

“[The Bereans] . . . searched the scriptures daily,

[to see] whether those things were so.” —Acts 17:11

Self: Mankind's Number One Problem

T. A. McMahon

VIEWES ABOUT “self” today are confusing at least. The world has a number of them. All teach the importance of one’s having a positive regard for one’s self. The Bible, on the other hand, has nothing good to say about self. Nevertheless, the church, particularly in the last one hundred years, has increasingly reflected what the world preaches rather than what the Scriptures teach. As Dave Hunt reminds us, “Although we cannot define self any more than we can define soul or being or beauty, we can clearly see where self was first manifested, how it happened, and the eternal result. We can also see that self not only defines one person as distinct from all others, but it also defines man as distinct from God. *What the Bible seems to mean by self is man cut off from God*, acting and possessing independently” (Hunt, *Beyond Seduction* [Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers] 153).

The Word of God reveals that self first reared its ugly head in Heaven. Lucifer was an anointed angel who became God’s adversary (Satan) by exalting himself: “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13-14). Thus Lucifer’s “I will,” that is, his *self*-will, supplanted submission to God and His will, and the consequences were not good: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” (Ezekiel 28:15; Isaiah 14:15).

Satan brought his rebellious “self” concept to earth and seduced Eve with it. His strategy began with sowing confusing ideas about what God had said (Satan’s principal program) and then feeding Eve self-oriented lies: “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). That initiated the lie of self-deification and godhood for humanity, in which the Serpent’s deception found fertile ground: “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6). Adam and Eve’s act of disobedience against the single prohibitive command given to them by God set sin and self on their destructive course. Hence all mankind was separated from God and pursued self.

The world’s focus is to highly value self. Why? Because there are only two options regarding any potential hope for humanity: Self or God (meaning the God of the Bible). Self is the choice of the world: man’s will and way as opposed to God’s will and way.

Self is the only option left for everyone who rejects the God of the Bible. Although there may seem to be other options, including religious ones, they are all variations of willful “works-salvation” and self-righteousness, with some being more obvious than others.

Islam, for example, teaches works-righteousness. At Judgment Day, Allah weighs one’s good deeds against one’s offenses, and the weight of the former against the latter determines one’s salvation, i.e., whether or not a person may enter paradise.

Catholicism takes a similar approach. Entrance to Heaven is dependent upon one’s good works and adherence to the Sacraments as well as the expiation of one’s sins through temporal sufferings here on earth or in Purgatory. Doing good works in order to achieve salvation is denounced in Scripture: salvation is “not of works lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:9).

All religions, from the most legalistic to the most liberal to the mystical, have self at the core of one’s achieving a positive consequence regarding life after death. Only biblical Christianity teaches that *denying self* and turning to Jesus alone for one’s salvation is acceptable to God. The Bible indicates that Satan’s lie that humanity can achieve godhood will ultimately manifest itself in the last days through the Antichrist, who “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, [showing] himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Satan’s lie is not only prevalent in cults such as Mormonism, but

the Roman Catholic Church teaches mystical union with God in its official Catechism: “For the Son of God became man so that we might become God. . . . The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraph 460).

Self-deification attained through sacred rites is found throughout the religions of the East. The Dalai Lama’s Tibetan Buddhism teaches initiation rituals to enable one to become a *bodhisattva* or enlightened deity. Shintoism, which is the primary religion of Japan, involves numerous self-purification ceremonies that open the way for followers to become *kami* or ancestral gods. Deifying self, as noted in Genesis 3:5, is evident in forms of Hinduism that teach self-realization methods, that is, techniques for achieving godhood. It is taught that the individual self is a god whose goal is to merge with the All, Brahman, the supreme deity of Hinduism. That is what yoga is all about.

Self-realization has its counterpart in humanistic psychology where it is termed “self-actualization.” The connection between Eastern mysticism and psychology has long been recognized by research psychologists, who have documented the fact that Hinduism was brought to the West and made popular through the vehicle of psychology. Although not immediately recognized as self-deification, it is the aim of self-actualization, which is simply defined

I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST:
NEVERTHELESS I LIVE; YET NOT I,
BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME: AND
THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE
FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE
SON OF GOD...

— Galatians 2:20

as reaching toward the ultimate fulfillment of one's potential. This is the basis for the Human Potential Movement, which is pervasive throughout many of the West's most prominent corporations and their training programs.

Self is the cornerstone of all psychological counseling. All of its more than 500 concepts are contrary to the Word of God, and psychotherapy essentially rejects God himself. With God removed by psychology, only self remains, and thus *self* becomes the *only hope for resolving humanity's problems*. A fundamental teaching of psychological counseling is that man is innately good. Any mental, emotional, or behavioral difficulties he experiences must therefore stem from things external to him, e.g., his environment, his parents, his beliefs, emotional and physical traumas, etc. If, however, adverse issues in a person's life are primarily the consequence of a sinful heart, then the psychotherapeutic approach is a delusion. Why? Because, according to the Bible, mankind has a sinful nature: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9), and "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:18-19). Psychological concepts and practices can never change an individual's sin nature. Furthermore, the biblical teaching about sin is antithetical as well as offensive to psychological counseling.

We know that self is the chief vehicle of sin. What then does the Bible say about how a person is to deal with self? In order to understand that, one needs to understand the biblical perspective regarding self. "Self" is synonymous with sin. All humans (Christ as the sinless God-Man excepted) are born with a sin nature. No part of Scripture makes this more clear than Psalm 51:1-5: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Self also involves the will—which is autonomous—and therein lies the problem. Man's will, because of his sin nature, is naturally and continually disposed toward himself. That is the breeding ground of rebellion: not *Thy* will but *my* will be done. Self is not given to submission to anyone other than itself. Philippians 2:21 confirms that "all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ's." Yet God has the solution for humanity's self-oriented, self-willed dilemma. It must start with a new birth—a spiritual birth from above.

When one receives the simple gospel by faith alone, he is submitting himself, from the heart, to God and to obeying His teachings found in the Scriptures. Although he is then born again spiritually and has become a new creature in Christ, he still retains his old sin nature, but he has been delivered from its control. Nevertheless, a spiritual battle follows between doing his will versus God's will. God has given every believer the Holy Spirit to help him win every battle in favor of God's will. Moreover, He has also supplied born-again Christians with instructions for the spiritual battle of His will versus man's will and self.

Submission to God is paramount: "If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." That commitment pertains not only to select issues but to one's whole life: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24). Jesus gives an illustration of what a believer's saved life must entail: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a

corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:24-25).

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31) and "For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Timothy 2:11). In Colossians 3:3 he declares, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." What did he mean? In Galatians 2:20 he explains: "I am *crucified with Christ*: nevertheless *I live*; yet *not I*, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." After listing some of his continual tribulations Paul writes, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10-11). The "death" is the death of one's autonomous self-will and the "life" is one that is completely given over to God's will.

The Word of God exhorts believers to be *other* directed. Consider the following: "[Christ] died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory [selfish ambition, conceit]; but in lowliness of mind let each *esteem other* better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of *others*" (Philippians 2:3-4). This is biblical selflessness.

First Corinthians chapters 10 and 13 (the "love" chapter) provide additional exhortation. It boggles the mind when one considers how the insidious and unbiblical doctrines of self-love and self-esteem have been so widely preached and promoted within Christendom. Were it not for Scripture prophesying that this would take place in the last days (2 Timothy 3:1-2), the invasion of selfist-psychology in the church through so-called Christian psychology would seem incredible. But we are living in those days!

Jesus, who is completely God and Man, shows us in His own life *perfect selflessness*: "Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13). Furthermore, He demonstrates for us His own submission to the will of God the Father. As a Man, He is the perfect sinless Self. Yet He, as part of the Godhead, nevertheless subjected His own will to His Father: "And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless *not what I will, but what thou wilt*" (Mark 14:35-36; see also Luke 22:44).

What Jesus demonstrated regarding selflessness would be impossible for any believer except for the fact that every true follower of Christ has been sealed with the Holy Spirit, who enables one to live out Christ's instructions: "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man... Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (Ephesians 3:16; 6:10).

May the prayer found in Hebrews be our continual cry to the Lord and our encouragement in order to win the battle over self: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work *to do His will*, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21). And amen.

TBC

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

You can submit your own questions to TBC by writing to us at -
PO Box 7019 • Bend, OR 97708 or by e-mailing editorial@thebereanall.org

QUESTION: Like me, you folks at TBC probably do not agree with all of Mark Biltz's theology; however, my wife and I enjoy very much Mark's teaching on the Hebrew picture language, his teaching on the Lord's Feasts, and many insightful concepts of his teaching as well as some of his guest speakers. We encourage you folks to watch and promote their [good] agenda, which seems to us to be very accurate.

RESPONSE: There is a good reason why the Scriptures tell us that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9). Although Mark Biltz may at times give some helpful information, his agenda is never far beneath the surface, and it cannot be called good.

For example, his teaching on the Feasts of the Lord involves more than biblical exegesis or "rightly dividing" the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). In an interview on *Prophecy in the News*, Biltz states, "When we hear the word 'feast,' we think food. But the Hebrew word has nothing to do with food. It has to do with a divine appointment, as if God has a Day-timer, and He says, 'OK, I'm gonna mark the day and the time when I'm going to signal My appearance'" (cited in *World Net Daily [WND]*, www.wnd.com/2008/04/63076/).

Although careful to use words such as "possible" or "could be," Biltz has linked the Feast Days to his theories concerning the "blood moons" of 2014 and 2015. *WND*, which strongly promotes Biltz's materials, said, "The pastor is now sounding the alarm about what the celestial events could mean for our immediate future here on Earth." Biltz told *WND*, "Four total lunar eclipses happening the next two years herald possible war in the Middle East as well as global economic collapse" (www.wnd.com/2014/02/blood-moons-mania-to-shake-planet-earth/).

Defenders of Biltz have pointed out that he often says, "I do not set dates, but I will teach you God's appointed times or Festivals." So, what does that mean, according to Biltz? Regardless of his disclaimer, the urgency of his teaching is clear: "This has happened only eight times over the last 2,000 years! And the last two times [that] these occurred on the Jewish holidays, there was a war in the Middle East regarding the nation of Israel.... The Jewish *Talmud* records that total lunar eclipses are indicators or omens for the nation of Israel," said Biltz (*Ibid.*).

We see that Biltz's agenda involves more than just teaching the Hebrew roots of our biblical faith. In fact, his citation of the *Talmud* raises additional concerns. Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) teachers like Biltz often tell you, with some truth, that Christianity (generically speaking) has been influenced by paganism and the traditions of men. Invariably, however, they teach that their way is the true way to worship YHVH, and Christians are uninformed, not knowing Torah from a Hebrew perspective. For Biltz, this includes the *Talmud*, which is the writing containing Jewish civil and ceremonial law, commentary on the *Torah*, and Jewish legends.

Their perspective, however, too often leads to a modern Judaism that is not derived from the Five Books of Moses. Rather, as Reformed Judaism writers tell us, "The *Talmud* (Hebrew for 'study') is one of the central works of the Jewish people. It is the record of rabbinic teachings that spans a period of about six hundred years, beginning in the first century C.E. and continuing through the sixth and seventh centuries C.E. The rabbinic teachings of the *Talmud* explain in great detail how the commandments of

the Torah are to be carried out" (Ronald H. Isaacs, *A Taste of Text* [URJ Press, 2003] and Mark Washofsky, *Jewish Living* [URJ Press, 2010]). As Jesus, in the "first century C.E.," told the religious leaders, "[You make] the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:13).

It is also certainly true, as our ministry has sought to demonstrate, that too many in the evangelical church in the West today have succumbed to the deceptions of the Emergent Church, mysticism, Purpose Driven Life, etc., and have set aside sound doctrine. As 2 Timothy 4:3-4 tells us, "For the time will come when *they will not endure sound doctrine*; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

This is but one of Scripture's warnings about turning from sound doctrine to fables, i.e., fictions or myths. Others include Paul's warning in 1 Timothy 1:4: "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions [cause disputes], rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do" (See also Titus 1:14).

Until recently, Mark Biltz stated on his website "We do not want to convert Jews to Christianity or Christians to Judaism. The Scriptures say: The LORD will magnify the Torah and make it honorable, and those that love Torah will have great peace (Is 42:21/Ps 119:165). Yeshua loved Torah and loving what He loved will bring true Peace!" When Biltz teaches the Torah, that teaching comes with implicit demands. Biltz states, "Shabbat is a critically important Torah picture telling us the Good News is [that] we don't work to earn our salvation; it's a free gift. The Sabbath is the gospel message. When we don't keep the Sabbath, we are denying the good news!" (Yeshua our Cornerstone Series, "Feast of Shabbat," Notes, p. 1). On the contrary, if we are obligated to "keep the Sabbath" we've rejected the good news.

Whatever sound insights teachers such as Biltz may have, their promotion of unbiblical teaching remains a problem. The potential danger is that one not grounded in the Word might be drawn away from the faith. Jude exhorts, "Beloved... it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (v.3).

In conclusion, any insights gained come with unbiblical baggage. Biltz states in his book, *Blood Moons: Decoding the Imminent Heavenly Signs*, that a person will not be able to understand the Bible without studying the Hebrew language. He goes beyond that premise and claims insights that are kept from the average Christian because every Hebrew letter represents a word, a number, and a picture. Consequently, he is essentially teaching a Bible code that the average believer must be able to read in order to understand the Scriptures. Without interpreting the picture meaning of every Hebrew letter, we cannot comprehend what the Bible is teaching. He labels this as the decoder ring for being able to see what God is hiding. The subtitle of the *Blood Moons* book is *Decoding the Imminent Heavenly Signs*. This subtitle gives us a clue as to where Biltz gained his insights. Mark Biltz is into Jewish mysticism, or, more precisely, the Kabbalah. The Kabbalah movement argues that the full message of the Bible is never on the surface, but must be discovered through divining its secrets (Biltz, *Blood Moons: Decoding the Imminent Heavenly Signs* [WND Books, 2014], 16).

May the Lord give us wisdom concerning these teachers.

LETTERS

Want to connect with TBC? Write to us at PO Box 7019 • Bend, OR 97708
or email editorial@thebereancall.org

Tom,

Someone might call me a contrarian because I am generally careful and skeptical, and sometimes I don't agree with everything you say either, but this time I can only say thank you for the clear and classic distinguishing between Rome and the biblical gospel. Thank you for your bravery too. May the Lord protect you and BC.

I try to be charitable toward anyone professing Christ, as the Lord does not crush bruised reeds nor extinguish smoking flax, but my saying concerning Catholics has long been, "If any among them are saved, it is not because of Romanist doctrine but in spite of it." But it is one thing to be tender and gracious and quite another thing to hide plain truth; we CANNOT join with Rome, and those who do are either still in spiritual and biblical darkness, or are apostates going back into darkness, or both. TS (email)

Dear T. A.,

I'm reminded of what Dave used to say about how we try to make the gospel acceptable to the world. That was my impression of [a church Christmas show I attended]. The quality of the music was excellent. The staging, lights, and effects were awesome. But of all the time we spent there, approximately two hours, I only heard the gospel presented for about six minutes. The light show and special effects and dancing dominated the night, and, finally, Jesus got to tell His story. The rest was glitter, glam, and just plain entertainment. JB (TX)

Dear Mr. McMahon,

I want to say thank you for your critical discernment letter you did on *The Harbinger*. For many years I have been deeply bothered by Cahn and many other Rabbinical Jews, like Sid Roth, etc. I love the Jews...and I pray for them as I know what is coming. I see a bigger picture being played out here behind the scenes and that is

the enemy has crept in and millions of Christians will be caught up by these lying men and will fall into apostasy and be carried away to Babylon (spiritual). Because of the love the Gentile Christian has for the Messianic Jew they have been tricked and blinded as they chose them over truth. The enemy is cunning in his use of these men and the Christians don't see it. VG (South Africa)

Dear TBC,

Thank you for sending me...one of the most challenging books ever given to me by a ministry....Most ministries send only basic truths to us....I desire to be an apologist and to that end and with the Lord's help...I will study to show myself approved...rightly dividing God's Word....You have greatly helped me to be able to use logic and reason.... RW (AR, prisoner)

Mr. McMahon,

Thank you for the timely piece on Roman Catholicism. My husband was raised in the Catholic Church, but left it as a young adult. When we married, neither of us were Christians, but we decided to read the Bible. We both found many startling facts our cultish backgrounds had skipped over. (I was brought up in Christian Science). The verse which spoke loud and clear to him was 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...." That pretty well does away with praying to or through saints, and the so-called power of the Catholic priesthood.

The apostasy of the Church is discernible almost everywhere now. Local churches that used to be considered "good churches" are compromising absolute faithfulness to Scripture for (apparently) larger audiences. What you wrote about the Catholic religion is true. But much more could also be said about the road that many mainline and evangelical churches are following. It is thrilling to be living in a time when we see the prophecy of God's Word falling into place before our very eyes, but it is also discouraging when trying to find a church that preaches the Truth.

Thank you for staying true to God's Word. SL (email)

TBC NOTES

Less is More...

You may have noticed fewer pages in this month's newsletter. Reducing the size will lower our printing and production costs, which are on the rise, and will enable us to continue to send the newsletter free of charge within the US. The subscription rate for addresses outside the US will remain at \$12 per year.

The main changes to note are fewer resource pages and no book excerpts. Our apologies to those who will miss the removed content. On the other hand, we invite you to access additional editorial content on our website, www.thebereancall.org.

You can help us to be careful stewards of the funds that God so graciously provides by switching to our email edition. Simply visit our website and click on the red "Subscribe" button. Be sure to let us know that you've switched to email and we will discontinue your paper edition.

T. A. McMAHON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

T. A.'S SPEAKING SCHEDULE

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| May 1-3 | Candlelight Fellowship
Coeur d'Alene, ID (208) 772-7755 |
| May 15-17 | Cornerstone Baptist Church
Fargo, ND (701) 371-2416 |
| Aug 28-30 | TBC Conference
Bend, OR (800) 937-6638 |

STS 24/7 BROADCAST SCHEDULE

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Mar 6 | Dave & Tom Classic
<i>What Does the Bible Teach about Self?</i> |
| Mar 13 | Dave & Tom Classic
<i>Is Your Self-Esteem Too Low?</i> |
| Mar 20 | Dave & Tom Classic
<i>Does a Positive Self-Image Make You a Better Person?</i> |
| Mar 27 | Dave & Tom Classic
<i>How Can God Love Worthless People?</i> |

Listen to *Search the Scriptures 24/7* at -
www.thebereancall.org/radio (Schedule is subject to change.)

NEWSWATCH

News stories are selected for reader awareness and as an exercise
in discerning the times from a biblical perspective.

SAUDIS BUILDING 600-MILE WALL TO KEEP ISIS OUT

CHRISTIANHEADLINES.COM, 1/27/15, "SAUDI ARABIA BUILDING 600-MILE WALL TO KEEP ISIS OUT" [EXCERPTS]: Saudi Arabia is building a 600-mile long wall along its northern border with Iraq in order to keep ISIS at bay, the Telegraph newspaper reported.

Each watchtower will be equipped with high-tech surveillance radars that are capable of detecting low-flying helicopters and approaching vehicles, as well as being able to spot a human from the range of about 20km.

Work on the wall was started in September 2014 but plans for the project were initially drafted in September 2006 at the height of the Iraqi civil war. ISIS's advance across central and south-western Iraq has prompted fear in Riyadh of a violent overflow and the project was given the go ahead.

It will not be the first time Saudi Arabia has enforced one of its borders. In 2013 it constructed a 1,100 mile barrier across its southern border with Yemen after a spate of intense sectarian fighting in the country led to a deterioration of security along the border.

(<http://goo.gl/GbHTmf>)

MORMONS BACK GAY RIGHTS—WITH ONE CONDITION

CNN.COM, 1/27/15, "MORMON CHURCH BACKS LGBT RIGHTS—WITH ONE CONDITION" [EXCERPTS]: In at least one big and bruising culture-war battle, the Mormon church wants to call a partial truce.

Convening a rare press conference on Tuesday at church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Mormon leaders pledged to support anti-discrimination laws for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people, as long as the laws also protect the rights of religious groups.

In exchange, the Mormon church wants gay rights advocates—and the government—to back off. "When religious people are publicly intimidated, retaliated against, forced from employment or made to suffer personal loss because they have raised their voice in the public square, donated to a cause or participated in an election, our democracy is the loser," said Elder Dallin Oaks, a member of the church's Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

The Mormon church is one of several religious groups to complain about

religious freedom coming under "attack" in recent years.

Oaks cited several examples...including:

- The mayor of Houston subpoenaing sermon notes last year from pastors who opposed an equal rights ordination. The subpoena was later dropped.
- Public pressure on a Mormon gymnast to step down as an Olympic liaison in 2011 because he had supported California's Proposition 8, which banned gay marriage in 2008
- In 2014, Mozilla CEO Brendan Eich was forced to resign because he had donated money to support the passage of Prop 8.

"It is one of today's great ironies that some people who have fought so hard for LGBT rights now try to deny the rights of others to disagree with their public policy proposals," said Oaks.

(<http://goo.gl/D7F0ma>)

NO ROOM IN AMERICA FOR CHRISTIAN REFUGEES

CHRISTIANHEADLINES.COM, 1/5/15, "NO ROOM IN AMERICA FOR CHRISTIAN REFUGEES" [EXCERPTS]: At the end of World War II, the Jewish survivors of Europe's Holocaust found that nearly every door was closed to them. "Tell Me Where Can I Go?" was a popular Yiddish song at the time. Decades later, the Christians of the Middle East face the same problem, and the Obama administration is keeping the door shut.

America is about to accept 9000 Syrian Muslims, refugees of the brutal war between the Assad regime and its Sunni opposition, which includes ISIS, Al Qaeda, and various other militias. That number is predicted to increase each year. There are no Christian refugees that will be admitted.

No matter how moved Americans were this Christmas season by the plight of their fellow Christ followers in Syria and Iraq, no matter how horrific the visuals of beheadings, enslavement, and mass murder...The Christians are being raped, tortured, and murdered by militias, not by the Syrian government. This technicality condemns them to continue to be victims without hope. And this technicality is being adhered to with all the tenacity with which President Franklin D. Roosevelt's State Department manipulated quotas and created subterfuges to keep out the Jews

fleeing the oppression of Nazi Germany. Obama no more wants the Middle East's Christian refugees than Roosevelt wanted Europe's Jewish refugees.

The Department of State chooses to adhere to a definition of refugees as people persecuted by their own government. The Christians would barely have to be vetted for ties to terror organizations, which by their very nature do not take Christians. Meanwhile, there is the uncomfortable issue that among the Sunni refugees there are some in league with the Sunni terror militias. And beyond that there is the equally uncomfortable question of the acculturation of segments of the Muslim community.

(<http://goo.gl/R14gWP>)

THE BEREAN CALL

Founder: Dave Hunt
Executive Director: T. A. McMahon

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The Berean Call (TBC) has always operated on the belief that God will provide as we seek His face, so we do not make appeals for financial help. Although the ministry operates primarily on donations, these are freewill and not solicited. Through the years, TBC has seen God "do exceeding abundantly above" all that was asked or thought.

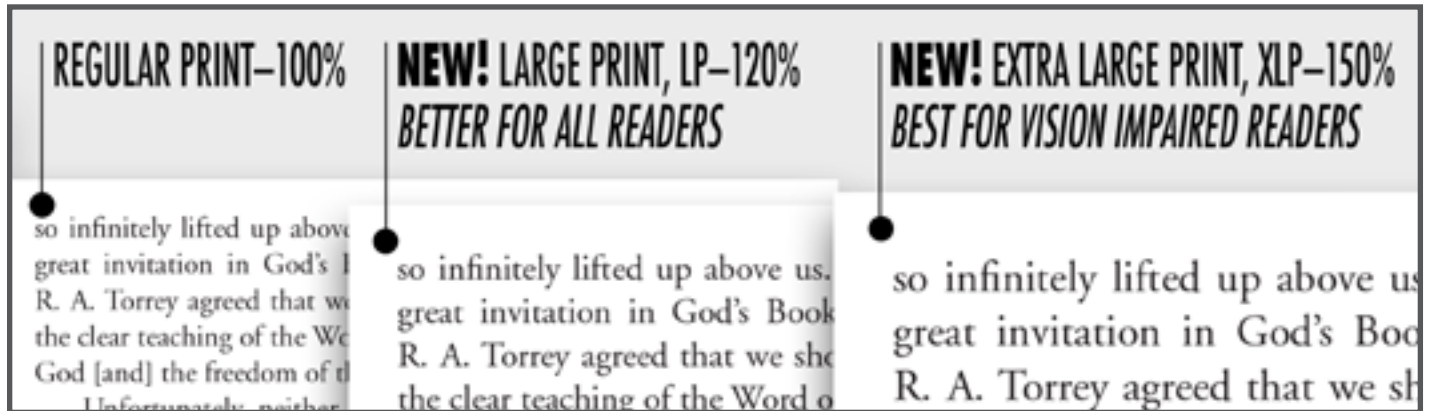
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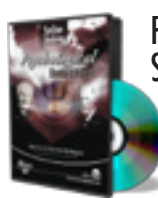
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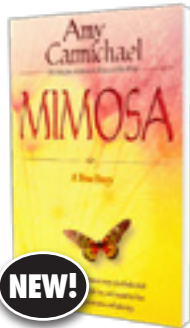
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