

# Violence, Culture and Meaning

A Biblical response to the Dark  
Knight Massacre

# Three Observations concerning the Dark Knight Massacre

- We must pray for, comfort and do good deeds for those who are suffering
- There is something wrong with a society that demands brutal, perverse cruelty for its entertainment
- Senseless violence should be expected from those living in a senseless universe

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# Comforting the Suffering

Romans 12:15 NASB Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

James 5:16 Therefore, ... pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Matthew 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Galatians 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

Matthew 25:40 "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

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# Review of the 2008 Batman Movie, “Dark Knight”

Movie critic Jenny McCartney was surprised by “the sustained level of intensely sadistic brutality throughout the film. The film begins with a heist carried out by men in sinister clown masks. As each clown completes a task, another shoots him point-blank in the head. The scene ends with a clown – The Joker – stuffing a bomb into a wounded bank employee's mouth.”

She goes on to describe more of the appalling instances of violence in the movie. “It is all intensely realistic. Oh but don't worry, folks: there isn't any nudity... The director, Christopher Nolan, hasn't sought to ramp up the cartoonish aspects of his superhero story, as other directors before him have. He has tried instead to make the violence and fear as believable as possible, and in this he has succeeded.”

# Review of the 2008 Batman Movie, “Dark Knight”

“*Spider-Man* now looks like *Bambi* when set next to *The Dark Knight*. Even since 2002, the public's willingness to expose children to previously unthinkable levels of screen violence has soared, and the [British movie rating board] finds itself virtually powerless to stop it.”

“... we know that entertainment aimed at young people is becoming markedly more violent. My generation was terrified by the Child Catcher in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*; the current one is diverted with torture and agonising death. ... The poet WB Yeats once wrote, ‘In dreams begins responsibility’, yet Hollywood will never take responsibility for its most brutal dreams so long as the paying public still flocks to the theatre of cruelty.”

SOURCE: Jenny McCartney, The Telegraph, July 2008

# Review of the 2008 Batman Movie, “Dark Knight”

“As a reviewer, I naturally understand that a degree of violence is an unavoidable force in cinema, as it is in life, and that a talented director can employ it to say something meaningful. Yet since 2000, when I first began reviewing films ..., sporadic scenes have brought me up short, because they seemed to signal a sudden, significant shift in the director's moral perspective....”

“Once, Quentin Tarantino was the edgy enfant terrible of Hollywood. Now he is a member of its establishment, encouraging younger, mainstream "torture porn" directors such as Eli Roth to push the boundaries of explicit, ingenious cruelty ever further....Increasingly, extreme screen violence is used not as a necessary adjunct to a greater point, but as the pleasurable point in itself.”

SOURCE: Jenny McCartney, The Telegraph, July 2008

# “Torture Porn”?

- Pornography gives viewers perverse sexual pleasure without the risk and feelings of guilt associated with actually committing immoral sexual actions
- Torture porn gives viewers perverse sadistic pleasure in seeing others suffer without the risk and feelings of guilt associated with actually acting cruel to others.

# If a Person Consumes Cruelty as Entertainment...

- He may not shoot up a movie theatre, like James Holmes
- But how is he going to be able to fully appreciate things like...
  - Justice?
  - Mercy?
  - Compassion?
  - Forgiveness?
  - Grace?
- What will his thought life be like?
- How will he treat others?

# Two Societies

- The society of Noah's world – Gen 6:5-13

# Genesis 6:5-13 NASB

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ... 11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. 13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

# Two Societies

- The society of Noah's world – Gen 6:5-13
- The society of God's people – Phil 4:8

# Philippians 4:8 ESV

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

# Two Societies

- The society of Noah's world – Gen 6:5-13
- The society of God's people – Phil 4:8
- The difference? Their thoughts!

# Proverbs 4:23 NASB

Watch over your heart with all diligence, For  
from it flow the springs of life.

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# If there is no God...

- Life becomes meaningless
- Moral judgments are emptied of meaning
- When something good or bad happens in such a universe, why should anyone care?

# Batman's Senseless World

- As a child he saw his parents die, killed by a mugger after leaving a movie theater
- He became a crime-fighter in response
- But in the Dark Knight series of comics (1986) he loses his moral compass and “goes rogue”

# Batman's Senseless World

*“My parents taught me a different lesson...  
lying on the street, shaking in deep shock,  
dying for no reason at all. They showed  
me that the world only makes sense  
when you force it to.”*

# Romans 1:28-31 NASB

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

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# A Parallel Between Gotham City and Our World

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- The 1986 “Dark Knight Returns” comic series depicts a Gotham City ten years after Batman’s retirement that has spiraled further and further into crime and violence.
- One example of how bad it had gotten is when a deranged man shoots up a movie theatre killing three people.
- Finally things get so bad that Batman returns to crime fighting to clean things up before he goes off the deep end himself.

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- How long has our nation been without God?

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- Without Batman, Gotham City got so bad that a man shot up a movie theater and killed three people
- How long has our nation been without God?
- What have been the results?

# A Parallel Between Gotham City and Our World

- Can we PLEASE finally conclude that a society that does not honor God simply does not work?

# A Parallel Between Gotham City and Our World

- Can we PLEASE finally conclude that a society that does not honor God simply does not work?
- Or do we want to continue in this direction another ten years and see what happens?

# Our World Needs Jesus Christ

- He is the One Who gives all things meaning
- He is the One Who will right every wrong and ensure every injustice is paid for
- He is the Savior and the Redeemer
- And He wants to be Your Lord

# Matthew 11:28-30 NASB

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."