

Worldviews

Apologetics Resource Center Newsletter

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The Chosen Series

By Rev. Clete Hux



A few months ago I got a call from a friend wanting to know my opinion of *The Chosen*, a television series that has become very popular. I had not really watched much of it, just a few snippets here and there. So, I decided to do some research and discovered two things right away. One is that the series seems to present a very personable and almost overly relatable Jesus compared to other Jesus movies of the past. This was quite obvious. Less obvious, however, is that it seems that Jesus' divine nature is quite obscured in the series, appearing almost to be taking a back seat to his human nature.

The other thing I discovered was Dallas Jenkins, producer of the series and son of Jerry Jenkins, producer of the *Left Behind* movies, incorporated LDS Mormons to work on the project with him. For this, he has received a lot of scrutiny and criticism. His association with Mormons in this production gets more complicated when he communicates that he and LDS Mormons he knows have the "same Jesus", dismissing any differences as mere semantical language. (See YouTube of Melissa Dougherty). Another thing that should be mentioned is the fact that the *Chosen* is being filmed at Goshen, Utah, the LDS church's set version of Jerusalem.

These are some of my initial findings in research. Also, Jenkins, in his own admis-

sion of wanting to be balanced and fair, communicated with a Jewish Rabbi, a Catholic Priest and Evangelicals in the production. Let me say this, in a day and age when religious pluralism and ecumenicism appear to be one and the same, Christians sometimes accept anything that says that it is Christian. Obviously, LDS Mormons claim to be Christians, but one doesn't have to be a scholar to know that orthodox Christianity teachings about Jesus are not the same as the LDS. Mormonism has re-defined the biblical Jesus ([Go here for more information](#))

Space here does not allow for a long critique of *The Chosen*. Here are a couple treatments, one short and the other a long but well documented and balanced:

This critique of *The Chosen* TV series is a guest post by Ingrid McCullough.

The Chosen is a popular series, with many claiming that the series has enabled them to relate to Jesus, and that it's made the scriptures "come alive." Where scripture is silent regarding certain events, or the characters of Jesus and his disciples, Jenkins has used his imagination to fill the gaps. Some find the mixture of facts and fiction in the series heartwarming and entertaining, but we don't need warm and fuzzy feelings or speculation to know the Christ of the scriptures. We need the scriptures. If you're a fan of the series, put your emotions aside and consider the facts presented in this article.

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6 Truths That Expose and Demolish the Delusion of Woke Educators

By Dr. Paul Cleveland

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The Importance of Foundational Principles
All people live by some code of conduct that approves certain things to be right and good and other things to be wrong and immoral. The choice made by different textbook authors will lead to vastly different content. This becomes a huge problem when Christian schools and homeschools choose to use material originally developed to comply with government regulated standards. It also shows itself in the answers required in many AP tests. To equip students to be informed citizens capable of recognizing good life choices and workable policy options it is essential they learn history, government, and economics with curriculum built on a solid foundation of universal principles.

1. One triune God who created all things is our reference point

For us at Boundary Stone, our moral compass is rooted in the belief that the triune God of the Bible is the Creator of all things and that He providentially rules over His creation. This gives rise to several additional principles that make up the foundation for everything we do. Let's consider five more of these necessary principles.

2. EVERY human being has dignity and inherent value

The fact that all people bear the image of God means that everyone should be treated with respect. The main way to respect others is to deal with everyone we meet in mutually beneficial ways. That is, we should voluntarily interact with other people and when we find opportunities to trade, it should be in mutually beneficial ways that advance humanity. In fact, we believe that God has commanded us to interact in this way as the primary means of pursuing His command that human beings should take dominion over the earth.

3. The universe God created is governed by discoverable natural laws

Using our senses and our ability to reason, we can discover patterns in the nature that can be

harnessed and used as we make our way in this world. We continue to learn new ways to use the natural laws of physics, aerodynamics, mathematics, etc. As we do so, we develop new technologies and ways to utilize the resources available to us to make our lives easier and richer in ways previous generations could never have imagined. Natural laws can be discovered in the ways people act and interact with one another. Understanding these principles of human nature is fundamental to determining how to structure our institutions. We can learn lessons from history as people have at times acted in harmony with these natural laws and at other times have tried to act as though these principles do not exist. Viewing history through these natural law principles is essential to determining the best paths forward for our future. When we determine certain things need to be remedied, our solutions need to bring our laws and institutions more in line with this natural law.

4. The best government is limited government

We also believe in limited government. If history teaches us anything, and if our own personal experience gives evidence of anything, it is that people have a tendency to abuse each other in numerous ways. Jealousy, envy, greed, hatred, and rage are as old as human history as best we can observe. Put simply, we are not what we should be. It is for this reason that some form of government is needed to punish the worst offenses of person against person in order to secure a modicum of civility in a fallen world. Namely, governments should be instituted among us to punish murderers, rapists, and thieves. However, government should not be thought of as an institution that has the ability to provide for our needs. It simply has no such power to do so and any thought that it can will soon lead it to be a source of murder, rape, and theft.

5. Human ills are best solved by private enterprise and charity

Making our way through this world is challenging for all of us. As such, we believe that people left free are most motivated and best able to find new and better ways of dealing with the difficulties of life. Put simply, innovations and new products and services are best left to entrepreneurial human action. In addition, it is a fact that there are many people among us who suffer from various ills that they cannot overcome by themselves. In such cases, people of good will rightly desire to help alleviate their pain as best they can. True charity in this regard is best defined as voluntary sacrifice motivated by love. That is, charity is a very personal act of choice and is never a matter of governmental action. Simply put, charity cannot be demanded or forced. Any attempts to do so will not promote charity. Instead, it will promote injustice and promote hatred rather than love.

6. Protection of private property is essential for a productive society

Finally, mutually agreeable voluntary human action cannot be maintained without respect for and protection of private property. We inhabit a physical world and were given a task by our Creator to take dominion of it and to rule over it. In the process of doing so, it is our nature to create property. From raising herds of livestock to growing crops or producing any number of goods and services to benefit other people, we create property. As such, we ought to respect the property that other people create and if we wish to acquire something that is possessed by someone else, we can enter into a mutually agreeable trade for it. Therefore, our Creator has tasked us with the duty to be productive as best we can and to use the rewards of that activity to engage other people. In doing so, we promote the welfare of society.

In all of our educational materials, we adhere to these principles. They are the foundation on which our books, videos, and articles are based. They provide a framework within which we explore history, economics, and other social studies. Hence, they provide for our worldview.

Dr. Paul Cleveland is a Professor of Economics and Finance at Birmingham-Southern College. He earned his Ph.D. in Economics from Texas A&M University and began his career at SUNY-Geneseo in 1985. He spent one year as a Visiting Professor of Economics at the University of



Central Florida in Orlando before joining the faculty at BSC in 1990.

<https://www.boundarystone.org>

Books by Paul Cleveland

This book clearly lays out the important foundational issues that policy makers either sadly miss or deviously seek to mask. It then examines several individual areas of policy including education, the environment, welfare, and business, revealing the sacred lies we have believed for far too long. The ideas in this book will more than likely challenge your view of what constitutes good public policy.

\$25.00 Paperback

<https://boundarystone.org/product/unmasking-the-sacred-lies/>

Individual freedom and liberty are fundamental principles upon which a good society is based. Regrettably, those principles have been under attack for over one hundred years around the globe. The notion that paradise on earth can be achieved by coercive means has led to the spread of tyranny and despotism. Dr. Clarence B. Carson originally explained this truth in his 1978 book, *The World in the Grip of an Idea*.

\$19.50 <https://boundarystone.org/product/the-great-utopian-delusion/>

When America's founding fathers established our constitution – a constitution that set up a representative republic ruled by laws rather than by a human king, a dictator, or an oligarchy – they acknowledged that such a form of government would only work if most of the citizens who make up the United States were governed from within their own minds and hearts by the biblical laws of love.

John Adams, signer of the Declaration of Independence and second President of the United States, wrote...

[W]e have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. . . . Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.

And, Charles Carroll, another signer of the Declaration of Independence, wrote...

Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime and pure, [and] which denounces against the wicked eternal misery, and [which] insured to the good eternal happiness, are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments.

In other words, Carroll was saying that a free government will only continue to last as long as the citizens of that nation are governed by their inner moral compass; and, God's Word (the Bible that is taught and followed by Christians) is the place where we find the moral standards that will help us live free – those standards being summed up in the two Great Commandments – to love God and to love others.

If every person is doing what is right in his or her own eyes, you will have anarchy. We must have a moral standard that comes from beyond ourselves, and our founding fathers recognized the Bible (of the Jews and the Christian religion) to be that unifying, moral standard.

Well, what happens when God's people fail to obey and teach these two laws of love (to love God and to love others)? Let me suggest several images of a loveless society:

- Worship becomes a ritual instead of being a relationship with God.
- There will be a breakdown of the family.
- People will live unrestrained lifestyles.
- People will find a substitute authority-figure to bring order and stability to their lives.

However, if we fall in love with Jesus and show it by loving others, what will that look like?

- Instead of worship being a ritual, worship will become genuine and alive.
- Instead of there being a breakdown of the family, homes will be restored.
- Instead of living unrestrained lifestyles, believers will live disciplined lives.
- Instead of finding a substitute (or false) authority-figure, Christians will begin to show others that there is a better way to live; we will begin again to influence society and our culture instead of being influenced by our culture; we will do this by pointing people to the ultimate authority in life, Jesus Christ as revealed in His Word.

<https://www.alcap.com>



A native of Rome, Georgia, Joe Godfrey earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Samford University in Birmingham, AL, a Master of Divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, TX and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, TN. He, also, received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Judson College in Marion, AL in 2005.

Godfrey pastored churches in Alabama for 26 ½ years. In 2003 and 2004 he served two, one-year terms as President of the Alabama Baptist Convention. In April 2007 he was selected by the Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) Board to succeed Dr. Dan Ireland as executive director.

Godfrey's duties with ALCAP include lobbying the Alabama Legislature concerning moral issues, particularly those related to addictive behaviors, such as alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and gambling; and consulting with communities that are fighting wet-dry elections or gambling expansion. His responsibilities related to American Character Builders include fund-raising and oversight of the program and staff.

Godfrey serves on several local, state and national boards including: The Samford University Board of Trustees; the Alabama Tobacco-Free Coalition Board; the American Council on Addiction & Alcohol Problems Board (ACAAP); and the Stop Predatory Gambling Board (SPG).

This past year has been extraordinarily difficult and contentious. The pandemic in many ways worked as a catalyst for political unrest and government overreach. The fallout from Covid and the tragedy of death has given the federal government and the Biden Administration an excuse to expand and deny citizens many rights. Once it has taken them, it will not give them back.

We have seen the church, as an institution and one of the three pillars of culture, failing in many ways in its mission. The Pope has focused on the environment, but failed to admonish politicians who support abortion, permitting them to receive Holy Communion. The Southern Baptist Church is dealing with sexual abuse, while the Presbyterian Church in America is refusing to judge homosexuality. As always, with mainline denominations, anything goes. This is not meant as an indictment of local churches and pastors, most of whom are faithful to God's Word.

The separation of Church and State is not an American Constitution principle. It is found in the Russian Constitution. In recent times, pastors have practiced it, however. This is understandable for positions on candidates and some issues, due to valid differences of opinions of church members. But on issues that clearly violate scripture, "something ought to be said," to quote Rev. E.V. Hill at the Religious Right's Convention in Dallas, Texas in 1992.

This is particularly true now with the Biden Administration. No matter what you may think of Donald Trump's speech patterns, his policies and those who served his administration did more for religious freedom than any president in modern history. Where he protected Little Sisters of the Poor, Biden's office of civil rights has directed HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, to limit religious freedom. Becerra opposed

sanctity of life efforts in California while he was Attorney General there. He sued Little Sisters of the Poor, Catholic Nuns, attempting to require them to provide contraceptives and abortifacients to their employees.

Biden issued an executive order that the definition of "sex" from the *Bostock v. Clayton County* case (see August 2020 Educational Update), meaning gay, transgender, etc., be applied by all federal agencies, including the military. His orders are to diminish the Federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which is meant to protect religious freedom on the federal level. Biden supports abandonment of the Hyde Amendment, thereby committing federal funds to be used to provide abortions. The most significant and far reaching of his executive acts has been to require OSHA to disregard the 10th Amendment which protects states' rights to handle health care issues, and further violating the religious rights of persons to be exempt from certain healthcare procedures. We receive calls almost daily from persons who are losing their jobs for refusing to be vaccinated on religious grounds. We hope and expect the pending lawsuits around the country to enjoin Biden's unconstitutional orders.

Religious liberty is under a greater threat than at anytime in U.S. history. In the 1980's, the groups we know today as First Liberty, Alliance Defending Freedom, Liberty Counsel, Southeast Law Institute and others formed to restore strength to the Free Exercise Clause. It had been weakened by successive SCOTUS opinions making virtually any religious activity in the public square a violation of the Establishment Clause. The Biden Administration has extreme hostility to any religious belief

or activity that holds to traditional Judeo/Christian values, primarily LGBTQ + and sanctity of life issues. We cannot underestimate the power of the presidency.

These demonstrate all the more the need for our commitment to religious freedom. Our rights must be protected. The truth of Christianity, paradoxically, guarantees religious freedom for all. But, the church must hold fast.

SLI is committed to this work. We look forward to 2022 to advise, represent and help without charge. We represent individuals, churches and ministries, along with providing counsel to conservative political groups who work on the issues of religious freedom, parental rights, public and nonpublic schools and sanctity of life. We will continue to provide guidance on vaccination issues. We will work with others to pass state laws against mandates. We are planning a strategy on these issues for the 2022 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature. We will work with conservative dedicated public servants to hold that “representative” body accountable to its people.

The threats are real and to paraphrase Frances Schaeffer, we must not allow our personal peace and affluence to blind us to what is happening. SLI does not address economic issues, but we see we are moving socialistically to being a third world culture thanks to the Biden administration. Overreach of government will result in loss of the freedoms for which we stand. We have much for which to be thankful. With support of all the organizations who stand for proper values,

and those who prayerfully and financially support them, we look forward to a blessed and prosperous new year.
~AEJ

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Mr. Johnston is the Director of the Southeast Law Institute

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<https://www.southeastlawinstitute.org>

The "no crying" chubby little thing in the manger, captured with Hallmark brilliance, fails to express the essence of the event that took place in human history two millennia ago. That event profoundly impacts our idea of human identity, about which we hear so many theories two thousand years later. Backed by "deeply researched progressive" laws, we now proudly affirm our right to self-identify, changing or creating our identity by the slightest whim or fantasy.

- Some now claim to be animals. The "otherkin" community, for example, believes they have a non-human or animal soul or ancestry, inherited through the vagaries of reincarnation. This allows them to say: "In the last life I was a cat so it is perfectly normal that I have feline desires in this one."
- An 18-year-old kid from Buffalo believes he is a wolf and wants to change his name legally from Matthew to "Shiro Themian" so he can "officially" be a wolf. He has friends who believe they are a tiger, a leopard and a raccoon—quite a menagerie!
- A fifty-two-year-old father of seven children now claims he is a six-year-old girl—and who can say he is not?
- Many claim to be the opposite of the sexual biology with which they were born. Men reinvent themselves as drag queens and become television stars.

Where will this vast experiment in self-reinvention take us? It conjures the image of the Mos Eisley cantina on the desert planet Ta-

tooine, from *Star Wars: A New Hope*. In this unforgettable scene, all kinds of beings—human and mostly inhuman—of bizarre shapes and sizes, engage in strange and incomprehensible social contacts in an eerie prophecy of where we might be going. And where is that? The *New Hope* will be a society of "diversity," shorn of any bothersome celebrations of Christmas. Each person celebrates "Winter Holiday" in a self-defined gender, imposing on friends a family of preferred pronouns. This world will not be the much-desired harmonious "one" so much as a cacophonous madhouse of self-obsessed narcissists.

It is indeed a *joy* to the world that the Bible gives us a magnificent definition of human identity, which is solid and sure. We are "made in God's image, male and female" (Genesis 1:27), which is the God-ordained basis of human relationships. For this good reason we are not allowed to make images of God from the stuff of this created order (Exodus 20:4), nor may we make images even of ourselves by redefining who we would like to be. Only God is the image-maker, and he made the image of the human being, bestowing it with great significance to reflect who he is. The gift of this image is the gift of human dignity. It is the gift of the baby in the manger in Bethlehem.

The birth of this unique man-child in the little town of Bethlehem long ago brings sanity to humanity, and especially to our time of revolutionary change. The man Jesus is "the image of the invisible God,

the firstborn of all creation,.. .[and] in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col. 1:15-19). Jesus is the final revelation of God in human form, for two reasons:

1. so that fallen human beings can understand in a definitive way who the great God of the universe is, as a God of love and condescension. and,
2. so that we could know who we were meant to be. God’s people were predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29). In this life, those who are in Christ Jesus become more and more like him and in the future, "just as we have borne the image of the man of dust (the original Adam), we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (the second Adam who came from heaven to save us and who will resurrect us—1 Corinthians 15:49).

The human male baby, born of a woman created in God’s image, is what the Creator gives us at Christmas time. Jesus is the perfect image of who we were meant to be. Thus, we need the *incarnation*, not *reincarnation*. We need the final revelation of God in human form, who, bearing our sins, died on the Cross for us and was raised from the dead in newness of life. Instead of eternal reincarnation with the fiction of returning in animal forms, we need the sure hope of resurrection, which is the glorification of our sinful, mortal human bodies, into the likeness of the resurrected Jesus.

Of all the gifts this Christmas, may God’s gift of his Son fill you with great joy!

<https://www.Truthxchange.com>



Dr. Peter Jones is scholar in residence at Westminster Seminary California and associate pastor at New Life Presbyterian Church in Escondido, Calif. He is

director of truthXchange, a communications center aimed at equipping the Christian community to recognize and effectively respond to the rise of paganism.

Peter Jones holds an MDiv from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, a ThM from Harvard Divinity School, and a PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is Director of truthXchange, and Adjunct Professor of New Testament, as well as Scholar in Residence at Westminster Seminary California.

You can read more of his work here:

<https://www.truthxchange.com>

The SJC ruled that Missouri Presbytery did not violate the Book of Church Order when it declined to bring charges against Greg Johnson; this Dissent Disagrees.

In his arguments TE Johnson rests on appeals to his own authority, first as a same-sex attracted man, then as an academic, then as a theologian, and then as a minister. He communicates authoritatively and effectively, and he has clearly convinced many that his understanding of how God interacts with same-sex attracted people is the right one: God's ability to change people affected by this particular sin is only a remote possibility and should not be held out as a realistic hope for Christians; it would be extremely rare that they might change. There cannot be a more succinct denial of God's power to sanctify.

Dissenting Opinion
SJC 2020-12 Complaint of TE Ryan Speck v
Missouri Presbytery

RE Steve Dowling, joined by TE Paul Bankson, RE John Bise, RE Mel Duncan, RE Sam Duncan, TE Fred Greco, and RE John White
October 31st, 2021

We respectfully dissent from the court's ruling in this case on the following grounds:

1. That Presbytery did not exercise the "due diligence" required by BCO 31-2 in its investigation and that it therefore committed "clear error" [BCO 39-3] in making its determinations;
2. That the SJC was not bound by the "great deference" requirement of BCO 39-3 because this is a case centering on Constitutional interpretation; and
3. That the substantive conclusions reached by Presbytery and confirmed by the SJC do not follow from the facts in the Record of the case.

The first two grounds are procedural, while the third is on the merits of the case. Each of

these grounds is important, and each error has significant consequences for the denomination.

That Presbytery did not exercise the due diligence required by BCO 31-2 in its investigation and that it therefore committed clear error [BCO 39-3] in its determinations.

While this case is nuanced, it isn't particularly complex and some parts of it are simple. One of the easiest things to understand about it is that the SJC went through most of the judicial process, including its final hearing with the parties to the case, and then opened the record to get more information. Here is the court's reasoning for doing that :

The SJC believes it is necessary to attempt to clarify the Record of the Case because its magnitude (over 600 pages covering multiple years of writing, speaking, and judicial processes) makes it difficult to ascertain if specific representations of perspectives of TE Johnson are his actual or present theological convictions.

The first thing to notice here is that the SJC says it sought further clarification because the ROC was hard to understand. If the SJC -a group that is reasonably expert in these kinds of processes and issues- cannot make enough sense of the record to reach a conclusion, it's difficult to see how Presbytery understood it well enough to reach its conclusions. Further, the SJC had before it not only everything Presbytery had before it as a court, but also additional briefs, the benefit of a full additional hearing, and oral examination of the parties. Though we have no doubt about the fair motives of the court, it proved through its actions that due diligence hadn't been exercised by Presbytery. If it had been, there could be no need to get clarification after a record had once been declared judicially in order, a hearing

held, and SJC deliberations begun.

It bears noting that the extent of this clarification was substantial. It wasn't just that there was a question or two about some specific point in the record, but instead the apparent need for the SJC to form a committee create interrogatives, communicate them to the accused, and receive his responses. This process resulted in 103 questions being submitted by members of the SJC. From that catalog of questions, the committee chose 25 that it deemed the most useful (through a blind grading process). TE Johnson answered the questions, and these answers -over and against the contents of the original ROC- provide much of the substance cited by the SJC in its support of Presbytery. For example, Allegation #1 is denied with 7 citations, 6 of which are from SJC questions. The denial of Allegation #2 is supported by 4 citations from the original ROC, and 4 from the SJC's additional questions. For Allegation #3, the original ROC is cited once and the SJC's questions are cited 7 times, and the numbers for Allegation #4 are 4 from the original record and 4 from the SJC.

The SJC's supplemental work produced 67% of the citations used by it in support of Presbytery's conclusions, strongly suggesting that Presbytery's investigation was inadequate. If the investigation was inadequate, then Presbytery's conclusions constitute "clear error."

The second thing to observe in the decision's justification is that the SJC wasn't sure whether

"...specific representations of perspectives of TE Johnson are his actual or *present* theological convictions."

BCO Preliminary Principle 8 says this:

"Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object, and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever, but from its own justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the

countenance and blessing of the great Head of the Church."

It's hard to conceive that an 'impartial public' would approve of seeking the "present theological convictions" of an accused nearly two years after the discrete incident resulting in a complaint occurred, particularly in the absence of any effort to acquire contrary evidence. This extension of time to the present and *ex post facto* acquisition of information on the part of the court appears to be a misuse of judicial discretion, with the court having undertaken more of a pseudo-BCO 31-2 investigation than an action to perfect the record. Since the opportunity to answer questions two years after the fact was extended to TE Johnson, then the door should have opened to evidence (if there is any) related to his actions, social media utterances, and writings over the past two years which might contradict the veracity of his carefully formulated responses. Collecting evidence in that manner would be consistent with the desire for a *complete* record rather than merely an *expanded* record.

Discussions of fairness aside, TE Johnson's *present* positions are irrelevant to the complaint against him. The actions of the court and TE Speck's subsequent complaint exist within a discrete timeframe that ended with the initiation of the complaint. It's a closed set of circumstances, and subsequent events and information cannot properly be introduced.

In summary, the SJC's actions bear testimony to the fact that Presbytery's investigation was inadequate, and since it was inadequate the subsequent determinations made on that

inadequate investigation were “clear error.” Moreover, the SJC distorted the record - however unintentionally- by soliciting the “present” views of TE Johnson.

That the SJC was not bound by the “great deference” requirement because this is a case centering on Constitutional interpretation

There are limitations on courts of review in the PCA. BCO 39-3 enumerates these, saying first that a higher court should limit itself in its decisions to issues raised by the lower courts, and that higher courts shouldn’t overturn the decisions of lower courts unless there is “clear error.” In applying these limitations there are conditions and exceptions. For example, BCO 39-3.2 presupposes that the lower court’s proximity to the events in question better qualifies it to judge a case, and BCO 39-3.3 presupposes better ability to judge based on “familiar acquaintance” with events and parties. Putting aside the obvious argument that familiarity may actually compromise a court’s objectivity in some cases, BCO 39-3.4 establishes that:

“The higher court does have the power and obligation of judicial review, which cannot be satisfied by always deferring to the findings of a lower court. Therefore, a higher court should not consider itself obliged to exhibit the same deference to a lower court when the issues being reviewed involve the interpretation of the Constitution of the Church. Regarding such issues, the higher court has the duty and authority to interpret and apply the Constitution of the Church according to its best abilities and understanding, regardless of the opinion of the lower court.”

The matter at hand is a doctrinal case requiring interpretation of the Constitution of the Church and the SJC was not obliged to grant “great deference” to the

lower court. Moreover, the SJC had the duty to address the issues raised in the complaint without dependence on the “great deference” standard, but it conducted the case instead as if it were bound by the provisions of BCO 39-3.2 and 3. While we respect the SJC’s unwillingness to exceed its mandate, or to position itself as the arbiter of truth for the Assembly, this is an abdication of responsibility with respect to BCO 39-3.4.

Further, by not meeting its obligation to interpret the constitution of the church under BCO 39-3.4, the SJC has affirmed Presbytery’s authority to make Constitutional and theological declarations on behalf of the denomination. Since the decision made by Presbytery in declining to indict has been affirmed, the SJC not only has reinforced the idea that this authority lies with individual Presbyteries, it has also formalized a dubious Constitutional interpretation of SSA and how it applies to ordination.

That the substantive conclusions reached by Presbytery and confirmed by the SJC do not follow from the facts in the Record of the case

(Continued on next page)

Again, while nuanced, this case only becomes complex when the things pertaining to sexual dysphoria among Christians generally are made indistinct from ordination requirements, and when the semantic ranges of terms used in the discussion are narrowed, expanded, or otherwise changed according to undiscernible criteria. In the first case, solid biblical arguments for the church to embrace “sexual minorities” are extended to ordained service as if there could be no category of sin, or no operative level of a specific type of sin, that is *a priori* disqualifying. In the second, the symbols (or words) with which we communicate are redefined without agreement, having been appropriated by those with special knowledge of the distinctions they desire from the symbols.

For example, the word “homosexual” appears just under 2400 times in the record for this case. In virtually all the places where it’s used the term is semantically equivalent to “same sex attracted,” so there seems to be a high correlation between the symbol and the thing signified in common usage, with some translators using the word to translate *arsenokoitai* 1 Corinthians 6:7-9. Even so, here is what TE Johnson says:

“Neither *malakoi* or *arsenokoitai* map very tightly onto this modern use of *gay* or *homosexual* or *same-sex attracted* as an orientation.”

He is saying that the biblical strictures are not closely aligned with the “modern” use of the words as an “orientation,” but there is no biblical support for arguing that the concepts in 1 Corinthians 6 are culturally bound. Pucci provides some insight here:

“... the Muses sing a discourse similar to true things, but with some distortion, invention, or deflection—in a word, with some differences. The similarity vouches for the credibility of the discourse, while the invention, deflection, and difference make it

false.”

We mean by this that fine distinctions and novel interpretations may obfuscate truth rather than illuminate it, and that the effort to more narrowly define meaning can have the effect of removing meaning altogether, turning truth into falsehood and vice-versa. In this case, TE Johnson’s reinterpretation of the meanings of *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* through a modern lens to make a distinction related to “orientation” does little to clarify the issue from a biblical standpoint.

The ROC is clear that TE Johnson identifies himself as a “same-sex attracted man.” Irrespective of whether there’s a distinction between that and “homosexuality,” and whether or not *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* “map tightly” to the scriptures condemning homosexuality, TE Johnson provides enough evidence from his own statements to make it obvious that this characteristic is so core to his being and so central to his personal narrative that it disqualifies him from ordained service.

TE Johnson’s testimony establishes that he has seen himself as same-sex attracted since he was 11 years old. He says he has never had an attraction to a woman and that he finds the idea of looking at a woman lustfully “disgusting.” He says that his public ministry as a same-sex attracted man is intended to help others who are suffering and ashamed about their own same-sex attraction, and in his 2019 General Assembly speech, he claimed that Article 7 of the Nashville Statement “hurt” because it asserts that it is a sin to adopt a homosexual self-conception.

TE Johnson's self-identification *per se*, then, is not a disputable issue; the real question is whether this identification "compromises and dishonors" his identity in Christ, and there is good reason to conclude that it does, because TE Johnson consistently palliates the sin of same-sex attraction such that he dishonors God. For example, he first appeals to the universality of sin to make the argument that same-sex attraction is just like any other sin, while the Constitution's exposition of Scripture asserts that some sins are more heinous than others (with homosexuality "more heinous" than even inappropriate heterosexual activity by virtue of it being against nature).

While it is true that all people are sinners, it is not true that all sins alike are equal. If they were, then every argument advanced by TE Johnson with respect to same-sex attraction would have to apply equally to every kind of sin. The sin of pedophilia would have to be considered no worse than anger; the sin of bestiality no worse than drunkenness. While it is true that all people are sinners and all deserve God's wrath, and while it is true that no one's righteousness is good enough to contribute to his salvation, arguments for sin equivalencies mock the word of God and dishonor Him.

Second, TE Johnson is a late middle-aged man of high achievement. He is well-educated and has an earned PhD establishing him as an expert historian. He is an author. He is a lifelong minister who carries the imprimatur of a Seminary education and ordination by one of the most biblically sound denominations in the world. All these things constitute *aggravations* of his sinful same-sex attraction and his teaching related to it according to the Constitution of the church. Question 151 of the Larger Catechism asks what constitute aggravating factors for sins more heinous, and they are

these: "...if they (the persons offending) be of riper age, greater experience or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office, guides to others, and those who example is likely to be followed by others."

TE Johnson not only dishonors God in his prominent self-identification as a same-sex attracted man, the matter is made worse by his age, leadership position, and level of achievement.

The ROC demonstrates that TE Johnson is capable of formulating an orthodox view of sanctification, but it also demonstrates that he minimizes the possibility of change for people suffering from sexual dysphoria. He acknowledges that God can do anything in much the same way Cessationists acknowledge that God could still perform a miracle in the world: that is, He could, but He won't. He contends strongly—on the basis of his research and experience—that orientation change practically never happens, citing statistics that establish that only 3.5% to 4% of people will ever experience any change from same-sex attraction to natural attraction.

In his arguments TE Johnson rests on appeals to his own authority, first as a same-sex attracted man, then as an academic, then as a theologian, and then as a minister. He communicates authoritatively and effectively, and he has clearly convinced many that his understanding of how God interacts with same-sex attracted people is the right one: God's ability to change people affected by this particular sin is only a remote possibility and should not be held out as a realistic hope for Christians; it would be extremely rare that they might change. There cannot be a more succinct denial of God's power to sanctify.

At the same time, the form of this argu-

ment is the opposite of TE Johnson's argument about the equivalency of sin. First, he claims that all sin is alike and SSA is no different from any other sin in order to establish that it cannot be a disqualifying factor for ordination. He subsequently says that while all sin is alike, and all people are sinners, sin related to sexual dysphoria are utterly different in that God hardly ever acts to change people from them and therefore those sins need to be accepted as an ontological phenomenon—they are part of being. By that line of reasoning any other sexual sin must also be accepted as a condition of being, whatever the perversion.

While the ROC doesn't show that TE Johnson entirely denies that sanctification could extend to a sexual orientation change, it clearly shows that he doesn't expect it to, even arguing that people need to understand the truth and not be optimistic about change when they are saved [ROC 461, ROC 928, etc.]. In the same way, TE Johnson both claims the power of sanctification in his life and denies it, particularly when he speaks about his sexual appetites, which continue unabated:

"I share about once a year from the pulpit that I'm a porn addict. I haven't actually looked at pornography for 15 years, but when I did, I was all in and that pull is still as strong as it was. I've mortified this for 15 years and it still, you know, I see a computer terminal unmonitored and immediately my mind thinks, I want to look at porn. Fifteen years of strangling this thing, and it doesn't die, it doesn't go away [ROC 453] ..."

And:

"TE Johnson: "You wanna know about my sexual brokenness? I am happy to

talk to you about what I talked about in the pulpit two weeks ago, and that I think is relevant to this conversation. I am a pornography addict. I have had a pornography addiction for 15 years. Actually 18" Interviewer 2: "Are you still doing pornography, Greg?" TE Johnson: "No, I haven't for 15 years." Interviewer 1: "So you're not an addict." Interviewer 2: "So you're not an addict anymore." TE Johnson: "Oh, but I know what it does inside of me. You see, I know that if I look at one image, I'm going to look at a thousand. I know I'm not going to come up for air for hours." [ROC 553-554, 568]

Some might be tempted to minimize these statements because of the circumstances of a live interview. TE Johnson says as much, having called this interaction a "train wreck." That is an assessment of the outcome but not necessarily the conversation, since the interviewers were clearly trying to dissuade TE Johnson from the point he was trying to make, and TE Johnson himself argued harder and harder for his vulnerability to these sins in order to impress upon them how powerful its control is over him. The Constitutional aggravations listed above apply here. If TE Johnson were young or naïve or inexperienced in public interactions, these might serve to mitigate his responsibility for what he said; it might provide an argument from extenuation. Instead, he is mature, educated, esteemed, and an accomplished public speaker. He clearly believes what he insistently told these interviewers and his words cannot be ignored.

By these beliefs and descriptions of his own experience, TE Johnson minimizes God's purposes and power in sanctification, while at the same time demonstrating the grip by which his sin holds him. In his testimony [ROC 610], his sermons [ROC 606], his public speeches [ROC 556] and his writings [ROC 812-830] TE Johnson has made his homosexuality central to his self-perception,

his self-presentation, and to his ministry. He has become a public figure as a result, and it is clear from the record that he is regarded as an authority on the subject—one who expressly teaches and intends to teach his version of “truth” as it relates to SSA.

While the ROC and his public utterances demonstrate great facility with language and theological nuance and sometimes serve to obfuscate clear issues, TE Johnson’s fundamental argument for serving as an ordained minister of the gospel is that he is now and has always been chaste, making him immune to disciplinary action for sexual misconduct.

By this standard no sexual predilection is disqualifying as long as it doesn’t materialize in an act. Therefore, the pedophile who suffers in the way TE Johnson does—that is, one who had no hope of change or no resistance to a single look at child pornography such that *he “...wouldn’t come up for air for hours...”* is eligible for ordination. The same would also clearly be true of someone who struggled with illicit heterosexual attractions under the same conditions, but it is unimaginable that a man would be called as a minister of the gospel who said, “I struggle with lust for women to the point that I don’t expect change, and I’m also an addict who is one look away from complete immersion in pornography - but don’t worry, I only think about it . I’m not currently doing it”.

Despite the many excellent points made by TE Johnson about the difficulties faced by Christians who experience SSA or sexual dysphoria, and despite much good advice on how to minister to “sexual minorities,” these arguments cannot be applied without distinction to ordained service.

In Summary, the SJC overlooked the clear deficiencies of Presbytery’s investigation, which is proven by reopening the record and admitting additional information that sought

the “present” positions of TE Johnson, extending consideration of facts well beyond the events complained against. Moreover, it was incumbent on the SJC to deal with the matters raised by the Complainant as issues of Constitutional interpretation instead of deferring to the lower court in this case. For these reasons, we respectfully dissent from the majority decision.

This opinion was written by RE Steve Dowling and can be viewed on the website:

[The Aquila Report Website](#)

(Continued from page one: The Chosen)

By Ingrid McCullough May 2021

“The Bereans have long been seen as a positive example of how a person or community should respond to things taught in the name of God. What can we learn from the noble Bereans? Acts 17: 10-11 tells us that “The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now, these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the Word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” They received the Word with eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

What a wonderful reminder to us to do the same! There is so much taught in the name of God online, in churches, in devotions, in small groups, on TV. Not all of it is good despite the Christian label slapped on to it. As Christians, we should be testing all who present themselves as teachers in the church universal, and there is no point where we should stop testing what they teach against Scripture.

As [Got Questions](#) succinctly states, “Jesus warned us that “false Christs and false prophets” will come and will attempt to deceive even God’s elect (Matthew 24:23-27; see also 2 Peter 3:3 and Jude 17-18). The best way to guard yourself against falsehood and false teachers is to know the truth. To spot a counterfeit, study the real thing. Any believer who “correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15) and who makes a careful study of the Bible can identify false doctrine. For example, a believer

who has read the activities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Matthew 3:16-17 will immediately question any doctrine that denies the Trinity. Therefore, we must study the Bible and judge all teaching by what the Scripture says.”

And so, today, I ask you to examine carefully a recent cultural phenomenon, The Chosen, and its creator Dallas Jenkins. I ask you to join me in comparing what is being taught in the name of God to the Word of God (as Pastor Chris Rosebrough says). This is a wonderful opportunity to practice discernment by testing things against the Word of God together.

What is The Chosen? The Chosen is a TV show created by Dallas Jenkins that claims to tell the story of the “authentic” Christ. The second season of the show is currently airing, but Mr. Jenkins has publicly stated that he plans to make seven seasons. The second season of The Chosen was filmed in Goshen, Utah, on the set replica of ancient Jerusalem built by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). The show’s hashtag is “Get Used to Different.”

So let us look at some aspects of the show and things Mr. Jenkins has publicly said and compare those things to Scripture.

The Sufficiency of Scripture

We will start with [this video](#) dated May 30, 2020 (I will call this Video 1 at times). In this video, Mr. Jenkins states The Chosen is not a replacement for Scripture at the 48-second mark and the 3:03 mark. This is absolutely true! “The apostle Paul declared that the Holy Scriptures “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All

Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:15–17). This is called the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture: “If Scripture is “God-breathed,” then it is not man-breathed, and, although it was penned by men, those “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). No man-made writing is sufficient to equip us for every good work; only the Word of God can do that. Furthermore, if the Scriptures are sufficient to thoroughly equip us, then nothing more is needed.”

Except, Mr. Jenkins claims God “pressed it on his heart,” and the hearts of others, that this would be one of the high callings of their lives and that he must take responsibility to tell the story of God’s people with extreme care and dedication (2:20 timestamp of Video 1). He repeats this claim in a recent interview with Melissa Dougherty. Starting at the timestamp 13:40 through to about 15 minutes in the interview with Ms. Dougherty, Mr. Jenkins claims that he felt God speaking to him 3-4 times in his life. He claimed he felt God “laying on his heart” that “in several years The Chosen was going to be what people thought of when they pictured the disciples.” He went on to say, **“I felt like God was saying that ‘this will be the definitive portrayal of My people and this is what people are going to think of around the world when they think of My people. And I’m not going to let you screw it up.’”**

Claims of having heard a special message directly from God aside (as we could spend a whole post talking about that claim alone), if The Chosen is not a replacement for Scripture, why would God purportedly say it will be what people think of when they picture the disciples or why would it be the definitive portrayal of God’s people? Do we need something more than the Bible to know what

God wants us to know? By definition, The Chosen and the Bible cannot *both* be the definitive portrayal of God’s people. And if Mr. Jenkins is claiming that God told him The Chosen would be the definitive portrayal of God’s people, what does that say of Mr. Jenkin’s actual view of the Bible? What does it say about what he supposedly heard from God? His statements are contradictory at best and show a low view of God’s Word at worst.

Adding to Scripture

To further complicate matters about Mr. Jenkins’s views on the sufficiency of Scripture, in video 1, Mr. Jenkins says he believes the Bible is the Word of God and needs no improvement (timestamp 2:30 – 3:00). Yet, by his own admission, he knowingly adds historical, cultural, and artistic details and states he does not believe this changes the Bible itself (timestamp 3:03-3:13 of Video 1). Of course, such additions do not change the actual Bible, but the changes mean he is not accurately portraying the written Word of God. Additionally, he adds more than historical, cultural, and artistic information. He has added information about the disciples, for instance, that Matthew is autistic and James the Lesser has cerebral palsy. He imagines and presents feuds between disciples and backstory that is never mentioned in the Bible. A reading of each episode’s synopsis shows extensive examples of extra-biblical information (like Peter breaking the Sabbath to fish and the extensive story arch resulting from that addition).

Yet, we are warned not to add to or change the Word of God: “Although the warning in Revelation 22:18-19 is specific to the Book of Revelation, the principle applies to anyone who seeks to intentionally distort God’s Word. Moses gave a similar warning in Deuteronomy 4:1-2, where he cautioned the Israelites that they

must listen to and obey the commandments of the Lord, neither adding to nor taking away from His revealed Word. Proverbs 30:5-6 contains a similar admonition to anyone who would add to God's words: he will be rebuked and proven to be a liar. Although the warning in Revelation 22:18-19 applies specifically to the Book of Revelation, its principle must be applied to the entire revealed Word of God. We must be careful to handle the Bible with care and reverence so as to not distort its message."

The canon of Scripture is closed. We do not need additional revelation through television episodes or self-proclaimed, modern-day prophets or apostles. God determined that what we need to believe about Him and what He requires of us. He reveals that information in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. It does not come from a movie or TV show that embellishes details to move us beyond what the Scriptures say.

Mr. Jenkins will sometimes emphasize that it's just a show and definitely not adding to Scripture, yet he says God told him that The Chosen would be the definitive portrayal of His people and that God would make sure it was accurate. This would have to include the portrayal of Jesus. If God said "I won't let you screw this up" then it follows that the portrayal of Christ also has some level of divine inspiration. It's also not "just a show" because Mr. Jenkins is involved in writing study guides and devotionals that go along with his portrayal of Christ and His followers. Churches and small groups will be watching episodes of The Chosen and using the accompanying materials for the sake of spiritual growth. He argues that the Chosen doesn't replace Scripture but He does claim that God is the one behind it, wanting to use the series to bring people closer to Christ. This same line of reasoning is used by the LDS to promote the Book of Mormon as seen in the sponsored Facebook ad next column..



Like the Bible, the Book of Mormon is a special book that teaches about Jesus Christ. It doesn't replace the Bible. As you study both books, you can gain a deeper understanding of Jesus's gospel and draw closer to God.



Mr. Jenkins is making the same argument for The Chosen. He says the Chosen is a special series that God wants him to make about Jesus. It doesn't replace the Bible, he says. In other words, as you study the Bible along with The Chosen, you can gain a deeper understanding of the Gospels and draw closer to Christ.

He may not be adding verses and chapters to the Bible but he is presenting his version of the Gospels to the world and claiming that his additions are accurate. The series creates a new context that will be in peoples' minds when they read the Biblical text. So let us look closer at the portrayal of Christ in the series.

[Read More](https://fitl.co.za/2021/05/19/the-chosen-the-shift/) or go to <https://fitl.co.za/2021/05/19/the-chosen-the-shift/>

A few years ago a series about the Bible came on the scene called “The Chosen” and quickly became extremely popular. They even had a Christmas special this past year that many Christians enjoyed. My oldest daughter, Jess, watched it but became more than a little concerned when she noticed the ecumenism (a coming together of faiths) during the special.

She decided to do some research on the show. I believe you will be thankful that she did. What she found is important information for anyone who is truly dedicated to God and His Word. How important that we value truth and biblical accuracy over being entertained.

*So today we will have a guest post by Jess, explaining what she found and why she has decided this show is definitely not biblical and should be eliminated from our list of entertainment options. I might add that I wholeheartedly agree with her conclusion. (You can find out more about Jess at the end of this post.) So here is why both she and I will not be watching *The Chosen*— Leslie Growing4life.net*

The Chosen TV series has recently taken the Christian world by storm. Do a quick google search and you’ll be hard pressed to find any criticism of the show. Instead, raving reviews come from those both inside and outside of the church. So I am aware that my own critique of this show will not be a very popular one. I believe, however, that it is a necessary one and I’m going to propose to you three reasons why I

think it’s best that we avoid watching and endorsing *The Chosen*.

My first concern is the subtle (or not-so-subtle) Scriptural inconsistencies.

The most blatant one is the way the show pushes a feminist agenda. We first glimpse this when Jesus asks Mary Magdalene to lead in prayer and Scripture reading before a sabbath dinner. This is a historically impossible scenario and totally inconsistent with first century Jewish culture. Mary Magdalene is also seen throughout the show as “the 13th disciple” and travels around with Jesus and His disciples. It would have been both culturally and morally inappropriate for a single woman to travel around with a bunch of men. And if she had, her virtue and the intentions of Jesus and the disciples would have been called into question. And finally, in episode 6, we see Tamar and Mary Magdalene carry the paralytic man through the crowd. This is in *direct contradiction* to the story in Luke 5 where it clearly states “some men” carried the paralytic man (see verse 18). The writers are clearly trying to appease the feminist American culture even at the expense of changing the words of Scripture. Another error is found when Jesus is conversing with Nicodemus and asks him, “what does your heart say?” I can tell you— beyond a shadow of a doubt —Jesus *never* would have said that ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)). They also portray Matthew as having Asperger’s Syndrome. You can’t find any proof for this scripturally and, again, it feels as though they’re simply pandering to the current American culture.

My second concern is that this show will affect the way people approach

Scripture.

The writers obviously take a lot of liberties with the story of Jesus, the disciples, and other biblical characters to create a multi-season series. You might think it's not a big deal; that it's just entertainment. But this show adds details, attributes, and circumstances that *aren't in the Bible* to Bible characters and Bible stories. Don't you think that those things might paint an inaccurate picture that will affect the way you read God's Word?

Quotes like "I came to know Jesus better through this show" and "I feel like I've been reading my Bible in black and white all these years and now it's in color" have been circulating on social media by both the creators and fans of the show. The creator says he's "trying to tell God's stories in a fresh way" and "enhancing Scripture". Those are all incredibly dangerous statements. Do you need something other than *God's Word* to know Jesus? No. In fact, God's Word is the only way we can know Jesus. Do we need anything to enhance God's stories or tell them in a fresh way? Absolutely not. Only the Bible is the inspired Word of God and it needs no enhancing or modern re-telling by fallible men.

My final concern is with the creator of the show himself, Dallas Jenkins.

Before I share my own thoughts, I think it might be best to allow his own statement, in an interview on a LDS (Church of the Latter Day Saints or Mormon) radio show, to speak for itself:

"So I can honestly say, it's been one of the top three most fascinating and beautiful things about this project – it's been my growing brother and sisterhood with people of the LDS community that I never would've known otherwise and I learned so much about your faith tradition and realizing, gosh, for all the stuff that maybe we don't see eye to eye on...that all happened, that's

all based on stuff that happened after Jesus was here. The stories of Jesus we do agree on, and we love the same Jesus. That's not something you often hear...sometimes it's like, oh they believe in a different Jesus than we do. No, it's the same, I mean I'll sink or swim on that statement. I know that's controversial and I don't mind getting criticized at all for the show, and I don't mind being called a blasphemer, I don't like it when my friends are. I made it very clear that if I go down, I'm going down protecting my friends and my brothers and sisters and so I don't deny we have a lot of theological differences but we love the same Jesus."

This is one of many examples of him stating that Mormonism, Catholicism, and Christianity simply have minor theological differences. He calls them "different perspectives" that are "exciting to explore, not dangerous". He consults a Catholic priest, a Jewish rabbi, and an evangelical Christian after writing each episode to make sure they are "biblically accurate". You can find him saying many times that we all believe in or that we all love the same Jesus.

But do we? Both the church of LDS and Catholics believe in a combination of works and faith. Mormons believe that God attained His supreme status by righteous works and that Jesus is a created being and not equal to God. I could go into more details behind the errors of the Mormon and Catholic faiths and what makes them false religions, but I'll save that for another day. However, the differences between the true Christian faith and the Mormon and Catholic faiths *are* essential, gospel issues and not simply theological differences we can brush over. And the

bottom line is this: If Dallas Jenkins believes what he's saying then he doesn't understand the true Gospel. The Gospel that says there's only one way. The Gospel that says we are forgiven on the merit of Christ alone and not of anything we can do. The one and only Gospel that is founded on the belief that Jesus is God incarnate.

And do we really want to watch a show about *Jesus and the Gospel* that is created by a man who doesn't even understand the Gospel? I'll let you make that decision, but I, for one, cannot.

<https://growing4life.net/the-chosen-is-it-biblical>

Read more of Jess blogs at Anchor for the Soul on Facebook and messenger @ananchorforthesoul.



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2376 Lakeside Drive
Birmingham, AL 35244
www.arcapologetics.org

