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FEBRUARY 2013

THE DEMISE OF BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT

by T.A. McMahon

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THE BEREAN CALL

"[The Bereans] . . . searched the scriptures daily, [to see] whether those things were so."—Acts 17:11

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The Demise of Biblical Discernment

T. A. McMahon

In last month's issue of this newsletter we exhorted our readers to discipline themselves to read the Word of God daily. The emphasis was on developing a habit, the best and most necessary habit—one that every believer should have. Of course, we encouraged reading the Bible as a basis for living one's life by what it teaches, which is the only way that one who is born again spiritually can mature in the faith. Yet, here is the simple truth that too many Christians have missed: if we don't read God's Word for ourselves, we can't truly know its instructions. If we don't know God's instructions, we can't follow Him, and we therefore can't do what pleases Him. Tragically, many if not most Christians haven't considered that simple truth. Their spiritual beliefs tend to be a collection of things they've heard (sermons, radio, TV, books, movies, etc.) mixed with what they may or may not have gotten from the Bible. They have been spoon-fed rather than getting their spiritual meals directly from God's Word.

Why is that tragic? Wouldn't it be of value to get input from the various Christian media regarding the teachings of our Lord? Hasn't our Lord gifted teachers to help believers better understand His Word? Certainly, but if that is our primary feeding of God's Word, it leads to a spiritual anemia at best and makes us defenseless against spiritual deception at worst. How can a believer tell the difference between a good teacher and a false teacher? Although Scripture tells us that God gave some to be teachers (Ephesians 4:11), His Word also tells us, "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies" (2 Peter 2:1). So how can we know what's what and who's who?

Most Christians are not asking such questions—nor do they seem to be concerned about the consequences related to a lack of biblical discernment. The second chapter of Hebrews begins with a warning that we could drift away from the Scriptures and find ourselves going along with something that seems biblical but is not. More and more frequently these days, I hear confessing and professing Christians excusing themselves and others for their unbiblical beliefs and practices by declaring that they

all nevertheless "love Jesus." What Jesus might that be? Is it the biblical Jesus—the One who declares that He is "*the way, the truth, and the life*"? Is it the Word incarnate, who challenges everyone who professes to be a believer in Him by asking: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Would our reply be, "Sorry, Lord, I wasn't aware of most of the things that you said"? If that's the case, having "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16) is a wishful delusion.

Just so there is no misunderstanding, the heart of this article is a *concern for the fruitfulness* of everyone who truly knows the biblical Jesus, everyone who has by faith alone put his or her trust in Christ as Savior, the One, the only One, who could (and did) pay the full penalty for the sins of mankind. For those who have put their faith in Him and have received His gift of eternal life, what follows is their life *in Christ*, which is all about living a godly and productive life. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). A believer's fruitfulness not only greatly enriches his own life, but his new life in Christ becomes a testimony, a witness to the truth of the gospel that changed his life, so that others may be drawn to Jesus. Yet a believer's life in Christ will be spiritually futile if he (or she) doesn't really know what Jesus taught.

An unproductive life in Christ is bad enough, but it can go far beyond just being spiritually feeble. Not knowing the Word of God sets one up for being spiritually deceived. Again, it should be rather obvious: if we don't know what the Bible says, we can't discern what is true to it and what is contrary to it. Consequently, a person who is ignorant of the Scriptures is ripe for being led away from God's truth. When such a condition becomes epidemic among Christians, they become collective pawns of God's adversary, Satan, and participants in the apostasy as well as unwitting contributors to the emerging religion of the Antichrist (Revelation 13). But could such a thing happen?

Both Dave Hunt and I have been observing trends in the evangelical church for 35 years. In those three and a half decades significant developments have taken place, all of which have greatly undermined the belief in and dependence upon the Scriptures. We have documented such developments in the twenty years of TBC's existence and

five years prior to that in *The Seduction of Christianity*. In past articles we have shown from God's Word that Satan's primary strategy as the deceiver of mankind is reflected in his initial statement to Eve in the Garden of Eden, a tactic calculated to weaken her trust in God's Word by questioning it: "Yea, hath God said. . . ?" (Genesis 3:1). Down through history, he has expanded his assault on the Word beyond planting seeds of doubt to distorting, denigrating, corrupting, compromising, and outright lying about the Scriptures. In the last 30 years, some of his most effective devices have seduced Christians away from the written Word of God, replacing it with subjective and experiential content (feelings-oriented beliefs). Briefly (see our archives for more extensive writings on these subjects and others), that drift has been a major contributor to the *demise of biblical discernment*.

For example, the false teaching known as *Rhema* vs. *Logos* says that God *speaks* today to believers with the same or even greater authority than is found in the Bible. For decades this doctrine has led millions of Charismatic and Pentecostal believers away from the objective, written Word of God.

The subjective pseudoscience of Christian psychology, with its goal of integrating psychology with the Bible (primarily through psychological counseling), has infected the conservative evangelical church with the humanistic doctrines of self-love and self-esteem. Even more damaging, it has all but eliminated the belief in the *sufficiency of the Scriptures* for multitudes of Christians.

The Church Growth Movement (the attempt to increase church membership through various consumer-oriented devices aimed primarily at meeting the "felt needs" of the lost) has turned to the "way that seemeth right unto a man" (read *marketing*) in opposition to God's way. That development has been a major factor in ushering man's so-called wisdom into the church and distancing it from the Scriptures.

The youth-oriented Emerging Church Movement (ECM) is an attempt at supposedly reaching the "culture" for Christ by emulating that culture and much of its worldly affinities. ECM writers (many of whom have conservative evangelical backgrounds) have advocated "reinventing Christianity" in order to reconcile it with what the world *believes* and acts upon socially, psychologically, politically, morally, scientifically, and theologically. Because it claims

absolute authority in its *doctrines*, the Bible itself is the chief obstacle to the ECM, and therefore “must be re-imagined” in order to accommodate man’s thinking. Such distortion of God’s Word is deceptively tragic for a generation of young Christians, few of whom have been disciplined in the faith.

These are just a few of Satan’s most successful assaults against the doctrines of the Bible and the people of God. Should anyone be surprised that the Adversary would be so effective among those who profess to be Christians? Shocked perhaps, but not surprised. When an army lacks training, discipline, and is ill equipped to do battle, should it come as a surprise that the enemy is taking many of its soldiers captive?

Let’s spell out the problem in spiritual terms once again: lack of training (no discipleship), lack of discipline (not reading the Scriptures daily), and being ill equipped (mishandling the Sword of the Spirit). But don’t take my word for it! Let’s go to God’s infallible Word. Regarding the particular *time* when biblical truth will be abandoned by great numbers in the church who have been deceived, Jesus gives us a sobering warning, characterizing the last days prior to His return in these words: “Take heed that no man deceive you....” He then adds that the deception will be so great that the very elect will be vulnerable (Matthew 24:4,24). Furthermore, most of the epistles also address the subject of believers drifting away from sound doctrine.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul wrote, “For the time will come when they will *not endure sound doctrine*” (2 Timothy 4:3). Paul is obviously speaking to the church. Those in the church who do not study the Scriptures for themselves cannot endure (take to heart and live out) *sound doctrine* (God’s instructions). He wrote to the church at Ephesus, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14).

Scripture seems to be making it quite clear that not enduring sound doctrine opens one up to spiritual deception. To the Ephesian elders Paul issues a warning of what would take place after his departing: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30). This was Paul’s parting warning to his beloved

Ephesian believers, a message of critical concern for their future in Christ. Paul knew what devastating destruction would result from their turning to *false doctrine*. It was a message that he preached continuously and tearfully during his three years with them.

Those who do “endure sound doctrine,” besides having the primary foundation for a fruitful life in Christ, are also equipped to *discern and resist* the wiles of the Adversary’s many deceptions. That’s the good news. The not-so-pleasant news is that they will find themselves on the front lines of a spiritual battle that is increasing in intensity daily. One need only conduct a cursory review of the Scriptures and later church history to get an idea of how destructive, even deadly, have been the consequences related to the church’s non-adherence to biblical doctrine. We see many reacting today by claiming that it is the doctrines of the Bible themselves, especially when they are accepted dogmatically, that create division. Such thinking is a fulfillment of “not enduring sound doctrine.” It is *false doctrine itself* that divides because it separates a believer from the truth.

Paul clears up the misconception: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). Incredibly, it is that verse, misapplied, that has been used against the multitudes who have contacted us because their church leadership would not hear their concerns regarding false doctrines and programs that had entered their fellowship. Most have been threatened with “disfellowship” for actually *enduring* sound doctrine. Such situations are intensifying throughout the church, undoubtedly for some of the reasons listed in this article but perhaps in fulfillment of Peter’s prophecy: “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God...” (1 Peter 4:17).

Although for decades we at TBC have been exhorting and encouraging believers to be Bereans (i.e., to check out everything they are being taught by searching the Scriptures—Acts 17:10-11), we too have experienced the increased intensity of the spiritual battle and witnessed its exponential growth. The latest issue, which we submit to you for prayer support, is a threatened lawsuit over the book we published by David James (*The Harbinger: Fact or Fiction?*). The complaint is that the author used too many quotes from the *New York Times* best-selling book, *The Harbinger*, without permission from author “rabbi” Jonathan Cahn and publisher Charisma Media Publications (CMP). The complaint further states that our use of the quotes has inhibited the sales of *The Harbinger* and has thus financially damaged Cahn and CMP in an amount yet

to be determined. In effect, we are being told that we must limit our documentation in warning the body of Christ of the biblical errors in *The Harbinger*. In other words, we cannot be Bereans or like the watchman of Ezekiel 3:17-19 without Cahn’s permission.

This is the first time in my 35 years of working with Dave Hunt and our addressing nearly every major religion, religious cult, aberrational Christian sect, unbiblical trend, religious publication, book, media production, etc., that any organization or individual has even hinted at suing us. Now, however, we are being threatened with legal action by those claiming to be in the church. More critical than the unbiblical action of a brother threatening to take another brother to court (1 Corinthians 6) is the issue of preventing the biblical evaluation of a work that is influencing hundreds of thousands of professing and confessing Christians, as well as those who don’t profess to know Christ. We have hired a copyright attorney to address the legal issues and have responded to the attorney for Cahn and CMP. Even so, we covet your prayers that the Lord will be glorified throughout the process.

As the spiritual battle rages around us, the Word of God gives us directives regarding how we are to function in it. Paul gives Timothy general instructions: “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). In ministering correction, he writes: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Then there may be times that, as the Spirit leads us, tougher action is to be taken: “These things speak, and exhort, and *rebuke with all authority*. Let no man despise thee...” (Titus 2:15). Titus was to minister the Word of God to his flock, his authority was the Scriptures, and he was exhorted to stand fast in them that he not be despised for backing away from sound doctrine.

Our prayer is that all who name the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will follow Paul’s encouragement to Timothy and to us as well: “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.... Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.... Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (1 Timothy 4:13,16; 2 Timothy 4:2).

Quotable

Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years, but by obedience to the will of God. Some people mature into an understanding of God's will more quickly than others because they obey more readily; they more readily sacrifice the life of nature to the will of God; they more easily swing clear of little determined opinions. It is these little determined opinions, convictions of our own that won't budge, that hinder growth in grace and makes us bitter and dogmatic, intolerant, and utterly un-Christlike.

—Oswald Chambers

Q&A

QUESTION: The Bible is important to us personally; we memorize whole chapters of it for truth and meditate on them (as God in Scripture directs us to) for deeper understanding. In this way, the Bible is of great help. But I have to oppose those who teach that the Bible is essential, is vital for anything, especially for salvation. Enoch and Noah walked with God and didn't even have Genesis. Jesus informed us that His sheep hear His voice, as Enoch, Noah, Daniel, Job, and innumerable others did—and still do, since the Lord does not change. “Bibliolatry,” the belief that the written word is more important, more to be sought for answers, than the Living Word who gave it, is very prevalent in America's churches. Have you addressed this?

RESPONSE: There is little danger of “Bibliolatry” being seen today, although the invented term itself bears a lot in common with other inventions such as “homophobia.” In both cases, each word seems very well designed to pursue an agenda but leads us far away from the truth.

There are other utilitarian sayings, such as “too heavenly minded to be any earthly good,” which have been crafted by the adversary to sound clever and to divert attention away from what should really be considered. Actually, if a person is truly “heavenly minded,” he or she will be of immense earthly good!

It is true that Enoch, Noah, Daniel, Job, and others didn't “have Genesis” in their hand. They did, however, walk with God, and it was His *Word* upon which they fed. There is no logical, compelling reason to doubt that very early on godly men began to record man's interaction with His Creator.

Skeptics like to argue that writing itself didn't widely exist in the time of Abraham. This belief came into popularity in the middle of the 1800s, when the liberal march

of heresy was well underway. Liberal “Christian” college teachers put forth the notion that the Bible came after centuries of oral tradition because *no one could write in the time of Moses*. This folly has been destroyed by evidence of writing that took place 1,800 years *before* Moses. In addition, linguistic scholars have noted the archaic phrases in the book of Job, and there are also “more references [in Job] to creation, the flood, and other primeval events than any book of the Bible except Genesis” (Henry M. Morris, in “Introduction to the Book of Job,” *The Henry Morris Study Bible*, Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2012). Bible scholars have a number of other reasons for asserting that the writing of Job preceded Moses' writing Genesis. Simply put, the book of Job is old.

Yes, we memorize and meditate upon the Bible but not just for “deeper understanding.” Joshua 1:8 tells us, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: *for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*”

Many passages in the Old Testament establish the fact that the Scriptures are to be the basis of how we live our lives: “And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth” (Dt 11:20-21).

You say that the Bible is “not essential?” The Lord Jesus Christ has a far different view. Jesus confronted the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-27). He rebuked them for their failure to believe the Word of God. According to the narrative, “... beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (v. 27). In other words, He taught them the *essentials*.

“Not essential?” Then why did the Lord inspire Paul to write Romans 10:17: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God?” This clearly is speaking of more than what some call the “Living Word of God” as opposed to the written word of God. “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14).

There is very little evidence that a presumed Bibliolatry “is very prevalent in America's churches.” On the contrary, we are seeing (as we have documented) an increasing *rejection* of Scripture in favor of mysticism, emotionalism, and “every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4:14). Many self-proclaimed

prophets are claiming to have had great spiritual experiences and warn those who would test their words against the Scriptures to “not touch the Lord's anointed.”

This is what we should be concerned about in these days. The Prophet Amos warned of a time that sounds very much like today: “Behold, the days come, says the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” (Am 8:11).

Knowing Jesus is absolutely vital, but how do we know that it is the real Jesus unless we are able to discern between the genuine and the counterfeit? “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him [i.e., you gladly embrace him]” (2 Cor 11:4).

May the Lord give us His balance and the discernment He has promised in His Word.

QUESTION: Does God hear and respond to the prayers of the unsaved? I know that believers have the privilege of prayer as children of God, but what about the Lord?

RESPONSE: It is clear that God hears every prayer—meaning that He is aware of the petitioner and his or her prayer. The pertinent question, however is, Does God hear and respond to every prayer? It has often been said that the only prayer of the unrighteous that the Lord will hear is a prayer of repentance. The following Scriptures come to mind: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Ps 66:18). “The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous” (Prv 15:29).

In 1 Peter 3:12, the apostle writes, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”

The intent of the heart is key. The Roman Centurion Cornelius was a just (not *justified*) man, who told Peter, “Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God” (Acts 10:30-31). Earlier, the angel told him to contact Peter, “Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14). Cornelius was clearly seeking the Lord, and in this instance we can see that the prayers of a man who was not yet saved were heard.

Again, it is clear that the Lord will hear the prayers of the repentant man, and the one who is earnestly seeking Him: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13).

TBC NewsWatch

BBC3 SUICIDE COMEDY ROW

Christian Voice, 1/9/13, "BBC3 Suicide Comedy Row" [Excerpts]: An Member of Parliament has criticised the BBC for planning to air a situation comedy which treats assisted suicide as a "matter of fun," reports the *Sunday Express*.

Way To Go has three young men building a machine that can kill people. They offer their services for money to those who wish to end their lives. The show is written by US-based writer Bob Kushell and stars Blake Harrison, Marc Wootton and Ben Heathcote.

But Conservative MP Mark Pritchard has slammed the sitcom, planned to go out on BBC 3 this month. He said: "This is a sensitive and complex issue that should be handled with compassion and understanding.

"It is a sad fact that assisted dying is now regarded a 'revenue stream' to some foreign clinics and clearly as a matter of fun by some parts of the BBC."

In one scene the lever of the machine is pulled to inject a fatal dose. Harrison's next-door neighbour dies in a matter of seconds.

Later a friend phones from a pub with another client for the assisted suicide machine.

He tells him: "He's got stomach cancer. How fantastic is that!"

BBC 3 controller Zai Bennett said: "Bob Kushell's scripts are in turn dark, poignant, absurd, moving and brilliant, but mostly they are very, very funny. I'm thrilled that *Way To Go* is coming to BBC 3."

Comedy producer Jon Plowman, responsible for shows such as *The Office* and *Little Britain*, said: "*Way To Go* is a show about a current and difficult issue but it treats its serious subject in the same way that *Arsenic and Old Lace* dealt with old lady poisoners or *Kind Hearts and Coronets* dealt with aristocratic murders."

Government figures show that three-quarters of suicides in the UK are by men with those aged 30-39 at highest risk of suicide, followed by men aged 40-49.

However, teenage suicide is a serious and growing problem. Suicide is the second most common cause of death in people aged 15-24, behind accidental death.

<http://www.christianvoice.org.uk/index.php/2012jan09suicide/>

[TBC: In Plowman's attempt to compare Way to Go with old productions such as Arsenic and Old Lace, he forgets that the

reaction of the secular participants was to stop the old lady poisoners from doing what they were doing. There was a message that it was wrong. That message has vanished today.]

ISLAMIC EXTREMISM DOMINATES PERSECUTION LIST

Baptist Press, 1/9/13, "Islamic extremism dominates persecution list" [Excerpts]: Islamic extremism, especially in Africa and the Middle East, dominates the latest annual report on global persecution of Christians.

Eight of the top 10 persecutors of Christians—and 24 of the top 30—are countries marked by militant Islam, according to Open Doors' 2013 World Watch List released Jan. 8.

Meanwhile, North Korea, a non-Islamic country, maintained its hold on the No. 1 spot in the Open Doors list for the 11th consecutive year.

"Islamic extremism is the prime persecutor of Christians in the world today," said Ron Boyd-MacMillan, Open Doors' chief strategy officer, at a Washington, D.C., news conference. Among 24 of the leading 30 persecuting countries, "it is Islamic extremists, either in government or in violent opposition forces, that are the source of the persecution," he said.

The new list of the world's most severe persecutors of Christians includes five African countries that were unranked last year but reached the top 50 because of the impact of Islamic extremism: Mali (No. 7); Tanzania (No. 24); Kenya (No. 40); Uganda (No. 47), and Niger (No. 50).

In addition, militant Islam in Ethiopia helped catapult that East African country from No. 38 to No. 15. The Muslim state of Sudan, Ethiopia's neighbor, jumped from 16th to 12th.

The uprisings against totalitarian states in North Africa and the Middle East that began about two years ago have produced greater persecution for Christians.

(<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=39490&ref=BPNews-RSSFeed0109>)

IS IT A SIN TO BAKE A CAKE FOR A GAY COUPLE?

The Christian Post, 1/10/13, "Is it a sin to bake a cake for a gay couple?" [Excerpts]: Thanks to our progressive government, Christians are suddenly confronted with conundrums that once belonged in the category of "how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?"

Conundrum #1: Due to new laws allowing gay marriage, Christian bakers, innkeepers, florists, photographers and

caterers are suddenly forced to answer a question once thought unthinkable, "Is it a sin for a Christian business owner to provide a service for a gay couple?"

It is a Sin: Discover Annapolis Trolley Cars has determined to go out of business rather than compromise their Christian convictions. They believe it is a sin to provide a trolley ride to gay couples as they believe they would be participating in a sinful activity: gay marriage.

It is Not a Sin: Some would argue that providing a wedding service for a gay couple is no different than providing a service for any other sinner. Certainly Discover Annapolis Trolleys has provided a ride for some couples who were having affairs. We can assume that Discover Trolleys gave a wedding tour to couples who were unequally yoked, therefore, providing a service for a gay wedding couple should be no different.

Conundrum #2: Health and Human Services insists that Christian owned Hobby Lobby provide insurance for employees who can purchase abortifacient birth control pills.

It is a Sin: Hobby Lobby concluded they cannot comply with our government's demand and they are willing to face draconian fines for their stance. They simply cannot violate their Christian conscience as they believe that providing abortifacients for employees is a sin.

It is Not Sin: Some would argue that Hobby Lobby already "pays for abortions" every time they pay their taxes to the government which provides 1/3 of Planned Parenthood's revenue. Furthermore, employers provide compensation to employees who use that money for other nefarious purposes. This is no different.

What Does the Bible Say? There is not a specific Bible verse that tells us exactly what to do in this situation. Therefore, we must examine all of the indirect verses that apply and draw careful conclusions. Let's examine two verses: Verse One: Jesus responded plainly to the question of paying taxes to a lousy government. We are to "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's (Mark 12:17). It is certain that the Roman government was using tax dollars to commit atrocious sins including the murder of Jewish people.

Verse Two: When Peter and John were commanded by the authorities to stop preaching the Gospel, they refused (Acts 4:18-20). If the government commands something God forbids, we cannot obey... if the government forbids something God commands, then we cannot comply.

(<http://blogs.christianpost.com/wretched/is-it-a-sin-to-bake-a-cake-for-a-gay-couple-14056/>)

T. A.'s Speaking Schedule

May 24-27 **Christian Renewal Center**
Silverton, OR
(503) 873-7743

Aug 23-24 **TBC Conference**
Bend, OR
(800) 937-6638

Letters

Dear Brother McMahon,

Shalom in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I receive *The Berean Call* via the prison chapel and I read the February 2012 [article] "Warning the Witnesses." This issue is close to my heart, and I have been trying to share the Gospel with [some family members and fellow inmates] that Jesus is God and only by faith are we saved. I have even had a strong discussion with two of the "Jehovah's Witnesses" who came to my prison cell one day. Please send me more information...so that I can learn and equip myself....Thank you and keep up the good work. GF (CA, prisoner)

Dear Saints at Berean Call,

Thank you, through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, that you are continuing [to be] "truth doers," standing for righteousness in rightly dividing the Word of God, and for being an edification and encouragement for this pilgrim that I might be sharpened and enabled by the Spirit to

prayerfully do my own "foraging" instead of being lazily "force" fed by just grazing on today's media supplements or indeed, even comfortably fed by sound teaching shepherds and ministries, versus going to the Word and searching on my own in prayer and by the Holy spirit's leading!...I discern a change manifesting among [many ministries] in that they are beginning to reveal a lack of discernment that causes me to grieve and to continue in prayer as they seem to be choosing to accept less than God's Word and Ways. The gate, the pilgrim path upon which we tread, becomes ever narrower.... I pray...that we might be filled with the love of Christ...and share this with the increasingly dark and deceived world, and sadly, the deceived saints. PS (ID)

T. A. McMahon,

I read with interest your recent article on the problem with accepting the so-called science of psychology in church practice. I would suggest an additional reason to exclude its use.

When one makes a sweeping statement such as, "all psychology is wrong," people almost cannot believe what they have heard. Years of taking true/false tests make us wary of accepting any statement with an absolute in it.

However, I contend that there is no psychological theory of human behavior that includes the concept of sin. All theories that exclude this aspect of human nature will fail to accurately describe why people do things. Any therapeutic methods derived from such flawed theories could only at

best hope to approach randomness in their efficacy.

For a pastor to apply a technique that can at best be as effective as doing nothing and at worst compound existing problems would seem foolish.

One can be sympathetic for pastors who have been prepared by their seminaries to defend their denominational doctrine, but have been left unprepared to deal Biblically with real human problems. For these men I would suggest cultivating relationships with older, wiser Christian men from whom they can learn the application of Christianity to real life. TF (email)

Dear Brother and Sister Hunt and Brother McMahon,

I am writing to tell you how much your ministry has blessed me over the years. I first read your newsletter in November 1995, while deployed to Kuwait. An airman gave me several of his copies and they were a great blessing to me then. I subscribed shortly after returning home and have received the monthly newsletter ever since.

[My family and I] have removed ourselves from our local Baptist congregation. The pastor there revealed that he does not believe God is omniscient. There are other stands he has taken that disagree with the Scriptures so we felt compelled to remove ourselves. The majority of the congregation is not bothered by this and sits quietly, agreeing to disagree.

We are blessed to have you preaching and teaching God's Word....Thank you again for blessing me. EM (TX)

TBC Notes

TBC 2013 Conference Date

We have finalized the dates for our conference this year and are quite excited about the opportunity to bring some terrific speakers to Bend for your spiritual edification. Our emphasis this year is ministering to young adults, an audience that has been missing from our past conferences. That is a common dilemma for conferences that major in biblical doctrine (apologetics, prophecy, hermeneutics, etc.), yet a knowledge of sound doctrine is critical in our day and especially in the days ahead for the next generation.

I was thinking of declaring that the conference will be free for everyone 30 and under and for everyone over 30 who brings someone 30 or under. However, the conference is free for everyone, so I can't enforce my wishful proposal. Nevertheless, I can still beg for one and all to bring young adults. I can guarantee that they won't be disappointed by the speakers and the topics: Carl Kerby (Creation vs. Evolution), Mark Cahill (Witnessing), David James (Hermeneutics), Keith Gibson (Cults), Paul Wilkinson (Israel and Prophecy),

T. A. McMahon (Psychology vs. Scripture). The dates are Friday, August 23, and Saturday, August 24, 2013.

Bend is at its "summer best" in August. Please join us!

"Radio" Returns

As most of you know, we ceased doing radio when it became too difficult for Dave Hunt because of his health issues, yet some stations were gracious enough to replay archived programs of *Search the Scriptures Daily*. Starting in February, we will begin a new program titled *Search the Scriptures 24•7*. Rather than returning to radio broadcasting, however, each 30-minute episode will be posted on our website each week with the goal of increasing to two programs per week later in the year.

Our format will primarily feature interviews geared to encourage discernment by focusing on unbiblical teachings and trends that are currently influencing great numbers of those in Christendom. The guests will be individuals who are knowledgeable of the issues and equipped to address them biblically. Look for *Search the Scriptures 24•7* on TBC's website.

T. A. McMAHON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE ISAIAH 9:10 EFFECT

EXCERPTED FROM *THE HARBINGER — FACT OR FICTION?* BY DAVID JAMES

THE NEXT major idea that Cahn introduces in connection with the “Second Shaking” is termed the *Isaiah 9:10 Effect*. Just as the theory of the nine harbingers was developed to demonstrate the connection between Isaiah 9:10 and America, the Isaiah 9:10 Effect is crucial to understanding God’s second round of warning to America.

[THE PROPHET] “As in there comes a second, yes. So what would it mean?”

[KAPLAN] “The prophecy has a second part, it leads to something else . . . to a second manifestation.”

[THE PROPHET] “The Isaiah 9:10 Effect.”

[KAPLAN] “Which is what?”

[THE PROPHET] “This: *‘The attempt of a nation to defy the course of its judgment, apart from repentance, will, instead, set in motion a chain of events to bring about the very calamity it sought to avert.’*”

Before going any further, the first question every reader should be asking about The Prophet’s definition of the Isaiah 9:10 Effect is, “Where did this definition come from?” It certainly didn’t come from Isaiah 9:10. Neither did it come from any of the verses in the vicinity of Isaiah 9:10. The importance of this matter cannot be overstated because the rest of Cahn’s entire theory depends on *this* theory—that there really is such a thing as the Isaiah 9:10 Effect. This is immediately apparent as the dialogue continues:

[KAPLAN] “And this all has to do with America?” I asked.

[THE PROPHET] “Seven years after 9/11,” he said, “the American economy collapsed, triggering a global economic implosion. Behind it all, and all that followed, was something much deeper than economics.”

[KAPLAN] “Behind the collapse of Wall Street and the American economy was . . .”

[THE PROPHET] “Isaiah 9:10.”

In the author’s mind, Isaiah’s words in the alleged Isaiah 9:10 Effect actually *cause things to happen*. This is clearly affirmed in

the following exchange at the end of chapter 16:

[KAPLAN] “As in the Isaiah 9:10 Effect?”

[THE PROPHET] “Yes, but in this mystery the connections are even more beyond the realm of the natural.”

[KAPLAN] “They’re supernatural?”

[THE PROPHET] “You could say that.”

[KAPLAN] “And they connect 9/11 to the economic collapse?”

[THE PROPHET] “Not only do they connect them . . . *they determined them . . . down to the time each would take place.*”

[KAPLAN] “An ancient mystery?”

[THE PROPHET] “Yes, an ancient mystery upon which the global economy and every transaction within *it was determined, a mystery that begins more than three thousand years ago in the sands of a Middle Eastern desert.*”

A FATAL FLAW IN THE THEORY

So, the question remains, “Where does the concept of the Isaiah 9:10 Effect come from?” Since it doesn’t come from the text itself nor from the immediate context, nor is anything remotely similar to the Isaiah 9:10 Effect mentioned or implied anywhere else in Scripture, it appears to be just another one of those things in the book that has been made up. Yet one would never guess that from reading *The Harbinger*. Cahn presents the Isaiah 9:10 Effect as if it were an inviolable scriptural principle—that once it is set in motion, the corresponding prescribed outcome is inevitable.

However, even if he were discussing only the fulfillment of Isaiah 9:10 in ancient Israel, this would not be a good way to explain how prophecies work. The reason that prophesied events happen is because God causes them to happen, not because the *prophecy itself* somehow causes them to happen. Yet Cahn seems to be suggesting that as a principle the Isaiah 9:10 Effect can

cause these same events to happen anywhere at any time once it is triggered.

Of course, if it were simply a general principle such as that of “sowing and reaping,” or like the many principles found in Proverbs, it wouldn’t necessarily be as problematic. Even this would disregard the fact that Isaiah 9:10 does not appear to be a principle in context. The Isaiah 9:10 Effect is presented as being so specific that it is independently formulaic. In other words, if and when the First Harbinger happens, then it is just a short matter of time until the Second Harbinger also happens—which will then be followed by each of the other harbingers—until finally the judgment takes place.

As noted before, Cahn strenuously argues that he has been misunderstood by those who believe he is saying that Isaiah 9:10 specifically applies to America. However, if that is not what he is saying, then the only other possible explanation is that the Isaiah 9:10 Effect is an independent and formulaic principle that operates in a mystical way through the power of the words themselves. Once again, he tries to have it both ways, as can be seen in the necessary results of the Isaiah 9:10 Effect (emphasis added):

- “So the rebuilding *must* begin . . .”
- “So the Gazit Stone *must* be brought . . .”
- “...the Sycamore *must* be replaced . . .”
- “The Erez Tree *must* be planted . . .”
- “The vow *must* be spoken . . .”
- “But according to the Isaiah 9:10 Effect the second calamity *must* be born out effectively of the first . . .”

This leaves Cahn with two major problems. If Isaiah 9:10 is to both ancient Israel and America, he is faced with an insurmountable hermeneutical problem. But if instead there really is such a thing as the Isaiah 9:10 Effect, he then has a historical problem.

What if “the breach” and “the terrorist” had been observed in 1812 or 1861 or 1941? In theory, could someone have discovered the “hidden ancient mystery” of Isaiah 9:10 in 1949? And if it had been claimed that Pearl Harbor was a breach by an enemy who persistently used terrorist tactics throughout the war in the Pacific (which the Japanese did), then could it not be argued that God’s hedge of protection had been withdrawn prior to December 7, 1941? And if the hedge of protection had been removed long before 9/11, had God put yet another hedge of protection in place since WWII? The questions are truly endless.

This is not an attempt to mock the author. This is a very serious issue because if he is correct about the Isaiah 9:10 Effect, then it could have happened at any time in the past or it could happen again at any time in the future. On the other hand, if it could only have happened one time on September 11, 2001, then *there is no such thing as the Isaiah 9:10 Effect as a principle.*

OTHER “. . . EFFECT” PASSAGES?

If Cahn is right about the Isaiah 9:10 Effect, this raises another very important question: Are there any other prophetic passages in the Old Testament that also function like the *Isaiah 9:10 Effect*? How many other prophecies that were directed to Israel can also be correlated to historical events in the United States?

Is there also a “Genesis 12:2 Effect?”:

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.

Or a “Joshua 1:2 Effect?”:

Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

Are there *dozens* of others? Or is Isaiah 9:10 the *only* such passage in the entire Bible? If the Isaiah 9:10 Effect really exists, then it seems remarkably unlikely that it would be the only such principle in the entire Old Testament. But if not from the context, how could it possibly be known whether any given passage is supposed to function in this way? And yet there is nothing whatsoever in the context of Isaiah 9:10 that would suggest the existence of such an effect.

As noted earlier: *If a proposed theological or spiritual idea is not found in the Bible, or if it cannot at least be supported by the text in some way, then someone made it up.* This is exactly the nature of the Isaiah 9:10 Effect—someone made it up.



ABOUT DAVID JAMES: David James is a co-founder and the Executive Director of The Alliance for Biblical Integrity (ABI). Dave earned his undergraduate degree in engineering from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology and his masters in Biblical Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary. He also holds a diploma in Biblical Studies from the Word of Life Bible

Institute. Dave’s ministry with ABI includes an extensive international teaching and preaching schedule in Bible institutes, seminaries, and conferences, as well as research and writing on current theological issues. He served with Word of Life Fellowship for 21 years, with 16 of those years as the Founding Director of the Word of Life Bible Institute in Hungary. Dave also teaches in the School of Prophets (a ministry of Prophecy Today and Louisiana Baptist University, directed by Jimmy DeYoung), which offers masters and doctoral degrees in advanced eschatological studies. He has also taught as an adjunct professor of Bible for Grace College in the Indiana state prison system.

If you are interested in purchasing *The Harbinger: Fact or Fiction*, please see page 16 for more details.

IS THERE ANY HOPE FOR AMERICA?

—PART TWO—
BY MARK DINSMORE

“Everybody Wants to Rule the World”

Last month, we looked at a number of historical efforts to “Christianize” different cultures at different times—each one by political leaders who believed they were exercising “God-given authority” to rule over the earth. Usually, those involved in orchestrating such efforts misquote the book of Genesis and point to Adam and Eve’s failure to “take dominion” as the basis for needed “restoration” of this mandate. And of course, such a goal always comes by human effort—which is nothing but another attempt to reach “heaven” by climbing up another way (Jn 10:1).

Dave Hunt and *TBC* have long addressed Kingdom-Dominionism in many forms—from the heresies and evil deeds of Roman Catholicism to the aberrations of Reformed theology and modern Reconstructionism to the extrabiblical and occultic practices of the Charismatic Latter Rain movement (see *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* and *Temporal Delusion*). Each of these historic cults and schisms has shared the same goal: to establish a “Christian” religious and political authority—first nationally and then globally. Historically, however, such attempts have always led to the removal of “Christian liberty” through tyrannical oppression and eventual persecution of true saints in Christ. The same holds true for the ongoing advancement of ecumenical unity in the New Religious Right of today—a *converging* church that is being built on the foundation of “common ground” with Masons, Mormons, and even Muslims.

It should be clear from Scripture and history that our God-given assignment is not to take dominion over unregenerate individuals, nor to become lords over human government, but rather to preach the gospel and make disciples. Yet, the temptation for some to “Christianize” the nation—and ultimately, the world—through human government is too great.

In divining “God’s Plan for America,” (see Part One) Pat Robertson and other Christian patriots have evidently not consulted with the Scriptures—or else they must not be familiar with the depictions of world kingdoms as they pertain to past, present, and future prophecy. Did not the statue dreamt of by Nebuchadnezzar and interpreted by Daniel depict Babylon as the head of gold, Medo-Persia as the chest and arms of silver, Greece as the thighs of bronze, and Rome as the legs of iron—all fulfilled in history? And despite all the emotional idealism about America’s unsurpassed wealth and unrivaled power, where does America fit into this vision of earth’s sequential kingdoms?

Is America “The Stone Kingdom”?

Most conservative evangelical scholars would agree that the US will be squeezed into the “western” foot and/or toes mingled of iron and clay. Yet, Robertson insists that “the magnificence” of the US *dwarfs* that of every single kingdom identified in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar? This is, at best, pure delusion! That is, unless Robertson somehow believes that America is itself the “stone cut out of the mountain without hands” (Dn 2:45) that crushes them all. But how could such a twisting of Scripture occur? And where is the discernment of viewers and the rebuke of leaders who seek to protect their flocks from such deception?

Probing further, it appears that Robertson’s hopes are indeed pinned on a little-known aberrant doctrine that refers to America as “The Stone Kingdom.” In a book by that title, author E. Raymond Capt claims to present “compelling evidence that the United States of America *is* that final kingdom!” In fact, the author declares that America will “become a great mountain and eventually fill the whole earth.” At first glance, one may dismiss this notion as ridiculous but harmless. However, as *TBC* has long documented, Christian Dominionism is a “doctrine of devils,” which continues to deceive millions while laying the foundation for the coming kingdom of Antichrist.

Strange Doctrine Makes Stranger Bedfellows

One basis for this heresy is the doctrine of British Israelism, an idea originating in the mid-1600s, which attempted to prove that Western Europeans were principally descended from the “lost” tribes of Israel. Some even attempted to connect the Royal Family to the lineage of King David. A number of “Bible teachers” pursued this idea, and by the mid-1800s it became a significant “Christian” movement, impacting the direction and development of various cults—including those established by Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, and Herbert W. Armstrong. Joseph Smith declared that “the whole of America is Zion itself from north to south” (http://globalmormonism.byu.edu/?page_id=9). Even today, Christian Science adherents proclaim that “America is The Cradle for the Second Coming of the Christ” (<http://mbeinstitute.org/America/AmerIntro.html>). Pat Robertson’s declaration that all the kingdoms of history “are dwarfed by the magnificence of the United States” seems to echo these unbiblical sentiments.

When viewed in this light, one can begin to see the method behind Pat’s mantra when he repeatedly insists: “God has a plan! And he’s not finished with this nation yet! We are a covenant people! Don’t let any politician tell you we’re not! This nation was ordained by God in the midst of the nations of the earth.... We are here! God Almighty has a plan, and that plan is not finished yet.”

Tragically, not only is Robertson filled with the pride of Christian nationalism—which is rooted in the unbiblical doctrines of British Israelism, Freemasonry, and Mormonism—but he is sadly mistaken that such defiant declaration is warranted on the basis of Scripture. Though he evidently intends to encourage anxious believers and crestfallen patriots lamenting the course of their nation, his position is in direct conflict with the Scriptures.

Viewed in this light, calling America “the stone kingdom” is exceedingly dangerous. Under no circumstances should the professing church exalt America to the position reserved for Christ! This nationalistic idolatry is particularly offensive when one understands the extent to which the United States was conceived and built not by God, nor by his Spirit, but by *Masonic* hands that *literally* cut out and established America’s capitol—as well as its first great cities. Were true Christians among these occultists? Absolutely. Did they invoke the name of God? Most certainly. But America’s founding was an unholy mixture of the sacred and profane—with evil men and seducers, being deceived and deceiving others, mingled with many good men (some godly) who “knew not what they did.”

The pattern of deception continues now as it did then: True believers and professing Christians alike engage in ecumenical efforts for the building or restoring of “God’s kingdom on earth.” In the process, they “wittingly or unwittingly” practice occult methods for the purpose of “entering” the heavens, after the manner of ancient pagan kingdoms. Tragically, while believing themselves to be more educated and advanced, many “modern” Christians are no better off than the ancient Hebrews who “ignorantly” worshiped Baal.

The Cornerstone of American History—or Heresy?

Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of America’s occult foundation can be seen in the Babylonish ceremony for the laying of the US Capitol cornerstone. Dressed in full Masonic regalia, our nation’s first president, George Washington, presided over the elaborate parade and ceremony—entirely conceived and conducted by *Freemasons*—which concluded with a ritual “dressing” of the cornerstone with an engraved silver plaque, on top of which was poured corn, wine, and oil, and “sealed” with a Masonic chant.

Is such ritual Christian—or pagan? Could America’s “destiny” have been “sealed” from its very foundation and dedication to the god of Freemasonry? Lodge records faithfully document every detail of the

cornerstone ritual's procession—which concluded with “The President of the United States, the Grand Master... and the Worshipful Master of No. 22, taking their stand to the East of a huge stone; and all the Craft, forming a circle westward, stood a short time in silent awful order” (http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/masonicmuseum/gw_laying_the_cornerstone_mural_medallion.htm).

If the modern reader did not know the event being described, the parallels to the practice of witchcraft (also called “the *craft*”) are striking—particularly with regard to the reverence paid in “silent awe” to the *East*. In a counterfeit reference to Christ’s Second Coming (Mt 24:27), Freemasonry regards divine light, or knowledge, as coming “from the East.” This is why the former women’s auxiliary of Masonry (now open to all male and female relatives) is called the Order of the *Eastern Star*. Though cloaked in a “Christian” veil, the Gnostic light of this star is Lucifer, “light bearer,” which Scripture also depicts allegorically as “a bird of prey” (Jer 49:16).

What about 2 Chronicles 7:14?

In clip four of the preview for *God’s Plan for America*, Robertson simultaneously issues a caveat and a call to action with the question:

And so God says to us, “Will you be faithful to the covenant? Will you renew the covenant that I made with your forefathers on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean when they knelt in prayer and claimed this land for me? Will you renew that covenant?” And if we do, we will enter a period of unprecedented prosperity and blessing, and the blessing of heaven will be showered down upon us. And that’s the challenge that I give you and He gives us. To renew once again that covenant, and to grasp hold of the plan that God had before the creation of the earth, that this land would be here, as first among nations.

Once again, Robertson exposes his own heresy with the declaration that God intends for *America* to be “*first among nations*.” This is defacto anti-Semitism. And yet, even those evangelicals who reject this unbiblical doctrine fall into the same trap of exalting America to an idolatrous height. As we’ve seen, American believers in particular love to view Scripture through the myth of an imagined covenant with God—which they believe makes the United States a “Christian nation.” Though it *was* once a nation of predominantly Christian-minded people who long enjoyed peace and prosperity—as a partial result of governing and living by biblical values—America was never ordained to be “The Stone Kingdom.”

This aberrant view of history, in turn, results in a skewed perspective when it comes to interpreting and applying Scripture. As Dave Hunt responded on *Search the Scriptures Daily* radio: “If you don’t recognize that there is a difference between Israel and the church, you will be very confused both as to salvation and the Rapture [and] the Second Coming. God...has promised full restoration of Israel to her land. There’s no restoration to a land for the church. There’s no way that you can make the prophecies to Israel fit the church, but people try.... For example, you have 2 Chronicles 7:14:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Dave continues, “Now, there are people who...say, ‘Now, look, if the church in America would just confess her sins, and get right with God, and really—let’s have a campaign of prayer, and pray and *pray* for our country—God would turn America into a Christian nation.’ But of course, God...never gave the Americans America, and he certainly never gave the Christian Americans America. So they are badly mistaken when they try to apply [2 Chronicles 7:14].”

Tragically, innumerable campaigns, programs, and crusades have been based on this single verse alone—leaving untold millions of believers under the delusion that this is a promise of God *for America*. Stop right there. Consider the context! The entire chapter is about Solomon’s dedication of the temple and consecration of the nation of *Israel* to God—an account that starts all the way back in the second

chapter. Throughout Scripture, the *only* nation and the only culture that God addresses as “my people” is Israel and the Jews.

Although it is true that the account of Israel throughout Scripture has various application for *believers* both personally and corporately, it is a patent falsehood to misapply this promise to the United States—or to any other country. For example, can you picture an evangelistic crusade in China based on 2 Chronicles 7:14? In India? In Syria? Why not? After all, if the promise of this passage is directed to God’s people *everywhere* (the Bride of Christ), then why not encourage the persecuted church to rise up and proclaim this promise for a communist nation? a Hindu nation? a Muslim nation?

The absurdity of this suggestion should illustrate the seriousness of wresting Bible passages from their context. And yet, even “solid” evangelicals have put their trust in a promise *never intended* for American believers. But despite decades of political activism and countless perennial prayer events, faith in America’s flag—along with its moral fabric—has continued to unravel. Even culture warrior and psychologist James Dobson acknowledged bleakly in his farewell address at Focus on the Family:

We are awash in evil and the battle is still to be waged. We are right now in the most discouraging period of that long conflict. Humanly speaking, we can say we have lost all those battles....

The secular media was quick to rejoice at this admission, as *Washington Monthly* columnist Steve Benen gloated in his “Political Animal” column of April 12, 2009:

Whether Dobson and his cohorts give up now or not, his assessment about their lack of success is nevertheless accurate. The culture war is all but over, and far-right evangelicals have precious little to show for their efforts. After about three decades of fighting, the culture warriors are hard pressed to point to any progress at all.

Considering this dismal reality (from an earthly perspective), is our goal for evangelism *really* to help make America “be a great nation again?” If that’s the hope we’re promoting through grand crusades with popular bands and patriotic bunting, then I fear it is false advertising for God. It’s like the well-intended, but misguided gospel presentation of the classic Campus Crusade tract, *Four Spiritual Laws*, in which the first law states: “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Really? What if that plan includes pain, suffering, trial, tribulation—and by worldly measure, abject failure?

The *truth* is, God’s word declares: “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tm 3:12). And unlike the imagined “God’s Plan for America,” this is one principle repeated throughout the New Testament that *does* apply to the church in America. Therefore, if crusade converts pray to receive Christ, and then have their earthly dreams fall apart—or after years of ceaseless labor in some ministry of conservative political activism, they see the degradation and depravity in our nation continue to spiral out of control, what will be the end of their faith? As the Apostle Paul mused, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor 15:19).

With great respect for all those who have labored for the vision of a “Christian America,” I submit that our God-given purpose in evangelism is *not* to “dominate” government, nor to restore an Edenic utopia. Our Creator has promised to do this in His time: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD” (Zec 4:6). Until that day, we are strangers in a strange land—pilgrims on this planet, whose assignment is *not* “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (the endless material accumulation for ourselves and our posterity) but rather to participate in God’s great rescue mission—which was that of Christ, who came “to seek and to save that which [is] lost” (Lk 19:10).

Unlike America’s broken (and impossible) promise of “liberty and justice for all,” only one King and His Kingdom offers true “liberty and *salvation* for all” who believe: Jesus Christ. This alone is the greatest (and only) hope for America—and for the world.

With whom will you share God’s *truly* wonderful plan today?



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS to CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

“A Higher Power by Whatever Name”?

QUESTION: Why are Christians so adamantly opposed to the many other concepts of God that are honored in other religions? I agree with what Vice President Al Gore said at the 1993 Presidential Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C.: “Faith in God, reliance upon a Higher Power, by whatever name, is in my view essential.” Think of the unity there could be if religions would stop quarreling and honor all concepts of God in an open-minded and brotherly fashion!

RESPONSE [Excerpts]: Yes, think of the unity there could be if we would all agree that two plus two equals five—but that wouldn’t make it so. A “Higher Power”? How high? Higher than what? And what does this mean?

With all due respect to you and the Vice President, what you both propose is completely irrational. Furthermore, you aren’t being “open-minded and brotherly,” as you think you are. By insisting upon the acceptance of *any* “Higher Power” and thus *any* god, you thereby refuse to honor the one true God or even to admit His existence. . . . Alan Bloom’s book *The Closing of the American Mind* point[s] out that “openness” has become the new fad in America, especially in education. Every idea must be respected, nothing can be wrong, and no one should be “put down” by suggesting that someone might be in error. He explained that Americans have in fact become so open to everything that they have become closed to the idea that something might be right and something else wrong. The *closing* of the American mind . . . by *openness*! In much the same way, you and the Vice President have become so open to every god that you are closed to the possibility that there just might be one true God and all the others false.

Let’s put your proposal on a practical level. How would you like it if everyone denied your unique individuality and specific personal identity and looked upon you as simply a representative of the general concept of humanness? Would you like being confused with a murderer, rapist . . . or some other criminal simply because each one of them also represents humanness? And what would you think if, to justify this travesty, it was said that “any human” will do? Why not, if “any Higher Power” will do?

There could hardly be any greater insult than such a denial of the truth about you as a unique person! You have definite qualities and traits that distinguish you from all other persons who have ever existed or will ever exist on this earth. . . . To deny your individuality would be to deny your very existence.

Suppose that your wife or husband and your children . . . cared not whether it was you or some other form of humanness sharing their home and intimacies of the husband-wife relationship! After all, such a relationship need not be with a *particular* person but merely with *any* person—just as *any* “Higher Power, by whatever name” is good enough. Let’s not be narrow-minded!

Is it not an even greater farce to suggest that God’s personal qualities and attributes, which separate Him by an impassable gulf from His creation and all beings in it, are meaningless? . . . How dare you say that God’s love for you means nothing but that you would be just as happy worshiping and trusting and loving some cosmic energy source or an idol or even the devil!

To Create the Universe Requires Definite Qualities

The fact is that no thinking person can embrace just “any god” as the Creator of this universe—and there must be a Creator. The logic of our own existence and the incredible design and structure of the universe around us force us to certain conclusions about God. Based upon such conclusions we must reject any concept of God that violates these requirements. It isn’t true that “any god” will do. And no “power,” no matter how “high,” could create the universe and mankind in it. Only a personal God of infinite power, wisdom, and love could do so.

Certainly, no one could reasonably attribute the creation of this universe to some idol made by human hands out of clay or wood or stone! . . . Who could possibly believe that an idol, which itself was made by human hands and has to be carried about, had any power at all to do either good or evil? Yet the majority of mankind down through history has trusted in idols. Even in today’s supposedly modern world, with radio and television widely publicizing the amazing advancements of science, several billion people still worship idols. . . . Such misplaced trust leads to spiritual darkness and bondage.

Mankind will be judged for such folly, and justly so. The very conscience and intelligence that God has given us contradict such superstitious madness. The Bible points out the folly of trusting in idols:

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not; noses they have, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet they have, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them. (Psalm 115:4–8)

When he gathered snake worshipers, fire worshipers, spiritists, animists, and witch doctors—along with Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims . . . to pray for peace, Pope John Paul II made the astonishing statement that they were all praying to the same God! Obviously, there are innumerable false gods and false religions, and the Bible denounces every one of these because they seduce mankind from knowing and obeying the one true God.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Grace Mally, 23, coauthored the book *Making Brothers and Sisters Best Friends*. She likes to arrange witnessing and outreach events in her community, speaks at Bright Lights and family conferences, and helps to lead the Bright Lights discipleship ministry, which was founded by her older sister Sarah.

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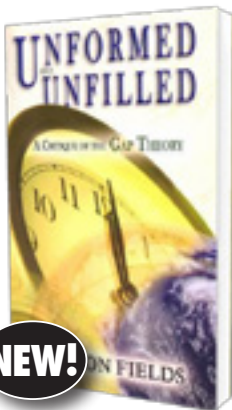
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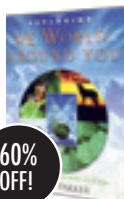
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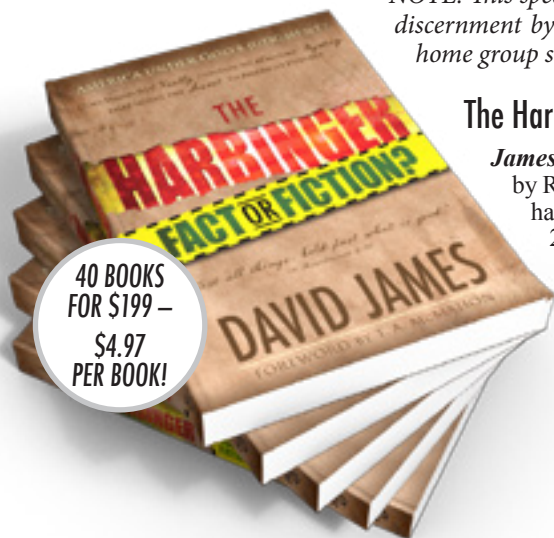
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