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**Sins of the Flesh (or What Zombies Can Teach Us About Christians and Hipsters)**  
by Dale Bridges

Here's the type of person I am: If my best friend were bitten by a zombie tomorrow, I would shoot him in the head immediately. No hesitation. No waah-waah goodbye speech. None of that pussy crap. Just BLAMO! And I would expect the exact same treatment if I were suddenly zombified.

You see, folks, when the zombie apocalypse comes (notice that I say *when*, not *if*), there just isn't going to be time for sentimental nonsense. Do I love my mother? Of course. Did she read *The Poky Little Puppy* to me when I was 5 years old and make me peanut butter sandwiches with the crusts cut off? Yes, she did. Will I chop her head off with a machete if she rises from the dead and tries to eat my pancreas? You're goddamn right.

This is by far the most frightening aspect of the whole undead paradigm, and it is why most people will not survive a zombie attack. Unlike other creatures in the horror genre, zombies are not faceless psychopaths or supernatural monsters that you can immediately disassociate yourself from. They are your homeroom teacher. They are the girl you took to prom. They are that sexy cousin who wore black fingernail polish and made you think naughty thoughts during family reunions. (Hi, Sandy! How's Aunt Helen?) Anyone can become a zombie at any time, and there's absolutely nothing you can do about it except blow their brains out when it happens and then go on with your life. This is why zombies are the perfect metaphor for modern culture and why I am slightly obsessed with movies that feature stiff-limbed ghouls that rise from the grave and stumble around in search of human appetizers. They represent the brain-dead khaki-wearing hoards you see every day lined up at Starbucks, twitching and grinding their teeth like heroine addicts because they haven't yet had their caffeine enemas.

The first time I heard about zombies was in Sunday School. "Jesus called out in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face." John 11:43-44. Of course, nine chapters later, Jesus also rises from the dead. He doesn't bite off a chunk of Peter's ear or start nibbling on Mary Magdalene's large intestine — BUT, right before He dies, Jesus makes the disciples eat their first communion, which is supposed to represent His body and His blood. And that's pretty fucking creepy when you think about it.

Now, before all you James Dobson Storm Troopers get your panties in a bunch, let me explain that I'm not saying all Christians are mindless bloodthirsty corpses. I know at least two or three Lutherans who have never tried to rip my skull open and eat my brains. However, there is definitely a lot of religious imagery in the Bible that coincides with zombie mythology (and don't even get me started on vampires).

And I'm not the first to notice this correlation. There have been hundreds of articles and books written on the subject over the years. In 2006, Baylor University Press published a tome called *Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero's Visions of Hell on Earth* by Kim Paffenroth, an associate professor of religious studies at Iona College in New Rochelle, NY. (In case you didn't know, George Romero is the director of *Night of the Living Dead*, the iconoclastic indie film that defined the modern zombie movie.) In an interview with Inside Higher Ed, Paffenroth said, "I think zombie movies want to portray the state of zombification as a monstrous perversion of the idea of Christian resurrection." This statement may or may not be true, but the irony is that Paffenroth herself comes from one of the largest zombie factories in the country. Every year, colleges across America crank out politically correct, multicultural clones who inevitably end up transforming into the middle-age hipsters you see at trendy restaurants wearing \$75 Che Guevara T-shirts and \$400 blue jeans designed to look like they belong to a dairy farmer in Oklahoma. Universities are just as responsible for producing mindless automatons as television, video games and Hare Krishnas.

The point here is that our society is composed of countless theological/cultural/intellectual institutions that control our thoughts.

Personally, I belong to the zombie organization known as "The Media." We take large, complicated subjects and reduce them to simplistic sound bites that are then forced onto the masses until the general population becomes so confused that they lock themselves in their suburban homes and eat mountains of delivery pizza and take Xanax and watch Oprah and cry themselves to sleep.

So, go forth, American zombies, and find some delicious, juicy brains to munch on.

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