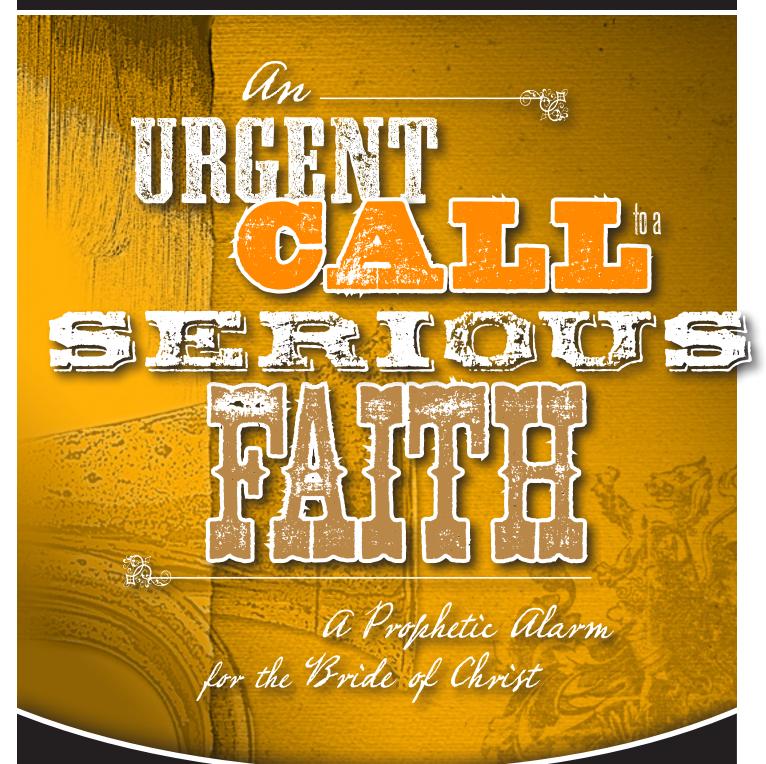
EXTRA — THE REALITY & HEAVEN FOR THE BELIEVER — page 8

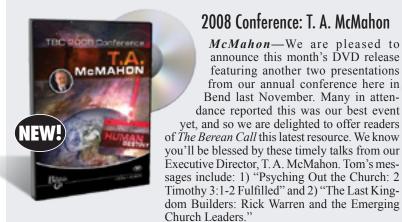


Berean
Call MARCH 2009

TRUE LOVE — PART ONE

by DAVE HUNT

T.A. McMAHON DVD SET FROM THE 2008 CONFERENCE



2008 Conference: T. A. McMahon

McMahon-We are pleased to announce this month's DVD release featuring another two presentations from our annual conference here in Bend last November. Many in attendance reported this was our best event yet, and so we are delighted to offer readers of The Berean Call this latest resource. We know you'll be blessed by these timely talks from our Executive Director, T. A. McMahon. Tom's messages include: 1) "Psyching Out the Church: 2

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THE BEREAN EXECUTE CALL

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

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VOL. XXIV NO. 3 - MARCH 2009

True Love Part 1

Dave Hunt

Jesus was asked to name the "great commandment in the law." His reply lays the foundation for obedience to every commandment from God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Mt 22:36-38). Adding an essential explanation of true love, Paul declared, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love [charity], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal....Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor 13:1-13).

"Science falsely so called" (1 Tm 6:20) has lately decided to debunk human love under the guise of supporting it. "Science" claims to have identified a part of the brain where "lasting love" resides. Scientists have located the same in the brains of swans, voles, and grey foxes. Is it supposed to be an encouragement to a couple who, for example, has been married for 25 or even 50 years to know that there is a "scientific explanation" for what they had thought, all these years, was genuine love? Am I suggesting that if there is a scientific explanation for love, therefore love cannot be genuine? Yes! That raises the question, "What is genuine love?"

Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the language in the DNA molecule, was so enamored with science that he declared in triumph, "You, your joys and your sorrows. your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules."

Does it make one happy to have this epitaph pronounced on what one thought were genuine experiences of joy, altruism, sacrifice, satisfaction, and so forth? Why do I say that a "scientific" explanation of these emotions, which are so real in our lives, pronounces their death?

One is reminded of the man who, every time he went to a friend's home and was offered a drink of water, would throw the contents in the host's or hostess's face. After this happened several times, his bewildered friend said, "Do me a favor and go to a psychiatrist. I'm not going to allow you back into my house until you've been cured of this outrageous habit!"

Hearing that the man had been in intensive psychotherapy for six months, the friend invited him to dinner again. The hostess was a bit wary when she put some water at his place setting, and, sure enough, in the middle of the meal, he suddenly threw the whole glass of water into the hostess's face.

"I've never been so humiliated in my life!" she exclaimed. "This is a new dress. It can only be dry-cleaned and now you've

The apologetic guest explained, "I've been under intensive psychotherapy for six months and the psychiatrist said I was cured!"

"Cured? He must be crazy!"

"I am cured. I used to feel horrible about doing this, but now that he's explained why I do it, I don't feel guilty anymore!"

Psychologists want to create a guilt-free world where no one is ever at fault. Defense attorneys can always plead for their clients, "He couldn't help himself—it's in his genes!" Of course, this is simply a modern version of "The devil made me do it."

This ready excuse clearly does not hold true in everyday living. Leading atheist Richard Dawkins seems bewildered by real life. It doesn't follow the rules according to his understanding of natural selection. For example, in his book *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins writes:

Anything that has evolved by natural selection should be selfish....If we find that... human behavior is truly altruistic, then we shall be faced with something puzzling... that needs explaining.1

"Any thing?" Things are neither generous nor selfish. Yet a major thesis of Dawkins's first book was that genes are selfish.2

Why does Dawkins say "if"? Can he possibly be ignorant of the well-known fact that there are thousands of examples of altruistic behavior on the part of humans? Quite a number of them even illustrate what Jesus referred to when He said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lav down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Consider the following example, which is only one out of many:

President Bush awarded the military's highest honor to a 19-year-old soldier who was killed in Iraq after falling on a grenade to save his fellow soldiers. Private Tom McGinnis, of Knox, Pa., was killed in a Baghdad neighborhood on Dec. 4, 2006, when a grenade was thrown into the

gunner's hatch of the Humvee in which he was riding....Private McGinnis had enough time to jump out and save himself but instead dropped into the hatch and covered the grenade with his own body, absorbing the fragments. He was killed instantly. All four crew members were saved.3

History records many such acts of selfsacrific, including quite a number of them in recent years. Dawkins has "explained" none of them. Certainly none of the heroes was controlled by "selfish genes."

We know by experience that human behavior is not consistent. One can be very generous today and much the other way tomorrow. That fact explains why the booming and lucrative psychology industry was doomed before it began. It is impossible to make a science of human behavior. Why? Because the subject of the experiment is hopping about capriciously with a free will, and one never knows what it might do next! If human behavior could be explained "scientifically," we would no longer be humans but stimulus-response mechanisms.

Of course, that would make atheists happy. If there were no soul and spirit, no free will, and if nothing but matter existed, then human behavior would have to be covered by scientific laws. That would destroy man as God made him and as our experience and intuition tell us we are. Gone would be free will and everything else that makes man a moral agent. We all intuitively know that human behavior cannot be explained by what one's genes may be doing, yet this is the "hope" of atheists, who of necessity deny free will.

No wonder the atheist flounders badly. He finds his ship sinking, and he can't bail out the water fast enough to keep it afloat. As the other psychiatrist in the film What About Bob? remarked as he turned his former patient over to Dr. Leo Marvin, "We're a dying breed, Leo!" In spite of this fact, the number of psychology's victims continues to grow.

Psychologists and psychiatrists have struggled for years to have their profession recognized as a science, apparently unaware that if their ambition were fulfilled with a general acceptance of this wish, man would no longer be the free-will agent that God created him to be.

Atheist Sam Harris, one of the leaders, like Dawkins, in the New Atheist movement, tries to sound authoritative but fails miserably:

While we do not have anything like a final, scientific understanding of human morality, it seems safe to say that raping and killing our neighbors is not one of its primary constituents. Everything about human experience suggests that love is more conducive to happiness than hate is. This is an objective claim about the human mind, about the dynamics of social relations, and about the moral order of our world. It is clearly possible to say that someone like Hitler was wrong in moral terms without reference to scripture.4

Moral order of our world? What is that, and who decides what it should be? Is it in our genes or in our conscience—and why? What is the conscience? Groping for a psychological, and thus presumably "scientific," explanation, atheists speak of "love" in purely utilitarian terms. What would be the relationship of love between an engaged couple or husband and wife or mother and child if each party were only interested in one's own happiness? The initial "happiness" would degenerate (as it so often does) into quarreling over who was not being fair with whom.

Researchers at Stony Brook University in New York...scanning the brains of people who have been together for 20 years...found that about one in 10 couples still display elements of "limerence," the psychologists' term for the obsessive behavior of new lovers....Scientists call them swans (swans mate for life).... Arthur Aron, leader of the researchers...and his team have established a biological basis for romance...hav[ing] found identical brain patterns in lovers from New York to Beijing. Unromantically, they say love is born in the brain's reward-seeking circuitry, not the heart, but we are no worse off for that. Love matters.5

The Bible states quite clearly, and our common sense agrees, that the heart is the appropriate term to use when speaking of love. This has been the intuition of mankind from the beginning. I can still remember when a young man would carve his initials in a tree, place a plus sign with his girlfriend's initials just beneath, then surround the whole thing with a heart. As long as Valentine cards have been sent, the heart has always been a symbol of true love. And now, "researchers" tell us that for all of these centuries men and women have been victims of a cruel hoax: it's not the heart that matters but certain concentrations of molecules in various parts of the body. According to this new view from "science," it doesn't really matter.

If that is the case, then the Bible is wrong. If the psychologists are right, then why would God command that "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might"? (Dt 6:5). Why did Paul declare, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"? (Rom 10:9). Of course, by "heart" the Bible signifies "sincerity," and this has always been the common understanding of mankind.

An article in Science Daily (9/8/08) tells us that scientists at Karolinska Institute [outside Stockholm, Sweden claim to have found a link between a specific gene variant and the way men bond or don't bond to their partners. Then they admit that the effect is relatively modest and cannot be used to predict future behavior with any real accuracy.

Why would anyone pursue research in something that will have no predictive value? Clearly, the research has no other purpose behind it than to prove somehow that God is not needed to explain human behavior—or really anything else. Yet scientists all over the world persist in trying to catch this will-o'-the-wisp of a scientific explanation for human behavior. And when they think they've caught it, they find they really have nothing. Having gone to all the effort of locating a "specific gene variant" that "explains" romance and love, we're told that its predictive powers aren't really that accurate or significant. In other words. the researchers have wasted their time and ours because of their desire to prove that there is no God. One could liken this experience to the discovery by a sculptor that the huge stone he'd been carefully carving and polishing was not marble after all but ordinary fieldstone.

These "scientists" are trying so hard to support their atheistic view of man that they overstate their case. It has been the common opinion in every generation that the greatest movies, operas, music, and poetry have one thing in common: they are all claiming, though in a variety of ways, that love is the greatest experience one could have. Who would dare to argue with that?

There are problems, however. "Love" can quickly turn to hate. This fact is demonstrated more clearly every day as the divorce rate climbs ever higher. A young couple stands before witnesses and swears their undying love "till death do us part." Six years—or it could be six months, or in some cases, six weeks or even six days—what each party had thought was genuine, lasting love has turned to quarreling, accusations, bitterness, and in some cases, even threats of violence. That pledge, "till death do us part," becomes worse than empty. How is this possible?

Will the answer to this enigma be found in the genes or somewhere in the brain? On the contrary, the answer is not found in any part of the anatomy but in the soul and spirit and will. Perhaps each one thought that the pledge of lasting love they gave to one another would never grow cold, much less turn to hatred. They discover that true love is not just a passing emotion; it involves a commitment for life. If those who later develop what the world calls "marital problems" honestly examined their hearts, they might be forced to confess that they had never really intended to establish an unbreakable bond.

Not just Valentine cards that come from mankind's common understanding, but the Bible itself has much to say about the heart. Jeremiah tells us that the "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." David, in Psalm 139, says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Proverbs commands, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart...;" Luke 8:15 tells us, "On the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep [it], and bring forth fruit with patience"; and Luke writes in Acts 2:37: "Now when they heard [this], they were pricked in their *heart*, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do?"

To answer the question, "What is true love?" the last place we should look is to psychologists. They are very good at explaining love away by giving us a psychological definition but very short on what we need to know. We need rather to consult God's Word. True love comes only from God, as we yield to Him and allow Him to pour His love through us to others. "We love him, because he first loved us," (1 Jn 4:19); "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

None of us is the wellspring of love. We are at best empty vessels that He can fill with His love and make us conduits of that love to others. Many of us are too full of ourselves to have any room left for loving God or genuinely loving others. It doesn't have to be this way. We can make it a continual prayer: "Lord, help me to love You with all of my heart, mind, and soul. Then pour Your love through me to others."

True love is God's love and is described like this:

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love [is] strong as death; jealousy [is] cruel as the grave: the coals thereof [are] coals of fire, [which hath a] most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if [a] man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned [rejected with disdain]. (Song 8:6-7) TBC

[To be continued]

Quotable

The Holy Scriptures are the divinely inspired Word of God, and therefore to be fully believed, highly reverenced, and strictly obeyed. Since faith comes from hearing the Word of God, and the just live by faith, we must ever remember that the basis of the Christian life is a constant meditation upon and simple acceptance of all that the Bible would say to us. But as Christ's work of redemption in the flesh was only preparatory to His future indwelling us by the Spirit, so the written doctrines of Scripture are only a means to all that inward teaching and powerful working of Christ's Spirit within us. As we must beware of neglecting the Word of God, so also we must beware of resting in the mere letter without expecting through the indwelling Holy Spirit a real and living experience of all that Scripture holds out to our faith. Nothing of divine love, life, or goodness can have birth or place in us but by inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. So they who imagine these virtues can be acquired by studying the letter of the gospels and epistles are under the same deception as the Jews that Christ said would not come to Him because they thought eternal life was in and by the Old Testament Scriptures alone.

William Law, The Power of the Spirit

Due to the favorable response we received from the inclusion of some Q&As from the past in our December 2008 issue of TBC, we are delighted once again to bring you some "vintage Dave" answers to tough questions.

Q&A.....

QUESTION: In your gospel message you emphasize that salvation is based on the fact that Christ "paid the penalty for our sins." Strong's Exhaustive Concordance has no entry for "penalty," nor did Jesus or the Apostles ever mention that a penalty for our sins was paid. If I ask fellow Christians where to find this view in the Bible either they are perplexed (they don't know the answer) or they imply that I am not saved. Since you use that statement so often in your gospel presentation, I pose that question to you.

RESPONSE: Nor is the word "trinity" in either the Bible or *Strong's*, yet it is a basic teaching of Scripture. Was not the casting of Adam and Eve out of the Garden a penalty for their sin? Isn't the death which came upon Adam and Eve and upon all of their descendants

to this day also a penalty for sin that would continue in eternal separation from God without His pardon? In declaring, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezk 18:13, 20)...sin bringeth forth death (Jas 1:15)...the strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor 15:56), is Scripture not saying that death is the penalty for sin? Does not a penalty have to be paid?

Granted, the Bible nowhere uses the exact terminology we would today about Christ paying the penalty for sin. But isn't that what is implied when it says "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5), or "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3), or "that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb 2:9), as well as in many similar verses? If death is the penalty for sin and Christ died for all, then surely He paid the penalty in full for all of us or we would have to pay that penalty ourselves. Our salvation is a matter of God's justice, "that he [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom 3:26). I don't understand your objection to saying that the penalty was paid. Is not that the force of Christ's triumphant cry from the cross, "It is finished [tetelestai]!," meaning paid in full? I am grateful that Christ paid in full the penalty for my sin and sins so that God can be just in pardoning me, the sinner! There is no other means of salvation.

QUESTION: In your book, In Defense of the Faith, I liked your explanation of "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things" (Isaiah 45:7). You explained that darkness is not something God created, but the total absence of light; and that just as light reveals darkness, so God's holiness reveals evil—it is not something God causes people to do. I liked that explanation. But what about Amos 3:6, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

RESPONSE: The Hebrew word there translated "evil" is *ra*. It primarily means adversity, affliction, calamity, distress, but it can also mean sin. Of these two possible meanings, how do we know what is meant in a given instance? The context will tell you.

In this short book of Amos, *ra* appears seven times; only twice (5:14,15) does it mean sin, the other five times (3:6; 5:13; 6:3; 9:4,10) it means judgment from the Lord. The Lord tells Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (3:2).

As His special people, they have known His protection; no calamity, adversity, affliction or distress could come upon them except the Lord allowed it. Now they will know His

judgment. God will bring ra upon them as punishment: "I command the sword, and it shall slay them [the disobedient people of Israel]: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil [ra], and not for good (9:4)."

"Evil" in Isaiah 45:7 is also *ra*. It could be understood to mean calamity or affliction. That would seem appropriate because the phrase "I make peace, and create evil [*ra*]" contrasts peace with *ra*. Surely *ra*, as calamity or destruction is the opposite of peace, just as darkness is the opposite of light.

In *Defense*, I took the most difficult understanding, that of *ra* as sin. Even with that meaning it is clear that God is not the author of sin.

QUESTION: I realize that some investigation of cults and the occult and false teachings in the church is necessary if we are to rescue those who are thereby deceived. But it would be too disquieting for my soul to spend enough time to investigate and understand every current error. How far is one obligated to go in explaining what the Word means to those who have been led astray? In my own experience, nothing anyone could tell me would have made any difference until God himself opened my heart.

RESPONSE: The time one spends pointing out error and attempting to persuade others of the truth depends upon one's God-given ministry and the people whom the Lord brings across one's path. Confronting and correcting error is apparently considered by God to be an important ministry, since so much of the Bible is devoted to it. Much of Christ's teaching was corrective, as are all of the Epistles. Paul corrected Peter publicly, named those who were leading others astray, and continually combated error. We must do the same if we are to obey God's Word and contend earnestly for the truth.

We are told to be ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pt 3:15). Sometimes that asking may come in the form of a challenge from two Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses knocking at one's door, or from a colleague at work who is a Buddhist or Muslim.

One needs at least a minimal understanding of opposing beliefs, but most important is the gospel. Paul was conversant enough with the Greek philosophers to be able to dispute with them in the marketplace and on Mars' Hill. In fact, he disputed daily (Acts 17:17,23). Sunday-school classes and youth groups ought to train our youth to such an extent that they can stand toe-to-toe with atheists, Buddhists, Hindus, cult members, etc., and confound them not so much by pointing out their errors as by presenting the truth.

You say nothing could have convinced vou until the Lord opened vour heart. But didn't God use someone's words and efforts in that process? We must be ready always to be used of God in the same way. Christ set the example for us to follow. He was gentle with those who had been deceived, but He sternly rebuked the rabbis who had perverted God's Word by false teaching. and He did so publicly.

One need not become an expert on cults and false religions. Many who thought that was their calling and immersed themselves in such studies have become obsessed with false teachings to such an extent that they have fallen by the wayside for lack of nourishment in God's Word.

Love the Lord your God and His Word, study it daily, meditate upon it with the intent of being always prepared to "preach the Word." The Bible itself is the sword of the Spirit. Therefore, our primary focus should be on knowing God's Word and presenting it convincingly in the power of the Holy Spirit. A workable knowledge of the cults and false religions should only take a secondary place.

QUESTION: I have trouble coming to grips with the idea that God uses trials to increase a believer's faith and trust in Him. This seems to be out of character with a God who is love. Can you help me get a better handle on this matter?

RESPONSE: The writer of Hebrews declares in no uncertain words that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb 12:6). James 1:17 tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from God. Paul in turn says that God gave him a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor 12:7). He further explains that he asked God to remove it and the Lord said no (vv. 8-9). Paul gave some medical advice to Timothy to help relieve this young man's stomach problems and his "often infirmities" (1 Tm 5:23).

Why did Paul not heal Timothy like so many others? The answer is obvious. Just as God's gift of a "thorn" to Paul was accomplishing a specific purpose, so too did Timothy's affliction. David was willing to walk through the "valley of the shadow of death" (Ps 23:4) because God was with him. This same verse also says, "thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Consider the implication here. While the shepherd's staff was used to gently pull a wayward sheep back into the fold, the rod was used to drive off predators and even at times to direct straying sheep with a judicious whack or two. If a sheep were prone to wander, the shepherd might break its leg. He would then set it in a splint, and during recovery the sheep must of necessity remain close to the shepherd and afterwards would stray no more. What some might mistakenly regard as a cruel act (or abuse) is really a gift of life.

In the midst of severe judgment, Jeremiah wrote down God's declaration: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you. saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer 29:11). Many faithful Christians are able to echo the testimony of the psalmist: "Before I was afflicted I went astray..." (Ps 119:67).

Yes, Jesus promised joy, peace, happiness in Him (not in the world). While promising that tribulation would come, He gave us the promise that He had overcome the world (Jn 16:33), not that He would necessarily remove our affliction. Paul and the rest of the apostles testified of the myriad troubles that came their way. And even though their "outward man perish," yet their "inward man is renewed [or strengthened] day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). While it is not always easy to see how problems can strengthen a believer's faith, the Apostle Paul testifies to such a fact (vv. 17-18; 5:1-21; 6:1-10, etc.).

The Scriptures are full of examples (neatly summarized in Hebrews 11) of those who through trial, troubles, and great loss were brought closer to God. And this does not exclude the deliverance from afflictions (Ps 34:19). We too must all walk in faith. Of even more concern is your assertion that you are unable to find these things in Scripture.

QUESTION: The idea that the Antichrist will be resurrected from the dead by Satan seems to be the prevailing opinion among evangelical pretrib teachers. I would appreciate your opinion.

RESPONSE: This popular idea comes from Revelation 13:3. For example, in his book, The Prewrath Rapture of the Church, Marvin Rosenthal states, "According to the Word of God, the Antichrist is a man who lived before. He ruled one of the seven great empires which directly impacted Israel....He will literally be raised from the dead. Concerning this raised ruler...the Word of God has much to say. 'And I saw one of his heads as though it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed...' (Rv 13:3)."

Note, however, that it is one of the beast's seven heads, not all of them, that is affected. Furthermore, the head (much less the beast) is not killed but appears "as though it were wounded to death." Seemingly, the beast could have died from this wound, but verses 3 and 12 declare that its "deadly wound was healed." So we have a healing, not a resurrection.

I believe it is referring to the Roman Empire which has indeed suffered from a deadly wound but has never died and is being revived before our eyes. Only God can raise the dead. Satan has no such power. At best he might pull off a "fake death and resurrection" of Antichrist, which John MacArthur suggests in his Study Bible as a possibility.

News Alert

http://www.onenewsnow.com, European COUNTRIES CRACK DOWN ON 'HATE SPEECH' **[Excerpts]:** Geert Wilders (Dutch Freedom Party), an author and critic of Islam, says the recent decision by a Dutch court to prosecute a Dutch lawmaker for comparing the Koran to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* does not bode well for the future of free speech rights in the United States.

The Islamic world complained, but last year prosecutors decided against launching a case against Wilders, saying his strident anti-Islamic statements were "hurtful to Muslims, but not criminal."

But now the Amsterdam Appeals Court has ruled that prosecutors will launch a hate-speech case against Wilders. Robert Spencer [director of Jihad Watch] says this case is part of a larger effort to criminalize any discussion of Islam to which jihadists object.

"The Organization of the Islamic Conference, which is 57 Muslim governments around the world, is making a concerted effort at the United Nations to criminalize any discussion of the elements of Islam that jihadists use to make recruits and justify their actions," he contends.

Spencer says the Wilders prosecution shows that Europe is falling in line with the Islamic initiative to prosecute anyone who engages in what the Islamists say is hate speech. He adds that could affect the free speech rights of Americans as well.

"Especially at a time when the Obama administration has announced its intention to bring the United States into line with European sensibilities about this and closer to the U.N.," he points out. "And with both Europe and the U.N. giving way on free speech at a rapid clip, that bodes ill for our freedoms in the United States."

Endnotes

- 1. Richard Dawkins, The Selfish Gene (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4.
- 3.http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/03/ washington/02cnd-medal.html?ref=us.
- 4. Sam Harris, Letter to a Christian Nation (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2006), 24.
- 5. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading article/article5439242.ece.

Speaking Schedule

Mar 22 Candlelight Christian Fellowship
(TA) Coeur d'Alene, ID

(208) 772-7755

Apr 1-3 Tulsa International Prophecy Conf (Dave) Tulsa, OK

(918) 835-6978

May 1-2 Saskatoon Bible Conference

Saskatoon, SK (306) 531-4733

Letters

Dear Ones,

Over the years since the release of *The Seduction of Christianity* I have been blessed by the ministry of Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon. This has come to me through *The Berean Call*, books, tapes, CDs, videos, and now MP3s, DVDs, the internet. Two words come to mind: WOW and Hallelujah!!! Keep up the good work. RC (NC)

Dear Dave,

Our God is so good. In yesterday's mail I received a sharp rebuke for being a separatist after questioning the manager of our local "Christian" radio station as to a local priest calling Mary our intercessor on his station. I also received "I Love the Lord" (2008 TBC Conference), through which I wept. Thank you for being a lover of the Truth. RF (PA)

Hi.

I was torn about whether...I should ask you to keep sending the newsletter to us because I know it costs you money, and...I could read it online. It's just that I know I wouldn't do it. I can keep the paper with me, carry it around until I have a few minutes while waiting somewhere, or read it at night before I fall asleep. If it's online, I will scan it as I do all my other email correspondence. If my printer is working, I could print it out. Right now it's not working again. I'll leave it up to you. I do appreciate your ministry so much. You say many things clearly that need to be said. We are an inner city church,...rejoicing in what we see the Lord do and provide. We are among your reformed readers—who disagree with you on that one point....Keep up the good work. Just yesterday one of my church members asked, "Are there any kinds of modalities in wholistic medicine Christians should avoid?" I knew exactly which website to go searching for specific answers. May the Lord bless you. DS (PA)

Dear TBC,

TBC is a valued resource and note of Biblical sanity for me here in the midst of the very syncretistic church in this place.

Materials come in from all manner of groups and are accepted uncritically by most of the professed believers. Detailed study of the Word of God is not honored by most here. and basically anything goes. I have the privilege (from the LORD) of teaching an exegetical Bible study to a few other men who want to know God the only real way, through His word. But for the most part, things are quite shallow here, as also in the outside world. In this latest TBC you have a letter calling you on the carpet for naming Benny Hinn et al., saving that is divisive. I suppose that makes Paul divisive, as he names Cephas in Gal. 2:11, when he found him condemned of hypocritical behavior. RJ (prisoner, TX)

Hi Dave,

I just sigh with anguish at the way the churches are just swallowing every new mystical thing. I came to Christ over thirty years ago and worked...exposing the JWs and Mormons and saw the horrors of the cult's corrupt doctrines. I am now seeing those mind-manipulation methods running rampant within the...churches here in North Kent, UK. I just want to say thank you for being there and for the witness of *The Berean Call*. DC (UK)

Dear Brother Hunt and Staff,

I wanted to drop you a note and thank you for the December *Berean Call* newsletter. I have been receiving your newsletter for a number of years, and found the cover and contents [of] this issue to be very inspirational. You can't do a one-up on God's word. Tom's feature article was very good, and I appreciated the Q&A section, which had Dave's answer to a question about *The Message*. Dave's comment about the mistranslation of Hebrews 11:16, changing it to "God is Proud of them," was very encouraging [as] I have been in correspondence and discussions with several...pastors regarding Pride. GR (ID)

Dear Mr. Hunt,

It's...been over 20 years since I wrote the first (and only) time. I was a young adult with my head in the clouds, wanting to experience God in a new and exciting way. Your book The Seduction of Christianity was a slap in the face to my newfound "name that blessing" theology. I'm afraid that my letter was less than gracious. Twenty years later, I can appreciate the wake-up call you gave to the Body of Christ....[My family finally] realized how critical it is to have a relationship with God that is real, a relationship that sustains, a relationship that is based on what Christ has done for us. I can remember far too many times sitting in a service begging the Holy Spirit to deliver a special word to me, then leaving disheartened. What a joy it is to be assured of God's love for me as I read His Word. Knowing that my salvation is not a reward for being good but by God's grace alone has given me the peace and security I sought after for so long. I am embarrassed by my juvenile rant and apologize for the disrespect I showed you (not to mention what I did to the Scriptures). I also remember the kind and humble reply you sent. Thank you for your perseverence in taking an unpopular yet honest stand for the integrity of God's Word. BF (ID)

TBC Notes

To Air or Not to Air?

In the spirit of good stewardship, and with a view to the potential economic woes our country is facing, TBC's Board of Directors has advised TBC to trim back our spending where it is prudent. One such area is radio broadcasting, where some increased costs have been out of touch with our economy. For example, one station in Southern California nearly doubled our rate a year ago and then increased it again by 25 percent last month. Although that's an extreme case, it motivated us to review what we spend on radio broadcasting and concluded that we should choose "not to air."

We plan to continue radio production, even developing new programs for the future. However, distribution for our programs will be primarily through our website and subscription CDs (with financial assistance available). A few stations have graciously decided to run our programs at no charge.

To Conference or Not to Conference?

Our November 2008 TBC Conference was a wonderful experience for us and for all who attended. The feedback was great. Nevertheless, we have decided to defer our next conference until 2010. Our hope is to schedule the event in July or August, when it is more feasible for families and students. We want to do whatever we can to reach our next generation. The year's postponement will also be helpful to Dave Hunt as he devotes his time and energy to completing *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR T.A. McMahon

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THE REALITY & HEAVEN FOR THE BELIEVER

Excerpts from An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith, Chapter 29 —by Dave Hunt

THE BIBLE BEGINS with God creating the universe and it ends with Him destroying it entirely and creating afresh a "new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1). From beginning to end, history is the eternal God fulfilling His immutable purpose. Once we get a clear view of the cosmic proportions of God's plan, we lose any delusions as to our own greatness and are delivered from all mistaken notions that we can somehow fulfill human destiny by our own efforts.

From this perspective, it is ludicrous to imagine that the church, by organizing conservative voters or even by preaching the gospel, is going to establish God's kingdom. The true and eternal kingdom of God involves not just this small planet but all creation, including the purging by the blood of Jesus and the remaking of heaven itself. Nothing could be better established from Scripture and logic than the glorious fact that the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose is something that only He can accomplish. Obviously, we can only be part of that plan as we allow Him to have His way in and through us.

This realization puts us on our faces before God in wonder and worship and causes us to yield ourselves wholeheartedly to His will. Unfortunately, that awesome sense of the greatness of God and the cosmic and eternal proportions of the work that He is doing seems largely absent from Christianity today. Could this be why so many carry the self-imposed burdens of the many "programs" they are trying to put into effect in order to "live victorious lives" or to "advance the cause of Christ"? When we see that the task is totally beyond our capabilities, then we cease from our striving and begin to allow Him to work in and through us by His mighty power.

Many object to this heavenly/eternal perspective as "pie-inthe-sky in the sweet by-and-by" talk. There are warnings about being so "heavenly minded" that one is of "no earthly good." We must be practical, so the argument goes, meeting first of all the earthly needs of ourselves and of others and doing our best to make this world a better place for everyone.

Yet Christ himself continually turned the focus of His followers from earth to heaven. Throughout Scripture we are counseled to live at all times with the understanding that life on this earth is very brief and that it is followed by an eternal existence of either indescribable bliss in God's presence or unbearable agony in separation from Him. Peter declares that the knowledge that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise...[and] the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10) causes us to live godly lives. And John adds that the hope of being transformed into His likeness when He shall appear causes us to purify ourselves (1 John 3:2,3).

Of course, the greatest motivation is the love that is born in our hearts as we realize that the Creator of the universe loves each of us so much that He became a man to die in our place. This love has captured our affection so that we gladly declare that we are His and His alone for eternity. Accepting the death of Jesus Christ as our own death, we have given up life as we would have lived it so that He can live His resurrection life through us. The eternal kingdom has already begun in every heart where the King reigns! Moreover, as His bride, we long to be united in that heavenly marriage with Christ our Bridegroom and to honeymoon with Him forever in His Father's house! Forever we will worship and praise the One who has made all things new!

Many would have us believe that self-love is the answer to the world's ills. Both Christian leaders and the unsaved are teaching and preaching this lie. In fact, it is self-love that has wrought the ills of the world: greed, lust, and envy. What we actually need is a passionate love for God and His Word, turning us from earthly ambitions to heavenly hope.

Peace cannot be achieved personally until the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, reigns in our hearts. And peace on this earth will not be seen until the King of kings comes to reign. But startlingly enough, even His presence will not turn men from their determination to rule their own kingdom. Not even a kingdom ruled by Christ on this earth is our hope, but heaven itself; and in the new heavens and new earth God's will is finally done "on earth as it is in heaven" because heaven and earth have become one.

Then what is the Millennium? Quite clearly, it is God's final proof of the incorrigible evil of the human heart. Even Christ, having turned earth into a paradise rivaling the Garden of Eden, ruling with a rod of iron, and the redeemed in glorified bodies reigning with Him cannot change the human heart or make men willingly obey Him. There is no way to reform the present human race. It must be put to death in Christ and created anew through faith in Him. The kingdom begins in individual hearts when Christ the King is received to reign within.

When finally the Kingdom of God is realized, it will be in a completely new universe to replace the present one, which will have been destroyed by one great conflagration (2 Peter 3:10-13). That new creation will be inhabited only by sinless angels and men and women who themselves have been made new creations through faith in Christ. Then heaven and earth will be one with God's will truly done on earth as it is in heaven. This is the bright future true believers look forward to for all eternity.

Meanwhile, in this present world of evil and tribulation, it is not unusual for a believer to feel discouraged and even depressed by his or her own failure. At such times it seems impossible to believe that God could ever be pleased with us or that He would really accept us into heaven. We find it so very difficult to rest in His grace and love when we realize that we are absolutely unworthy of heaven. Yet our greatest joy comes from the wonder, amazement, and gratitude that He would take such wretched, unworthy sinners and grant us the joy of heaven!

We will never be worthy of heaven or of His love. That sense of self-worth that so many Christian leaders, deceived by Christian psychology, are attempting to foster among the redeemed, would ruin heaven by turning some of the attention and glory from God and the Lamb to ourselves. We will always be creatures and He the Creator; we will always be sinners saved by grace and bought with His blood, and He will ever be our glorious Savior. Because His infinite love for us has filled us with love for Him, our passion for eternity will ever be to see Him exalted and praised and to love Him with all the capacity He supplies. His eternal joy will be to bless us with Himself. Such will be the wonder and ecstasy of heaven.

God desires to have us in His presence even more than we could ever desire to be there. He loves us with a love that will never let us go. And because He has captured our affection, we will be eternally bound by love to Him—a love that not only flows to us from God, but which our redeemed hearts will return to Him with a purity and heavenly joy that will be to His eternal glory.

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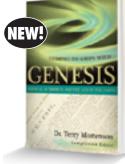


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