



Cross PURPOSES

MAN'S WAY vs.
GOD'S WISDOM

The
Berean
Call

OCTOBER 2009

THE MESSIAH AND THE CROSS—PART 1

by DAVE HUNT

THE BEREAN CALL

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

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The Messiah & The Cross **Part 1: Common** **Misunderstandings**

Dave Hunt

The coming of the Messiah has been the great hope of the Jewish people from the very beginning. *Messiah* means "anointed." The Greek equivalent is *Christos*. In the Old Testament, the priests (Lv 4:3, 8:12; Ps 105:15) and kings (1 Sm 15:1, 24:7-11; 1 Kgs 1:34; Dn 9:24-26) are referred to as the "anointed." In 1 Kings 19:16, we have the anointing to the office of prophet. The Messiah of Israel was to embody all three offices: prophet, priest, and king—and thus would uniquely be "the anointed one." Though "Christ" is simply the Greek form of "Messiah," Jews seem to take a special offense at that word, perhaps because they have endured so much hatred and persecution from many who call themselves "Christians."

Neither Jesus nor His disciples ever used the term, which was unheard of in their day. It may surprise the Jews to learn that the followers of Jesus were "called 'Christians' first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). It was a derogatory term that marked them out for scorn and persecution.

More Christians than Jews have been slain by Catholics. That statement would surprise Jews. Why were they killed, and why by Catholics? It was because true Christians, out of love for the Messiah, have always refused to give allegiance to popes and have rejected the false doctrines of that false church. For that refusal they were slain by the thousands for hundreds of years, even before the Reformation. Both Jews and Christians were victims of the Inquisitions, a horror of which the Roman Catholic Church has never repented.

Prior to his recent death, Ted Kennedy, a devout Roman Catholic, wrote a letter to the present pope requesting prayer and addressing him as "Most Holy Father." True Christians find that title an abomination.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...." He also said, "Call no man on earth your father [excepting, of course, one's natural father]: for one is your father, which is in heaven." The popes have usurped that position, and Roman Catholics, in ignorance of Christ's command, willingly give it to them and obsequiously bow in their presence. History records that many of the popes were among the most

evil scoundrels the world has ever seen, yet they are all honored as successors of Peter. Tragically, Mother Teresa, following the example of the popes, looked to the Church and especially to Mary instead of to Christ for answers to prayer and for salvation. The rosary never left her hand, though she was haunted to her dying day by the fear that she would not get to heaven.

Jesus is almost always portrayed as a babe in Mary's arms and even appears as a babe in acclaimed apparitions, which are then honored in shrines in many countries. There are nearly a thousand such shrines in France alone. One would have to search long and hard throughout the world to discover more than a handful of Catholic shrines honoring Jesus.

AND PILATE WROTE A TITLE, AND PUT IT ON THE CROSS. AND THE WRITING WAS, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

— JOHN 19:19

The cross-waving soldiers of the First Crusade, motivated by Pope Urban II's promise of instant entrance into heaven without suffering purgatory for those who died, slaughtered Jews all along their path to Jerusalem. In 1096, not one of the 1,600 Jews living in Worms, Germany, survived when the Crusaders passed through that city. About half were hunted down in their homes and on the streets. Those who fled to the bishop's palace were given temporary shelter, provided they converted by baptism. Locked in a large conference room to contemplate their decision, all 800 killed themselves rather than convert. It was Masada repeated over and over all along the Crusaders' path. In the process of "liberating" Jerusalem, the Jews were chased into the synagogue, which was set ablaze, incinerating all those within its walls.

Sadly, there are Christians who deny that the Messiah came to be the Savior of all. They seem to contradict what John the Baptist declared: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). This is also a contradiction of the message given by the angels to the shepherds in announcing the birth of the Messiah: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Lk 2:10). These good tidings could hardly be to all people if they are, as some would tell us, *effective* only for the elect

(specially chosen for heaven), leaving the "unchosen" to go to hell.

Jesus preached His good news from the Old Testament, often using events in the history of Israel as illustrations. He introduced the best-loved verse in the New Testament, John 3:16—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"—with an illustration from Numbers 21:8-9. There had been an insurrection among the children of Israel against Moses and Aaron. In judgment, God sent "fiery serpents" among them. The remedy was for Moses to quickly form a likeness of the poisonous serpents and put it on a pole where all could see it. *Everyone* who had been bitten was marked for death, while *everyone* who looked upon the brazen serpent on the pole was healed.

The serpent, of course, is a picture both of sin and Satan. Every human being has been bitten by both: "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23); and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). This illustration at first seems difficult to understand. Was Jesus, lifted up on the Cross, both a picture of sin and Satan? "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor 5:21). We know that Jesus was entirely sinless. He knew no sin. He did no sin. In Him there was no sin. Then what does it mean: "made to be sin for us"? It could only mean that He was punished as though He were sin itself. How else could John the Baptist have said that this Lamb would "[bear] away the sin of the world"? It was through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that Satan, the serpent, would be destroyed. We read of his final demise in Revelation 12:7-11: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.... And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

The serpent on the pole was certainly not indicating that Satan would be the co-redeemer of the world, any more than the serpent on the pole in the wilderness indicated that the serpents that bit them had any part in their cure. Satan was not on the

Cross, but through the Messiah's death, he would be destroyed.

Of the Messiah it was prophesied: "He shall not cry...nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth" (Is 42:2-3). Jesus quotes this passage, then adds: "and in his name shall the Gentiles trust" (Mt 12:21). Jesus was not forbidding street preaching. I myself have preached on Wall Street in New York, where, of all places, it would seem that I was casting my pearls before swine in the sense that the passers-by had their minds on everything but the gospel. Nevertheless, who knows what seed from the Word of God may have somehow taken root?

Jesus did not come to start a crusade. The gospel is not to be forced upon anyone. Unfortunately, special efforts to preach the gospel are often called "crusades," even today. No poorer word could be chosen for spreading the good news of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah to Jews, who Scripture specifically declares are to be given priority in receiving it. Special efforts to preach the gospel, rather than using this offensive word, "crusades," could be called "campaigns," or "presentations," or something else to make it clear that we are not in any way taking an example from the Catholic Crusaders sent out by the popes. We want to avoid any possible misunderstanding about some relationship that could hinder spreading the good news to the world.

Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory, [except] in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*" (Gal 6:14). Paul's emphasis is clearly upon the One who was crucified, not on the *means* of His death. How many people emphasize the Cross rather than the One who died upon it? Nor does the Roman Catholic Church remedy this omission with crucifixes that have Jesus perpetually hanging on the Cross. The Cross itself, rather than *what transpired upon it* 20 centuries ago, has become the focus of attention. The power of the Cross lies not in its display but in its preaching; and that preaching has nothing to do with the Cross itself but with *our Lord's death upon it*, as declared in the gospel (see 1 Cor 15:1-4).

It comes as a shock to many that the gospel includes no mention of a cross. Why? Because a cross was not essential to our salvation. This was the *manner* of the Messiah's death, foretold in Psalm 22—not because the Cross itself had anything to do with our redemption. What was essential was the shedding of Christ's blood in His death, as foreshadowed in the Old Testament sacrifices (Lv 17:11; Heb 9:22).

At the Last Supper, Jesus gave bread and wine to His disciples, explained that this was His body and blood, told them to partake of these elements, and commanded them, "This do in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19-20). Evangelicals have varying ways of attempting to obey this command. Some do it weekly, others monthly, others quarterly, some annually, and some never. Generally, this is done at the end of a sermon and the usual Sunday morning service, with little time for meditation and with no hymns or prayers specifically in remembrance of Jesus. Such remembrances are a form, as though going through these motions has some efficacy in itself. It is up to everyone's conscience to decide *how* this is to be done, but it is very rare to find a fellowship of believers who make the remembrance more than form.

FOR CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE,
BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL: NOT WITH
WISDOM OF WORDS, LEST THE CROSS
OF CHRIST SHOULD BE MADE OF
NONE EFFECT.

—1 CORINTHIANS 1:17

Our topic is "The *Messiah* and the Cross," not "The *Cross* and the Messiah." Nor was it the scourging, mocking, and physical abuse He suffered at the hands of men; the wicked Roman soldiers who scourged Jesus could hardly have been God's instruments for punishing Him for the sins of the world, as the Catholic film *The Passion of the Christ* portrays. Isaiah 53:10 says, "It pleased the *LORD* to bruise him, *he* hath put him to grief: when *thou* shalt make his soul an offering for sin...."

Obviously, *The Passion of the Christ* could not possibly portray the fact that it was not the physical sufferings that saved us. What man did to the Messiah could not save but only add to our condemnation. Ever since Eve believed the serpent's lie that physically eating the forbidden fruit would turn her into a god, her descendants have been materialists. Materialism has carried over into everything man touches. It has turned love into physical lust. Human beings imagine that happiness and possessions are what make life worth living. The lives of many men and women are consumed with acquiring physical things and the money that purchases them. Jesus said a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things that he possesses. Jesus did not say that money is the root of all evil. In fact, it is necessary. He condemned "the love of money."

Materialism has even perverted the gospel and religious observances. This is

particularly true of Roman Catholicism, a large part of which involves physical acts or objects: baptism, relics, statues, robes, etc. The bread and wine of communion, which are only *symbolic* of the body and blood of Jesus, through the magic of transubstantiation are allegedly turned into the *physical* body and blood of Jesus.

For Catholics, baptism is another physical act that "confers" salvation, yet salvation is a matter of the heart: "If thou shalt confess... the Lord Jesus, and...believe in thine heart... thou shalt be saved" (Rom 10:9). Catholics "bring converts to heaven" through water baptism, though, like many Protestants, they think baptism only involves sprinkling the water on someone's head. Thus it can be administered to babies. Mother Teresa's "Sisters of Mercy" have been known to put a damp cloth on the foreheads of dying patients and whisper a prayer that allegedly forgives their sins and gives them free passage through death into heaven.

This "way to heaven" was forced upon many unwilling people under threat of death during the days of the Inquisitions. Catholicism was spread across Latin America with the sword. In a heated discussion, Cortez rebuked Aztec chief Montezuma for offering human sacrifices. With amazing insight, Montezuma responded, "At least we don't eat the flesh and drink the blood of our god." The Spaniards slaughtered thousands of Aztecs in their attempt to force them to submit to baptism into the Roman Catholic Church.

One need go no further south than to Mexico to see the effects of Roman Catholicism in its continuing dominance throughout Latin America. Evangelicals attempting to bring the gospel to Latin America still encounter stiff opposition from the priests in every town and city.

Common sense recognizes that forcing one to "believe" something is a futile effort. There is an old saying, "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." Yet in Islam, force is the main means of "conversion." Muhammad even boasted that to become a Muslim, one does not need to believe.

The Messiah simply said to Jews and Gentiles, "Follow Me," an invitation that may be accepted or rejected. The Bible ends with this gracious offer, "Whosoever will may come." The Messiah, who came to the world through Israel, forces nothing upon anyone. One is free to choose hell or heaven. Jesus paid the penalty for all of mankind's sin, but this payment is effective only for those who believe and receive His sacrifice on their behalf. Tragically, most Jews still remain resistant to the salvation that God offers through the promised Messiah. **TBC**

Quotable

God delights to increase the faith of His children. We ought, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, to be willing to take them from God's hand as a means. I say, and say it deliberately: trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith.

George Müller

Q&A

QUESTION [composite of several]: You offer Mark Dinsmore's confusing articles (TBC Extra, 4/09; 7/09) with no clarification of his connection to your ministry....I was disturbed and confused as to what your purpose is for advancing his particular ideas on "Christian patriotism." What if our forefathers had taken this pacifist attitude when we arrived in the New World? If the Founders had not rebelled against England, then the U.S. would never have been established!

RESPONSE: We try not to use up precious space with biographical details, but since a number of readers have inquired:

For nearly six years Mark has served as Creative Director and Print Production Manager and in other capacities (including research and editorial) at The Berean Call. Mark has a B.S. from San Diego Christian College (formerly Christian Heritage College) in El Cajon, California, and since 1988 has served several Christian ministries and publishers in writing, design, and pioneering of resources for the Creation Science and Homeschool movements. Mark has a lifelong passion for apologetics research and writing, citing a favorite Scripture: "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works" (Ps 26:7). Mark and his wife are both active in their local church body and enjoy growing in knowledge and grace and teaching God's Word together. They have three teenage sons.

Mark's articles have struck an emotional chord with many readers, some responding very negatively, but his position was clearly and biblically articulated. Long-time readers and supporters of *The Berean Call* should not be surprised at the critical distinction between historical, biblical Christianity and its Americanized form. Although many do not recognize it, "popular" Christianity is often rooted in nationalism and influenced by "kingdom-now" and "dominion" theology. The reaction of some readers reveals the need for increased discernment in this area.

From time to time, *TBC* has directly addressed matters and movements related to

Christian activism and "civil disobedience" (11/89; 1/97; 9/99; 11/99; 4/00; 7/06), particularly when it has proved to be a diversion from the propagation of the gospel. Consequently, our "purpose" for printing Mark's Extras is not to promote *his* ideas but to sound a warning to those being swept up in an emotional and fearful *reaction* to the actions of our leaders and the headlines of these perilous times rather than a reasoned and biblical *response* to increasing persecution—of which Scripture repeatedly warns *will* come (Jas 1:1-2; 1 Pt 1:7; 4:12-16).

A few readers have jumped to conclusions not drawn or even suggested in the two Extras. Although we fully acknowledge, as did the deist Benjamin Franklin, that "God governs in the affairs of men," it does not mean that all actions of men, whether godly believers or pantheistic pagans, are sanctioned by God. Clearly, even what evil men have designed, God can use for good (Gn 50:20; Rom 8:28), but this does not make God the author of evil. Similarly, armed rebellion by believers against a tyrannical ruler is clearly not sanctioned in Scripture nor supported by any biblical principle—yet such resistance has been "used" by God "for good."

"What if" our forefathers had never rebelled against England? Is God's hand shortened? Is not the Sovereign Creator capable of raising up rocks themselves to proclaim His gospel, if necessary (Lk 19:40)? Surely, if there had never been an "American Revolution," He would still have been able to raise up individuals or nations to fulfill His mission. As Mark clarified, the cry, "Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God," is no more a biblical statement than the imagined proverb, "God helps those who help themselves." Both of these popular aphorisms are the wisdom of man and are demonstrably contrary to Scripture.

Although it is true that many of the original Pilgrims left England in search of religious freedom, these Puritans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were as far removed from the Declaration of Independence as we are today—*by the space of 200 years!* In other words, the values, convictions, and causes of those on the Mayflower were in many ways quite different—even at odds with—the values, convictions, and causes of those initiating and fighting in the War for Independence.

Today, more than 500 years after Columbus "sailed the ocean blue," we understandably confuse the pursuit of "religious liberty" with patriotism because we are so far removed. In reality, the Puritans were largely pacifists—not "red-blooded patriots." Furthermore, at the time of the Revolution, only a small minority of

colonists were in favor of war with England. Is war over *taxes* a biblical cause? Christ said, "Render...unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mt 22:21).

Whether the cause be taxes, gun control, or freedom of speech or religion, there is simply no biblical passage nor any precedent for the *church* that Christ established to support such a violent uprising. There are many cases in which God used the sinful actions of men "for good," including His own children who acted in rebellion against His authority: Moses (although he struck the rock a second time instead of speaking to it, God still brought forth water) and Jonah (whose rebellion served to give us the *only* sign that Christ used in reference to those seeking such—Mt 16:4), for example. But again, God's sovereignty and foreknowledge do not justify violent acts of rebellion, even for dearly held *spiritual* convictions.

The point of these two Extras was not to advocate pacifism nor disarmament but to specifically address the question, "should Christians jointly resist a tyrannical government with force—and if so, on what biblical grounds?" Compelling biblical arguments can be made for protection of the innocent, including the use of arms as a deterrent or defensive response. The primary point, however—that followers of Christ, as a unified body of believers, clearly have *no* biblical command or precedent for armed conflict or aggression against *their own government*—is unwaveringly clear.

As Dave Hunt noted in his article "Christian Activism" (11/89): "Increasing numbers of Christians are engaging in social and political activism for the astonishing purpose of attempting to coerce an ungodly society into adopting Christian standards of conduct....There are numerous cases of civil disobedience in Scripture, but it was never engaged in for the purpose of forcing an ungodly society to obey biblical principles. Christ *suffered* for us, leaving us *an example, that ye should follow his steps*.' He sternly and repeatedly rebuked Israel's false religious leaders, yet He *never* spoke out—not even once—against the injustices of Roman civil authority! Nor did He advocate, organize, or engage in any public protests to pressure Rome into changing its corrupt system, or the society of His day its evil ways. He submitted to unjust authorities, as Romans 13 tells us we should do today [see also 1 Pt 2:21-25]....

"Yes, Paul told the centurion, who was about to have him unlawfully scourged, that he was a Roman citizen; and he told the local officials at Philippi to come and apologize for beating him and Silas without

trial. That was not, however, political/social activism. He was not attempting...to change society. He was simply standing up for his personal rights under the law (as we also should do), and that includes voting. Paul was determined to obey God rather than men and never held back from preaching the gospel, though it meant his life. If Christian activism [were] God's will, Paul would have been the first to pursue it fearlessly at whatever cost."

Dave further addressed this matter in his article "Political/Social Activism?" (1/97):

"In attempting to justify ['Christian uprising'] from Scripture, one of [the church's] major errors is in confusing Israel and the church. Gideon, Jeremiah, David, et al., were not [born again believers]. Nor were their actions in smashing idols, in riding Israel of homosexuals, and stopping the practice of offering children to Molech—or the setting up of righteous judges by Moses—either political or social 'activism.' These were the deeds of Israel's leaders, ruling God's "chosen people," of whom He said, 'And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy,' (Lv 20:26). Israel is unique (Ps 147:20)...The promises of the Messiah's rule...pertain to a redeemed Israel back in her land....Far from telling the church to take over the world, Christ said that His kingdom was not of this world, that His servants did not fight. He promised us, 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me....ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world....If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying [which the world did not], they will keep yours also [obviously we won't be influential in the world]' (Jn 15:18-21).

"Paul warned the Ephesian elders with tears night and day for three years (Acts 20:28-31)! Did he warn about the abortion, homosexuality, pornography, and other evils rampant in society at that time and call for political/social action to oppose it? No. He warned about the coming apostasy and told them to 'feed the flock of God.'

"More than 40 years of civil protest and persistent Christian activism (Focus on the Family, Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, etc.) have not stopped abortion. Instead of the hoped-for moral awakening, morals have declined. Crime, drug addiction, pornography, divorce, etc., increase. Scarcely 10 percent of Americans believe in all of the Ten Commandments, a third of all married Americans have had an affair, and a fifth of the children have lost their virginity by age 13. Would all of the effort that has gone into political and social action have done more good if instead it had been expended upon reaching the lost with the gospel as Christ commanded us?

[These statistics are not improving, but worsening—if believers cannot even reform the church by "earnestly contending for the faith" then how can it possibly "restore America"?)

"My sympathy is with [all who labor for social justice]....The question remains, however, What are we to do? We must follow Scripture....The Great Commission is not to go into all the world to reform its morals... but to 'preach the gospel' and convert sinners. In the end, the conversion of sinners will have a far greater impact on society than all of the lobbying, protest marches, and passionate appeals to morality that consume the time and energy of concerned Christians."

Truly, Christians in America are blessed to be "free" (for the time being) to exercise certain "rights" to speak, write, assemble, vote, and run for political office, according to one's conscience and God's Word. The Bible is explicit that true worldwide peace will come only when the feet of the Prince of Peace touch down on the Mount of Olives (Zec 14:4). Since war begins in the human heart, until humanity can realize the vain hope of changing the same through forcible means, there will be no final peace.

QUESTION: Why do you Protestants fail to see that without the tradition and pronouncements of an authoritative Church, you wouldn't know what was Scripture? The New Testament was certainly not available for many years. Without the oral teachings of the Apostles, how could people know what was truth?

RESPONSE: Catholicism would dearly love to claim the mantle of being *the* "authoritative" church, but all she has been able to produce through threat of force is a surface conformity riddled by internal dissension and corruption. In contrast, believers are truly given an unfailing authority.

Second Timothy 3:16 is rightly cited as evidence for *sola scriptura* [by Scripture alone]. Verse 15 says: "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures...." The "scriptures" here must refer to the Old Testament because Timothy did not have the New Testament in its entirety. Nevertheless, he had at least the two epistles written to him. Furthermore, this verse tells us that "from a child" he had known the Holy Scriptures, undoubtedly taught to him by a godly mother and grandmother. The Apostle Paul is declaring that the Scriptures available were sufficient to lead one to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts is filled with examples of the apostles expounding the Scriptures, but we will consider just a few.

In Acts 8, Philip was led of the Lord to where a certain Ethiopian eunuch was passing by. As Philip approached, he

heard him reading from the book of Isaiah. Apparently, the Scriptures weren't so scarce that a courtier in Ethiopia couldn't obtain a copy. Philip and the man had an exchange, and the Ethiopian invited him to ride along in the chariot. Then "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35). The book of Isaiah, used at the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, was sufficient to lead this man to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament Scriptures were also sufficient for the Lord Jesus Christ when He confronted the two disciples who were on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-27). Imagine what a Bible study that must have been! Consider the case of Apollos (who was "mighty in the scriptures") in Acts 18. He was preaching the "things of the Lord," but he knew only the baptism of John (v. 25). He did not know that the Messiah had come, lived, bled and died on the Cross, been buried, and then raised again, in power. Two disciples, Aquila and Priscilla, took him aside and "...expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (v. 26). At that point, he did not begin teaching a tradition solely on the basis of something orally communicated to him; rather, he continued to preach and exhort, "showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:28).

News Alert.....

International Jerusalem Post, 9/2/09

[EXCERPTS]: U.S. President Barack Obama, at a dinner to celebrate the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, praised American Muslims for enriching the nation's culture.

"The contribution of Muslims to the United States are too long to catalog because Muslims are so interwoven into the fabric of our communities and our country," Obama said at the *iftar*, the dinner that breaks the holiday's daily fast.

Obama also noted the contributions of Muhammad Ali, who was not in attendance, though the president borrowed a quote from the famous boxer, explaining religion. "A few years ago," Obama said, "he explained this view—and this is part of why he's The Greatest—saying, 'Rivers, ponds, lakes and streams—they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do—they all contain truths.'"

Obama released a video message to Muslims before the start of Ramadan. In the video, he said Ramadan's rituals are a reminder of the principles Muslims and Christians have in common, including advancing justice, progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.

Speaking Schedule

Oct 4-6 (Dave)	Midnight Call Prophecy Conference Myrtle Beach, SC (800) 845-2420
Jan 21-22 (Dave/TA)	Calvary Chapel of the Finger Lakes Farmington, NY (585) 398-3550

Letters

Hi Dave and Tom,

Thank you so much for making the mp3 files [of your radio broadcasts] available online at no cost. I have been downloading the broadcast to my mp3 player for a few years now....I just wanted you to know that God blesses me through your ministry. DP (email)

Dear Brethren at TBC,

In the May 2009 issue, you published an excerpt from an email that someone sent you; it said that "Mary is not...the Queen of Heaven." According to many Catholic books and writings, some of which I have, Mary is the Queen of Heaven. It is not strange that some people attack your ministry, since many Christians have idolized renowned "Christian" leaders such as Benny Hinn, Bill Hybels, or Rick Warren. In the Spanish-speaking Christian world there are also idols, and woe to anyone who says anything wrong about them no matter how truthful it is! So, brethren, keep exposing them and their lies—they are *idols*. AM (Spain)

Dear Dave and Tom,

I am 84 and don't write many letters, but I

do pray for you....I can't begin to express my gratitude to God for the help I have received over the years in staying on the right path because of your sound biblical teachings. I look forward every month to your message and CDs. It's like a visit from wonderful Christian friends....Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your willingness to be empty vessels for the Master's use. JW (KY)

Dear Dave,

Thank you for your good work. I think you are very meticulous and sharp in bringing up issues that the general church leaders have refused and/or neglected to address. I find your commentary interesting and relevant. I am writing this to simply say that there may be a silent majority out there that agrees with your viewpoint and supports your work. God bless. GK (Malaysia)

Dear T. A.,

This is not a question [but] rather a comment. I read *The Shack*, and loved it. It did not cause me to create a false idol of who God is. Rather, like Jesus, who said He was the exact representation of the Father, [it] gave me a greater sense of how much He loves humanity and how close and personal He really is. We are changed from glory to glory and the process of changing from glory to glory had its way in my heart as old mindsets of a distant God were changed. He is always with me, He is my comforter, He is my helper, He is the lover of my soul. He is to be praised and to be worshipped and awed for His great love. God is love. Anything that reveals His nature and helps me to die

to mine and live to His, is good food. It is amazing to me that people get so caught up in "their understanding" of the scriptures and refuse something that falls outside of that. Well did Jesus say of you, "You search the scriptures for thinking that in them you have eternal life and these are they which testify of Me, but you are not willing to come to me that you may have life."

I realize that I'm judging your judgment of others and in that I'm probably wasting my time. I guess my hope would be that you would reconsider the things you're dogmatic about so that you can truly see the beauty of who God is and who He's made you to be. He is close, He is personal, and I am comfortable with Him. I know He loves me so much that He made a covenant with Himself to take care of the thing that separated me from Him, namely the handwriting on stone, which was nailed to His cross. He will no longer be distant. Believing the simplicity of who God is and how much He loves allows the fruit of the spirit to truly flourish in our lives and it is the most wonderful thing to live in and share with others.

Not looking for a reply or to start a debate, hoping and praying that you will learn to see through a different lens and allow the Spirit and Love of Jesus to flow, rather than your ideas about theology and who is right or wrong about how they try to communicate the personal love they have experienced by a very personal and loving heavenly Father. JM (email)

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TBC Notes

Come, Let Us Reason Together

I find it rather fascinating that many of those who subscribe to and enjoy our newsletter tell me they like to read the "Letters" page first. Perhaps it's because they want to know what others think about what we've written previously. To give you a little insight, we have no particular scheme or design regarding the letters we select; our objective is to always reflect a balance of readers' reactions from month to month.

I don't think we have ever responded in print to any of the letters, simply letting our readers have their say—whether we agree or not. This TBC Notes may be the only exception to our unwritten rule.

In deference to the wishes of the writer of the letter defending *The Shack*, I will refrain from debating his views. However, I'm compelled to ask some questions that his letter raises. I hope that he and others will carefully and biblically consider the questions and their responses, to the end that they are consistent—not with what I think—but with the faith delivered once for all unto the saints (Jude 3).

If our Creator, who is infinite, all-powerful, and all-knowing, has communicated to His finite and fallen creation what we need to know about Him and can only know in truth because He has revealed such information to us, don't we need to search the Scriptures to

compare what anyone thinks or writes about Him with what He has revealed in His Word?

Shouldn't everything that man writes regarding Christ (books, poems, hymns, etc.) reflect the truth about Him as revealed in His Word? No matter how good it seems or makes one feel, if it's not true to the Scriptures, wouldn't this lead to a false characterization of Jesus, and ultimately to "another Jesus"?

Specific to *The Shack* and the letter we received, could a fictional book that pretends to "reveal His nature" truly give one "a greater sense of how much [Jesus] loves humanity and how close and personal He really is"? Greater than revealed truth? How does that "good food" compare with "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)? Can the "food" be good if it's false? How can the "fruit of the spirit truly flourish" except in truth by the Spirit of truth? Can a "different lens" that imagines things that do not conform to sound doctrine truly "allow the Spirit and Love of Jesus to flow"?

Finally (only for lack of space), and most critically, who would dare, other than a false prophet, psychic, medium, channeler, shaman, etc., to conjure up or contrive conversations with God? Who is actually speaking?

These questions (and many, many others) need to be answered by those enamored by *The Shack*.

T. A. McMAHON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

John Newton's Letters (1725–1807)

TRUE PATRIOTISM!

Dear Friend,

Allow me to say, that it excites both my wonder and concern, that a Christian minister such as yourself, should think it worth his while to attempt political reforms. When I look around upon the present state of the nation, such an attempt appears to me, to be no less vain and foolish, than it would be to paint the cabin—while the ship is sinking! Or to decorate the parlor—while the house is on fire!

When our Lord Jesus was upon earth, He refused to get involved in disputes or politics, “Friend, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” (Luke 12:14). “My kingdom is not of this world! If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight!” (John 18:36). God’s children belong to a kingdom which is not of this world; they are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and a part of their Scriptural character is, that they are the “quiet in the land” (Psalm 35:19).

Satan has many contrivances to amuse people, and to divert their thoughts from their real danger!

My dear sir, my prayer to God for you is—that He may induce you to employ the talents He has given you, in pointing out sin as the great cause and source of every existing evil; and to engage those who love and fear Him, (instead of wasting time in political speculations, for which very few of them are competent,) to sigh and cry for our abounding abominations, and to stand in the breach, by prayer, that God’s wrath may yet be averted, and our national mercies prolonged! This, I think, is true patriotism—the best way in which people in private life may serve their country.

I consider the ungodly as saws and hammers in the hand of the Lord. So far as they are His instruments, they will succeed—but not an inch further! Their wrath shall praise Him, and be subservient to His designs!

If our lot is so cast that we can exercise our ministry free from stripes, fines, imprisonments, and death—it is more than the gospel has promised to us! If Christians were quiet when under the cruel governments of Nero and other wicked persecutors, when they were hunted down like wild beasts—then we ought to be not only quiet but very thankful now! It was then accounted an honor to suffer for Christ and the ‘offence of the cross’!

Those are to be greatly pitied, who boast of their ‘liberty’—and yet they do not consider that they are in the most deplorable bondage as the slaves of sin and Satan, under the curse of God’s law and His eternal wrath! Oh! for a voice to reach their hearts, that they may know their true and dreadful state—and seek deliverance from their horrific thralldom! May you and I labor to direct them to the one thing, which is absolutely needful, and abundantly sufficient.

If I had the wisdom or influence to soothe the angry passions of mankind—I would gladly employ them! But I am a stranger and a pilgrim here in this world. My charter, my rights and my treasures, are all in heaven—and there my heart ought to be. In a very short time, I may be removed (and perhaps suddenly) into the unseen and eternal world—where all that now causes so much bustle upon earth—will be of no more importance to me—than the events which took place among the antediluvians!

In the hour, when death shall open the door into eternity—many things which now assume an ‘air of importance,’ will be found as light and unsubstantial as a child’s dream!

How crucial then, is it for me—to be found watching, with my lamp burning, diligently engaged in my proper calling! For the Lord has not called me to set governments right—but to preach the gospel, to proclaim the glory of His name, and to endeavor to win souls! “Let the dead bury their own dead—but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God!” (Luke 9:60). Happy is that servant, whom his Master finds so doing, when He returns!

As you have forced me to respond—both duty and love have obliged me to be faithful and free in giving you my thoughts.

I recommend you to the care and blessing of the great Shepherd and Savior; and remain for His sake, your affectionate friend and brother,

John Newton

—Puritan Minister of the Revolutionary Era, 1725-1807

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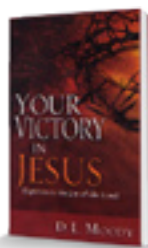
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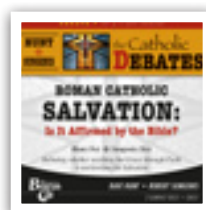
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