



BBC UPDATE

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NEW BOOK



Dr. Thomas M. Strouse

“Not after Christ”

The Ever-growing Movement of Gnostic Christianity

Bible Baptist Church is planning on releasing another book shortly to expose the real but subtle attack upon New Testament Baptist assemblies. Several Bible Baptist Theological Seminary graduates will be contributing articles in this compilation to show the prevalent false teaching encroaching churches of all stripes, including emerging, mega, fundamental, and even independent Christian churches. Its title and theme come from Col. 2:8-10 revealing that any theology or worship “not after Christ” is Gnostic in nature and practice! The following is the Introduction to *“Not after Christ” The Ever-growing Movement of Gnostic Christianity*.

Introduction

The spiritual battle of the ages has been between Christ and Satan, starting in the Garden of Eden. The battle has not changed as Satan has continually attempted to diminish the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ to his exaltation. The biblical writers have constantly warned about the pervasive and persuasive “Lies of the Garden” (deathlessness and deification of man) which have been perpetuated within the fallen adamic race. As the Lord loves His Baptist assemblies, Satan hates them! The Apostle Paul succinctly addressed the place and the program of the Lord’s will for this dispensation, saying, *“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.** And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory**”* (I Tim.3:15-16). The place is the Baptist assembly which has the offices of bishop and deacon (I Tim. 3:1-13), and also has the focus on the program which teaches and practices the central Bible doctrine *“God was manifest in the flesh.”*

Again, the Apostle Paul gave the biblical truth about Christ while refuting Gnosticism, saying, *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and **not after Christ.** For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power”* (Col. 2:8-10). With the decreasing focus on the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the advancement of goodness and the works of man increases. The diminishing of the deity of the God-Man promotes the deification of Man. This theological and practical “slippery slope” begins with Fragmented Gnosticism and bottoms out with Full-blown Gnosticism.

The Lord’s Baptist assemblies have the responsibility to focus on the precious Saviour and the desire to please Him with godly living. As churches become carnal and worldly, the focus on pleasing the Lord Jesus becomes less and less to the extent that His Person and Work

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becomes obscured. Man-centered Christianity becomes the easy target for man-centered theology with Gnostic fragments undermining the biblical Christ.

The Christian should realize that Gnosticism is not merely an interesting cult to examine in his spare time! It is imperative to know one's enemy! Many Christians, pastors, and theologians are ignorant of "*the wiles of the devil*" (Eph. 6:11), and hence their deception and ultimate destruction.

The Judea-Christian Scriptures introduce the Unknown God Jehovah Who the angels, prophets, and apostles make known in their source of revelatory truth, the Bible. The Unknown god of Gnosticism is known through the angels, teachers, and gurus in their esoteric writings. The Bible teaches that God indwells the repentant sinner whereas Gnosticism teaches that the "spark of divinity" indwells all men. The Christian must have spiritual advancement (sanctification) in this lifetime whereas spiritual advancement for the Gnostic is through numerous reincarnated lifetimes. For the Christian, salvation gives deliverance from the old nature of flesh whereas for the Gnostic salvation gives deliverance from the flesh. The Christian resurrection gives salvation for the flesh whereas the Gnostic reincarnation gives salvation from the flesh. Jesus was God manifested in the flesh whereas all men are gods manifested in the flesh. Jesus is the God-Man whereas Gnosticism teaches that Jesus was the adopted man or the phantom man. Christianity teaches that Jesus is One Person with Two Natures, whereas Gnosticism teaches that Jesus was two persons with two natures. The death of Jesus saves man in the flesh whereas the death of man saves god in the flesh. Jesus is the *Pleroma* whereas in Gnosticism the gods are in the *pleroma*. Faith in the work of Jesus completes believer whereas faith in man's works never completes. Jesus is the creator of and is greater than angels whereas in Gnosticism angels are highest in *Pleroma*. Finally, Christianity gives assurance of salvation whereas Gnosticism never gives assurance.

Satan has cleverly imitated the truth about Christ and the *Pleroma* so that within Christian churches many will trust and worship another Jesus, another Spirit, or another Gospel to their eternal damnation. The Corinthian Baptist Church had those that denied the resurrection (I Cor. 15:12) as did the Ephesian Baptist Church (II Tim. 2:17-18).

The purpose of the compilation of articles about Gnosticism is to acquaint, instruct, and warn Christian church members about the many facets of Gnosticism, including doctrine, finances, martial arts, media, music, (Hip Hop, praise songs, etc.), and translations, which creep into the Lord's assemblies perpetuating fragments of full-blown Gnosticism. When a Christ-centered doctrinal church begins to slip towards a man-centered practical church, Satan has a foothold to flip eventually the assembly into full-blown worldly Gnosticism where the Lord Jesus Christ is not known nor welcomed.

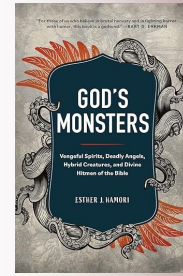
Peter warned the scattered Baptist assemblies, saying, "*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not*" (II Pet. 2:1-3). So also Jude, who warned, saying, "*For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Jude 1:4).

BOOK REVIEW



Dr. Joel Grassi

Journal of Ministry and Theology - Spring 2024
God's Monsters. By Esther J. Hamori.
Minneapolis, MI: Broadleaf Books, 2023. 296 pp.
Hardcover \$28.99; Kindle \$20.49.



Superhuman beings have long fascinated people, and Esther Hamori's entry into the biblical subject seeks to expose the dark side of these creatures, and of God Himself, in a book that Bart Ehrman calls, "a godsend" (cover). It is through this vantage point that readers will have to sift in order to find a few moments of edification due to the darkness of both the material and the author's viewpoint. Hamori alerts the reader to this point of view in her introductory chapter: "Monsters of the Bible can indeed demonstrate something about the nature of the biblical God. But be prepared: God's nature isn't always so benevolent. In fact, this God may be the monster of monsters" (7).

The material is divided into three major sections: first, the heavenly entourage of God with chapters on Seraphim, Cherubim, The Adversary, The Destroyer and Other Angels, Demons in God's Ranks, and Manipulative & Mind-Altering Spirits; secondly, the earthly monsters including the Sea Monster, Shades, Ghosts, and Other Living Dead; and then finally God, who the author refers to as "the God-monster" (261). The book is based upon material from a class that Hamori has long taught at Union Seminary in NY called "Monster Heaven," and with copious sarcasm and numerous references to popular horror movies, she desires her reader to see that "The Bible has been domesticated, muzzling its monsters" (10).

One of the strengths of the book is the way it de-sanitizes popular misconceptions of angelic beings. Her chapter on the Cherubim addresses their infantilization: "Cherubim are imagined now as happy, fat angel-babies. To the writers of the Bible, this image would be unrecognizable" (41). Her accounting of the story of Job pulls no punches, reminding the reader that "there's no softening the loss of ten children" (90), and enabling her audience to feel the bleakness of the innocent sufferer's dilemma: "He's subjected to his friends' unremitting affirmations of the divine message that God doesn't cause the innocent to suffer (but he did!) and so Job must have brought this on himself (but he didn't!)" (191) (parentheses in the original).

Unfortunately, the book suffers from several weaknesses. First is the myopic way the work seeks to compartmentalize these monsters and horrors, isolating them from the greater narrative. Yes, the Bible is full of many awful events and individuals, but the bigger picture of Scripture helps make sense of it. Hamori presents Bible accounts in a way that prevents the reader from seeing this. For instance, in her examination of the Cherubim and her recounting of the Garden of Eden narrative, she states, "When God realizes things haven't unfolded as he expected, he curses everyone in his path...He's like Walter White in Breaking Bad putting down everyone who sees through his innocent facade...In a disturbingly typical abuser move, God shows just enough care to keep the people convinced of his love, making them clothing and even dressing them himself. This tender act is almost enough to make you forget that he just lied to them about their lives being in danger ...He even alters the story: he misquotes himself to Adam...God has just gaslighted the first humans" (pp. 45-46). By breezing over the significance of the clothing God made for Adam and Eve (an innocent, bloody,

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substitutionary sacrifice to cover their shame) and making reference neither to the protoevangelium nor the statements of Adam and Eve, the redemptive narrative is muzzled, even mutilated. Another example is Isaiah 6 wherein she recounts the story of the Seraphim but never so much as alludes to what Isaiah or the heavenly beings say about what just happened with the live coal being put to the prophet's mouth. Of course, soteriology is not the focus of her study, but nonetheless this practice of cherry picking monstrosities throughout the book amounts merely to a catalog of the sensational as one awful act is listed after another. If Hamori's emphasis is how the Bible is meant to be read, one wonders how it ever came to be cherished by so many, including her own ancestors.

A second weakness which some readers may not find helpful is the tone with which God is addressed. Certainly, both testaments are filled with the honest, unfiltered struggles of God's people as they grapple with the problem of why God allows suffering and the mystery of evil, but Hamori's work is supersaturated with sarcasm directed at the Almighty, which perhaps will be of little devotional, theological, or homiletic value to many. She is wont to use phrases such as, "God's anger management issues aside" (18), "the Godfather sends his heavies to do his dirty work" (21), "God intentionally harming his people" (24), "in this analogy God's the wife beater" (26), "God lied and the snake told the truth" (45), "Ongoing teamwork between God and Satan" (100), and "In the final verses of the New Testament, it is written that no one who practices falsehood will enter the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27; 22:15). This could pose a problem for the Almighty" (200), among many others.

A third, though minor, weakness the book has is that it requires the reader to be familiar with scores of horror movie references and television shows. Undoubtedly Hollywood has been drawing inspiration from the Bible for over a century (presumably without paying royalties to the author) but each chapter contains so many references that the reader will have to brush up on his TV binging if he hopes to understand each illustration.

The book also has flashes of higher criticism, open theism, and a bit of politics. There are also some interpretive oddities, such as when dealing with the topic of the Adversary, Hamori omits any reference whatsoever to Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, without an endnote as to why these traditionally significant passages are left out of the discussion. And regarding the Seraphim, she argues strongly but not convincingly that the fiery serpents of Numbers 21 are the exact same beings seen in Isaiah 6, though the Hebrew terms are not exactly the same.

One final significant point to bring up is that in her introduction Hamori briefly reflects on the effect the tragic death of her brother had on her. "His death, and my sense of a world spinning out, off its axis, without order, propelled me into a long period of religious exploration, turning over a variety of ideas before finding my way back home to Judaism, the tradition I grew up in" (9). The reader could be left with the impression that the author's world continues to be disordered and off center. She concludes "the Bible isn't a solution to the struggles of life, but a reflection of them" (271). If there is nothing more to God's monsters than this, the reader will be left longing for a sequel wherein God is not a monster only, but also a Father.

PRAYER REQUEST UPDATE

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and the staff they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

On December 19th, 2023 Kirsten Gagnon was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The tumor, located on the body of the pancreas, was inoperable at that time due to the complication of the tumor encasing two secondary blood vessels. The team of doctors immediately initiated an intense treatment plan of chemotherapy to shrink the tumor away from the blood vessels so it could be surgically removed. After the first four rounds (8 weeks) of chemotherapy, a CT scan was performed which showed a 20+% reduction of the tumor and one of the blood vessels had been freed. After the eighth round, (another 8 weeks) another scan was performed which showed another 20+% reduction, but still encasing the splenic artery, which meant that surgery was still not an option. Kirsten finished the twelfth round of chemotherapy and this time the CT scan showed no change. This means that the tumor is still not operable as the surgeon wants to knock it down further before he attempts surgery. Kirsten has now finished 27 weeks of treatment and the next step will be radiation. She will be meeting with the doctors later this month to determine how long and how often this part of the treatment will be.

Thank you so much for your prayers as we have seen many answers so far in her treatment. We kindly request that you continue come boldly unto the throne of grace on Kirsten’s behalf, that she may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4:16)

BBC/BBTS 2024-2025 SCHEDULE

July 22-26
Plymouth, NH
Psalms 42-72

August 17-23
Indonesia Module and
Commencement

August 26
BBTS Fall Semester
Begins
Greek Exposition Mondays
(TMS)

September 5
BBTS Fall Semester
Begins
John the Baptist Thursdays
(Dr. Grassi)

September 23-27
Bible Baptist Church
Nashua, NH
Minor Prophets I

October 20-23
Willow Grove Baptist
Church
Waynesburg, PA
Timeless Truths Bible
Conference
The Book of Nahum

October 27
Calvary Baptist Church
Mannington, WV
TBA

November 1
BBTS Fall Lecture Series
Galilean Baptist Church
Stafford Springs, CT
TBA

2025

January 6-10, 2025
Ireland Module
Greek III & Psalms 1-41

Jan. 13-17, 2025
Fairhaven Baptist College
Psalms 42-72

February 10-14, 2025
Philippine Module
Quezon City
Psalms 45-72

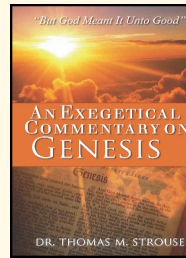
April 11, 2025
BBTS Spring Lecture
Series
Galilean Baptist Church
Stafford Springs, CT
TBA

May 17-18, 2025
BBTS Banquet and
Graduation
Bible Baptist Church
Cromwell, CT

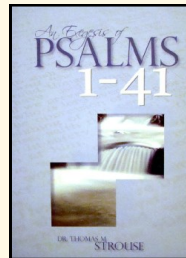
May 26-30, 2025
Ireland Module
Greek IV & Psalms 42-72

The Publication Page

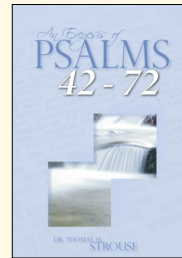
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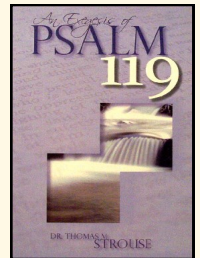
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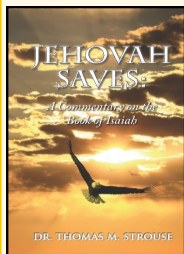
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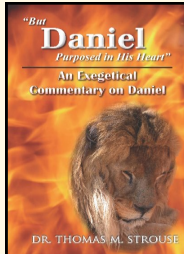
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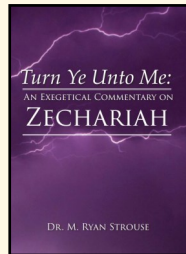
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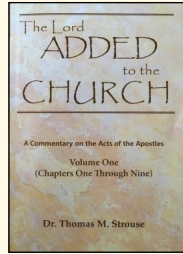
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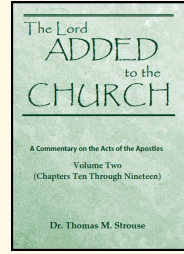
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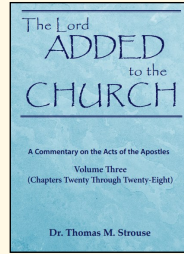
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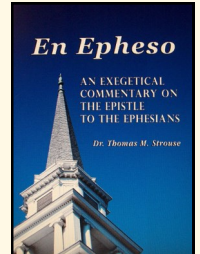
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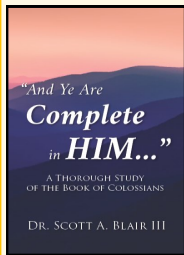
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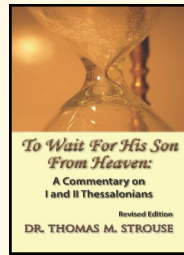
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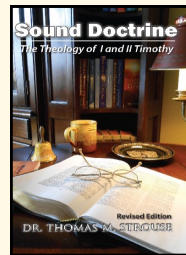
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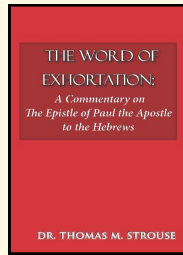
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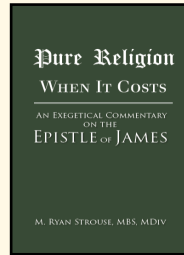
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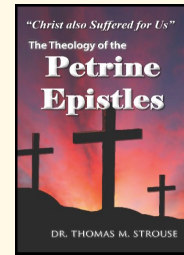
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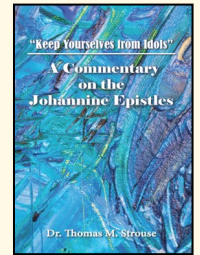
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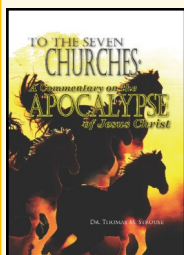
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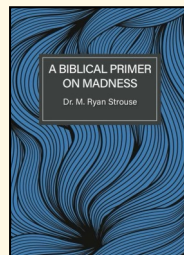
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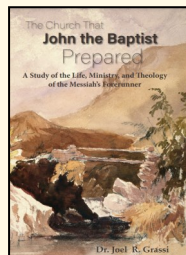
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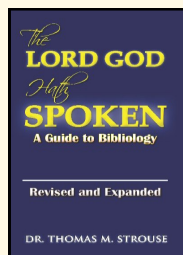
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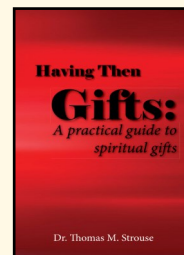
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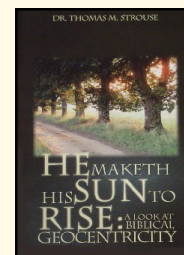
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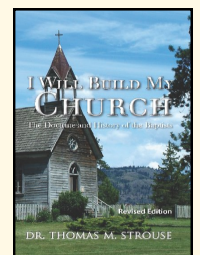
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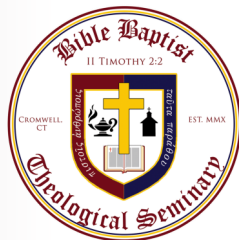


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PUBLICATION PAGE

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