



## THE RISE OF MOCKERY

We were to pass on the Olympics this time around (cf., Issue 14), but the repulsive opening ceremony cries out for the warning: God will not be mocked (Galatians 6:7)!

Since the fall of man there have always been those who go to the furthest lengths to blaspheme God, to flout his law, and to disparage his people. The Bible calls them scoffers (Psalm 1:1), fools (Psalm 14:1; 53:1), and so forth. They fail to make their Godlessness the norm and end in tears. We could ignore them, but why allow them to impact others and to face the wrath of God without a loving warning. (Photo: Pixabay, "Paris 2024.")

### NEW LOWS

First, recall *the depth of the depravity*. The well-documented obscenities clearly shocked not only Christians, but decent and religious folk the world over. Notwithstanding the back-peddling of Paris 2024, it was very difficult for onlookers not to view the pageant as a mockery of the Lord and Savior of the world. Associated Press journalist John Leicester lauded the event as a revolution—"wacky, wonderful and rule-breaking"—designed to astound, bemuse, and to poke a finger at the world. Anything less than "the most flamboyant, diversity-celebrating, LGBTQ+-visible of opening ceremonies," coming from the home of the Enlightenment "would have seemed a betrayal of the pride of the French capital."

Thus, in an affront to God above all, the organizers ran the ceremony full-steam into the gutter of human depravity. Wrote Leicester, "Paris didn't just push the envelope. It did away with it entirely as it hammered home a message that freedom must know no bounds." ("Paris' Olympics was wacky and wonderful—and upset Bishops. Here's Why.")

Second, there was *the breadth of the coverage*. Paris 2024 knew very well of the global coverage and interest, and the

assumption that the event would be family-friendly—a spectacular warm-up to the festival of sport. What an opportunity, then, to bring on the drag queens to continue on a mass scale their interest in corrupting children.

### OLD RATIONALIZATIONS

Of course, for the debauched the opening ceremony was liberating. It required no repentance. Yet, in deference to the god of tolerance Paris 2024 issued a "sorry," but one void of conviction.

First, there was the organizers' *plea of ignorance*. The ceremony's artistic director, Thomas Jolly, himself gay, claimed there was no intention to "mock or denigrate anyone," and that the most questionable scene referred not to Leonardo Da Vinci's painting of our Lord's last supper (with apostles played by transvestites) but to Dionysius, a pagan god of ecstasy (god also, quite fittingly, of insanity and ritual madness). Unsurprisingly, mainstream media echoed Jolly, yet we are told that the festivity on the Debilly Bridge was called: "*La Cène Sur Un Scène Sur La Seine*" ("The Last Supper on a Stage on the Seine"). If so, a loss of veracity goes hand-in-hand with a loss of chastity.

Second, there was the subtle *blame-shifting*. Claimed Anne Descamps Paris 2024 spokeswoman, "Clearly there was never an intention to show disrespect to any religious group." She continued, "On the contrary, I think Thomas Jolly did try to intend to celebrate community tolerance. We believe this ambition was achieved. If people have taken any offence, we of course are really sorry." Read the subtext: The disgusted are just too sensitive. But are we? If you bar athletes from referencing the holiest and most influential person in history but allow the sordid to flaunt their stuff then it's not tolerance you seek but dominance.

Third, there was the *doubling down*. Subtly discernable amid the controversy ran Paris 2024's logic: We'll concede that offending 2.4 billion Christians went too far, so long as you concede that Pride in all its degeneracy is here to stay. Stated Jolly, "we have a lot of rights in France, and this is what I wanted to convey." Yet, self-ordained rights do not trump our Creator's will. A small minority of *provocateurs* and an acquiescent majority don't change this.

## THE ROOTS OF MOCKERY



Ironically, Paris 2024 marks the hundredth anniversary of the courageous stand by Eric Liddell for God and the sanctity of the Lord's Day. Yet, the roots of today's mockery had already been laid. It's spiritual causes we'll come

to, but first we trace how Western society got to its current degraded and defiant low. To do so, we return to France and to the Enlightenment of the late eighteenth-century. (Photo: Quotesgram.com.)

### THE IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS

Prior to the Enlightenment, Western civilization had been shaped by Christianity's defeat of paganism. That fourth-century victory had been secured by the proclamation of *who God is* (the sovereign ruler of the universe), of *who we are* (God's image-bearers created for his purposes), and of *what God offers* (forgiveness through the atoning work of Christ). Subsequently, during the Middle Ages, the church knew uneven health, yet the Protestant Reformation upheld the objective truth of God, reformed the church, and recovered the clarity of the gospel.

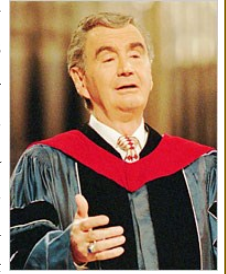
Two centuries later, though, the Enlightenment philosophes launched the idea that truth is accessed by human reasoning rather than by faith in God's Word. The emerging rationalists began to limit their acceptance of biblical teaching to what accorded with their thinking, and were followed by the romantics who only accepted from God's Word what was palatable to their feelings. Then, by the mid- to late-twentieth century, postmodernists went full-on, denying truth altogether. Thus, we now speak of "my truth" or "your truth." Truth has been reduced to what is personally suited, however bizarre the truth claims may be.

### THE MORAL OUTWORKING

Once truth became a matter of choice, so did morals. "My lifestyle" is as valid as "your lifestyle." In this regard, God's creation of but two genders no longer matters (Genesis 1:27), nor does the one assigned us through conception. Sin, the law, and offending of God play no role in our choices, for the Enlightenment promoted the idea of our independence from God. Thus, we decide our lifestyles, whether lawful or not. That is why Paris 2024 could include drag queens in the Olympic curtain raiser, for their "perspective" on lifestyle is equal to anyone else's.

Moreover, my lifestyle is no one else's business, says the postmodernist. My choices must be tolerated. Yet, stated the churchman D. James Kennedy, "Tolerance is the last virtue of a depraved society. When you have an immoral

society that has blatantly, proudly, violated all the commands of God, there is one last virtue they insist upon: tolerance for their immorality." Accordingly, I am free to choose my gender, have a sex change, cohabitate before marriage, have children out of wedlock (often guessing at the paternity), or become non-heterosexual. It's all up to me. (Photo: www.NYTimes.com.)

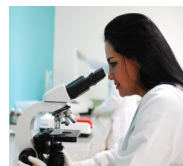


What matters is that I am true to myself, am at peace with my feelings (however fleeting they may be), and evade the Victorian sin of hypocrisy. Who cares what God says, what the church has taught, what physiology evinces, that same-sex couples cannot procreate, or that *my* choices require the death of the unborn. All is well, so long as no one troubles my conscience or warns of my provoking God. Since no one does so more than Jesus, who is "*the truth*" (John 14:6), he must be canceled at all costs.

### THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

While Christians sorrow over breaches of God's law, we are called to do more than tolerate our enemies. We are to love them. Although unpopular, this entails exposing the dangerous irrationalities of the age of reason (Ephesians 4:15). In the name of love and inclusion, its advocates hate and exclude; in the name of freedom, they enslave hordes in sin; and in the name of protection, they kill millions.

To illustrate, we advocate the rights of women then allow biological males claiming gender fluidity to destroy their sport. We blast Dutch volleyball player Stephen van de Velde, for raping a junior then deem it a breakthrough when drag queens destroy the sexual innocence of children. We demean marriage and then ponder the effect of fatherlessness. We defend to the hilt a woman's right to kill her offspring but fret critically low population levels. We reject the Ten Commandments then ponder spates of rioting and violent crime. We desperately need conversion, but indiscriminately ban conversion therapy. We so need God but become addicted to prescription pills and self-help. We slap labels on the mentally ill, incarcerating the worst in insane asylums, but ridicule the idea that some may be suffering the psychological effects of unconfessed sin.



In summary, we are in an age wherein we can see flecks under a microscope but not the absurdities going on under our noses. To quote John Leicester's verdict on the opening ceremony, "Freedom: Does anyone do it better than the French?" In actuality, we have resurrected first-century paganism. Of it, the apostle Paul noted, "Claiming to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22). And so have we. (Photo: Pixabay.)

## THE REASONS FOR MOCKERY

To indict the Olympics' opening ceremony and to trace how Western society has so degenerated from its Judeo-Christian roots is only to touch the surface of the matter. We can easily illustrate the visible irrationalities and follies of the modern and postmodern eras, but what are the less obvious causes and characteristics of those who mock?

### SOME CAUSES OF MOCKERY

*First, the natural state of the heart.* Despite the common myth that man is basically good, we each enter life misshapen in iniquity (Psalm 51:5). From conception we are inclined to turn away from God in favor of sin. Sin taints our every faculty. It runs through our minds, it corrupts our hearts, and turns our wills away from pleasing God. We daily commit sins of omission (falling short of God's law) and of commission (transgressing the bounds of the law), and thus are vulnerable to degenerating into mockery.

*Second, the habits of sin.* Obviously, not all the depraved become scoffers. While we each possess original sin, the extent and depth of our actual sins depend on the degree to which we open ourselves up to sin. Note how the psalmist amid warning the blessed not to lose their blessedness indicates the steps toward mockery (Psalm 1:1). Naturally, we are wicked, for although we may appear innocent and upright we reject our Creator's rule over our lives. Once sin gains a hold on our lives and we begin to act out our rejection of God we regress into the category of sinner and lose our moral integrity. Finally, persisting downward along this rejectory, unless checked, we become scoffers, casting off all sensitivities, restraint, shame, and accountability.

*Third, the hardships of life.* While sin breeds sin, the circumstances of life, testing our readiness to trust God, either improve us or accentuate our hardness of heart and rebellion against God and his people. Some are embittered by dysfunctional parents, some by abuse and sexualization at a tender age, some by broken homes, some by sudden grief, and some by blessings denied. Scratch the most outspoken and outrageous atheists and one will nearly always find some occasion of disappointment with God.

### SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF MOCKERY

Some of these we have touched on: a shameless despising of God, his Son, his law, and his Word. But there's more.

*First, mockery bespeaks relentlessness in sin.* States the book of Proverbs: ***"Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks . . . How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing***

*and fools hate knowledge?"* Scoffers exceed all bounds.

*Second, mockery seeks to corrupt society.* Mockery is most anticlimactic when it resides solely in the mind. Its proud and brazen nature requires an audience to shock. For this reason the Psalmist warns the blessed not to ***"sit in the seat of the scoffers."*** We are not to keep company with them, for scoffers would have us become like them. They are influencers and want to see "Birds of a feather flock together."

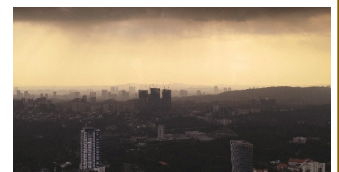


*Third, mockery fulfills the prediction of the apostles.* Little do scoffers realize, but in the very process of attacking the Holy Scriptures they actually fulfill them. Jude, the half-brother of Jesus who himself did not trust in Jesus as his Savior until after his resurrection (Acts 1:14), wrote a letter against the blasphemies and ungodliness of his day: ***"But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, 'In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.' It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit"*** (Jude 17-19).

*Fourth, mockery signifies the impending judgment of God.* Initially, the judgment is temporal. The apostle Paul warns in his letter to the Romans that even though God as it were drags his feet to judgment—it is his ***"strange work"*** (Isaiah 28:21)—now that Christ has come God's righteousness has been revealed from heaven as also his wrath. God's wrath is revealed in the lives of those who persist in suppressing his truth in unrighteousness. Thus, God gives them up to a debased mind and to all manner of sin, shame, and dishonor. They thought sin would delight them, but its penalty begins to appear in their lives.

Ultimately, the judgment is eternal. All the while scoffers sin with abandon, they know ***"God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, [because] they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them"*** (Romans 1:32). In short, they feel the wrath of God on account of both their offence against the justice and holiness of God and of their impact on those they influence.

Thus, with the mockery of our day wafting up to God as a stench in his nostrils, we can expect him, although slow to anger (Exodus 34:6-7), to make his displeasure known. Could it be that the power outage during the Olympics—very under-reported—was just a beginning: God's way of saying that if we want to live in darkness he can arrange it. Let's be sure then, while God stays His hand, to turn back without delay!



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## THE REJECTION OF MOCKERY

It is vital we heed God's warnings. He is constitutionally just and must meet the demands of his broken law. But God is also love and seeks our acquittal. (Photo: Pixabay.)

### CHRIST AND THE JUSTICE OF GOD

The nearer Jesus drew near to the end of his ministry, the more burdened he became for those who rejected God's grace. Jesus especially lamented those who knew of his mission but dismissed it: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to it! How often would I gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! Behold your house is forsaken"* (Luke 13:34-45a; cf., 19:41-44). Jesus mourned because his countrymen were resting in their works to escape divine judgment. He knew that forty years later Rome would, as an instrument of divine judgment, reduce Jerusalem to rubble, and thus visualize to this day what it means to face God's wrath. After all, once God's love in Christ is rejected, what remains?

### CHRIST AND THE LOVE OF GOD

God yet offers you a way out of condemnation. It is free to you but cost Christ dearly. He was mocked by Romans, crowned with thorns, adorned in a purple robe, hailed sarcastically as King of the Jews, and struck (Luke 19:2-3). Also by Jewish rulers who secured Jesus' crucifixion by false witnesses and the exchange of Barabbas, an insurrectionist, and taunted him as he hung from the cross (*"He saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"* [Luke 23:35]). Yet, he endured all the ignominy so as to pay in full the sentence for our sins.

Mock, then, no more! *"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"* (Isaiah 55:6-7). (Photo, above right: christianstudylibrary.org.)

## THE REVERSAL OF MOCKERY



Throughout the history of the church, creeds, confessions, and catechisms have been produced to summarize biblical teaching, to express personal and communal devotion, and to instruct believers in their faith. The Protestant Reformers were especially productive and reliable in creed-making. Consider the Heidelberg Catechism, written by Caspar Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus, and passed by the synod of the Palatinate Church (along the Rhine, Germany) in 1563. We end with a few of its questions and answers (in today's English [[www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org)]) to help you if you have now received Christ as your Savior and Lord:

### LORD'S DAY 23

**Q.** What good does it do you . . . to believe all this?

**A.** In Christ I am righteous before God and heir to life everlasting.

**Q.** How are you righteous before God?

**A.** Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Even though my conscience accuses me of having grievously sinned against all God's commandments, of never having kept any of them, and of still being inclined toward all evil, nevertheless, without any merit of my own, out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner, and as if I had been as perfectly obedient as Christ was obedient for me.

**Q.** Why do you say that through faith alone you are righteous?

**A.** Not because I please God by the worthiness of my faith. It is because only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness make me righteous before God, and because I can accept this righteousness and make it mine in no other way than through faith.

### LORD'S DAY 24

**Q.** Why can't our good works be our righteousness before God, or at least a part of our righteousness?

**A.** Because the righteousness which can pass God's judgment must be entirely perfect and must in every way measure up to the divine law. But even our best works in this life are imperfect and stained with sin.

**NEXT ISSUE DUE OUT: DECEMBER 1**