

Credulous: A Review

Neil Girrard

Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from Andrea Lingle, *Credulous*, Cascade Books, 2018

Credulous is defined as “having or showing too great a readiness to believe things.” With this definition, one might expect to find spiritual naivete or superficiality in Andrea Lingle’s book of that title. Instead, one finds a real grappling with real-life problems all throughout the book and very few detractions from a frank, refreshingly objective examination of the author’s spiritual journey through the minefield of “church.” After all, not many are (in the world and the “church’s” view) “crazy” enough to simply believe and trust God when things seem contrary to what we have been taught about “Him.”

As one way to understand this author (as well as all others who write of their “church” exodus process), I offer a parable. Recently in northern New Mexico, a compound was discovered from which several missing children were rescued. The owners of the compound had been training the children to engage in school shootings and other terrorist type activities and some of the children exhibited combat training skills comparable to a U.S. Marine. When viewed from a spiritual perspective, this comes too frighteningly close to being an accurate parable of what the “church” has done to far too many of its victims.

Even though Andrea Lingle has so far remained in her “church,” she has done a fabulous job of chronicling her spiritual journey and has made herself as vulnerable as anyone could ask for. Her book exhibits a depth that is not often found in “church” circles. Perhaps the most obvious truth one can walk away from this book with is that no matter what denomination or even cult one starts out in, Jesus still personally calls to each and every individual, “Come to ME. When you learn where and how your particular context is keeping you from Me, I will still be here drawing you to Myself.”

This reviewer can seriously relate to the author. I’ve been out of “church” for 20 years now and am more in love with Jesus than ever. I too could not “understand how that which I experience on Sunday morning could compel someone to self-annihilation.” (p. 6) But now I know with greater clarity (even without absolute certainty that I can attain to it) what it means to rely on the blood of Christ, on my testimony (personal experience of Christ) and on my willingness to lay down my life for His sake. (Rev. 12:11) Further, my wife and I lost a daughter under almost exactly similar circumstances (p. 16) and our hearts truly go out to the author. We weathered that storm because we were enabled by God to know that our unborn daughter was in a better place that perhaps she might not have been able to enter had she lived a normal lifetime. And still further, this reviewer recognizes the genuineness of the author’s spiritual journey because many of the “mile-markers” spoken of throughout the book are very recognizable.

But just as the children spoken of at the beginning of this review have been irrevocably molded by their inappropriate training, so too does Lingle’s spiritual journey reveal just how deeply her “church” training works against her spiritual life. Her struggle with prayer is perhaps where the carnal “church” training she has received is most apparent and her steps toward overcoming, though not complete, are most encouraging. (chapter 7, p. 53-63)

Credulous is organized around the Methodist “church” bulletin or liturgy (order) of worship. This too speaks volumes of her spiritual journey from deception into truth – and yet it simultaneously reveals where some of her next steps on this journey must take place if she is to follow on in the way of Christ. In Heb. 8:1-2, Jesus is said to be the High Priest and “Minister

[Administrator] of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.” The Greek word for this position (which only Jesus is said to hold) is *leitourgos* (Strong’s 3011] It doesn’t require much discernment to see that this is the word from which we derive “liturgy.” The “church,” in its inappropriate training of its victims, has traded down from the Person and Spirit of Christ who is the Administrator of the sanctuary and tabernacle (us, the people) and settled for a written list of activities that are still able, albeit in a watered down version, to point us who hunger for truth, righteousness and purity toward Him who is the focal point of the New Testament, God’s only “Kingdom Manifesto.”

Chief among the “church” leftovers that introduce some contamination into Lingle’s book would be her statement “I am a lay theologian... There is the ordained. There is the lay... I am a lay person. I don’t have that [theological] degree. I never did the work to be ordained.” (p. ix, 105) The “ordained,” often called the “anointed” or “the man of God,” is a “church” fable or myth, a deception that keeps people coming back to have their ears tickled and scratched. (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

The word “clergy” derives from the Greek word *kleros* [2819] which originally referred to the portion gained through gaming, war or inheritance. The word was originally used by Peter to say that elders should not be lords over God’s portion (*kleros*) but rather examples to His flock. (1 Pet. 5:3) By the time of Tertullian (third century A.D.), however, this word would be the justification for the exalted clergy who alone were held to be the real heritage and portion of God and who were to be held by all in reverence and awe as recipients of greater authority and as superior specimens of spirituality in Christ. As Paul so clearly warned the *elders* of Ephesus, after his departure “from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking corrupted things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:30) This did not happen in Ephesus only. The rise of the bishopric (the position of “bishop” that evolved into the office of “pastor”) is a fact of church history that most people remain unaware of, especially unaware of how truly devastating this change (from the original gospel presented in the New Testament to the modern “church” paradigm) is to our spiritual life in Christ.

Lingle’s error in this regard is to feel the need, as it were, to apologize for not being “ordained,” for being a mere layperson. No apology is required or even desired by God. The truth is, the clergy are the ones who need to apologize for “standing over the assembly in the place of Christ.” (Ignatius of Antioch, died c. 110 A.D.) Jesus clearly said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you.” (Mt. 20:25-26) and He said that He *hated* the deeds (practices) and teachings (“theological” justifications) of the Nicolaitans (those who conquer the laity, the people – Rev. 2:6, 15) Most “pastors” remain (keep themselves?) blissfully unaware of these facts.

To show how deep this deception can go, I offer the suggestion that the real and deepest reason Lingle may have remained in her “church” is because she is married to a man who holds the falsely exalted position of “pastor.” It would take a lot of courage on her part to follow Christ if He were to call her to go where her husband may be unable or unwilling to go. There is no easy solution for resolving this issue but to completely ignore this possibility and its implications or to use her marriage to define her “theology” is certainly not wise.

What is somewhat disturbing about Lingle’s book is the occasional subordination of the truths of the Bible to her own opinions and her tendency to reshape even Jesus into her own likeness according to her own personality and imagination – some of which may have validity but some of which does not. But rather than berate her for not having arrived at spiritual perfection (as none of us have!), I’ll leave it to the reader to be wary of believing that everything the author says is 100% accurate spiritually speaking and offer up a prayer that the author will continue on in

her spiritual journey and that these deceptions will drop off as she continues to believe in and on Christ and to obediently follow Him who is our everything – salvation, truth, way of life *and* liturgy (order of worship) – wherever He might lead. But even with this caveat, let it be clear that there is much in her book that is worthy of much discussion and consideration even if some of her beliefs and thoughts need some correction!

Sister Andrea and all who read her book, keep pressing on into the kingdom of God, that “realm” where Christ is lovingly and loyally followed and increasingly obeyed as King and Lord!

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