

AND HAVING DONE ALL to Stand

Yea, and all that will live
godly [standing for sound
doctrine] in Christ Jesus
shall suffer persecution.

— 2 TIMOTHY 3:12

The
Berean
Call

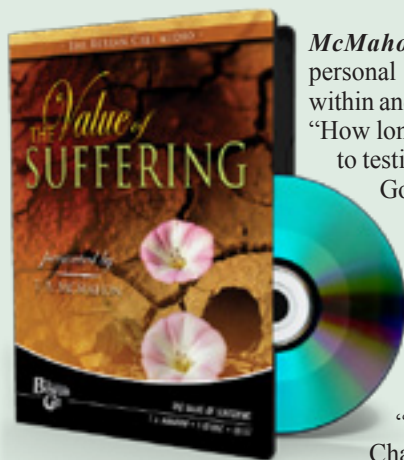
JULY 2011

SEDUCTION: A PRIMER FOR PERSECUTION?

by T. A. McMahon

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Seven years after publication of the controversial ground-breaking bestseller *The Seduction of Christianity* in 1985, its authors, Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon, joined forces on another front. They began a ministry for the purpose of encouraging spiritual discernment among those who regarded themselves not just as “evangelicals” but as *biblical* Christians. The primary vehicle for this endeavor was through the publication of the newsletter *The Berean Call*. The ministry and newsletter name is taken from Acts 17:11, in which the writer of Acts commended those in the synagogue of the Greek city of *Berea* for being more fair minded than those in Thessalonica—because not only were they eager to receive the Word, the *Bereans* also checked it against what the Apostle Paul taught them in order to see if his teaching was according to the Scriptures. Through the publishing and multimedia efforts of The Berean Call (TBC) believers are exhorted to get back into the Word of God instead of being “carried about by every wind of doctrine,” and are equipped with materials to help them walk in the truth. TBC’s stated mission is to:

ALERT believers in Christ to unbiblical teachings and practices impacting the church

EXHORT believers to give greater heed to biblical discernment and truth regarding teachings and practices being currently promoted in the church

SUPPLY believers with teaching, information, and materials that will encourage the love of God’s truth, and assist in the development of biblical discernment

MOBILIZE believers in Christ to action in obedience to the scriptural command to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3)

IMPACT the church of Jesus Christ with the necessity for trusting the Scriptures as the only rule for faith, practice, and a life pleasing to God

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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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Seduction: A Primer for Persecution?

T. A. McMahon

For the last three decades, Dave Hunt and I have addressed many trends and teachings that have influenced the evangelical church, particularly in the United States. Our concern has focused primarily on unbiblical beliefs and practices that were turning Christians away from the Word of God. Twenty-five years ago, we wrote *The Seduction of Christianity*, a rather controversial book that was motivated by feedback from those who had read Dave's earlier books and had watched the film documentaries to which I had contributed in the early eighties. Some dealt specifically with religious cults (*Cult Explosion*, *The God Makers*, etc.). Responses from Christians who read those books and watched the films, however, alerted us to the fact that the cult beliefs that we identified were also being taught in their churches, which were being influenced by leading Charismatic and Word/Faith teachers. Those same false teachers were also spreading cultish doctrines throughout the country on Christian television networks.

One of the principal false teachings at the time was the belief that godhood could be attained by created beings. Though that is foundational to Mormonism ("As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become") and Hinduism (self-realization is realizing that man is God), it had worked its way in various forms and methods into different "Christian" movements, teachings, and practices. Much of it was promoted by extreme Charismatics, but it was also finding its way into conservative evangelical churches through so-called Christian psychology (with its emphasis on self and self-esteem, leading to the exaltation and deification of self). Of course, the lie that man could become a god was the cornerstone of Satan's *seduction* of the human race (Genesis 3:1-5).

In his war against those who have committed their lives to the true and living God, Satan, as God's chief adversary throughout history, has majored in *seduction* and *persecution*. Although persecution would seem to be more effective in its prohibition of Christianity than seduction (and it certainly generates more fear), it is far less productive for the Adversary in achieving his objective. The saying that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"

has been demonstrated throughout church history. Martyrdom and other forms of persecution have always increased and/or *strengthened* the body of Christ. The same, however, cannot be said for seduction.

Believers in the United States have never experienced significant religious persecution—certainly nothing like what has taken place in China, India, or throughout countries controlled by Islam. Historically, true Christians in the West as far as Europe have suffered violence from the Caesars of Rome, the Church of Rome, and Communism, among others, but a comparable level of persecution has yet to reach our shores. On the other hand, spiritual seduction has proliferated here and has shipwrecked the faith of many within Christendom.

Unlike persecution, there is not even a remote value associated with seduction; it is spiritually debilitating and deadly. Stories abound of those believers who have survived and been strengthened in their faith during the persecution they suffered in communist countries only to have their walk with the Lord devastated after they escaped to the West. They could endure persecution, but they could not resist seduction.

The thesis of this article, which is that seduction will ultimately bring about persecution, is intimidating for me personally. Why? Partly because Dave and I have only rarely addressed the potential for persecution in the U.S. and partly because it's only beginning to show its nasty head here. Then why write about it now? From my observations, increasing signs point to a pending clash between the professing—and even true—Christians who will conform to the world by compromising biblical teachings and those who will remain steadfast in the faith. Nevertheless, I put little value in my observations unless I'm confident that they reflect what the Scriptures teach. Nor should anyone who reads this article.

Following are seven pertinent verses (among others that could be given) that have influenced my observations and this thesis:

In Matthew 24:4, Jesus warns that the last days prior to His return will be a time of religious deception: "Take heed that no man deceive you." He adds (v. 24) that the deception will be so great that if it were possible the very elect could be deceived. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus refers to the "strait gate" and "narrow way" that leads to life and announces that "few there be that find it." Luke writes (18:8) the sobering words of

our Lord regarding the time of His return: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?" Since His Second Coming is for the purpose of judgment and to save Israel from annihilation, His words here seem better suited to His coming for His bride in the midst of a professing Christianity that has joined the apostasy. The Apostle Paul gives this insightful explanation as to how apostasy could manifest among those who call themselves Christians: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Sound doctrine will not be endured in the last days because many who began with the milk of scriptural truth have already been weaned away from it, i.e., seduced, by their own lusts and by false teachers. More than that, sound doctrine will become an issue that will foster division among Christians. Paul instructed the Roman believers to identify those who teach things "contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). It's clear that believers who desire to stand firm for the teachings of God's Word will be at odds with Christians whose beliefs and lives are not conformed to the Scriptures.

Could division over doctrine result in persecution? Both history and the Word of God indicate as much. In the Book of Acts, we are told that "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1). It involved violent assaults, imprisonments, and deaths, and the issues were doctrinal—pitting those who fiercely defended the religious traditions of men against those who followed the teachings of Jesus the Messiah. Persecutions continued as Christians who stood firm in the doctrine of Christ refused to bow down to the deified Caesars or conform to the pagan rituals of Rome. They became vicious entertainment for those who packed the coliseums to see them burned and torn apart by animals. Later, a "Christianized" Rome persecuted those who attempted to reform Roman Catholicism. From there, doctrinal inquisitions and trials by torture proliferated against the "protestants" and other biblical non-Catholics. Today, persecution continues against believers in Islamic countries and in those places in the West where Roman Catholicism still controls the society, such

as cities, villages, and even some states in Mexico and South America.

Although none of the above has manifested itself substantially in the United States, could such religious persecution take place here? Roman Catholicism has never been in a position to impose its dogmas on the American populace; Islam has only begun to control some neighborhoods here with its Sharia legalism ("Terror's Secret Weapon: Shariah," *Townhall*, 4/20/11). But what about a scenario of Bible-believing Christians being persecuted by other Christians who will "not endure sound doctrine"? Is that likely? Some who have previewed this article were doubtful that "Christians killing Christians over doctrines" would ever take place here, a law-abiding country where, for the most part, "doctrinal apathy" rules among evangelicals. I tend to agree, yet if someone had told me 25 years ago that evangelicals would shift from the then highly influential moral majority/Christian Right to the socialism-oriented Christian Left—I would have laughed. No one is laughing at that reality now (Q&A 1/11). Only the Lord knows how extreme the oppression will become prior to His return for His bride, but there are many forms of persecution, short of martyrdom.

In previous *TBC* articles, we have addressed significant trends among evangelicals that have "weaned them off the Word," seducing them into following the ways, means, and agendas of *man* contrary to the Scriptures (See *TBC* 3/04; 2/05; 3/05; 2/07; 3/07; 9/07, et al.). In the midst of that process of compromise, increasing numbers of professing and true Christians have accepted the ideals of the world, including moral, social, and religious tolerance. "Intolerance" in thought, word, or deed of that which the world believes is good for humanity identifies a person as antisocial at least and as bigoted, prejudiced, or a practitioner of hate crimes at worst. Furthermore, what if a social gospel that is based upon "good works" became widely accepted as a better form of "salvation"—one that had the potential to rally *everyone* together, including governments, the world's religions, liberal Christians and cults, humanists and even atheists? Everyone, that is, *except biblical Christians*. What might be the consequences for those who would object to such a world-supported "Christian" development because it did not conform to sound doctrine?

Sound doctrine, i.e., the teachings of the Bible, is what a true Christian is to abide by as one lives his life for Christ. Sound doctrine is the *absolute criterion* that dictates what beliefs, practices, and programs he can accept and what he must reject. Moreover, Scripture exhorts him to be discerning and steadfast in its teachings: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye

may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.... And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:13-14, 17).

But would God allow persecution to take place *within* the church? That's what Peter seems to be acknowledging: "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17). Judgment, in the sense of correction and strengthening that results from God's allowing of persecution, as we've noted, has always been a part of Christianity. The Epistle to the Hebrews also indicates that persecution is one of the things that God has used as a spiritual pruning and purifying process for Hebrew Christians.

If you're not sure how (or why) persecution might take place within Christianity, consider these examples: When Promise Keepers enjoyed popularity among evangelical men, it became known that one of its goals was to "break down the walls" between Catholics and evangelicals. Part of that process involved turning churches against ministries that evangelized Roman Catholics. When Rick Warren's "40 Days of Purpose" began to influence hundreds of thousands of churches throughout the U.S., long-time members who protested on doctrinal grounds were either disfellowshipped, or threatened with disfellowship, unless they submitted to Warren's program in their own churches (see *TBC* 10/04 and 9/08). To question a pastor or the elders' support for introducing yoga or "Christianized yoga" in a church has been grounds for disfellowship.

Although the above examples may seem marginal to some, they and other endeavors, including church-growth marketing programs, emerging church methods and mystical practices, ecumenical overtures to Muslims and Mormons, an ecumenical global P.E.A.C.E. plan that involves all the world's religions, movements aimed at solving the world's ecological, poverty, and social injustice problems, etc., have driven multitudes of believers to start home churches.

What if you were to preach against the various agendas mentioned above because they were a rejection of sound doctrine? Remember the Apostle Paul's admonition? "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ... Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine..." (2 Timothy 4:1-4). What would be the reaction among

those within and without the church who were supportive of those agendas?

Or what if even *without* your preaching or protesting it simply becomes known that you are one of those biblical Christians who is intolerant toward other religions, who rejects evolution, who won't go along with psychology, who is anti-abortion, anti-genetic manipulation, and anti-euthanasia; that you view homosexuality as a sin rather than an alternative lifestyle, and that you are against gay rights and gay marriage? Furthermore, you seem to be out of touch with the acceptable morality of the day (marriage now being statistically a minority as a practice in the U.S.) by having a "problem" with cohabitation, and it's been said that you believe sexual abstinence should be practiced outside of marriage. You are suspicious about the alarm over "global warming." It's become known that you support Israel against the alleged right of the Palestinians to be restored to the land they believe is theirs. How will such a person be dealt with in Christendom—as well as by the world that champions everything that a believer opposes? The dark clouds of persecution appear to be gathering over the church in the U.S.; signs indicate that the seats of the "coliseum" are beginning to fill with a widely diverse audience (see *TBC* 1/11) that, at least in a figurative sense, has "a taste for the blood" of those who reject their programs and teachings on the basis of sound biblical doctrine.

The seduction of Christianity has created a condition in which biblical discernment and steadfastness in the faith are the exception rather than the rule. Standing for the truth and righteousness of the Word of God while the opposition increases within and without the church can only result in some form of persecution. Paul makes that quite clear: "*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Timothy 3:12). Although that verse may distress some believers, it shouldn't. Why? Because the beginning of the verse gives a believer the key to receiving the grace to glorify God and to benefit others through persecution: living godly lives in Christ Jesus! That is a believer's only preparation and it is more than sufficient. Jesus, who is the Word made flesh, gave His disciples this astonishing word of encouragement regarding standing for His teachings: "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven..." (Luke 6:22-23). Our prayer is that the Lord Jesus will help us to live godly lives and by His grace remain steadfast in the faith as we look for His soon coming. **TBC**

Quotable

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:1)

Paul was in a dark place. He was a prisoner of Nero in degrading circumstances and awaited death at any moment. Many thoughts filled his mind. Yet, above these were two others: the will of God and the promise of life. Whatever was happening to him he was convinced was in the will of God; it could not be otherwise. While Nero might be the means of his death yet he had the promise of life in Christ Jesus. Man's worst efforts opened up God's promises. Somewhere in this darkest hour was God's will and somewhere in the confusion was God's promise of life. May we also try to remember these wonderful truths in our dark times.

— R. Hill, in *2011 Choice Gleanings*

"If God is your co-pilot...you need to switch seats."

— Anonymous

Q&A

QUESTION: In your article on heaven, May 2011, you stated that the man in 2 Corinthians 12:2 was "no doubt" Paul himself. May I ask for some clarification? Paul had stated that the prophets never lose mental control (1 Corinthians 14:32). They did not go into trances, comas, or out-of-body experiences. If that is a true interpretation, then Paul would have known whether he was in the body or out of the body. There was a person who had such an experience in Revelation 10:1-4. John was also caught up into the third heaven (Revelation 1:10) and given words he could not reveal—the third heaven, not pertaining to altitude, but time, as Peter explained in 2 Peter 3:6,7,13. As best as I can interpret, Paul never spoke of himself in the third person, as the case would be in 2 Corinthians 12. It seems that 2 Corinthians 12:5 clarifies beyond doubt that this man was not Paul. If I am missing something, please let me know.

RESPONSE: It seems very likely to be the case that the Apostle Paul is referring to himself in 2 Corinthians 12:2-7. First of all, it is a very personal account of an exalted experience, and Paul, in his humility, seems to use the third person to temper any glory that might be bestowed upon him. Verse 7

clearly indicates his reluctance to boast lest he himself be exalted. Why should Paul himself need a "thorn in the flesh" if he were speaking of another man's revelation?

Additionally, it would certainly not be out of character—nor out of biblical context—for Paul to speak of himself in the third person. John ("the beloved") appears to have done so (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 21:20). In like manner, Paul wrote, "Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities...lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me" (2 Corinthians 12:5-6).

Regarding your statement that "prophets never lose mental control," you've missed the context of 1 Corinthians 14:32: "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." That verse simply indicates that the prophets, i.e., teachers or preachers, have control of what they say and when they are to say it, so that there is no confusion or disorder in a gathering of believers. Acts 10:10 and 11:5 declare that Paul and Peter, both prophets, had trance experiences.

One of the most striking aspects of this entire account is that while Paul clearly intended to speak about "visions and revelations of the Lord" (v. 1), in the end, he not only "failed" to describe what he *saw*, but he was also forbidden to repeat what he had *heard*! (Obviously, he was redirected by the Holy Spirit, in much the same manner as was Jude in verse 3 of his epistle).

The Word of God gives many examples of believers who had supernatural spiritual experiences, and we know that what they experienced was true because it was reported to us in the Scriptures, God's objective truth. Spiritual experiences in the Lord for believers today, although they may indeed have taken place, are nevertheless personal and subjective, and if others cannot verify them objectively, there is minimal value, if any, in sharing them. For some believers, too often the experiential becomes more significant than God's Word, and that is a pathway to delusion and worse.

QUESTION: There are many who advocate that a born-again believer in Christ can commit suicide and still be saved. They stress the fact that there is only one sin that God will not forgive: blaspheming the Holy Spirit. They use King Saul, Samson, and Judas Iscariot. My thought on this is that no saint can/could ever give up on life, self, or God because His Spirit is in them and is the Life of the believer. The works of the flesh are described in Galatians 5:19-21a. Could you explain the differences between these three men

(Samson, Judas, and King Saul) as to what their deaths proved? Is it possible for a saint to commit suicide?

RESPONSE: The answer to your question has little to do with King Saul, Samson, nor especially Judas. The answer is predicated upon this biblical absolute: Everyone who is truly born again, who has by grace alone through faith alone believed that Jesus paid the full penalty for one's sins (which He did—past, present, and future!) has therefore received the gift of eternal life.

One might as well ask if a saint of God could commit adultery, steal, or even murder. Tragically, it has proved to be possible for Christians to commit all manner of wickedness. Such is the nature of mankind, whose heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). As such a person goes through life and, for whatever reasons, is overtaken by the world, the flesh, or the devil—even to the point of suicide—his fruitfulness in life and his eternal rewards will be affected, but it cannot affect his gift of eternal life, which he neither earned nor could pay for.

A believer who is truly saved and maturing in Christ should not desire to commit *any* sin. The Word of God abounds in exhortations directed at believers to live their temporal life for Christ, to fight the good fight of faith, to beware of the wiles of the devil, who goes about seeking whom he may devour, etc. There would be no such admonitions directed at believers if they were immune to those things that would shipwreck their faith. But as God's Word repeatedly affirms, we are assured that His gift of eternal life extends even to those saints who fail.

QUESTION: A frequent reaction to your book *The Seduction of Christianity* is that it causes division within the Body. What is your response to this criticism?

RESPONSE: I agree that we as Christians are to love one another genuinely and to seek unity. However, I would remind you that it is the "unity of the *faith*" that we are to maintain; and it is the *truth* that we are to speak in love. If members of the Body have erred, then we must in love correct them.

Furthermore, division is not always bad. Christ caused division everywhere He went (John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19). He even declared that He had come into the world to bring division (Luke 12:51)!

I've heard Romans 16:17 misquoted repeatedly on this subject: "Mark them which cause divisions and avoid them."

That is not what Paul says. We are to mark and avoid those who “cause divisions and offenses contrary to [sound] doctrine....”

If division arises due to opposition to the truth, it is not the one teaching or standing firm for sound doctrine who is at fault, but those who “will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3). That doctrine is despised today is one of the clearest signs of the last-days apostasy, which is growing at an alarming rate.

Let those who oppose *The Seduction of Christianity* point out from the Bible where we have erred. If they cannot do so, it is a pitiful cover-up of their aversion to truth to raise the cry of “division”!

QUESTION: Regarding the May TBC article on “An Exercise in Discernment,” the scriptures in Exodus 20:4-5 and Acts 17:29 say that the Lord is against anyone attempting to make an image of God. We are grandparents and have given Christian children’s books about Jesus. The books have images of Jesus. We also have a Nativity set with an infant Jesus. Missionaries are using the *Jesus Film* to explain the gospel in rural third world nations where there are no Bibles in their languages. We want to be obedient to the Lord’s Scripture. What do you suggest we tell our grandchildren?

RESPONSE: Most of us are no doubt familiar with the analogy of a frog in a pot of water. As the heat slowly increases, the frog, a cold-blooded animal, doesn’t notice it and ends up being cooked to death. In a Christian culture, certain seemingly insignificant things creep in from the world that don’t appear to be contrary to Scripture, and they slowly increase and become acceptable over time. Religious art has had such a development in church history, in particular in the acceptance of icons by the Orthodox Church and the proliferation of statues and paintings in the Roman Catholic Church. Since the Bible was not the final authority of either of these churches, both of them disregarded the biblical prohibitions against such imagery. Centuries later, it is common for evangelicals to fully accept “religious art” as something useful and even helpful for “meditating” on the Lord.

All of that goes to say that although artistic depictions of biblical characters and topics have been around for a long time and have increased in our visually oriented culture, that still doesn’t give it the support of Scripture. An image of Jesus has serious problems: 1) Scripture prohibits it (Exodus

20:4-5; Acts 17:29). 2) No representation of Jesus, the God/Man, can accurately portray Him. 3) All such images of Jesus are false images. 4) Art is a subjective form of communication and unless it is ordained and directed by God (Exodus 31), it is a fleshly misrepresentation of what is presented in God’s objective Word. Even when God has ordained something for a specific purpose, man has used it for idolatrous purposes, such as the bronzed serpent (2 Kings 18:4). Centuries of the idolatrous imagery of the Catholic Church have been a major catalyst for all of its many superstitions.

There is a vast difference between generic representations of Jesus (for example, the characters on a flannel board) used for the purpose of teaching young children who don’t have the ability to read or write, and a detailed painting or sculpture purporting to represent our Lord, as is so often seen in contemplative practices. Children don’t seem to “cling” to the flocked figures as idolatrous objects. But we must remember Paul’s admonition: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11). When your grandchildren are old enough to read the Bible, that is how they should be taught—by the Word of God itself. Pictures may attract and entertain children, but they do not teach objective truth. Today’s animated and cartoonized characterizations of Bible stories seem increasingly objectionable and offensive—regardless of how cute and clever and well-produced they may be.

The same may be said for attempts to translate the Bible into a movie. No matter how sincere the attempt, it will always be a corruption of God’s inerrant Word, replete with images conjured up by fallen humanity.

What should you do? Ultimately, each of us is accountable to the Lord for our position and beliefs. Romans 1:17 tells us that the just shall live by faith. The challenge is before us to apply both grace and truth in dealing with these situations. We suggest that you explain to your grandchildren the biblical understanding that you have come to regarding imagery.

Fortunately, the Lord does not apply His righteous judgment upon us in the same manner as realized by Uzza, when he innocently (by human standards)—and with “good intentions”—reached out to keep the Ark from falling, or Ananias and Sapphira, who were not quite so ignorant in their sin. No one goes to hell for reading a picture book or seeing a movie with images that supposedly represent Jesus, but as depictions

that are not true to Him, they cannot lead one to the true and living Christ.

QUESTION: Many of today’s Christian leaders (including my former Pastor), matter of factly state that we live in a “Post-Christian Era.” My question is: aren’t these leaders conveying a defeatist attitude about Christian values in the United States and other parts of Western Civilization? Isn’t that what the enemy would have the church believe so that we would stop evangelizing the lost?

Response: It is true that what is commonly being heard in the West (i.e., America, Europe) is that we are living in a post-Christian era. The influence of Christianity has diminished greatly and there is a growing number of pagan, Islamic, Hindu, etc., religions moving in to fill the void. This is often used to fuel the argument that Christianity needs to change, something advanced by the Emerging Church.

Regarding the other side of the coin, Paul wrote, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). It is clear that the gospel is out of season for many. It has always been out of season in the world, but Paul clearly is addressing the church as well, for he goes on to say, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (v. 3). The Scriptures speak again and again of an apostasy in which “professing” believers will depart from the faith.

It is instructive to see how believers in Third World nations are so much more emphatic in their preaching of the gospel from Scripture. Even mainline denominational believers in Third World nations are more “evangelical” than many who identify themselves as evangelicals in the West.

We must also remember, however, that biblically there will never be a “Post-Christian Era.” John spoke in Revelation of “...a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands” (Revelation 7:9). He was told, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (v. 14). So even in those last of the last days, Christianity will be on the earth. Consequently, God will always have a faithful remnant, and the fruit of that remnant “no man could number.”

TBC Summer Conference!

Bend, OR • August 12-13, 2011



IT'S YOUR LAST CHANCE to plan for another exciting Berean Call conference in beautiful Bend, Oregon! We're pleased to announce that there is no cost to attend the meetings (though space is limited and pre-registration is required).



T. A. McMAHON:

Tom started The Berean Call with Dave Hunt and is TBC's executive director and editor-in-chief. Together, Dave and Tom wrote the bestseller *The Seduction of Christianity*.

T.A.'S TOPICS:

- God's Plan for the Clueless: A Personal Testimony
- Seduction: Setup for Persecution
- The Value of Suffering



DR. FRANK BOLLES:

Frank Bolles is a medical doctor and international Bible teacher who has led many tours to the Holy Land, where he has family members residing. Frank will present an insider's view of Israel and her current state of affairs.

FRANK'S TOPICS:

- Israel - Faces and Places - Parts 1 & 2 (Psalm 48: 12-14)



CARL KERBY:

Carl's passion is to proclaim the accuracy of the Bible and to engage the minds and hearts of believers and unbelievers so that they may experience the realities of the Word of God. A former board member of Answers in Genesis, Carl is currently President and Founder of Reasons for Hope, Inc., a ministry that teaches creationism, evangelism, and discernment regarding popular media.

CARL'S TOPICS:

- Does Genesis Matter?
- Fossils: Friend or Foe?
- Human Evolution: From Ida to Us, What're the Facts?



PAUL WILKINSON:

Paul's writings feature church history and particularly how developments such as replacement theology have adversely influenced Christians regarding the restoration of Israel and Christ's imminent return. Paul is the Assistant Pastor of Hazel Grove Full Gospel Church in Cheshire, England, and studied at the International School of Holocaust Studies in Jerusalem.

PAUL'S TOPICS:

- A Goliath in the Church (Christian Palestinianism)
- When the Chief Shepherd Appears
- Three Themes of a Hero

GENERAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Friday Morning

- 8:45-9:00 - Opening
- 9:00-10:00 - T. A. McMahon
- 10:00-10:15 - Break
- 10:15-11:15 - Paul Wilkinson
- 11:15-11:30 - Break
- 11:30-12:30 - Dr. Frank Bolles
- 12:30-2:00 - Lunch Break

Friday Afternoon

- 2:00-3:00 - Carl Kerby
- 3:00-3:15 - Break
- 3:15-4:15 - Paul Wilkinson
- 4:15-4:30 - Break
- 4:30-5:30 - T. A. McMahon

Friday Evening

- 5:30-7:30 - Dinner Break
- 7:30-8:00 - Music & Worship
- 8:00-9:00: - Dave Hunt Classic Video Premier

Saturday Morning

- 8:45-9:00 - Opening
- 9:00-10:00 - Carl Kerby
- 10:00-10:15 - Break
- 10:15-11:15 - Dr. Frank Bolles
- 11:15-11:30 - Break
- 11:30-12:30 - Paul Wilkinson
- 12:30-2:00 - Lunch Break

Saturday Afternoon

- 2:00-3:00 - Carl Kerby
- 3:00-3:15 - Break
- 3:15-4:15 - T. A. McMahon
- 4:15-4:30 - Break
- 4:30-5:30 - Q&A
- 5:30-5:45 - Closing

Saturday Evening

- 7:00-8:00: Dinner & Fellowship (see offer next column)

OPTIONAL DINNER TICKET:

We're planning on having a dinner at the end of the Conference, 7pm Saturday, August 13. Food will be served at (and by) Country Catering, next door to the TBC offices. Dinner tickets are limited and must be purchased by August 1st.

Adult Dinner Tickets: \$17

Children 5-12 Dinner Tickets: \$12

Dinner Menu includes:

- BBQ Tri Tip and Chicken
- Red Rose Potato Salad
- BBQ Baked Beans
- Tossed Green Salad
- Garlic Cheese Bread
- Salsa
- Cookies
- Ice Tea or Lemonade

This is your chance to tour the TBC office, whether or not you choose to attend the dinner.

TO REGISTER: Call us at 1-800-937-6638 or visit www.thebereancall.org

TBC NewsWatch

NETANYAHU SCHOOLS CONGRESS

THE WASHINGTON POST.COM, 5/24/2011

TRANSCRIPT: ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BINYAMIN NETANYAHU'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS [EXCERPTS]—In an unstable Middle East, Israel is the one anchor of stability. In a region of shifting alliances, Israel is America's unwavering ally. Israel has always been pro-American. Israel will always be pro-American....

An epic battle is now unfolding in the Middle East, between tyranny and freedom.... shaking the earth from the Khyber Pass to the Straits of Gibraltar.... Now this historic moment holds the promise of a new dawn of freedom and opportunity. Millions of young people are determined to change their future.... They muster courage. They risk their lives. They demand dignity. They desire liberty.

These extraordinary scenes in Tunis and Cairo evoke those of Berlin and Prague in 1989. Yet as we share their hopes, we must also remember that those hopes could be snuffed out as they were in Tehran in 1979.... The brief democratic spring in Iran was cut short by a ferocious and unforgiving tyranny. This same tyranny smothered Lebanon's democratic Cedar Revolution, and inflicted on that long-suffering country the medieval rule of Hezbollah.

Today, the Middle East stands at a fateful crossroads.... This path is not paved by elections alone. It is paved when governments permit protests in town squares, when limits are placed on the powers of rulers, when judges are beholden to laws and not men, and when human rights cannot be crushed by tribal loyalties or mob rule.

Israel has always embraced this path... the Middle East has long rejected it. In a region where women are stoned, gays are hanged, Christians are persecuted, Israel stands out. Courageous Arab protesters are now struggling to secure these very same rights for their peoples, for their societies.... Of the 300 million Arabs in the Middle East and North Africa, only Israel's Arab citizens enjoy real democratic rights.... Of those 300 million Arabs, less than one-half of one-percent are truly free, and they're all citizens of Israel!

This startling fact reveals a basic truth: Israel is not what is *wrong* about the Middle East. Israel is what is *right* about the Middle East....

We long for the day when Israel will be one of many real democracies in the Middle East.... For I believe that a Middle East that is genuinely democratic will be a Middle East truly at peace. But while we hope and work for the best, we must also recognize that powerful forces oppose this future....

Foremost among these forces is Iran. The tyranny in Tehran brutalizes its own people. It supports attacks against American troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. It subjugates Lebanon and Gaza. It sponsors terror worldwide.... The greatest danger facing humanity could soon be upon us: A militant Islamic regime armed with nuclear weapons....

Now the threat to my country cannot be overstated. Those who dismiss it are sticking their heads in the sand. Less than seven decades after six million Jews were murdered, Iran's leaders deny the Holocaust of the Jewish people, while calling for the annihilation of the Jewish state.

Leaders who spew such venom, should be banned from every respectable forum on the planet. But there is something that makes the outrage even greater: The lack of outrage. In much of the international community, the calls for our destruction are met with utter silence. It is even worse because there are many who rush to condemn Israel for defending itself against Iran's terror proxies.

But not you. Not America. You have acted differently. You've condemned the Iranian regime for its genocidal aims. You've passed tough sanctions against Iran. History will salute you America.

President Obama has said that the United States is determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. He successfully led the Security Council to adopt sanctions against Iran. You in Congress passed even tougher sanctions. These words and deeds are vitally important. Yet the Ayatollah regime briefly suspended its nuclear program only once, in 2003, when it feared the possibility of military action. That same year, Muammar Qaddafi gave up his nuclear weapons program, and for the same reason. The more Iran believes that all options are on the table, the less the chance of confrontation. This is why I ask you to continue to send an unequivocal message: America will never permit Iran to develop nuclear weapons!

As for Israel, if history has taught the Jewish people anything, it is that we must take calls for our destruction seriously. We are a nation that rose from the ashes of the Holocaust. When we say never again, we mean never again. Israel always reserves the right to defend itself.

My friends, while Israel will be ever vigilant in its defense, we will never give up on our quest for peace.... We've achieved historic peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan that have held up for decades.... But they're not enough. We must also find a way to forge a lasting peace with the Palestinians. Two years ago, I publicly committed to a solution of two states for two peoples: A Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state....

As the leader of Israel... I recognize that in a genuine peace, we will be required to give

up parts of the Jewish homeland. In Judea and Samaria, the Jewish people are not foreign occupiers. We are not the British in India. We are not the Belgians in the Congo. This is the land of our forefathers, the Land of Israel, to which Abraham brought the idea of one God, where David set out to confront Goliath, and where Isaiah saw a vision of eternal peace. No distortion of history can deny the four-thousand-year-old bond, between the Jewish people and the Jewish land.

But there is another truth: The Palestinians share this small land with us. We seek a peace in which they will be neither Israel's subjects nor its citizens. They should enjoy a national life of dignity as a free, viable and independent people in their own state. They should enjoy a prosperous economy, where their creativity and initiative can flourish.... In the last two years, the Palestinians have begun to build a better life for themselves. Prime Minister Fayad has led this effort....

We've helped the Palestinian economy by removing hundreds of barriers and roadblocks to the free flow of goods and people. The results have been nothing short of remarkable. The Palestinian economy is... growing by more than 10% a year. Palestinian cities [now] have shopping malls, movie theaters, restaurants, banks... e-businesses. This is all happening without peace. Imagine what could happen with peace....

If the benefits of peace with the Palestinians are so clear, why has peace eluded us? Because all six Israeli Prime Ministers since the signing of Oslo accords agreed to establish a Palestinian state. Myself included. So why has peace not been achieved? Because so far, the Palestinians have been unwilling to accept a Palestinian state, *if it meant accepting a Jewish state alongside it*.

You see, our conflict has never been about the establishment of a Palestinian state. It has always been about the existence of the Jewish state.... In 1947, the United Nations voted to partition the land into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Jews said yes. The Palestinians said no. In recent years, the Palestinians twice refused generous offers by Israeli Prime Ministers, to establish a Palestinian state on virtually all the territory won by Israel in the Six Day War. They were simply unwilling to end the conflict. And I regret to say this: They continue to educate their children to hate. They continue to name public squares after terrorists. And worst of all, they continue to perpetuate the fantasy that Israel will one day be flooded by the descendants of Palestinian refugees.

My friends, this must come to an end.... I stood before my people, and I said... "I will accept a Palestinian state." It is time for President Abbas to stand before his people and say... "I will accept a Jewish state."

Those six words will change history. They will make clear to the Palestinians that this conflict must come to an end....They will convince the people of Israel that they have a true partner for peace. With such a partner, the people of Israel will be prepared to make a far-reaching compromise....This compromise must reflect the dramatic demographic changes that have occurred since 1967. The vast majority of the 650,000 Israelis who live beyond the 1967 lines, reside in neighborhoods and suburbs of Jerusalem and Greater Tel Aviv.

The status of the settlements will be decided only in negotiations. But we must also be honest.... In any peace agreement that ends the conflict, some settlements will end up beyond Israel's borders. The precise delineation of those borders must be negotiated. We will be very generous on the size of a future Palestinian state. But as President Obama said, the border will be different than the one that existed on June 4, 1967. Israel will not return to the indefensible lines of 1967....

President Obama rightly referred to Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, just as he referred to the future Palestinian state as the homeland of the Palestinian people. Jews from around the world have a right to immigrate to the Jewish state. Palestinians from around the world should have a right to immigrate, if they so choose, to a Palestinian state. This means that the Palestinian refugee problem will be resolved outside the borders of Israel.

As for Jerusalem, only a democratic Israel has protected freedom of worship for all faiths in the city. Jerusalem must never again be divided. Jerusalem must remain the united capital of Israel. I know that this is a difficult issue for Palestinians. But I believe with creativity and goodwill a solution can be found.

This is the peace I plan to forge with a Palestinian partner committed to peace. But you know very well that in the Middle East, the only peace that will hold is a peace you can defend.

So peace must be anchored in security. In recent years, Israel withdrew from South Lebanon and Gaza. But we didn't get peace. Instead, we got 12,000 rockets fired from those areas on our cities, on our children, by Hezbollah and Hamas. The UN peacekeepers in Lebanon failed to prevent the smuggling of this weaponry. The European observers in Gaza evaporated overnight. So if Israel simply walked out of the territories, the flow of weapons into a future Palestinian state would be unchecked. Missiles fired from it could reach virtually every home in Israel in less than a minute....Imagine that right now we all had less than 60 seconds to find shelter from an incoming rocket....Would anyone live that way? Well, we aren't going to live that way either.

The truth is that Israel needs unique security arrangements because of its unique size. Israel is one of the smallest countries in the world....Israel on the 1967 lines would be half the width of the Washington Beltway....So it is therefore absolutely vital for Israel's security that a Palestinian state be fully demilitarized. And it is vital that Israel maintain a long-term military presence along the Jordan River. Solid security arrangements on the ground are necessary not only to protect the peace; they are necessary to protect Israel in case the peace unravels. For in our unstable region, no one can guarantee that our peace partners today will be there tomorrow.

And when I say tomorrow, I don't mean some distant time in the future. I mean—tomorrow. Peace can be achieved only around the negotiating table. The Palestinian attempt to impose a settlement through the United Nations will not bring peace. It should be forcefully opposed by all those who want to see this conflict end....Peace cannot be imposed. It must be negotiated. But it can only be negotiated with partners committed to peace.

And Hamas is not a partner for peace. Hamas remains committed to Israel's destruction and to terrorism. They have a charter... that...not only calls for the obliteration of Israel, but says "kill the Jews wherever you find them." Hamas' leader condemned the killing of Osama bin Laden and praised him as a holy warrior....Israel is prepared to sit down today and negotiate peace with the Palestinian Authority. I believe we can fashion a brilliant future of peace for our children. But Israel will not negotiate with a Palestinian government backed by the Palestinian version of Al Qaeda.

So I say to President Abbas: Tear up your pact with Hamas! Sit down and negotiate! Make peace with the Jewish state! And if you do, I promise you this. Israel will not be the last country to welcome a Palestinian state as a new member of the United Nations. It will be the first to do so....

OBAMA WHITE HOUSE ISSUES ULTIMATUM

HAARETZ.COM, 6/13/2011: U.S. PRESSURING NETANYAHU TO ACCEPT OBAMA'S PEACE PLAN [EXCERPTS]—Washington is pressuring Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to accede to its proposal to resume Israeli-Palestinian peace talks on the basis of U.S. President Barack Obama's May 19 speech.

An Israeli source who spoke recently with senior officials in Washington said the Americans were very frustrated with Netanyahu's behavior, feeling that he was impeding America's efforts to keep the Palestinians from unilaterally seeking UN recognition of a state in September. Netanyahu's personal envoy, Isaac Molho, spent last week in Washington, where

the Americans presented their proposal for resuming talks on the basis of Obama's speech. Specifically, Obama's plan calls for negotiating over borders and security first, while deferring issues such as Jerusalem and the refugees until later. It also calls for the borders to be based on the 1967 lines, with mutually agreed land swaps....

An Israeli source who maintains close ties with both senior U.S. officials and people close to Netanyahu said that Washington's frustration began with Netanyahu's trip to Washington last month, when he publicly fought with Obama and then refused in an address to Congress to endorse the president's outline for talks. The Americans were now speaking very harshly of Netanyahu, said the source.

"He's asking us to protect him in September, but he isn't giving us any tools with which to help him," the source quoted one American official as saying. "Instead of helping us, he's making it harder for us."

As a result, American officials complained, Obama was unable to get Britain and France to commit to opposing a unilateral Palestinian move when he visited Europe last month.

"The Americans need Israel inside, but Netanyahu isn't there yet," the source said. "To date, from the American and European perspective, Israel hasn't given anything."

European diplomats said Netanyahu's speech to Congress was viewed in Europe as one long "no" and had thus increased European distrust of him. "We want to hear Netanyahu say he's willing to negotiate on the basis of Obama's speech and that he'll discuss borders based on the 1967 lines with land swaps," said one diplomat.

Since the barren talks with Molho last week, the White House has been upping the pressure on Netanyahu. On Friday, Steve Simon, who heads the U.S. National Security Council's Middle East desk, told American Jewish leaders that Netanyahu needs to reply within a month to the U.S. proposal for restarting talks. The White House knew this remark would both be conveyed to Netanyahu and leaked to the American and Israeli press, thus making its displeasure public.

But Netanyahu's office insisted it was "unaware of any American pressure or ultimatum."

[TBC: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."

—Zechariah 12:1-3]

Speaking Schedule

Aug 12-13	TBC Conference
	Bend, OR (800) 937-6638
Sep 9-10	Calvary Chapel Appleton
(TA)	Appleton, WI (920) 735-1242
Oct 15-16	Cohocton Assembly of God
(TA)	Cohocton, NY (585) 384-9113

Dear TBC,

I once read an article [that] reported the findings of a question asked of several prominent conservative, orthodox fundamentalists....The question was: "Other than the Bible, what are the top five books that have had the greatest influence on you?"

Some...mentioned works by Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and several other theologians [who had] produced well-known pieces of literature. However, the only author and book to make it into the top five of every list was C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*. The reason I mention this is, if the Lord tarries for another generation, and this same question is posed to a future group of prominent conservative theologians, I am sure C. S. Lewis will make each list, but also included will be Dave's new book, *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*. It's that good and will have that much influence on everyone who reads it. Thank you. JB (KY, prisoner)

Dear Dave & T. A.,

The ministry of The Berean Call is a refreshing stream in the desert....I am 60 years old. Salvation came late in my life (30s), and in the 1980s I bought both *The Seduction of Christianity* and *Beyond Seduction*. Too bad I didn't read them....I kept seeking healing from my painful past through Christian psychology. [This resulted] in even more pain as I made very foolish choices that have brought sorrowful consequences.... So I got out your books and read them both (remarkable that I still had them after [many] moves)...WOW! Everything we had encountered was written on the pages of your books....Then when I read your description of psychology being a rival religion—that was it for me! I had my husband burn every "Christian" psychology book [I owned] and that was the end of that....The freedom from being double-minded is great! So add me to the list of people who cherish the truth...! Faithful servants like you encourage those of us out here in the wilderness. AC (GA)

Dear Mr. McMahon,

The poem about Dave in your [April] newsletter has...given me the prompt to

do what I should have done long, long ago. With...the exception of my own father, you and Dave have been the most influential people in my Christian walk and growth over the last three decades. Even from a young age, my favorite fictional book was *The Archon Conspiracy*, and I was then led to read many of Dave's other books, and of course the magnificent newsletter that I devour each month. I am currently reading *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* and...am amazed at how *more* relevant it is several decades on. I had the absolute pleasure and privilege of...meeting you...at our church in Sheffield (UK) last year....I was delighted to have the opportunity to sincerely thank you...for the massive influence you have been in my faith's growth and knowledge. I guess I will get the opportunity to thank Dave...when we are both in the Lord's presence....Thank you both so much....I hope to be able to pass on to my daughters what I have learnt from you and your ministry, just like my father, who steered me towards your ministry as a curious and knowledge-hungry teenager. JS (UK)

TBC,

Reading the books by Dave Hunt has finally opened my mind and my heart to what Jesus really means to me! My spiritual journey runs from India to Rome....Last Sunday I found myself sad but laughing [while] watching *60 Minutes* on TV. Not long ago I would have been amazed at the orthodox presentation of their mystical ancient behavior. I laughed because all I saw was Hinduism dressed up as Christianity! Thank you, everyone at Berean Call, for your work and the light you shine on Christ! GP (email)

Dear Dave,

With reference to your insightful answer [about God's foreknowledge 6/11]: Thanks for your wisdom in this regard, Dave. I have been a Christian for three decades and a pastor for almost two. Some nine years ago I started a serious flirtation with Calvinism and even began introducing aspects thereof into our church, although I had a nagging uneasiness about it. I then read a portion of *What Love Is This?* and as a result tried to merge Calvinism and Free Will in my mind. Some years later, after a humbling personal crisis, I attempted a second reading, and from the first page the book made me feel extremely stupid. I was crying out all the time "but I knew that!" and "I should have written this!" Something deep within whispered "Well, why don't you stick to what you know and believe?" I did exactly that, and it was not even necessary to finish the book. It is now years later, and it has become clear to me that there was a direct correlation between my attraction to Calvinism and

the size of my ego. I wanted to be part of the intellectual elite, and so I began finding reasons to discard the obvious and simple meaning of Scripture. My huge effort to become a 5-point Calvinist can be explained in one word: PRIDE. Thanks again, Dave. TV (email)

TBC Notes

"Beam Me IN, Scottie!"

That may not seem like the most spiritual way of announcing an opportunity for your church to have me speak on a Sunday or a weekday evening. Nevertheless, it's a blessing for those of us who love instances for good stewardship.

On two occasions recently I had the privilege of speaking to a fellowship in Miami, Florida. The best part was that they didn't have to pay for my airline ticket or my accommodations. Everything, including a lengthy Q&A session after one talk, was accomplished right from our office here in Bend, Oregon.

The computer program, with which many are already familiar, is called SKYPE. In its simplest form, a camera records sound and video images that are sent from one computer to another in real time. In a church situation, what is received by computer (the speaker and his power point) is projected onto a large screen for the congregation to see and hear. A camera at the church records the audience so the speaker can see how people are responding (e.g., enthralled, falling asleep, or heading for the doors).

We are still in a developmental phase with this, but it has worked quite well so far. Technically speaking, a church needs to have a computer with a camera and internet connection, a projector, and a large screen (or a blank wall), but these seem to be standard in most churches. Our procedure is to run a test with each interested fellowship to see if a SKYPE program is compatible with its current equipment. Once that's squared away, a date is set and the announcements can be sent out.

If this is something that your church may be interested in, you can call Sally at 1-541-382-6210, ext. 119, to arrange a facilities test and to schedule a date.

T. A. McMAHON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“DOCTRINE” IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

✧ by — RON MERRYMAN ✧

“Till I come, give attention to *the* reading, to *the* exhortation, to *the* doctrine....Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to *the* doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you”—1 Timothy 4:13, 15-16. (I have highlighted the definite articles each from the Greek text, because they affirm the focus of public ministry, the Word of God.) [Paul to Timothy, ca. A.D. 65]

Paul’s admonition here is directed to three emphases in Timothy’s public ministry. When believers met in assembly, Timothy was to: 1) attend to the reading aloud of the Scriptures; 2) attend to exhortation-encouragement flowing from the Scriptures; and 3) attend to the *doctrine*, the organized or systematized teaching of God’s Word.

Timothy was to *meditate* on these [literally, *keep giving meticulous care to these* (*meletao* in the present tense, active voice, imperative mood)], to give himself entirely to them (“*be in these things*,”... “be absorbed in them”), and to *continue* or *persevere* in them...for in so doing, he and his listeners would be delivered from the evils of the age. Strong imperatives for young pastors from the

aged Apostle! It is evident that Paul’s confidence in accomplishing God’s purposes was solely in the Word of God.

What was to be normative to Timothy has become dreaded in evangelical churches today! Doctrine has become the dreaded “D” word! Some see it as divisive; as though truth and error admit to little difference (need I say that doctrinal truth by nature is quite intolerant of error!). Others see it as dry and boring, as though God’s truth is unrelated to human experience. Still others avoid doctrine like the plague, fearful that it minimizes love, as though love can be sentimentally divorced from truth.

Not so with the Apostle Paul! And in his *Pastoral* Epistles, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, he communicates the importance of sound doctrine. Did you notice—Pastoral Epistles—letters to those who would be responsible for emphases in assembly gatherings! Pastors, elders, seminarians: Take note! As kindly as possible [and] with empathy, having pastored for 14 years, I ask, “Are the believers in your assembly well grounded doctrinally or not? If not, why not?” Believers: Are you well oriented to biblical truth so that you can propagate and defend doctrinal truth? Or are you leaving such to the “pros”? ✧

FALSE PROPHECY - OR A SHORT HISTORY OF LESSONS NEVER LEARNED

✧ by — EDWIN L. NEWBY ✧

There is a simple way to test a prophecy: “wait and see.” Scripture is clear: “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy:18:22).

Harold Camping’s May 21, 2011, Judgment Day prophecy is just one more example of a false prophecy. Camping claimed that the Lord “revealed” this to him in spite of Christ’s clear statement: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:36).

“Camping, who predicted that 200 million Christians would be taken to heaven Saturday before the Earth was destroyed, said he felt so terrible when his doomsday prediction did not come true that he left home and took refuge in a motel with his wife [having] spent millions—some of it from donations made by followers—on more than 5,000 billboards and 20 RVs plastered with the Judgment Day message” (“Radio host says Rapture actually coming in October,” Associated Press in *USA Today*, 5/23/2011).

Previously, Camping had revealed September 6, 1994 as the end. It wasn’t.

In his more recent prediction, Camping had said that October 21 was when the world would be destroyed. Now he says that May 21, 2011 was “an invisible judgment day,” i.e., the earth was spiritually judged. “But the timing and the structure is the same as it has always been.”

Camping’s response is nothing new. Followers of William Miller (the group that later became the Seventh day Adventist Church) said, “Jesus Christ will come again to this earth, cleanse, purify, and take possession of the same, with all the saints, sometime between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844” (Quoted in Everett N. Dick, *William Miller and the Advent Crisis*, Berrien Springs: Andrews University

Press, 1994, pp. 96–97). These days passed, with Miller recalculating and then offering April 18, 1844, which also came and went. This should have stopped further date setting, but Miller’s associate, Samuel S. Snow pushed forth one more date (with Miller’s support)—October 22, 1844.

The “Great Disappointment of 1844” was not corrected by confession of error. Rather, Hiram Edson, another follower, claimed to have a vision while walking across his cornfield, in which he saw Jesus entering “the second apartment” of the heavenly sanctuary to perform a work there before coming to the earth (F. D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, p. 458). This false teaching is called the Investigative Judgment (see *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh day Adventists* on our website: <http://www.thebereancall.org/node/4917>). Error begets error.

Charles Taze Russell, who founded the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah’s Witnesses), was greatly influenced by SDA teaching. He also subscribed to the idea that Egypt’s Great Pyramid was a “prophecy in stone” and used the hidden codes found in the dimensions of the pyramid to show “A.D. 1874 as marking the beginning of the period of trouble...such as was not since there was a nation—no, nor ever shall be afterward.” (Charles Taze Russell, *Thy Kingdom Come, Studies In The Scriptures*, vol. 3, 1904 edition). In the 1910 edition of Russell’s book, he changed the “fully corroborated” date to 1914. Further error begets greater error.

Jesus didn’t physically return in 1914. But Russell taught that Jesus had indeed returned, though invisibly. In fact, at Jesus’ second coming, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him...” (Revelation:1:7).

In conclusion, Camping’s actions are little different from others’ who presume to set a date for the Lord’s return. ✧

“By the grace of God I am what I am” No basis for self-esteem there!...

SELF-EXALTATION AND HUMILITY

BY DAVE HUNT ~ EXCERPTED FROM *BEYOND SEDUCTION* CHAPTER 9 (1987)

MANY CHRISTIANS living under persecution in Communist countries are confused when they hear how socially acceptable Christianity seems to be in the West. Since Paul's statement that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12) has proved true for Russian or Polish or Chinese believers, they wonder why the same is not true for Christians in the West. And they pray that God will help us not to compromise under the pressures of popularity and success, just as they have refused to be corrupted by Communism. These believers would find it astonishing that Christians in the West spend months and even years in "therapy" to overcome the damage to their psyches allegedly caused by "rejection." Those who grow up under totalitarian regimes hostile to the gospel *expect* to be rejected, despised, ridiculed, and even imprisoned or killed for their faith, and would not understand the importance that Christians in the West place upon self-esteem, self-acceptance, and self-fulfillment.

It would be even more incomprehensible to such suffering Christians, many of whom have never owned a Bible (and who long for the day when they will receive one smuggled in from the West), to be told that the church in the West considers the Bible to be inadequate and the Holy Spirit insufficient to provide complete spiritual guidance and power for living the Christian life. Indeed, they would find it astonishing that the Western church would so enthusiastically open its arms to embrace new theologies that are founded upon the theories of psychology....

Part of the problem [in the West] with such thinking is caused by confusing inferiority feelings with lack of self-esteem. The former involves performance or ability while the latter pertains to one's feelings of personal worth. Clearly the greater a person's self-esteem and self-love, the more disappointment there will be if abilities and performance are not comparable. No one hates himself, but he may hate his circumstances or appearance or lack of ability. The very fact that we dislike our appearance or lament our inability or become upset when people or circumstances abuse us is proof that we love and esteem ourselves, for if we did not esteem ourselves we would be glad when things go against us....

To feel inferior to others or to feel inadequate for the task at hand is not a defect that must be remedied before one can be useful. On the contrary, recognizing one's inability is the prerequisite for genuine victory, for it is when we are delivered from self-confidence that God can use us to His glory. Jonathan's lame son, Mephibosheth, called himself a "dead dog," but King David insisted that he eat with him daily at the royal table (2 Samuel 9:6-13). Gideon considered himself incapable, his family poor, and himself "least in my father's house" (Judges 6:15), yet he learned to trust God and became one of Israel's greatest deliverers. Isaiah shrank from God's call, considering his "unclean lips" unworthy to speak for his Lord (Isaiah 6:5). Amos was no prophet but a mere herdsman (Amos 7:14) whom God used to pronounce judgment upon nations. The turning point in Job's life came when he finally hated himself (Job 42:6): Then and only then could God restore him. When called by God, Moses responded, "Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh?" (Exodus 3:11) and he insisted that he was "slow of speech" and incapable (Exodus 4:10-13). God's answer to Moses should bring courage to everyone who feels inferior: "I will be with thee!"

Far from dealing with Moses' inferiority and building his "poor self-image," God promised His presence and power. In fact He chose Moses, the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3), to confront the world's mightiest emperor in his palace and deliver His people

so that God and not man would have the glory. So it can be with everyone who admits his own inability and unworthiness and then, instead of either groveling in self-deprecation or seeking to overcome his inferiority through humanistic methods, turns from himself to God and in his weakness relies upon God's strength. Instead of bemoaning his handicap, Paul gloried in his weakness:

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10)

Of course, those who brought selfishness into the church (even though they acknowledge that the idea first came from humanistic psychology) attempt to support it from Scripture. One leading Christian psychologist quotes Psalm 139 and suggests that the "wonderful pattern for growth, fulfillment and development" that "God built into our genes...is the ultimate basis for self-esteem." Surely the genius of the genetic code should cause me to bow in wonder and worship at the wisdom and power of God—but *self-esteem*? [This] is no more cause for self-exaltation than seeing God's creative power in genes in general or in a sunset or in a beautiful flower—I had nothing to do with creating any of it. Standing awestruck before the beauties and marvels of creation doesn't...cause me to feel good about myself, but it does move me to worship the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God," not my glory....

Even if I were physically or mentally or socially better endowed than anyone else in the world, that would be no basis for boasting, according to Paul: "For who maketh thee to differ from another?" he asked. The answer, obviously, is God, though I can't blame Him for defects I have inherited from sinful ancestors. But as to his talents and opportunities, and any goodness that was manifested through his life (and particularly his apostleship), Paul declared, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). No basis for self-esteem there!...

No one but saved sinners will be in heaven....Christ will forever bear the marks of Calvary. The scars of what He suffered for our sins will never be erased. Dare we think that we will ever be able to erase from our memories the fact that we are sinners saved by grace? Who would wish to forget the debt that we owe to the One who redeemed us? The throne of God will be forever known as the throne of the Lamb (Revelation 22:3). Our glorified Lord and Savior in His resurrection body will appear throughout eternity as the newly slain Lamb, and our song will be forever "unto Him who loved us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood!" The crucified and risen Savior bearing the marks of Calvary will be the glory of heaven. [Martyn] Lloyd-Jones expressed it well:

Pride is ever the cause of the trouble, and there is nothing that so hurts the natural man's pride as the cross of Christ.

How does the cross do that? What has happened that there should ever have been a cross? It is because we are failures, because we are sinners, because we are lost.

The Christian is not a good man. He is a vile wretch who has been saved by the grace of God.

It is impossible to know the true God in His splendor without seeing ourselves as very small indeed. There is no surer way to lose one's inflated sense of self-importance. <

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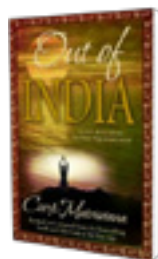


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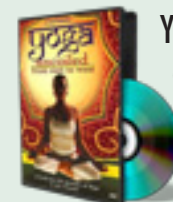


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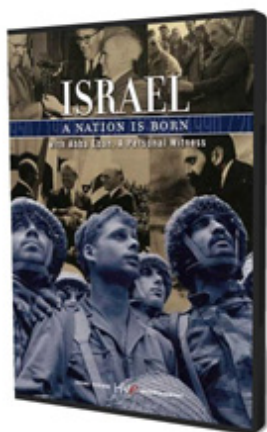
Morris—An easily read book, *The God Who Is Real* reiterates that, unlike the

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