



HEBREWS

JESUS IS BETTER

FULL CIRCLE

HOW THE CLASSICAL WORLD
CAME BACK TO US



FERDINAND MOUNT

God's long funeral is over, and we are back where we started. Two thousand years of history have melted away into the back story, which nobody reads anymore . . . So much about the society that is now emerging bears an astonishing resemblance to the most prominent features of what we call the classical world — its institutions, its priorities, its recreations, its physics, its sexual morality, its food, its politics, even its religion. Often without our being in the least aware of it, the ways in which we live our rich and varied lives correspond, almost eerily so, to the ways in which the Greeks and Romans lived theirs.

Hebrews 13:1-8

Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. ⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

Hebrews 13:1-8

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

⁶ So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” ⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever

Hebrews 13:16-17

¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Theme: The People of the New Covenant

The prevailing ethos = brotherly love (1)

{Four dimensions of the counter-cultural community}

The unchanging foundation = Jesus Christ (8)

Outline

The prevailing ethos = brotherly love (1)

- 1. Hospitality (2-3)**
- 2. Marriage & Sexuality (4)**
- 3. Money & Possessions (5-6, 16)**
- 4. Leadership & Authority (7, 17)**

The unchanging foundation = Jesus Christ (8)



1. Hospitality: Love Extended to Strangers

Hebrews 13:2-3

Hebrews 13:1-3


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persuasive account of how the
West was won—for Jesus."
—Newsweek

THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY



How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant
 Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries

RODNEY STARK

To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished Christianity offered charity as well as real hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachment. To cities filled with widows and orphans Christianity offered a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by ethnic strife Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. I am not saying the misery of the ancient world caused the advent of Christianity.

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RODNEY STARK

People had been enduring for centuries without the aid of Christian theology or social structures. I am arguing that once Christianity did appear, its superior capacity for meeting human problems soon became evident and played a major role in its ultimate triumph, for what Christianity brought was not simply an urban movement, but a new culture.

—Rodney Stark



2. Marriage & Sexuality: Love in Sacred Commitment

Hebrews 13:4

Hebrews 13:4

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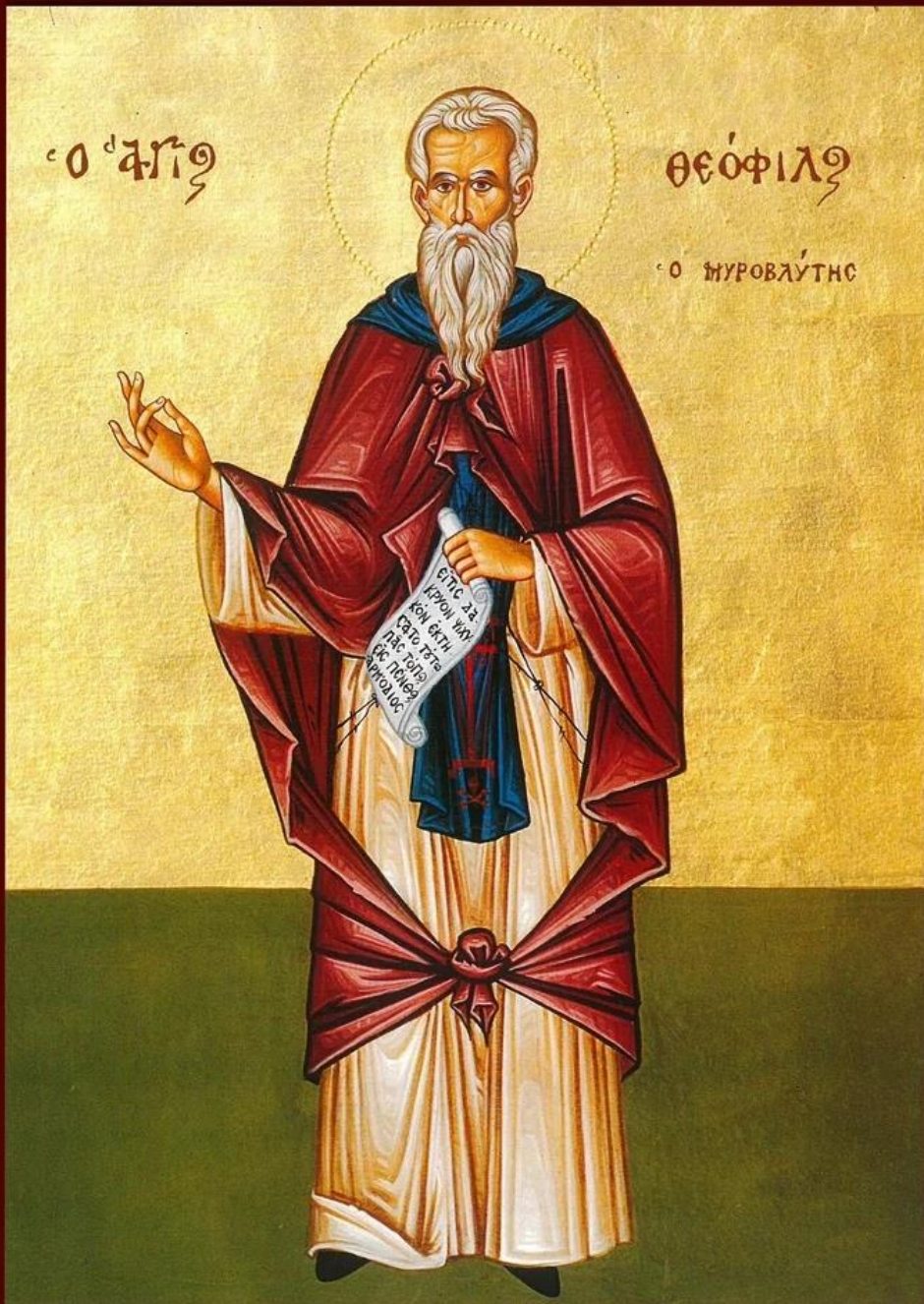


FERDINAND MOUNT

Sex relationships are officially deconsecrated and emptied of moral content; there need be no sense of shame if one changes partners, even quite abruptly. It is sometimes argued by up-to-the-minute philosophers that if you have any duty at all, it is to the truth of your emotions. It ought to be your goal to live an authentic life, and that is impossible if you continue to live a lie.

Hebrews 13:4

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With them temperance dwells, self-restraint is practiced, monogamy is observed, chastity is guarded, iniquity exterminated, sin rooted out, righteousness exercised, law administered, worship performed, God acknowledged: truth governs, grace guards, peace screens them; the holy word guides, wisdom teaches, life directs, God reigns.

—Theophilus of Antioch (2nd century)



3. Money & Possessions: Love Expressed in Contentment & Generosity

Hebrews 13:5-6, 16

Hebrews 13:5-6

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

⁶ So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

Hebrews 13:16

¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.



4. Leadership & Authority: Love Modeled in Church

Power Dynamics

Hebrews 13:7, 17

Hebrews 13:7, 17

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¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.



PENGUIN



CLASSICS

Early Christian Writings

The difference between Christians and the rest of mankind is not a matter of nationality, or language, or customs . . . Though they are residents at home in their own countries, their behavior there is more like that of transients . . . For them, any foreign country is a motherland, and any motherland is a foreign country. Like other men, they marry and beget children, though they do not expose their infants.



PENGUIN  CLASSICS

Early Christian Writings

**Any Christian free to share his neighbor's table,
but never his marriage-bed. They obey the
prescribed laws, but in their own private lives
they transcend the laws. They show love to all
men – and all men persecute them. They are
misunderstood, and condemned, yet by
suffering death they are quickened into life.
They are poor, yet making many rich; lacking all
things, yet having all things in abundance.**

—The Letter to Diognetus

Summary

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The unchanging foundation = Jesus Christ (8)

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**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and
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