

IS THE CHURCH DESTINED TO BE RAPTURED
—OR TO REIGN SUPREME?

TEMPORAL DELUSION



The
Berean
Call

SEPTEMBER 2011

THE LESS THAN TRUTHFUL "TRUTH PROJECT"

by T. A. McMAHON

NEW! TEMPORAL DELUSION

Is the church destined to be raptured — or reign supreme?



A compilation of T. A.'s TBC articles addressing the Temporal Delusion.

McMahon—AT THIS VERY MOMENT, millions of professing Christians are joining with millions of other “believers” to promote peace and reconciliation across the country and around the globe. These pragmatic, purpose-driven churches and organizations are uniting for the ecumenical “common good” to eliminate poverty, eradicate disease, and save the earth from political and environmental disaster—all in the name of advancing “God’s kingdom on earth.” But are all of these good works derived from a biblical blueprint for humanity? Or are these well-meaning workers building a house on foundations of sand?

Many of these faithful individuals and groups are laboring to “restore America” to a faith, freedom, and prosperity that they believe is biblical. Meanwhile, what the Bible says about the future of humanity—and the earth itself—is ignored in the name of “tolerance,” “love,” and non-judgmentalism. This raises a grave concern: Are any of these “kingdom-building” efforts bringing eternal life and salvation to the lost? Or are millions of professing Christians merely befriending the world in ways that create enmity with God? Furthermore, is the great commission of the church being compromised by ignoring the clear and unmistakable roadmap in Scripture concerning End Times events, including Christ’s “catching up” of the saints? Does it really matter what one believes about the Rapture in these increasingly perilous times?

If you seek to understand current church trends in the light of God’s revealed and perfect Word, you’ll find this easy-to-read volume both helpful and heart-pricking concerning the true state of the church today. In the process, you’ll discover that what you believe about “controversial” Last Days doctrines should indeed impact the direction and focus of our daily Christian walk—encouraging and equipping us to “redeem the time.” *The Berean Call*, 160 pp.

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ABOUT THE BEREAN CALL

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, but 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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The Less Than Truthful "Truth Project"

T. A. McMahon

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.
—John 17:17

The Truth Project (TTP) is a 12-part DVD series produced by Focus on the Family to encourage Christians in an understanding of a biblical worldview, and especially its application for their lives. Now, before anyone gets too excited (or put off) regarding the title of this article, let me say that there is much in this series that deserves praise. There are, however, some serious problems.

The first thing that blessed me as I began my 13-hour tour through the episodes was Del Tackett's exhortation to his mostly college-age students to "think!" That's not exactly a common characteristic among today's postmodern and experientially prone generation, and that includes young evangelicals whose biblical "education," for the most part, has consisted of some form of entertainment. Of course, Tackett wants them to think biblically and deeply. Amen to that!

Del Tackett is an excellent communicator. He not only has a command of his subject matter, but he also exudes an infectious passion for the Lord and for His Word. You can see that those "students" selected to participate in the program weren't just props for a well-designed production and set—it appears that they were really understanding, perhaps for the first time, some of the biblical insights that were being taught.

Many of the teachings are solidly biblical, such as the episode that addressed "The Family," which alone may be worth the price of the entire series. We couldn't agree more with Tackett's professed desire to encourage all believers to have a love for the Scriptures and to get to know the heart of God through the revelation of His Word. In view of the sad fact that there are very few quality productions that deal with apologetics and are directed at young adults, I initially wrestled with whether to raise any of the critical issues that concerned me. In other words, I didn't want to put people off regarding a series that I believe has biblical value. What finally motivated me to address what I found to be problematic teachings were two thoughts: 1) Everything in life, in every way possible, needs biblical scrutiny. If it has the support of Scripture, then we need to be encouraged to make it a *life support*. 2) A stated objective of TTP is to exhort believers

to *think through all teachings*, test all theories, doctrines, and dogmas. They encourage one to ask relevant questions, especially concerning the consequences regarding what is being taught—in particular, where is it leading or headed? That seemed to be the video's marching orders, so there should be no objections to my doing just that.

In spite of all that impressed me about The Truth Project, there were still some troubling aspects that tempered, even dampened, my enthusiasm at times. It reminded me of an ocean voyage that I took before I started graduate school. It was a terrific cruise if you could handle the seas that the North Atlantic was dishing up. I'm not easily susceptible to seasickness, so it was quite enjoyable for me. The last thing that entered my mind was whether or not the ship was on course to Southampton, England. I assumed that it was and gave it no further consideration. That memory resurfaced as I thoughtfully sailed with the "good ship Truth Project."

I wasn't too far along into the series when I realized that some of the "crew and its captain" were Calvinists. Del Tackett, according to his biography, was introduced to the Reformed faith in the late 1970s and started The New Geneva Theological Seminary as a branch of Knox Seminary in 1992. Knox Theological Seminary is a ministry of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church and is a bastion of Calvinism. Tackett is now associated with Coral Ridge Ministries and does a weekly TV program for them called *Cross Examine*. One of the main contributors to TTP is R. C. Sproul, perhaps one of the most influential Calvinists of our day. Although there is no overt teaching regarding Reformed Theology, its influence is noted throughout, including quotes from *The Westminster Confession* and a powerpoint slide presentation declaring man's needs: "Grace, Regeneration, Redemption." Calvinists teach that a person must be *regenerated* by (irresistible) grace before he can *believe* and be *saved*.

Perhaps even before my concerns about Calvinism, the fact that TTP was a production of Focus on the Family bothered me. Why? I can think of no ministry that has sown the seeds of psychotherapy among evangelicals more deeply than Focus on the Family, with psychologist James Dobson. Focus on the Family has made the humanistic teachings of self-esteem and self-love the pillars of their organization. Del Tackett was president of Focus on the Family Institute during the TTP production, and his organi-

zation's self-esteem bias shows itself as he declares that God has given everyone a "hunger for significance." That selfist teaching is certainly biblical—but not in a good way. It caused the fall of angels and mankind. Lucifer's desire to raise his "significance" level in heaven (Isaiah 14) and Eve's desire to be "as the gods" (Genesis 3) obviously indicated their "hunger for significance." Nevertheless, Tackett recognizes the errors of humanist psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. His criticism takes place in a TTP episode labeled "Anthropology." I find that odd because the issues in this episode are related specifically to *psychology*, which, curiously, is rarely mentioned in TTP. That missing topic appears less than honest, given the Focus on the Family connection.

Focus on the Family has not only been a chief promoter of psychological counseling; it is the foremost referral service among evangelicals for professional psychotherapists. Although TTP says that it desires to turn young people from the ways of the world to a biblical worldview, it seems to have intentionally avoided that "sphere" of psychology and its devastating effects upon mankind.

The prestigious *Princeton Review* reports that the number two most popular field of study for all U.S. college students (secular or Christian) is psychology. Young evangelicals, perhaps even more so, are attracted to and encouraged to choose a career in the pseudo-science of psychotherapy. Ironically, here is what Dr. James Dobson recommends: "Christian psychology is a worthy profession for a young believer, provided his faith is strong enough to withstand the humanistic concepts to which he will be exposed...." No. So-called Christian psychology is both a contradiction in terms and the chief dispenser of "self" teachings in the church (see *Psychology and the Church*, Resource Pages), yet too few are warning our next generation about this incredibly destructive worldview.

There was certainly no hint of an alarm in The Truth Project! The series devotes two hour-long sessions to exposing the pseudo-science of evolution but clearly avoids the even more spiritually deceptive pseudo-science of psychological counseling.

The single-most puzzling item in TTP is the inclusion of a man who unequivocally represents a *false gospel*: Roman Catholic priest Robert Sirico. Who made *that* decision? And why is he in The "Truth" Project? Although nothing could be worse

than featuring a man, under the *guise of truth*, who participates in leading one billion-plus souls *away* from the biblical truth, Sirico has some other issues. Prior to his being ordained a Paulist priest, he was a minister for the Metropolitan Community churches, a professing evangelical movement that was developed to refute the biblical condemnation of homosexuality. In 1975, Sirico performed the first-ever civil-licensed same-sex marriage. He is now a pastor of St. Mary Catholic Church in Kalamazoo, MI, and president of Acton Institute, an organization that promotes the “coming together of faith and liberty” through “integrating Judeo-Christian Truths with Free Market Principles.” His “faith” is not *the* faith, for which Jude urged believers to contend. But such distinctions are increasingly blurred in this ecumenical age. One of Acton Institute’s board members is Dr. Gaylen J. Byker, the current president of Calvin College. Sirico seems to hold the same attraction for evangelicals as does Mormon Glenn Beck, both of whom are very vocal in their promotion of “getting America back to her Christian roots.”

Almost none of “Father” Sirico’s involvement in TTP seems to make sense (especially considering the historic anti-Catholicism of Calvinism) until one pulls back to see the direction in which the “ship” is headed. It seems to be a reprise of Christian Reconstructionism directed at this next generation of evangelicals. Reconstructionism is a Calvinist-based movement that was popularized by Rousas Rushdoony, Gary North, Greg Bahnsen, and Gary DeMar. Also known as Theonomy, it proposes social and civil governments that are based strictly upon the Laws of God in the Old and New Testaments.

Reconstructionists believe that through the application of God’s Laws the earth will be transformed and the Kingdom of God ushered in. Del Tackett preaches that concept in subtle and not-so-subtle ways throughout the series. There’s little doubt that he is attempting to emulate John Calvin’s vision for the city of Geneva, which Calvin hoped would be a utopia of Christian principles worked out in daily life. That may be the reason Tackett called the seminary that he founded The New Geneva. He is currently on its Board of Directors and a faculty member. Calvin’s “biblical Law” experiment in Geneva, however, became so legalistic that he was referred to as “the Protestant Pope.”

Calvin’s historic failure to apply the Law didn’t seem to dissuade Tackett in The Truth Project. For example, he turns to the Fourth Commandment as a principle for New Testament Christians to incorporate into their lives regarding what he calls “The Sphere of Labor.” Although the commandment is

directed at the Israelites, instructing them to “remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” Tackett presents it as a principle meant for believers, especially regarding their attitude toward work. This is Theonomy, as well as being a misapplication of the Scriptures. Nine of the 10 Commandments involve moral issues (do not steal, lie, murder, etc.) that are written upon the conscience of man; the Fourth Commandment is not. It is a separation law written for and to be obeyed exclusively by the Israelites (Exodus 16:29; 31:14-16; Deuteronomy 5:15, etc.). We can certainly appreciate Tackett’s application of New Testament instructions for the believer today, but attempting to apply the Laws of Moses could constitute legalism, as well as leading to “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6-7).

Reconstructionism is never mentioned, but The Truth Project’s suggested reading material list is loaded with Amillennialists/Calvinists such as Abraham Kuyper and A.W. Pink, some key Reconstructionist figures such as Rushdoony and DeMar, and Coalition On Revival enthusiast Gary Amos, among others. Reconstructionists are Calvinists, and many, if not most are amillennialists and preterists (with some notable exceptions).

This means they believe that the church and the world are now in the Millennium and that nearly all the prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled. That may be why prophecy is nowhere to be found in The Truth Project, which is a huge loss for the hope of developing a confident biblical worldview. Fulfilled prophecy is the best apologetic for proving that the Word of God is of supernatural origin and that we can turn to it with great assurance. It also indicates what lies ahead for the church and the world. Simply and clearly, Scripture foretells that the imminent Rapture of the church, the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming, the Millennial Reign of Christ, the Dissolving of Our Present Heavens and Earth, and the Creating of a New Heaven and New Earth, will all take place, in that order. (See *Temporal Delusion*, Resource Pages)

The reason that this isn’t presented in TTP no doubt has to do with its eschatological perspective. The above prophetic biblical scenario does not fit with amillennialism (or postmillennialism) or any of the other attempts to “transform our culture,” “restore our nation,” or “fix the world’s temporal economic, social, health, injustice, ecological, and other problems.” All of this contributes to a temporal delusion, which is simply not biblical. The “worldview” of Scripture is not *global transformation*, a term used throughout TTP—not, that is, until the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Even then, it will not be a perfect society because the Bible tells us that it will end with the rebellion of those

who went along with the laws and principles of Christ’s rule but who never committed their hearts and minds to Him.

Tackett chides those who have a “why polish the brass on a sinking ship?” mentality. He seems to be referring to Christians who have abandoned their biblical responsibilities because of an erroneous interpretation of Scripture. We would also take issue with those who think like that, if it indeed characterizes their attitude. The true scriptural view is that the events presented above will literally take place and need to be considered in regard to any plans or agendas of men or ministries. We should not expect worldwide revival when the Bible indicates that the Last Days will be characterized by great spiritual deception in the world and apostasy in the church. Does that mean that we bail out on the world? No. But there is no scriptural basis for believing that the world will be or can be *transformed* through biblical law or biblical principles. To truly believe that, one would have to literally excise the Book of Revelation from Holy Writ, along with hundreds of other scriptures.

We believe that the mandate for believers in our day is a rescue operation of individual lost souls, not a program of collective global transformation. True believers certainly need to reflect the teachings and love of Christ in every aspect of their lives, but they are to do so first and foremost to please the One who saved them. It may be that some will turn to Christ because of a believer’s steadfastness and fruitfulness in the faith, but that will be the *exception* in this rebellious world, as biblical prophecy clearly indicates. The message of the gospel will never be popular in the world because “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness....unto the Jews [it is] a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness....” (1 Corinthians 1:18,23). Furthermore, rather than drawing the multitudes to Christ by example, Scripture states, “...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Jesus declared, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18-19).

In summary, The Truth Project, in our view, is akin to a troop support ship with a mixture of supplies aboard that need to be carefully scrutinized. More importantly, if the ship’s compass is off even a few degrees, the vessel will not reach its intended port. TTP has some excellent content along with some erroneous teachings, but its “intended port” of transforming the world is not on the course set by the Scriptures. **TBC**

Quotable

The vigor of our Spiritual Life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts. I solemnly state this from experience of fifty-four years.

The first three years after conversion I neglected the Word of God. Since I began to search it diligently the blessing has been wonderful. I have read the Bible through one hundred times, and always with increasing delight. Each time it seems like a new book to me. Great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study. I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God.

George Müller

Q&A

QUESTION: You have criticized preterism and amillennial teaching as being unbiblical, but teachers such as R. C. Sproul present what clearly are reasoned conclusions for their positions. What do you say?

RESPONSE: Some believers insist that most Bible prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 at the destruction of the Temple. Yet we must ask, When was Jerusalem surrounded by the armies of all nations? When did Christ's feet touch the Mount of Olives? When did He begin to reign over the world from Jerusalem? Did those who had pierced Him look upon and recognize Him as their Messiah; weep and mourn and believe on Him? Was Israel established in AD 70 in her land, never to be removed again? Can we seriously believe that Zechariah 12, 13, 14; Jeremiah 30:6-12, 31:27-40, 32:37-44; Ezekiel 37-40, and scores of other like prophecies, were all fulfilled in AD 70? And if not, how and by what authority can we apply such prophecies to the church?

Yes, there are a growing number of those who promote preterism or amillennialism, and whether they are Calvinists, Charismatics, or something else, they share common beliefs that are worthy of concern.

The late Bishop Earl Paulk called the Rapture an escape theory. He said that those who bless Israel are manifesting an anti-Christ spirit. He also said that the church is Israel and that Israel has no further place in God's plan. Many still say the same thing. Paulk also taught that we are "little gods" and that Jesus Christ cannot return until we rise to the full stature of our godhood, take over this world, and establish His kingdom for Him. Some details may differ, but this is dominionism, i.e., only when Christians take dominion over the earth can Christ

return—not to rapture us home to heaven but to rule over the kingdom that we have established for Him. With this idea, the reign of Christ during the 1,000-year millennium is denied, though this period of time is specifically stated twice in Revelation 20 (vv. 2,7). According to explicit statements in the Old Testament, during the Millennium, Earth will experience worldwide peace such as has never been seen before (Is 2:4; Joel 3:10; Mic 4:3).

Do we really believe that AD 70 saw the greatest tribulation in the history of the world—even greater than the slaughter of Jews and Christians under Hitler, Stalin, Mao ("nor ever shall be" - Mt. 24:21); that Christ came visibly like lightning flashing across the sky (v. 27), that the sun was darkened and the moon didn't give her light, that "the sign of the Son of man" appeared in heaven, that He sent His angels to "gather together his elect from the four winds" (vv. 29-31), etc.? Are we in the Millennium now? Is Satan bound? Is Christ the King now ruling over the earth and turning the world into a paradise? *None* of these things can be said to have taken place unless these scriptures are spiritualized.

As the old hymn goes, "tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take Him at His word, just to rest upon His promise, just to know thus saith the Lord."

QUESTION: I have a Christian friend who studies philosophy to attempt to pick out the flaws of atheism and all general non-Christian philosophy. He says that an ounce of philosophy is worth a pound of exegesis. He said that he's trying to stay in the realm of philosophy, since that's where the atheists' argument remains. He's also questioning his own existence (after reading Kant), believes that the physical world doesn't exist (and that what we perceive as "God's creation" is a sort of "thought projection" from God), that we are born a blank slate with no innate knowledge of the divine (also called *tabula rasa*), that General Revelation might not exist. I've given him [many verses] from the Bible that reject *all* of these ideas, but he says that Scripture is moot if one is attempting to stay within pure philosophy and pure reason. I've even quoted Colossians 2:8 to him, but to no apparent avail. What do you suggest?

RESPONSE: We strongly suggest prayer for your "Christian" friend. Only the Holy Spirit can deliver him from his being seduced by intellectualism. "Philosophers," whether "Christian" or otherwise, cannot provide final answers. They *absolutely* insist that there are no absolutes, that it is *true* there is no *truth*, and they are *certain*

that there are no *certainities*. As you pointed out, Paul warned in Colossians 2:8 to let no one take us captive through "philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Your friend has failed to heed the inspired warning and has been taken captive.

The Adversary loves to have us enter the arena of philosophy, knowing, after thousands of years of experience, that when we move away from the certainty of God's Word we are absolutely vulnerable. Was not Satan's question to Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" Yes, He has said—and we must not forget that truth!

In short, it's futile to seek to persuade others through philosophy. It's rather like being challenged to a wrestling match with the provision that our "arms and legs be tied." It's no wonder that too many are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph 4:14). The Lord declared regarding His Word, "it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Is 55:11). That is our assurance. With your friend's captivity, he is turning to the foolishness of men rather than the wisdom of God. We suggest that he read Dave Hunt's latest book, *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*, for a reasoned approach.

In Acts 17, Paul went to the Areopagus to speak to the "philosophers of the Epicurians, and of the Stoics" (Acts 17:18). These philosophers spent their "time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (v. 21). Without the intervention of Paul, who spoke of the absolute Word of God, the descendants of those philosophers would still be sitting there, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tm 3:7). Yet although "some mocked...others said, We will hear thee again of this matter" (Acts 17:32).

QUESTION: If not *The Secret*, then what books do you recommend to get people out of their self-fulfilling prophecy for a mediocre life? I mean I hear people all the time say "they can't do this or that." Please let me know of any tools I could use.

RESPONSE: *The Secret* is diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Bible. Moreover, we're concerned that your goal seems to be getting "people out of their self-fulfilling prophecy for a mediocre life." As Christians, we are called to an "objective" life, not a "subjective" one.

David wrote, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for

thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Ps 63:1).

An objective focus is consistent throughout Scripture: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:1-2). We run this "race" looking unto Jesus, not at ourselves.

In short, when we live our lives focused upon "self," it is not surprising that we conclude we "can't do this or can't do that." Consider the contrast with Paul's assurance that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil 4:13). The difference is, he wasn't focused on self, his was an objective faith.

This world has turned the biblical model upside down. We are told to seek after experiences. Not so. We are told in the Bible to *seek God*. In Acts 3, Peter and John weren't seeking an experience when they went down to the temple at "the hour of prayer" (Acts 3:1). They were seeking God in prayer. Along the way, however, they had an experience with a "certain man lame from his mother's womb." Before the Holy Spirit-directed series of events was finished (including their confrontation with the religious leaders), more souls were added to the church (Acts 4:4).

Even those who opposed them were affected: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it" (Acts 4:13-14).

Regarding other books than the Bible, William MacDonald's little book *True Discipleship* has proven to be an encouragement to many, as has Dave Hunt's *Seeking and Finding God*. (See Resource Pages)

QUESTION: If unbelievers do not have the Holy Spirit, how do they get answers from God? Are they not separated from God, as Romans says? How do they go to the throne of grace with their petitions? Please explain, because I had always learned that the only prayer an unsaved person could make was one related to salvation, yet in 1 Kings 8:39, God is talking to Israel and to pagans as well.

RESPONSE: Unbelievers have no access to God to have their "petitions" fulfilled by

Him. Furthermore, rarely would they turn to Him (in whom they don't believe) unless they were in a life or death situation in which only a miracle would help them. As you point out, the only prayer the unsaved can make is a prayer of repentance. Man is separated from God by his sin, it is not surprising that some pray to Mary, the "saints," or other deities. Even the religious counselors of King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged, "There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Dn 2:10-11).

On the other hand, God does intervene in the life of an unbeliever for His own sovereign purpose, to draw someone whom He knows will repent and come to Him, and in answer to the intercessory prayers of believers praying specifically for the salvation of unbelievers. In Scripture we see examples of individuals such as Hagar, weeping over her inability to protect the life of her son Ishmael (Gn 21:14-19), though previously God had already heard and responded to her "affliction" (Gn 16:11). God had not only protected him (21:19-21), but God blessed Ishmael exceedingly (Gn 16:10-11).

The people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah with the hope that Nineveh might be spared (Jon 3:5-10). God, in his mercy, did not destroy the city of Nineveh as He had threatened. The people of Nineveh may not have approached God as the Scriptures demanded, but they did know what repentance was.

In 1 Kings 8:38-39 we read, "What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men)."

Solomon is interceding for Israel and acknowledges the necessity of "knowing the affliction of his own heart...." Consequently, we see examples such as Cornelius the Roman centurion who met the Lord in Acts 10:4: "And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."

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

Again, the testimony in Scripture is clear, as in Psalm 34:17-18: "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

The mercy of God is such that in Psalm 51:17, we also see, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

QUESTION: Help me to understand 1 Samuel chapter 28. This chapter disturbs me greatly, and I have found no one who can explain it. How can someone living communicate with someone dead? If this is possible, why aren't we doing it now? I am sure many others could benefit from your position on this. Thank you for your help.

RESPONSE: The Bible forbids communication with the dead (necromancy). Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:9-12, 15; 1 Samuel 28; 1 Chronicles 10:13-14; Isaiah 8:19 are some of the scriptures that may be cited.

The passage in Isaiah is quite to the point regarding communication with the dead: "And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Is 8:19-20).

First Samuel 28 is a special case. Saul was the king of Israel, and he had violated the Law by seeking out a spirit medium to conjure up Samuel. The woman complied, and, instead of a deceiving spirit (demon), she was startled to see Samuel actually appear (1 Sm 28:12). That it was Samuel is beyond question, for the inspired writer of Scripture specifically calls him "Samuel" five times. Furthermore, the prophecy given by Samuel is spoken as the word of the Lord (vv. 16-19).

Samuel also specifically tells of Saul's upcoming judgment and death (1 Sm 28:19), no doubt for his necromancy as well as his other acts of disobedience. There is no encouragement in this verse to engage in communication with the dead. Indeed, this passage stands as a severe warning against this practice.

If someone needs communication with someone wiser than himself, should he not consider the biblical promise of our Lord? James tells us that "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not..." (Jas 1:5). The writer to the Hebrews urges us to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

TBC NewsWatch

WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS

DEBKAFI.COM, 6/29/2011: IRAN UNVEILS UNDERGROUND MISSILE SILO, U.S. SENDS CARRIERS, ATTACK SUBS TO GULF [EXCERPTS]—Iran's big Great Prophet Mohammad War Games 6 was launched Monday, June 27, ahead of a Turkish operation against Syria's Assad regime.

On Day One of the exercise, Iran unveiled its first underground missile silo immune to air strikes. It held what looked like a Shahab-3 ballistic missile. Israel has responded to Iran's military exercise and the spiraling regional tension by positioning one of its new Iron Dome rocket interceptor batteries in the northern city of Haifa. Iranian warships and submarines deployed in the Red Sea tracked the movements of two big U.S. aircraft carriers...which crossed each other in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait on June 21 heading in opposite directions through this strategic chokepoint between the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean.

The USS *Enterprise*, the world's largest aircraft carrier, was on its way from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean via the Red Sea and Suez Canal, while the USS *George H.W. Bush*, the U.S. Navy's newest carrier with the greatest fire power of any of its warships, left the Mediterranean and headed in the opposite direction for the Persian Gulf with a crew of 9,000 and 70 fighter bombers.

On the same day, Iranian naval surveillance picked up the arrival of the Los Angeles-class USS *Bremerton* nuclear-powered attack submarine off Bahrain opposite Iran.

[In a related story] debkafile reports an American naval and ship-borne missile interceptor build-up in the Mediterranean along with U.S. fleet movements in the Aegean, Adriatic and Black Seas. The USS *Bataan* with 2,000 marines, 6 fighter-bombers and 27 helicopters aboard is deployed opposite Syrian shores. Warned of a possible U.S. operation against Syria, Hizballah is moving its ground-to-ground rocket arsenal from northern Lebanon to the center.

GUARDIAN.CO.UK., 7/19/2011: TEHRAN CLAIMS THAT TRIPLING ITS URANIUM ENRICHMENT SPEED WILL HELP DEVELOP CANCER TREATMENTS—[An] Iranian foreign ministry spokesman told reporters, "[The International Atomic Energy Agency] has full supervision [and] are fully aware that Iran's peaceful nuclear activity continues to progress. This is another confirmation of the Islamic republic's successful strides in its nuclear activities."

However, France said Iran's move...confirmed suspicions that the Iranian nuclear programme had "no credible civilian application." The French foreign ministry said: "This is a new violation of six security council resolutions and 10 resolutions by the council of governors of the [IAEA]."

The British Foreign Office said the announcement "further undermines Iran's claim that its

nuclear programme is designed for purely peaceful purposes, and demonstrates the urgency of increasing pressure on Iran...Iran must understand that we will not be distracted by events in the region and it should not doubt our resolve".

THEATLANTICWIRE.COM, 6/28/2011: WHAT WE'RE LEARNING FROM IRAN'S WAR GAMES—During its face-off against Israel and the U.S. about its uranium enrichment program, Iran has often talked tough. But now it's backing up that talk with missile drills. On its second day of the country's ten-day "Great Prophet 6" war games on Tuesday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards fired 14 Iranian-made surface-to-surface missiles simultaneously at a single target, according to the country's official IRNA news agency....Reuters calls the military exercises a "show of strength" aimed at Israel and the U.S. The Iranians, according to Al Arabiya, claim the drills represent a "message of peace and friendship to countries of the region" and are defensive in nature, enabling Iran to retaliate in the event of airstrikes, which the U.S. and Israel haven't ruled out as a way to keep Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

"The range of our missiles has been designed based on American bases in the region as well as the Zionist regime," Commander Amir Ali Hajizadeh, head of the Guards' aerospace division told the semi-official Fars news agency.... Hossein Salami, deputy commander of the Guards, sounded even more threatening: "We still have our fingers on the trigger, but the number of the triggers have increased."

REUTERS.COM, 8/27/2009: U.S. EYES 12 GIANT "BUNKER BUSTER" BOMBS—The U.S. military wants to speed production of 10 to 12 huge "bunker buster" bombs, the Air Force said...amid concerns over suspected underground nuclear sites in Iran and North Korea.... The 20-foot-long (6-metre) MOP [Massive Ordnance Penetrator] is built to be dropped from either the B-52 or the B-2 "stealth" bomber. It is designed to penetrate up to 200 feet (61 metres) underground before exploding.... [After years of program delays, an 8/4/2011 article by Defense Industry Daily reveals that Boeing recently took delivery of 8 operational MOPs, along with a contract to modify aircraft bomb bay doors and loading adapters.]

DEBKAFI.COM., 7/15/2011: 15,000 U.S. TROOPS TO STAY IN IRAQ—New U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki quietly agree to at least 15,000 U.S. troops remaining in Iraq after 2011 in the guise of diplomats and other civilian personnel with America keeping control of four big air bases—two of them facing Iran. The Iraqi prime minister is dragging his feet before making this understanding public.

DEBKAFI.COM., 8/8/2011: ASSAD TOUGHS IT OUT AGAINST U.S.-TURKISH ULTIMATUM TO HALT MILITARY CRACKDOWN—As his tanks and artillery stormed the eastern Syrian town of Deir al-Zour, killing 100 civilians in one day, the U.S. and Turkey Sunday night, Aug. 7, began to turn the screw on President Bashar Assad: U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asked Turkey's foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu to press Syria to "return its military to the barracks," during his visit to Syria Tuesday. The Syrian ruler with Iranian backing spurned the ultimatum even before the minister reached Damascus.

DEBKAFI.COM, 8/10/2011: SYRIA GOADS TURKEY BY ATTACKING TOWNS ALONG THEIR BORDER—Less than 24 hours after Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu handed Bashar Assad in Damascus "a final warning," to stop the bloodshed or else, Assad demonstrated coolly that he is not scared by the prospect of Turkish or NATO military intervention or deterred by new U.S. sanctions against Syria's biggest bank and mobile phone company. The day after his Turkish guest departed, Wednesday, Aug. 10, Assad launched provocative military assaults on three towns in the Turkish border region—following receipt of a missile shield guarantee from Iran.

AP, 8/10/2011: OBAMA MARKS RAMADAN WITH IFTAR DINNER—President Barack Obama is hosting an Iftar dinner Wednesday evening to celebrate the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The Iftar is the dinner that breaks the holiday's daily fast. The dinner became an annual White House tradition under President Bill Clinton and was continued by President George W. Bush. The White House says invited guests include religious and grass-roots leaders in the Muslim-American community as well as leaders of other faiths and elected officials.

THEDAILYBEAST, 4/24/2011: THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE VOTE IGNITING THE MIDEAST—An explosive U.N. vote on Palestinian statehood looms in September.... Almost certainly, the United Nations General Assembly will vote...to grant statehood to Palestine, thus legally removing it from Israeli authority. Almost every U.N. member will vote "aye." Israel will reject the vote because such a Palestinian state would include half a million Israeli settlers living there unprotected. The United States cannot void the statehood resolution because its veto applies only to U.N. Security Council decisions. This story of a vote foretold should not be dismissed as the usual diplomatic gamesmanship with little or no consequences. The stage is being set for calamity....

[TBC: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." —Psalm 122:6]

Speaking Schedule

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Sep 9-10 (TA) | Calvary Chapel Appleton Appleton, WI (920) 735-1242 |
| Sep 11 | Calvary Chapel Cedar Rapids Cedar Rapids, IA (319) 363-3683 |
| Oct 15-16 (TA) | Cohocton Assembly of God Cohocton, NY (585) 384-9113 |

Letters

Brother Bereans,

Please accept my thanks for your wonderful gift of three books, which included *When Will Jesus Come?* I am most grateful as I share these with other inmates and as we study the one and only true doctrine, which is the Word of God, found in His Holy Bible. Although our group is very small (four persons) we do check all things with the Bible and if it is not in the Bible, we do not heed it...God bless all of you! RW (NJ, prisoner)

Dear Berean Call,

In a world full of darkness and distractions from the Truth, your newsletters help to show the light of God and to make light the paths we travel. I am a single, working guy just out of college, and sometimes my days become consumed with the trials of my new career. When I read your letters, it repositions my focus and perspective and inspires me to dig into the Word more. It is truly amazing to see the works and plan of God during these Last Days, which I truly believe they are. May we all pray that we (Christians)...continually place our focus on heavenly things, which will reside with us for eternity! JW (OR)

Dear Brother McMahon,

You, T. A. McMahon, will be held accountable for each and every Believer in Christ Jesus (man, woman or child) that commits self-murder as the result of your heretical teaching that promises [that] the Christian suicide victim will only lose some of their heavenly "rewards" but not their eternal "salvation." You, T. A. McMahon, will be tried and sentenced as the murderer of each and every self-murdered person who believed in your damnable lie. Their blood will be on your hands, T. A. McMahon, and the burning flames of Hell will be your everlasting reward for all eternity! BH (TX)

Dear T. A.,

I came to the website tonight feeling despondent about the most recent "crises"

in Washington....After watching this latest drama unfold, it was clearly evident to me that there will be no changing government, and that our votes, our voices, or anything else, is wasted on the corruption machine in place over this land. I was looking for God to speak to me through a newsletter, and boy, did He through your series on "The Temporal Delusion"! I am embarrassed to say that I had received all three of these newsletters, but I'd put them in the "To Read" pile, and had never gotten back [to them]. I know that God has our "education and rebuking" in His perfect timing for us individually, because He's used *The Berean Call* to enlighten me on many occasions....I am justly reprimanded for letting my gaze focus on earthly things and wonderfully inspired to change the direction of that gaze to where it belongs. In a few days I will begin sending a monthly contribution to TBC, which I consider an investment in one of the last true evangelistic organizations that we have defending the faith and instructing the flock. This humbled sheep thanks you. SJ (KY)

Dear Dave,

I found out that a new friend believes that the Rapture was in 70 A.D. I told her that I was going to do some research [and] I ended up watching you on YouTube. I am also reading a very yellowed copy of a book titled *Peace, Prosperity, and the Coming Holocaust*. I got it [from] a big church library. I did not pay attention to the man's name from YouTube. Halfway through your book I went back to the internet....This is when I discovered that the same man that helped me to understand where my new friend was coming from is still joyfully serving today. Thank you, Dave, for your hard work. PH (email)

Brother Dave,

I have just finished reading your book *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*. This is a literary masterpiece....I rarely read anything but the Word of God and my monthly copy of *Israel My Glory*. But I could not put your book down until I had finished it. It is *so interesting*, especially to a power engineer such as myself. It really answers the question that Zophar put to Job (11:7): "By searching dost thou find out God?" The subjects of space travel (and the futility of it!), the "miracle" of DNA, and the completely hopeless size of the probabilities against a chance occurrence of it being "accidentally" formed, held my attention all the way through....

Congratulations on such a thorough treatise on the subject of atheism. The table-turning and putting it into the category of

a baseless religion tickled my funny bone, except for the fact that Satan has so blinded the eyes of this world that they will NOT believe! Praise be to God for His marvelous GRACE in revealing Himself to us, who were no more enlightened than poor Mr. Dawkins, except for the Spirit of God that revealed the wonderful salvation available through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ! GA (Canada)

Dear Mr. Hunt,

Years ago, I had wandered away from the Christian faith [in which] my wonderful parents had raised me, far down the path of the occult—Silva Mind Control, Unity, Eastern philosophy, and yoga. I was so confused and unhappy. One day the Lord led me quite miraculously to *The Seduction of Christianity*—it was on a table full of New Age books for sale! The moment I opened it, I knew I was supposed to read it. Your wonderful book set me on the right path again, and *The Berean Call* newsletter and other books have kept me there. I just want you to know how much your ministry has meant to me. God bless you. TH (TX)

Dear Dave,

I have been saved for twelve years. Although I do not agree with everything you teach, I wanted to let you know that no other person has had more of an impact on my understanding, love, and passion for Jesus and His Word than yourself. BC (email)

Hello Dave,

You know, you are one of only a few who call out the Freemasons. I have read their founding document and most of their sages. I have to come down on the side of this is not Christian in the Jesus sense of the word. Something about serving two masters for starters....I thought for a while I was on the outside until I started reading your articles. My wife and I have been Bereans for so long, and just didn't have the label. God bless you—you are used of God. GK (email)

Dave and Tom,

I am one also who believes strongly in defending the truth. Unfortunately, even strong Bible-believing churches are complacent about the apostasy coming into the church. It grieves me that it is so easy to lose the focus on the true Gospel of salvation to compromise with other churches for the sake of unity and ecumenical causes. I also found myself compromising for the sake of feeding the poor by handing out literature to give them places to eat, etc. Though it seems like a small thing the true Gospel of Jesus Christ can become clouded and it can enable people to become complacent in sin, due to their physical needs being met at

the possible expense of the spiritual needs. Thank you so much for being strong in the LORD by defending the faith. I also, by God's grace, need to be more diligent...to keep the focus on the true Gospel of Grace. Thank you for all your encouragement through [the] years. MG (CA)

Dear Dave,

I have a 19-year old son who is very influenced by atheism to the point that he wants to convert his parents from their "fairy tale" beliefs. So he gave me a number of books by his favorite authors to read and discuss. I agreed to read these books by Dawkins, Hitchens, Harris, etc., in hopes of being able to communicate with him on his own level.

First I felt angry and offended because of the way God is being aggressively attacked by this new atheist movement but then, to my surprise, I found myself coming very close to doubting my own faith. So, for the past two years I have been reading different works by Christian authors in order to find answers to my own questions, to little avail.

A couple of months ago my friend gave me a book by Dave Hunt titled *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*. I am not halfway through this book yet, and I know quite well that every question I had has been addressed powerfully and right to the point.

I'd like to convey my deepest gratitude, and I hope that one day [this book] will be used as an instrument to enlighten the minds of many. EZ (email)

Dear Dave and Tom,

Thank you, thank you for your faithfulness in informing and encouraging your readers. Quickly the darkness is increasing, but the Light and Truth continue to shine—forever!

The increase in size and content of *The Berean Call* is timely with the increase of events politically, culturally, and spiritually. The "Letters" section is always interesting, especially the letters from prisoners, their faith and practice.

East Wind by Ruth and *Trapped in Hitler's Hell* by Jan Markell were absorbing to read. We need to remember their experiences, their faith and courage. This can happen again and we even sense it coming. We need to spiritually prepare....May you both have the health and strength needed to continue your ministry. PL (WA)

Dear Dave, Tom, and Staff,

Thank you all so much for all you are doing and have done to help the body of Christ. Your special issue [March 2011] was great. The answers in the Q&A were the best yet. Also, the message on Glenn Beck... showing people how the enemy deceives us.

For years you have been faithful, getting the message out to those who will hear. May our Lord keep each of you strong. Keep your eyes on our Lord despite the persecution. I don't do computers so, please, keep sending me *Berean Call*. I can't wait for the next one! JM (IN)

Dear Tom, Dave & Berean Call Staff,

We thank you for the newsletter, which continues to be read from cover to cover. What an eye-catching cover you had on the...March issue!

We have been viewers of Glenn Beck's program and knew he professes to embrace the Mormon faith. We pray for his salvation. We believe he is aware of evil, however, his co-authorship with Keith Ablow reveals his lack of Bible doctrine and [the] pure gospel of Jesus Christ. We have made copies of your article on Beck and are sharing it with others. God bless you as you spread the Word of God in these last days. Maranatha! J&KK (PA)

Dear Dave, Tom, and All,

Thank you for your faithfulness. We appreciate your newsletter, as well as your Facebook messages. In this day of rampant apostasy your scholarship and invaluable erudition have served to anchor our hearts in precious Scripture. When we consider many in our own families who have followed after popular heresies we are blessed and particularly humbled to have been introduced to your books and teachings over the last 20+ years. God bless you all. P&CL (GA)

Dear Dave and Tom,

F. B. Meyer said, "Goodness is not benevolent and kind but genuine and true." When one does not want to hear correction he can easily consider one harsh and cold. I am 85 years old and have received *The Berean Call* since its inception. I've never considered it "cold intolerance" but, like the Bereans, "searched the scriptures to see if these things are so." It is good to know there are watchmen on the wall to warn us of the danger ahead...they can see farther than we can. I know it is not pleasant having to always be calling attention to things in our lives...that we need to be watchful of or repenting of. If it's for my good and I'm willing to forsake it, then I'm thankful. But if I don't want to be told something is not right, I can easily say "you're judging me and are cold and intolerant."

So it depends on which we choose to be "benevolent and kind" or "genuine and true." I prefer the latter, even though the Word of God is like a two-edged sword, exposing what I didn't know...was a hindrance to my spiritual walk with my Lord and Savior....I have said it many times

before and I'll say it again: Thank God for *The Berean Call*. JW (KY)

Dave, Tom, and All at Berean Call,

You came thru again right when I needed you! A lady at church had given me the best seller *Heaven Is for Real* and I had just finished it when the May *Berean Call* arrived. I was struggling with my own questions, and, as always, your article made sense and gave me the guidance I needed.

I don't think God wants us to know everything about heaven until we go there to stay. The Bible tells what we are to know, and we should not bypass it just to feed our minds with what may be Satan misleading us. I tried to plant this seed with my church but they are sold on believing the book.

Thank you, Berean Call, for being true to God and the Bible. God will reward you someday for all the persecution you have to endure. When it is time, God will show us all that heaven is, and it will be perfect and wonderful. JM (KY)

TBC Notes

God's Grace, Your Responsibility

Any believer who has been following the Lord diligently for the last 25 years or so can attest to the fact that evangelical Christianity is changing rapidly—and not for the good. Apostasy is increasing at an exponential rate. This is not only evident, it is God's prophetic Word fulfilled in our day.

So, how do we handle it? By God's grace! "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). But His grace is given to enable us to grow in our understanding of and in the doing of His Word. With that comes protection: "I have written unto you...because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14).

Unless we are diligent to that end, unless we are disciplined in our reading the Scriptures and living them out in our lives, His grace will be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:10), and we will be ripe for the escalating seduction of the apostasy.

T. A. McMAHON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE CURRENT APOSTASY OF THE CHURCH

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that we are today in the midst of widespread apostasy. By that term we mean: departure from the faith once for all delivered to the saints, for which we are to earnestly contend.¹ I believe that apostates include two types of people:

- 1) Those who have knowingly turned completely from Christ and no longer even pretend to be Christians; and
- 2) Those who still claim to be Christians but have departed from the faith.

The latter would likewise be divided into two groups:

- a) Those who deliberately twist the Scriptures, perverting the gospel “to draw away disciples after them”² or who endorse false teachers (though they know better) because they want to share their fame and power³—or who simply want to be “positive” so as to “offend” no one; and,
- b) The naïve, who are genuinely deceived by false prophets/teachers.

Apostasy, of course, in some measure, has existed as long as the church. Most of the epistles involve, to some extent, correction of false doctrine and practice that was already in the early church in the days of the apostles. It is the mushrooming, widespread incidence of the apostasy described under number 2 above, however, among those who claim to be Christians, that I believe Scripture points to as a specific sign of the last days just prior to the Rapture.

The question, of course, must be faced whether today’s apostasy has anything to do with prophecies concerning the last days. If so, it would seem that this “sign of the last days” has been largely overlooked by many if not most prophecy teachers. They usually cite as “last-days signs” only “wars and rumors of wars...nation shall rise against nation...kingdom against kingdom...famines...pestilences...earthquakes,”⁴ unusual weather, the move to a cashless society, the revival of the Roman Empire, etc.

I have been criticized for years by those who complain, “Deal with prophecy, if you wish, but stick to your subject—don’t mix in apostasy!” In fact, one cannot adequately deal with the former while ignoring the latter. When asked by His disciples, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”⁵ the first words from Christ identified apostasy as the foremost sign of the last days. In His response, He emphasized religious deception three times—and He specified what it would involve:

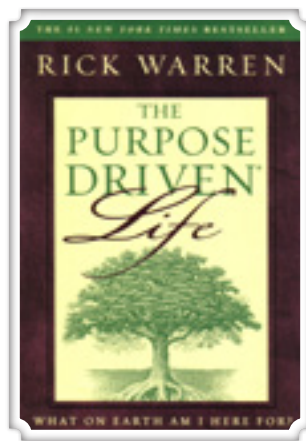
Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.⁶ And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.⁷ For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.⁸

Christ’s warning made several things clear:

- 1) The major sign of the nearness of His coming would be religious deception by professing Christian leaders;

- 2) A central feature of the deception would be false prophets showing “great signs and wonders,” which, though convincing, would also be false;
- 3) The repetition of the word, “many,” indicated that this religious deception would be widespread, apparently worldwide, and,
- 4) The words “Christs,” “prophets,” “signs and wonders,” and “elect” indicated that the deception would be among professing Christians, i.e., those inside the church.

This warning was echoed by Jude. The first reason he gave as to why we must “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” was the fact that “there are certain men crept in [inside the church] unawares...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹



“False Christs”! There have been many in our day (from Jim Jones to David Koresh), who gathered followers by claiming to be Christ. There are numerous gurus in India who claim to be the latest reincarnation of Jesus Christ. The false “Christs” presented by novels, videos, and movies have multiplied since *Jesus Christ Superstar* beyond reciting. None is even close to the true Jesus Christ of Scripture. The “Jesus” of *The DaVinci Code* is a complete fraud dreamed up by atheists. The “Jesus” of the ABC-TV presentation of *Judas* confessed to Judas that he “blew it” in chasing the moneychangers out of the Temple: “I lost my temper.”

That Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* received almost universal praise as “biblically accurate” from solid evangelical leaders is another indication of apostasy that has crept into the best pulpits unawares. In fact, it was almost all unbiblical....Much of it was drawn from the visions of a mystic nun and incorporated devices from the imagination of the director to arouse emotions. Nor did anyone seem disturbed that a sinful man was pretending to be the One who declared, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,”¹⁰ and whom Paul described as “God manifest in the flesh.”¹¹

The most prominent false Christ today is Sun Myung Moon, who openly declares that he is the Messiah come to earth to complete the mission that Jesus failed to accomplish: the establishment of the “perfect family.” Yet some prominent evangelicals have spoken at conferences convened by Moon, sharing the platform that featured the man who says he is perfecting the work “left unaccomplished by Jesus.”¹²

But what is *the* faith, a departure from which marks one as an apostate? Some might say that as long as a person believes that Christ died for his sins, was buried, and rose the third day, he is saved. But that declaration does not express the true gospel. As defined by Paul, the gospel declares the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ according to the Scriptures.¹³ Surely that involves who the biblical God is, who the biblical Christ is, what the biblical problem between God and man is, the biblical and only means of man’s forgiveness by God, and the eternal consequences, as taught in the Bible, for those who reject the biblical gospel. None of these is a peripheral point of doctrine to be ignored or compromised. To do so would be a departure from *the* faith into apostasy to proclaim a false gospel.

The entire Word of God, of course, is foundational to the faith. The Bible is one book, and it is all interrelated—each part to every other. Sadly, the church and the world are being robbed of the pure Word of God—and by those who claim to be evangelical Christians! Eugene Peterson's *The Message* (NavPress, 1993) is one example. Instead of "that the world through him might be saved,"¹⁴ *The Message* says, "He came to help, to put the world right again." That sounds like social and political action, the same old "social gospel," downgrading salvation to earthly improvement, and it is found throughout this entire "version" of Scripture. John 3:31 says, "He that cometh from above is above all." *The Message* says, "The One who comes from above is head and shoulders over other messengers from God." First Peter 5:10 says that God has "called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." *The Message* says that God "will have you put together and on your feet." What Peterson has done to God's Word is blasphemous!

Peterson dares to change the words and meaning of Scripture. Hebrews 11:4 declares, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," but *The Message* says, "It was what he believed, not what he brought, that made the difference." Obviously, both belief and action are important and interdependent. Moreover, Peterson has robbed his readers of the major theme of Scripture: the Lamb slain for our redemption.

Men like Peterson have no conscience about changing what God says, replacing His words with their own. Yet *The Message* is quoted more than 80 times by Rick Warren in *The Purpose-Driven Life*, which has now sold about 26 million copies [as of 2005], unprecedented in history. No greater promotion of this mass of heresy could be given than Warren's endorsement!

Yet Peterson's *Message* is also praised by other Christian leaders such as J. I. Packer, Warren Wiersbe, Jack W. Hayford, and Richard Foster. Peterson is "Consulting Editor, New Testament," for the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2005) edited by Richard J. Foster. A host of "scholars" contributed commentaries, among them Bruce Demarest, Professor of Theology at Denver Seminary in Denver, CO; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, MA; Tremper Longman III, the Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies at Westmont College, Santa Barbara, CA; Earl F. Palmer, on the Board of Trustees of the long-apostate Princeton Theological Seminary and senior pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, WA, and many others.

The *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* was touted as "THE BIBLE AS IT WAS INTENDED TO BE" in a two-thirds-page ad in the July 2005 issue of *Christianity Today*, next to the masthead declaring that Billy Graham was the founder (of CT) and that J. I. Packer is one of the executive editors. It is odd that Richard Foster and some 50 "biblical scholars" would go to the trouble to create and publish this "Bible," considering the fact that Eugene Peterson, its New Testament editor, has said, "Why do people spend so much time studying the Bible? [Christians] should be studying it less, not more. I'm just not at all pleased with all the emphasis on Bible study as if it's some kind of special thing that Christians do, and the more they do the better."¹⁵

Showing the apostate contempt of these men for God's Word, the *Renovaré* explanatory notes (bringing to evangelicals the old "higher criticism" of 150 years ago and still popular among liberals today) deny the Divine authorship of much of Scripture—even that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Yet the Introduction hypocritically declares, "we read the Bible literally, from cover to cover [and] in context."¹⁶

Renovaré cynically declares that Genesis 1-11 is neither historic nor scientific¹⁷ and that the entire book of Genesis is merely a collection of myths.

Of Daniel, the *Renovaré* Bible declares, "We do not know who wrote it or exactly when it was written it was most likely partially written during Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution of the Jews in Babylon, which began with the desecration of the Temple in 167 BC."¹⁸ So it is the work of an imposter pretending to be Daniel 400 years too late! Apparently overlooked is the fact that perhaps a century before Antiochus, the Greek Septuagint was translated from even earlier Hebrew manuscripts, and it contains the book of Daniel as we have it today.

The powerful prophetic promise from God in Jeremiah 31:8-14 to bring home the Jews scattered around the world is interpreted as a promise to all homeless people (nothing about Israel) and God's promise that Israel can never be destroyed (31:35-37) is ignored! Israel is treated as having been replaced by the church.

How does this relate to departure from "the faith once delivered to the saints"? The Messiah doesn't step off of a UFO and say, "Voilà! Here I am!" He comes in fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies and with a genealogy that proves His authentic identity. Israel takes up most of the Bible, and its history and its prophets' inspired pronouncements are foundational to the Messiah's identity. If the Bible is not 100 percent true in what it says about Israel, then we cannot believe what else it says about Christ and our "redemption through his blood."¹⁹

If this "trashing" of the Bible, endorsed by many leading evangelicals and tolerated without opposition from others, is not part of the apostasy, then what is? We are losing the Bible in many ways, raising a generation on the spiritual junk food of religious videos, movies, youth entertainment,

and comic book paraphrases of the Bible. The Word of God is being rewritten, dumbed down, and dramatized in order to cater to the tastes of the carnal mind.

The emphasis throughout Scripture is always on the *words*. The Bible is not a picture book! We are to live by "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,"²⁰ a fact so important that Christ quoted it to Satan in His temptation.²¹ But the Bible is today being "improved" by script writers, movie directors, and actors who are replacing the actual "incorruptible word of God" by which we are "born again,"²² with dramatic representations (the entire New Testament is now on video) that may soon be the only "Bible" youth know. (Continued next month)

— DAVE HUNT
PRE-TRIB STUDY GROUP CONFERENCE, 2005

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Jude 3.

² Acts 20:30.

³ Jude 16.

⁴ Mt 24:6-10; Mk 13:7-13; Lk 21:9-19.

⁵ Mt 24:3.

⁶ Mt 24:4-5.

⁷ Mt 24:11.

⁸ Mt 24:24.

⁹ Jude 4.

¹⁰ Jn 14:9.

¹¹ 1 Tm 3:16.

¹² *Washington Post*, 7/30/96; 8/1/96; *Washington Times*, 8/1/96.

¹³ 1 Cor 15:3-4.

¹⁴ Jn 3:17.

¹⁵ "A Conversation with Eugene Peterson," *Mars Hill Review*, Fall 1995, Issue No. 3, 73-90.

¹⁶ Richard J. Foster, ed., *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible*

(HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), General Introduction, xxxi.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

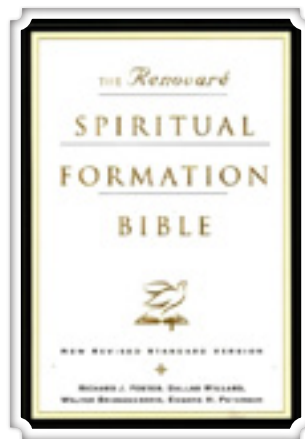
¹⁸ *Ibid.*, From the introduction to Daniel, by James M. Rand, 1245.

¹⁹ Eph 1:7; Col 1:14.

²⁰ Dt 8:3.

²¹ Mt 4:4, etc.

²² 1 Pt. 1:23.





FROM WILLIAM MACDONALD'S DEVOTIONAL BOOK:

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"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." — 2 TIMOTHY 4:8

"Also to all who have loved His appearing." For many years I thought that this expression referred to those believers who had kindly, sentimental feelings about the coming of the Lord. They would be rewarded with a crown of righteousness because their hearts glowed warm when they thought about the Rapture.

But surely it means more than this. To love His appearing means to live in the light of His coming, to behave as if He were coming today.

Thus, to love His appearing means to live in moral purity. For, as John reminds us, "everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

It means to stay disentangled from the things of this life. We should set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth (Colossians 3:2).

It means to serve God's people, giving them "food in due season" (Matthew 24:45). The Lord pronounces a special blessing on those who are doing that when He comes.

In short, it means that we won't do anything that we would not want to be found doing when He appears. We would not go anywhere that would cause shame at His coming. We would not say anything that would be offensive in His presence.

If you knew Christ were coming in a week, how would you spend the intervening days? Does it mean you would give up your job, go to a mountaintop and spend all day reading the Bible and praying? Does it mean you would go into "full-time Christian work," preaching and teaching day and night?

If we are really walking with the Lord today and living in the center of His will, it would mean carrying on as usual. If, however, we are living for self, then it would require some revolutionary changes.

It is not enough to have kind thoughts about the Savior's return. The crown of righteousness is reserved for those who love it enough to let the truth mold their lives. It is not enough to hold the truth about His coming; the truth must hold us.

— WILLIAM MACDONALD



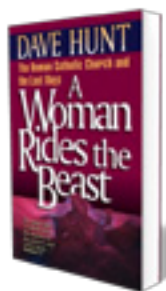
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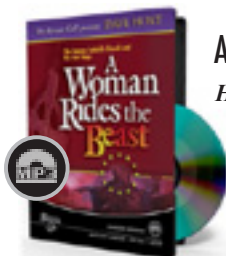


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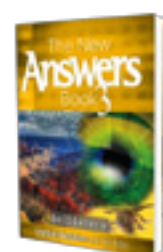
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