

The BIGGEST Issue

(continued from front page)

charity, such as “mercy” and “grace,” and I’m sure you realize I am referring to the mercy and grace of God. If a person wishes to see the *mercy* and *grace* of God (all extended toward us by the *love* of God) then that person needs to take a good look at Jesus—the Jesus of the Bible. Again and again, diversionary things will be thrust at you, that may perpetuate your confusion and excuses. I repeat...look at Jesus! Of course, there were those who even hated Jesus for healing the sick, the blind, the demon-possessed, etc! But for us to look at Jesus’ enemies who had baseless criticism, could be just another way to excuse or elevate ourselves.

The BIGGEST Issue is our sin with all its consequences; both in *this* world, and *later* when we face God. However, the BIGGEST charity is the mercy, grace and love of God to be willing to remove The BIGGEST Issue. The BIGGEST purchase price to accomplish this was not paid at **Christies nor Sotheby’s**. You and I are being handled like slaves at the auction, and like merchandise at a market stall. We must all adjust to the fact that God has “price-fixed” our release. People try innumerable methods to change the price, but this will never work. God set one price alone, and that is what we remember on “**Good Friday**” and “**Easter**.” The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ accomplished what was necessary for our release from The BIGGEST Issue connected with our sin.

Price-fixing is usually evil because the people and businesses are evil. Dictators, too, are often evil because all humans are “fallen creatures” with sinful natures and human limitations. God and *His* “Government” and “Law” do not suffer from

either evil or limitations. Some months ago, a rare copy of the **Magna Carta** was sold at Sotheby’s for £10.6 million. The Magna Carta set out the most basic principles of English law. However, and in great contrast, God’s Law stretches back much further, it has international application and jurisdiction and it will never be auctioned off! Furthermore, God promised that He will write *His* glorious Law, not on stone tablets like **The 10 Commandments**, but on tender, humble, believing, receptive human hearts, so that each possessor will WANT to obey the law of God! Hallelujah!

People work all their lives to pay off the debt-matter of The BIGGEST Issue, but will eventually receive their wages in full. The Bible says “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rom. 6:23), which refers to spiritual, physical and eternal death... and payday is coming. The GOOD NEWS is that The BIGGEST Issue can be turned over to the only One who can properly deal with it in our best interest. **Scotland’s branch of The Big Issue wants to “eradicate poverty,”** but God through Christ has made the way to eradicate (get fully rid of) the BIGGEST poverty and homelessness of all.

The last book of the Bible mentions a group of people who thought they were fully outfitted and didn’t need a thing. They were only one of other such examples given in the Bible. Jesus faithfully informed those same people that they were, in fact, “*poor and wretched, and miserable and blind and naked!*” (Rev.3:17). **Wow, were they blind to their real condition, or what?!** Jesus shows His love toward them by extending a guaranteed cure. He offers the same to every one of us today.

We must not turn a blind eye or a deaf ear to the earthly needs of others around us, **yet we must always remember to deal immediately, thoroughly and continually with The BIGGEST Issue of all.**

DESPERATE HUMAN NEEDS ARE ALL AROUND US, WORLD-WIDE.
On various visits, I had to choke back tears as I read the inscription on the tomb of the great Scottish missionary to Africa, David Livingstone, who is buried in Westminster Abbey (except for his heart, which remained in Africa with those he loved). Yet, notwithstanding the real human needs of today’s world, man’s greatest homelessness is his being away from God.

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The London Christian Standard *...and Provincial*

“Lift up a standard for the people.” Isaiah 62:10

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The BIGGEST Issue!

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Many of us are familiar with **The Big Issue**, which is made available on the streets of London. Apparently, numerous professional journalists contribute articles for The Big Issue, to provide homeless people with a means of generating income, as well as helping them overcome obstacles in helping themselves. That sounds good. In fact, the branch in Scotland says they are “dedicated to promoting practical solutions to eradicating poverty anywhere in the world.” **Now, that’s a big goal!**

Last month, an overwhelming reality “hit me,” and it started from The Big Issue. Many good charities exist which do great work, yet The BIGGEST Issue we could ever consider concerns our personal and actual relationship to God, and our up-to-date readiness to “meet our Maker.” The Big Issue states that they are now an international movement, but The BIGGEST Issue has existed

world-wide since the most severe trouble of man began.

I think it is very clear that, notwithstanding all the glitter and propaganda of this world regarding nearly every topic, there is a fundamental rottenness that is *not* being addressed. The deep-seated and essential rottenness to which I refer is doing a

pervasive work in spoiling the entire planet. **Unfortunately, almost innumerable diversionary matters keep us from dealing with The BIGGEST Issue.** Some of these diversions are imposed on people from outside sources, but many of them people impose upon themselves! The Bible speaks of those who “oppose themselves” (2 Tim. 2:25). Most people would not place themselves in that category, but God *would*...and the types of such people greatly vary. No, these people are not all the same, except for the fact that they are all following a diversion *away from* The BIGGEST Issue...and they are to be found *inside*, as well as *outside* the circles of religion.

The BIGGEST Issue must be addressed by the BIGGEST charity. Various words may rightly describe this

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HAPPY EASTER! (23 March) “Christ died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!”
Christmas and Easter are commercialised, and some religious and atheistic enemies try to attack and undermine the Bible and the existence and life of Jesus. If you wish to know the character of God, look at Jesus. As to the Bible being “changed,” if people changed the Bible to make themselves look good, they did a bad job, for the Bible treats everyone alike—ALL need to *truly* repent and be saved. “Orthodox Easter” is on 27 April

The March magnet

Gabriel L. Mancino

March 2008 has a magnificent power to bring things together! Well, my wife's birthday will always be on what is called "St. Patrick's Day" (March 17). It once fell on Mother's Day, so I made her a cake with green icing, with white lettering that said: "**Happy St. Patrick's Mother's Birthday!**" I have a photo to prove it!

This year, however, I noticed with a sense of shock that, **in a way, Jews, Muslims and Christians are drawn together this month.** Actually, instead of Muslims I should say Iranians, for it is their New Year to which I refer, and that celebration is *Persian* rather than *Islamic*. The Persian New Year falls on Thursday the 20th; the day before "Good Friday," when Christians remember the crucifixion and death of Jesus. However, while Christians are thinking of a rather gruesome event, the Persians are somewhat "joined" by the Jews who celebrate "Purim." Purim commemorates **the narrow escape from a Hitler-like extermination**, coincidentally, in ancient Iran—Persia! Purim is on that Friday and Saturday. The various features of the Persian New Year are packed with interesting and meaningful symbolism, which is a study in itself!

As I said, "Good Friday" is a time when many Christians honour that awful event of the Crucifixion. However, **that hideous event was one of victory** as well, and I do not refer to any *seeming* "victory" by Christ's enemies! The "forces" that nailed Jesus to the Cross

suffered openly humiliating defeat in the very act which they supposed brought them conquest over Christ. A reading of various modern Bible translations of Colossians 2:13-15 will demonstrate what I mean, for they word it quite clearly. Blending some of them together for verse 15, it could read as follows:

"He stripped, disarmed, shook-off and rid Himself of the evil and hostile principalities, powers, princes, rulers and authorities, and boldly made a public example, show and display, and held them up in open contempt as His conquests and trophies, leading them in a victory parade when He celebrated His triumph over them on the Cross!" Unlike Scotland on the front page, this is not an ambition or future goal, it is an accomplished fact...a done deal!

With such a victory parade as this, it is no wonder it sounds like Jewish Purim or Persian New Year! For the Jews, it was *rescue*, which is just another word for the Christian's word *salvation*. For the Iranians, it marks the start of new things, new hopes and new possibilities. Because of the Cross and the Christ of the Cross, every person on earth has the opportunity of the greatest "new start" imaginable. The Bible...*Old Testament* and *New...*says that without the shedding of blood, sin is not taken away. The entirety of the Bible story of God's rescue of man, makes it clear that the only perfect and God-accepted means by which our sin can be removed is by the bloody death of the Messiah, who God first promised to our first parents: Adam and Eve.

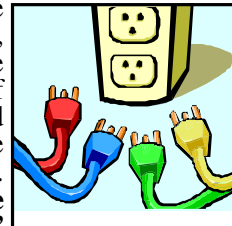
The Big Issue (see page 1) stated that it is now **"an international movement,"** but here we can see that what God accomplished in Jesus Christ is intended for every person on earth. Through the Cross, we may ALL have the greatest rescue ever, and most thrilling new beginning one could hope for!

A BUG'S LIFE — My Italian friend told me little bits about that cartoon movie, like the fly that was warned "Don't look at the light!" It was flying toward a blue light for killing flying insects. But the young bug was too attracted, and replied "I can't help it" as he flew to his doom. Jesus can take out the "I can't help it"... if we let Him.

EASTER "UNPLUGGED"

Gabriel L. Mancino

Yes, I will continue celebrating Christmas, regardless of the commercialisation of it, and the alleged pagan origins of the chosen date (25 Dec.). **I'll also continue celebrating "Easter,"**



regardless of the same complaints. The main fact remains for both: Jesus WAS born, and He DID die, and DID rise from the dead...for the same reason—to take away our sin. That is a rock-solid foundation, despite all the money-prompted high-jacking by worldly businesses.

Sincere and sensible gift-giving is fine, so long as genuine understanding and observance of the meaning and purpose of those two great dates remain well imprinted on minds and hearts. **When we consider those events,** there should rise up in all our hearts a sense of genuine and deep thanksgiving, that God would love us so much that He would send the most glorious Recovery Vehicle imaginable to salvage our dented and damaged souls.

It is often a very frustrating experience to try *everything*... including what seems to be "a sure cure"...only to fail. **When love tries its best to help...**only to be rejected or put off to another time in the never-coming future, it is crushing. It is easy for people to say, "Oh, if you do *this* or *that*, the person will understand or get better or change or whatever!" God knows this frustration of His love. We must all make sure that WE are not the person who is "sick" or "thick." By this I mean, "sick" in our sins, or "thick," that is, clouded-up in our minds by the deceitfulness with which sin and Satan,

or even *self* distorts our understanding of our own spiritual condition.

Among the many "story-sermons" Jesus told for teaching us priceless lessons was **one about two men that died.** See this in Luke 16:19, etc. One of these men was rich; the other poor. The poor man went to "heaven," but not simply because he was poor, and that God was finally having some mercy on him. The rich man went to "Hell," and again, not because he was rich. The point I wish to make is that though it was "too late" for the rich man himself to escape the torment of Hell, yet he at least desired that his other brothers, still on earth, would not go to that terrible place.

You can see that he should have considered them and himself before. Abraham's reply to the rich man was that his brothers had the writings of Moses and the prophets, and that the brothers could read it, learn from it and escape the same destination of their now-deceased brother. However, the rich man argued that if Abraham would send the *poor* man back to his brothers, they would believe and change their ways, thereby escaping Hell. **Yet, Abraham would not revise his reply,** saying very bluntly and sure: "*If they do not believe Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe if one rose from the dead!*" The application of this truth to Jesus' own resurrection is unquestionable. Jesus was *born* for us all. He *suffered and died* for us all. And He *rose from the dead* for us all. These aspects of His life had been spoken many centuries before His coming to earth (e.g. Acts 26:22,23). But if we refuse to read, to believe and to obey, **then we pull the plug** on the power of Christ's resurrection as it relates to ourselves personally. In reality, Easter can get as **"unplugged"** for us as it was for that rich man's brothers. Burning a houseful of £50 notes would not be as wasteful and devaluing as rejecting the Christ of the Resurrection. **Let's not unplug Easter, for there is power there for us all! Determine to be plugged in!**

EVEN JESUS' DISCIPLES HAD A HARD TIME GETTING "PLUGGED-IN!" Any who really want to find God and know God, will not be busy making excuses for themselves. However, we should be glad that the Bible shows us the disobedience of the Jews and the "thick-headedness" of the disciples. There is hope for you and me!!

We meet at Christ Church on the corner of Brent Street and Heriot Road in Hendon (NW4) at 5:45 pm Sundays. Nearest Tube: Hendon Central.