman Christian Standard Bible so you may read the referenced verses in context. You can save favorites, email prayers, and tweet or post to Twitter and Facebook.

Miles a Minute

iOS | Android

This video devotional from The Rock Church in San Diego features 365 video devotionals from Pastor Miles McPherson—and each one is only 60 seconds long (give or take). It's an entertaining and uplifting devotional, but also doubles as a light media library for other pastors.

From their website: Miles a Minute was created as a way to speak God's truth into the lives of those who don't normally find themselves inside a church.

DVO

iOS

This image and type-based daily devotional app is created for daily, bite-size Bible reading and sharing. But it doesn't stop with the user—DVO's Bible art is super sharable on social media, so users can share their devotions with friends, too.

From their website: Our intention is to help people get "His word in", in this busy, fast-paced life, in the most practical and convenient ways possible. So far we've reached more than 250,000 people with the Word of God....and still growing! Using social media and modern technology, we believe that every person should be empowered in their everyday living, with God's word.

Daily Bible Inspirations

iOS | Android

Daily Bible Inspirations serves up Bible verses and inspiring images once a day on your phone or tablet. The verses are organized by an ordained pastor, and the images are easy to share on social media.

From their app page: This is the perfect app for you if you are a busy parent, a grandparent, a new Christian, a student, or anyone that wants to reconnect with God on a daily basis but may not always have time for daily devotions. All verses are personally curated by an ordained pastor with a PhD in Theology. (So they're never pulled from a cold, impersonal database by a computer.)

X3watch

iOS | Android | Desktop

The leading online accountability (porn-and-other-bad-stuff-blocking) software, X3watch is the brain child of Craig Gross, who runs XXXchurch.com.

Adapted from their website: I created the software back in 2004 after hearing countless stories from people who were tired of keeping secrets. Over 1 million people have downloaded the software, and it is now available for Windows, Macintosh, iOS, and Android. So if I could tell you one thing it would be this: YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION COST: FREE	Christian Meditation is a particular form of meditative prayer drawn from the Christian tradition. It is 'prayer of the heart' which takes place in silence, with the aid of a mantra. The World Community for Christian Meditation recommends the use of the mantra 'ma-ra- na-tha' (a word from Aramaic, the language of Jesus, meaning Come Lord)
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	<p>CHRISTIAN MEDITATION is in two sections. One tab is a link to the World Community for Christian Meditation with access to Daily Wisdom, Weekly Teachings, Weekly Readings, The WCCM Monthly Review and Monthly Tablet Column.</p> <p>The second tab is The Meditation Tools Tab with links to a Meditation Timer and an Opening Prayer.</p> <p>The "Meditation Timer" button will open a "Timer Settings" window where you can choose your preferred bell sound and how long you want for preparation and the meditation itself. The latest setting used will be kept in memory - so next time you use the App you will find them already set as you left them. The "Opening Prayer" button opens a popup window displaying John Main's Opening Prayer.</p>
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<p>RESTFUL RADIO</p> <p>COST:FREE</p>	<p>RESTFUL RADIO app is calming photography accompanied by relaxing music.</p> <p>This app is intended to help slow the heart rate, lower the blood pressure, and provide a way to open the mind to contemplation. As well as listening, students could be given the opportunity to sketch, write words, feelings, emotions and responses during or after listening to the music.</p>
<p>PRAYER NOTE</p> <p>COST: FREE</p>	<p>PRAYER NOTE app is great for students who would like to engage in making their own prayer notes. They can add, modify or delete a prayer note. They can group prayers in to folders e.g. Prayers of Thanksgiving.</p>
<p>BOOK CREATOR</p> <p>COST: FREE</p>	<p>BOOK CREATOR is a simple way to create beautiful books that can be saved in iBooks and emailed to others to enjoy. Videos and music can be imported and speech can be recorded.</p> <p>Students could use this to create prayer books or re-tell bible stories.</p> <p>Add your text, images, video, music and narration and use all of your content to tell the whole story. Watch this short video to see how easy it is.</p>
<p>MY CHURCH</p> <p>COST: \$1.99</p>	<p>MY CHURCH features 75 stunning photos of beautiful Catholic Churches from all over the world. These photos can be set as still or used as a slide show. There is also a collection of classical religious music to listen to and a button to access the Catholic liturgical calendar.</p> <p>Students could view these Churches and talk about their special features. They could make comparisons to their local school/parish church or the St Stephens Cathedral. They could go on a virtual tour of St Stephens and they could create their own virtual tour of their local Church or Churches using the digital tool, Mapwing.</p>

<p>WHITE NOISE BOX</p> <p>COST: \$0.99</p>	<p>WHITE NOISE BOX features all of kinds of quality noise samples, helping you relax, reduce stress, increase your concentration or simply block distractions. This application features high fidelity white, red (brown), violet, pink and blue noise loops, as well as various nature sounds. This app could be used at transition times throughout the day so that students stop and become focused and calm.</p> <p>It is important to still the body and attend to posture before mindful listening and at the end of the time to leave students BE for one minute of silence and stillness. They could be asked to respond in prayer.</p>
<p>NATURE SCAPES</p> <p>COST: FREE</p>	<p>NATURE SCAPES is a relaxing and reflective app to listen to the soothing sounds of chimes blowing in the wind, crickets chirping, birds singing, rain falling, rivers flowing, birds singing, whales calling and more.</p> <p>This would be a good resource for leading students in to times of silence and stillness. They could engage in mindful listening and come to an awareness of their breath pattern in this time. There is an opportunity for them to choose their favourite Nature Scape and respond through journaling, writing prayers or psalms of praise and thanksgiving. Creating their own Nature scape and composing a text (mantra or scripture quote) to accompany the image they have selected or photographed would be another option.</p>
<p>LIFE OF JESUS: MIRACLES</p> <p>COST: FREE</p>	<p>LIFE OF JESUS: MIRACLES is an app that seamlessly integrates story and activities to create a truly engaging and interactive experience for exploring Bible stories from the new Testament! Features a Parent Discussion Guide Students can choose to Read, Listen, Colour, Explore illustrations, Reconstruct interactive story scenes or join in with the songs. Students could compare the version of the stories used in this App with the text in the class bible.</p> <p>An amazing catch of fish... Water turned into wine... A paralysed man made to walk again...</p>
<p>NOOMA</p> <p>COST: FREE</p>	<p>This new NOOMA app includes Rain 001 by Rob Bell for FREE! The films are stunningly presented and will delight you spiritually and visually. You can purchase all 23 other NOOMA films from with-in the app. Each film includes the Study Guide and you can read it in the app, print it or open in iBooks or any other app on your device that can read a PDF.</p>

	<p>About NOOMA: Jesus lived with the awareness that God is doing something, right here, right now, and anybody can be a part of it. He encouraged his listeners to search, to question, to wrestle with the implications of what he was saying and doing. He inspired, challenged, provoked, comforted, and invited people to be open to God's work in this world. Wherever he went, whatever he did, Jesus started discussions about what matters most, because for Jesus, God is always inviting us to open our eyes and join in. NOOMA is a series of short films that explore our world from a perspective of Jesus. NOOMA is an invitation to search, question, and join the discussion</p> <p>Suitable for staff, parents or older students.</p>
<p>FELTBOARD</p> <p>COST: \$0.99</p>	<p>FELTBOARD</p> <p>This app could be used for the retelling of scripture stories or creating scenes that depict e.g. what a good choice would look like.</p> <p>Especially designed for imaginative play, storytelling and learning.</p>

Praying with apps

	<p>iPause (1.99)</p> <p>Used for centuries for meditation and prayer, labyrinths bring an inner peace for those who seek deep self-reflection. Choose one of six soothing labyrinths and let your inner journey begin. Children could follow this walk through the finger labyrinth beginning with some breathing; choosing a mantra to pray as they walk the labyrinth; resting at the centre and journaling as a response to the experience.</p>
	<p>Free Candle</p> <p>Select from 10 different candles. Swipe your finger up and down to light the candles. Add music from your iTunes list. Children could choose the candle for the day and the music to accompany it burning.</p>
	<p>3 Minute Retreat (.99)</p> <p>Engage in a spiritual "time out" to reconnect with God and experience peace of mind. This could be suitable for teachers and students to help them to stop and reflect at the beginning or end of the day or lesson.</p>
	<p>Virgin Mary Icons (1.99)</p> <p>These 22 Icon images, each with 'Prayers To Mary', will help you to contemplate on the image and to pray with each icon.</p>
	<p>Sand Art (.99)</p>

	<p>Draw on the beach as if you were actually there. Sand Art comes with many features:soothing ocean background music; choice of stick size to draw with; an eraser; a clear button; a save button. Sand Art is a great app for those who simply want to relax and draw at the same time. Students could write or draw their prayers in silence or with the soothing background music.</p>
	<p>Doodle Buddy</p> <p>Finger paint your prayer with thousands of colors and drop in playful stamps. Use this app for Praying in Colour. http://prayingincolor.com/praying-in-color-praying-in-black-and-white</p>
	<p>Gratitude Journal (2.99)</p> <p>If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough. Meister Eckhart. Try to write down the little things you are grateful for your day in this journal. This could be a class entry.</p>
	<p>Virtu Wicks Candle Maker (.99)</p> <p>Create. Burn. Share! Children create a prayer candle and write a prayer of intercession. This could be a whole class activity with all contributing to the candle for the day e.g. a candle with a prayer for someone who is sick.</p>
	<p>iZen Garden (5.49)</p> <p>iZen Garden gives you all the peace and tranquility of a beautiful Zen Garden. Choose from 100s of objects, plants and creatures to place in your garden, then rake the sand and share your creations!</p>
	<p>Insight Timer (2.99)</p> <p>Insight Timer is a way to support your meditation practice with beautiful singing bowls. Choose one of the singing bowl sounds as a meditation bell to begin and end your meditation time. You can choose an option to journal after your meditation.</p>
	<p>Mandalas</p> <p>A mandala is a repetitive design within a circle that has been used as a tool for meditation for centuries. The centre point symbolises that God is at and in the very centre of our lives. The circular shape symbolises all things being encompassed by God. Invite children to carefully choose colours and begin to slowly colour their mandala beginning at the centre point. Ask students to spend time in silence reflecting on their mandala. Encourage them to think about how God is with them in all they do. Lead them to create their own words about their mandala e.g. Peace or God is with me</p>
	<p>Relax Melodies</p> <p>Create your own music for relaxation and meditation.</p>

	<p>Wordfoto</p> <p>This app allows you to take a photo and annotate this photo with words that deepen the meaning of the image. They can be words from scripture or words that come from your heart.</p>
	<p>White NoiseBox</p> <p>This app features noises and nature sounds that can help with reducing stress and leading students to a sense of calm and relaxation.</p>
	<p>Pic Play Post (1.99)</p> <p>PicPlayPost is an all in one Video and Photo editing tool that delivers you a full suite of customization options to build unbelievable video collages.</p>