

# PART 2

## UNDERSTANDING MONUMENT

*We are introduced to our mandate, our opponents, and the important decision we face.*

To understand Monument, we need to keep one eye on *Culture* and one eye on *Scripture*. We will continue to do that this time with the following headings: Our Mandate, Our Opposition, Our Decision.

### OUR MANDATE

To be a **counter cultural, committed community of Christ followers, on mission**. This is a mandate to be a *revitalized* church.

### OUR OPPOSITION

We found out last time that our great opponent is individualism. But it gets worse. She's had kids. And she's weaponized them. And, they each have a weapons specialty.

#### Wince Alert

As you meet the kids, you will wince because they hate their covert identities being exposed, they lash out when challenged, and the battlefield is in our hearts.

#### **FIRST BORN: SECULARISM** **WEAPONS SPECIALTY: ANTI-FAITH**

Secularism is the anti-faith pulse in our culture that tells Christians to stop being counter cultural and come join the new majority. Secularism is a master seducer, claiming that we can now attain the *outcomes of Christianity without the constraints of Christianity*.

## **SECOND BORN: CONSUMERISM**

### **WEAPONS SPECIALTY: ANTI-COMMITMENT**

Consumerism fights on two battle fronts. The first battle front is **FOMO** (fear of missing out). Increased choice results in decreased commitment, because one fears missing out on the options you don't choose.

The second battle front is **FOCUS** on self. Whilst his first Battle Front (FOMO) was “Don't commit to anything over anything else,” his second line of attack is, “If you are going to commit to something, then always commit to *you*. Commit to becoming a better you, and I have products for you to consume to help with that, such as gadgets, podcasts, Pilates, self-improvement books, and - wait for it – church! This sounds sensible. Where is the problem? McCracken explains:

It (consumerism) turns Christianity into a product akin to a smartphone app: something the “user” can opt in or out of as is convenient ... If it is in any way uncomfortable or costly, the “app” is easily deleted.” (*Brett McCracken, 8 Ways to Battle Comfort Idolatry: October 5, 2018*)

Secularism says “Leave church.” Consumerism says, “No need to leave church. Just don't overstate it. Don't make it *the* App, rather make it *an* App, just one-of-many serving you as you become a better, happier you.”

## **INDIVIDUALISM**

### **WEAPONS SPECIALTY: ANTI-COMMUNITY**

Imagine three basic needs (freedom, purpose and community) as three as piggy banks, each taking a max of 30 pennies. And imagine you only have 30 pennies, total. Individualism says to be happy, put all 30 in the Freedom Bank. This is baloney. To be happy, we know we need to take some pennies out of the freedom bank and place them in the other banks of purpose and community.

Being part of our church community means forfeiting some personal freedoms in various areas of life, including time, energy, sexual ethics. But Jesus said, *“Lose your life, and you will find it.” Take on My restrictions, and you will be truly free and truly happy.*” Jesus gives us what individualism promises to give us but cannot, but we receive it from Jesus by placing Jesus on the throne and removing Self from the throne!

### **THIRD BORN: DECONSTRUCTIONISM** **WEAPONS SPECIALTY: TRUTH IS WHAT YOU FEEL**

Deconstructionism perverts many truths. He is currently working hard to deconstruct the definition of right and wrong, of sin and morality. Biblically, sin means not being true to the Lord. He tells us it actually means not being true to *yourself*. He tries to make how we *feel*, our sense of *authenticity*, the ultimate moral. If he can do that, then whenever we read or hear or are called to something we don't *feel like*, we will reject it, and best of all, we'll feel righteous in doing so - because the greatest sin is not being true to *yourself*, and true to what you *feel!*”

### **FOURTH BORN IS ISOLATIONISM** **WEAPONS SPECIALTY: ANTI-MISSION**

In *Democracy in America* Tocqueville wrote of “a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to **isolate** himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself” (Democracy in America, 506).

Isolationism and Bubbliism don't mind about us being a counter-cultural, committed community of Christ-followers – they are quite happy for us to isolate ourselves from greater society. The bit they hate is us being on a mission into greater society.

## OUR DECISION

We earnestly aspire to being a **counter-cultural committed community of Christ followers**, but we are up against the powerful and committed Ism Family. How can we prevail? What do we do? The answer is found in 1 Thes. 1:9, where the Apostle Paul describes the Thessalonians' conversion as: ... *turning to God from idols*.

The American Church is better at **turning to** God than **turning from** idols. This has left us half converted, half vital, and actually schizophrenic. We have **turned to** without **turning from**. Now here is the Pain Point: The pain is not felt in **adding** something to our lives, but in **subtracting** something from our lives.

- *Think calendar: The pain is not putting a church commitment into my calendar; it is taking another one out to make way for a church commitment.*
- *Think finance: The pain is not giving expendable income to God's mission; it is giving non-expendable income.*
- *Think sexual freedoms: The pain is not saying no to sexual immorality; it is saying no when we want to say yes.*

### Key Thought:

*Individualism is only really challenged when something is tangibly subtracted from our lives.*

Turning to God and turning from idols is a life-long journey. The decision to become a member of Monument is a decision to go on that journey with friends, helping each other gently but meaningfully (in a grace-infused, non-claustrophobic, manner) to steadily **dethrone Self** and **enthroned Jesus** in our hearts, and help others in the Greater DC Area to do the same.

Which of the Ism's do you have the least trouble with?

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What does that look like?