

# THE BEREAN CALL

P.O. Box 7019 Bend, Oregon 97708

www.thebereancall.org

April 2004

## God is Love

Dave Hunt

Today, exactly as the Bible prophesied, man grows ever bolder in his defiance of God. One basic element common to the rejection of Christ in the world and contempt for sound doctrine in the church is the lack of *musings*, i.e., thinking and reasoning carefully, especially about God, His Word, and His will. Instead, the chief pursuit of the world—and, sadly, of many Christians—is amusement. We are too busy entertaining ourselves to think of God. As atheism rejects theism, so amusement stifles musing.

Let's swim against the tide and muse together. God called to Israel: "Come now, and let us reason together...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword..." (Is 1:18-20).

That cry comes repeatedly from God's heart, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth...I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel...doth not consider" (Is 1:2,3).

God's reiterated pleadings for Israel to repent surely indicate that He was not the cause behind their sin. He had not foreordained their rebellion and judgment. They were not doing His will. The God of Israel reasons in vain with His chosen people: "I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not...Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth..." (Jer 44:4). Obviously, God had not predestined their wicked behavior and doom, or He could not have called their idolatry "this abominable thing that I hate."

Nor is the selfishness, jealousy, and hatred; the fornication, adultery, and divorce; the homosexuality, lesbianism and rejection of marriage as God ordained it; abortion and other murders; ethnic and religious wars and other violence so rampant in today's self-centered world any more God's will than was the wickedness in Noah's time. That world was destroyed in the flood. Today's world is ripening for

an even worse outpouring of God's wrath against sin.

Man was made in God's image (Gn 1:26,27)—not physically but spiritually. "God is a Spirit" (Jn 4:24) with no physical form. Man was to reflect the moral and spiritual character of God in all that he thought, said, and did. Eden's Garden was not only a paradise of physical beauty and abundance beyond our imagination, but also a spiritual paradise as well—a bit of heaven on earth.

What a glorious relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed! The Garden was a symphony of God's glory expressed in the exhilarating oneness of a man and a woman joined in that first marriage by God Himself: the ecstatic, untainted happiness of selfless love displayed in words and deeds of continual kindness, thoughtfulness, grace, mercy, pure goodness, and compassion, each seeking only the other's joy in the wonder of intimate companionship!

**In this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world...**

**1 John 4:9**

When His creation of the universe, the animals, and man was finished, God pronounced it all to be "very good" (Gn 1:31). Then what went so horribly wrong? How could man, made in the image of God, have such deep hatred against his Creator and such determination to take his own way and flaunt his rebellion before the compassionate and holy God to whom he owes his very existence?

The Bible calls this enigma "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thes 2:7) and declares that its secret source is in the depths of man's heart: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within..." (Mk 7:21-23).

The heart is not only the seat of the emotions but of the will—like a fortified castle to which each person holds the only key: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prv 4:23).

I will never forget the interview on TV of a Canadian who had been arrested in Saudi Arabia and falsely accused of terrorism.

Under continuous torture, he "confessed his guilt" before he was released. That terrifying experience taught him two things: 1) torture can be so excruciating that the strongest person can be made to "confess" to *anything*, even that he murdered his mother, or God; and 2) yet no torture, no matter how unbearable, can make the victim *believe* what he is forced to confess.

There is a place deep inside where the real person guards his secret thoughts and true intentions. Solomon warns his son that what a man *says* is often a deceit to hide what he really *is* inside (Prv 23:6-8).

The Bible repeatedly calls this inner stronghold "the heart" or "the will." Without it, one has no individuality—nor could one love another or receive love. God has so made us that even He cannot force us to believe anything. He reasons with us in the gospel to persuade us of the truth; but, sadly, most people do not listen to reason and insist upon pursuing the broad road to destruction though they know where it leads.

The world is filled with stubborn, disobedient youths who've grown up in rebellion not only against their parents but against all authority, especially God. The carrot of amusement that is offered even in the church has only led them further from in-depth thinking, i.e., musing. The result is "unreasonable and wicked men [who] have not faith" (2 Thes 3:2).

The hidden bastion deep within can be either the throne of a selfish tyrant ruling others, or the seat of selflessness poured out for others in genuine love and compassion: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Mt 16:25); "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit..." (Jn 12:24).

God did not make us robots. In spite of the denial by Luther, Calvin, and many evangelical leaders today, God gave man a will to freely choose to love or to hate Him, to receive Christ as Savior and Lord or to reject Him. God wants man to trust Him so fully and to love Him so deeply as to give Him the keys to this inner fortress of the heart, holding nothing back: "my son, give me thine heart" (Prv 23:26).

God doesn't want to trick us or to superficially persuade us by our emotions. He wants to win our hearts with His truth and love. "Know therefore...in thine heart...the

LORD he is God” (Dt 4:39); “thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Dt 6:5); “The LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Dt 13:3). God’s command for all to love Him with the whole heart proves His love and desire for all mankind to be saved. It would be unreasonable for God to command any to love Him whom He does not love enough to do all He could to save them, but has instead predestined to hell.

“Only fear the LORD, and serve him...with all your heart...consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed” (1 Sm 12:24, 25); “turn ye even to me with all your heart...rend your heart, and not your garments” (Joel 2:12, 13); “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest [be baptized]” (Acts 8:37); “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and...believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9).

Creation’s most powerful witness to its Creator is found in DNA. Digitally organized instructions for building and operating trillions of cells as one body are inscribed upon DNA in encoded language that only certain protein molecules can decode. Everything written has an author! And the author of this amazing pool of intricate information could only be an infinite Intelligence, the One who created and sustains all by “the word of his power” (Heb 1:3).

The rebellion of Satan and man brought destruction to the entire order in the universe. The ongoing result has been natural disasters and a growing pool of disease and deformities among men and animals: “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together...” (Rom 8:21, 22). Even some cells no longer follow the instructions encoded in the DNA, resulting in cancer.

In spite of overwhelming and indisputable evidence bombarding him daily, man refuses to obey his Creator. He is thus a spiritual cancer on the earth, doing “that which [is] right in his own eyes” (Jgs 17:6).

God would be justified in wiping man from the earth—which He almost did with the flood. We would not be alive today had Noah not “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gn 6:8). And why is God gracious and merciful to rebels? Only because of His boundless love revealed in Christ Jesus!

Christ’s sacrifice for sin is the great proof of God’s love for all mankind: “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). The unspeakable horror of sin is revealed in the creatures’ mocking, scourging, and nailing their Creator to the

Cross. And as sinful, rebellious man does his worst, God’s love shines all the brighter: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34)—and to answer that prayer, the Father punishes Christ in full for the sins of the world, past, present, and future.

In loving response to rebellious man, who desires to tear Him from His throne, God sent His Son to become a man through the virgin birth and to pay the full penalty His own infinite justice required for sin. Indeed, He could do no other. What? *Could do no other?* Yes, for “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8,16).

There is a vast difference between saying that God is loving, and that God *is* love. The words, “God is,” are coupled with many glorious promises—and warnings: God is, “thy refuge” (Dt 33:27); “my strength and power” (2 Sm 22:33); “gracious and merciful” (2 Chr 30:9); “a very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1); “my defense” (Ps 59:17); “good to Israel” (Ps 73:1); “faithful” (1 Cor 1:9; 10:13); “true” (Jn 3:33)—“a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29), etc. But these expressions describe how God *acts*, not what God *is*.

Love is the very essence of God’s being. He cannot but love. Though love that is

**...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.**

**Romans 5:5**

truly selfless is rarely seen on earth, every person *knows* that such love is of God. That recognition is like a haunting memory deep in man’s heart of a paradise long lost.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, they suddenly realized that “they were naked” (Gn 3:7). Not that they were without clothes (see *TBC*, Feb and Oct ’02), for that had been true since their creation. Made in the image of God, they must have been clothed in the very light of God: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5). It has been well said that “we are like mirrors whose brightness, if we are bright at all, depends entirely upon the sun [Son] that shines upon us.”

Sin stripped the first man and woman of all that God had intended for them as creatures made in His glorious image. The reflection of His glory no longer shone out through them. They were spiritually and morally naked. What a tragedy! And today man is still naked before his Creator, missing the glory that once clothed his first parents: “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

The love, which is God’s very essence, is missing because we have been separated

from Him by sin. There is a bitter aching in the heart that nothing but God himself can satisfy. God is calling us to be reconciled to Him: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13).

Most members of our tragic race turn to everything but God in an attempt to satisfy the longing that only He can fill: “Be astonished, O ye heavens...and be horribly afraid...saith the LORD. For my people have...forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns...that can hold no water” (Jer 2:12,13).

Some, however, will not be satisfied with anything less than God himself. With the Psalmist, they cry, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God...” (Ps 42:1, 2). This is not a thirst to have one’s “needs” met or to see miracles that excite the flesh. This is a deep thirst to know God himself in such a close relationship as to become all that He desires one to be. Is this the passion of your heart—of mine?

In Christ’s prayer to His Father, He expresses the earnest desire that God’s perfect love would indwell and be manifest through those who know and love Him: “that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (Jn 17:26). What a prayer from the heart of the One who longs to “bring many sons unto glory” (Heb 2:10) in His likeness (1 Jn 3:2)! Hear David’s earnest expectation: “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Ps 17:15).

This is more than a restoration of the love that Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden. That intimate relationship they had known with their Creator could be, and was, lost. What the new creature in Christ is brought into is infinitely better and can never be lost. Christ told a troubled Martha: “Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Lk 10:42).

Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would come to a full understanding of “the hope of his calling” (Eph 1:18). Wonder of wonders, God will eternally restore naked sinners “unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus” (1 Pt 5:10)!

The new birth through faith in Christ begins a new and eternal life. Christ lives in us, but we must diligently partner with Him: “work out [not work *for*] your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12,13); “whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Col 1:29).

May we each have that same steadfast purpose in our hearts as we eagerly await His return.

**TBC**

## Quotable

The time is short: seek little here below:  
Earth's goods would cumber thee,  
and drag thee down;  
Let daily food suffice; care not to know  
Thought for tomorrow; it may never come.  
Thou canst not perish, for thy Lord is nigh,  
And His own care will all thy need supply.

(J.J.P.)

Nor does God require of His children great skill or learning: it is only love which he regards. If this be sincere and fervent, free from disguise and dissimulation, God takes more pleasure and delight in it, than in all the knowledge and wisdom, in all the art and talent that any man upon earth, in his best works, can possibly exhibit. Wherever this divine love is wanting, there all wisdom and knowledge, all works and gifts, are altogether unprofitable. They are accounted fain and dead, as a mere body without life (1 Cor 13:1-2).

John Arndt (1555-1621)

## Q&A

**Question:** I heard you recently express concern that an actor played the part of Jesus in the Mel Gibson movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. There have been many movies that portrayed Christ, yet I don't recall hearing you complain about them. What about the *Jesus* film that has been the means of millions coming to Christ around the world? Why are you just now becoming concerned?

**Answer:** I have consistently opposed attempts to portray Christ in film and other visual media. My reasons are rather simple. If you carried in your wallet a picture that you took out several times a day to look at in order to remember and honor your wife or husband—but it wasn't a picture of that person at all, but of someone else—wouldn't your spouse be justifiably be upset?

Literally hundreds of pictures of "Jesus" exist by different artists, famous and otherwise: "Christ Crowned with Thorns," by Dutch painter Jan Mostaert, c. 1510, in the London National Gallery; "Crown of Thorns," done about the same time by Italian painter Correggio; "Christ Carrying His Cross," by Italian and Spanish painter El Greco, 1580, in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art; "Head of Christ," by

Rembrandt, 1655, held in the Picture Gallery, Berlin; "White Crucifixion," by Russian painter Marc Chagall, 1938, Art Institute of Chicago; "Head of Christ," by Warner Sallman, 1940, copyrighted by Warner Press, Inc.; the pitiful, any-person androgynous "Jesus of the People" that won the *National Catholic Reporter* contest against about 1,700 other entrants in 1999, etc., etc.

These alleged "portraits" are all different. Which one is the true Christ? Not one! Then what is the point for an artist to paint or for you to honor an image of "Christ" that is not what He really looked like—and certainly is not as He appears now in glory?! To whatever extent any depiction (portrait or by actor on stage or film) isn't accurate but influences your thinking, you have been led astray.

What must Jesus think of these misrepresentations! If your wife or husband would not be pleased with your carrying the picture of another to remind you of him or her, is Christ pleased by those who claim to love Him honoring so many phony representations?!

Moreover, is not Jesus God himself? Tell me why pictures pretending to represent Jesus are not a violation of the commandment not to make an image of God, even in our minds. Is this any better than the Israelites embracing idols as representations of Yahweh? You say you don't bow before pictures of Jesus. But you do look upon them as representing Jesus, do you not? If not, why have them?

The error is even worse when someone dares to portray Christ on the screen. Of himself, Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jn 14:9)! What actor playing "Jesus" would dare to say that? Yet they are attempting to portray in their flesh what Paul described as "without controversy, great is the mystery...God was manifest in the flesh..." (1 Tm 3:16). What audacity! And what of those who watch with approval and are influenced by such portrayals?

Jim Caviezel felt that in order to accurately portray Christ in *The Passion* he had to ingest the wafer turned into "Christ" in the Mass each day. Would that help?

After viewing movies, many sincere people see in their minds the actor who played "Christ" every time they think of Jesus. Does that please our Lord? I will leave that to your conscience.

**Question:** I have been disturbed for some time by the "praise and worship" music in my church—even to the point of looking elsewhere. But I seem to find the same thing everywhere I go. So much of it seems shallow and repetitive. I long for the old hymns that had doctrinal content and really bowed me before the

**Lord in worship and filled my heart with praise to Him. Am I just old-fashioned? Help me.**

**Answer:** We are hearing this anguished cry from increasing numbers of people. Let me try to explain the basic problem as clearly as I can, hoping that some "praise and worship" leaders or pastors will at least give it some serious thought and prayer.

The abandoned hymns were composed by men and women of God who were mature in the faith, had often suffered much for Christ, and wrote from deep experience and biblical knowledge. Today's church has substituted choruses composed by those who are mostly young both in years and in the faith. They have little to offer except catchy tunes, a snappy beat for clapping, loud noise, and very little of true reverence for our Lord—hardly appropriate for entering God's holy and awesome presence. This is not true of all, but of most.

Sadly, today's "worshippers" seem content to sing over and over, for example, "I will sing of your love forever," or "I love to praise you, Lord," or "We have come into your house to worship you," or similar empty phrases. Why are they empty? The focus is more upon self than upon God—what I'm giving *Him* rather than His love and grace to me.

To repeat, "I will sing of your love forever," is not singing of His love at all. You are only saying you are *going* to sing of His love. Stop *promising* to sing of His love and do it! Sing of His love! Recite what He has done, how much He has loved you, and tell Him how much you love Him and *why*.

The same is true of "I love to praise you, Lord," or "We've come to worship you." This is neither praise nor worship, but merely *saying* that you love to praise Him or are going to worship Him. If so, then let's praise Him and worship Him! Praise is not saying you love to praise, nor is worship promising to worship. Let's really do it!

How? Let's express mature love and praise for Him, for His love, His character, and what He has done for our redemption.

There are so many powerful hymns that praise Him for His love and express our love and gratitude to Him! Here are sample excerpts: "The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell; it goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell...to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky!" Or, "Son of God, 'twas love that made thee die our ruined souls to save; 'twas our sins vast load that laid thee, Lord of Life, within the grave...." "Down at the cross where my Savior died, Down where for cleansing from sin I cried, There



to my heart was the blood applied; Glory to His Name!” “He is coming as the Bridegroom, coming to unfold at last the great secret of His purpose, mystery of ages past; and the Bride, to her is granted in His beauty now to shine, as in rapture she exclaimeth ‘I am His, and He is mine!’ Oh! What joy that marriage union, mystery of love divine; sweet to sing, in all its fullness, ‘I am His, and He is mine!’”

What about a current favorite, “I love you, Lord, and I lift my voice to worship you, O my soul rejoice. Take joy, my King, in what you hear. Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear”? Is that any better? Slightly. At least it says, “I love you, Lord.” But to say, “I lift my voice to worship you” is only an empty promise to worship—not actual worship. Asking the Lord to take joy in what He hears and hoping it will be a sweet, sweet sound in His ear is offering nothing. How about singing words that would bring Him joy and actually *be* a sweet sound in His ear! But the song contains none of what it seems to promise.

In contrast, consider the following: “And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior’s blood? Died He for me who caused His pain—for me who Him to death pursued? Amazing love, how can it be, that Thou, my God, should’st die for me!” Or, “Down from His glory, ever living story, my God and Savior came, and Jesus was His name...a man of sorrows, tears and agony....What condescension, bringing us redemption; that in the dead of night, not one faint hope in sight; God, gracious, tender, laid aside His splendor, to stoop to woo, to win, to save my soul...!Without reluctance, flesh and blood His substance, He took the form of man, revealed the hidden plan. O glorious mystery! Sacrifice of Calvary! And now I know He is the great I AM! O how I love Him, how I adore Him! My breath, my sunshine, my all in all. The great Creator became my Savior, and all God’s fulness dwelleth in Him!”

**Question:** Obviously, there are many Christian teachers on radio and TV whose teaching is misleading or unbiblical. Should we avoid them, or learn what we can from them that is biblical? Who is safe to listen to? Whom do you recommend on radio, TV or in books that is the most biblically reliable?

**Answer:** There is a horrible mixture of truth and error being taught by Christians in pulpits, on radio, TV, in magazines, and in books. Whether or not one should continue to “eat the fish and spit out the bones,” as is often said, depends upon the nature and extent of the error in each case.

We at The Berean Call cannot set forth any rules. The Lord and His Word will have to be your guide.

Of course, there are those whose heresies are so many and so serious that you should avoid them entirely. However, the Lord has not called us here at TBC to approve or disapprove of individuals, much less to lead boycotts. We have been called to teach biblical truth, to warn of error as we see it, and to attempt to teach readers to discern truth and error by whomever it is taught.

**Question (composite of several):** I disagree with your answer in *TBC* February issue regarding the actions of Judge Roy Moore. He should have obeyed the order to remove the Ten Commandments as if it were from God. In Acts 5:29, the disciples had been specifically commissioned by God to preach the Gospel. If they were ordered not to, it would be against God’s command, and they were therefore correct in saying that they must obey God rather than men. But moving a stone out of a courthouse in no way conflicts with what God wants for us. Therefore, your quoting of Acts 5:29 was in error.

**Answer:** Thank you for your thoughtful letter. You make a good point about Judge Moore’s obligation to obey the authority over him, which is constituted by God. You correctly state that the only exception would be if the governing “authority requires us to go against God’s commands.” I agree.

You say that I misused Acts 5:29. But I believe that the disciples’ continuing to preach Christ in disobedience of the commandment not to do so, given by constituted authority, is an exact parallel and set a valid precedent for Judge Moore to follow. Jesus had said that “the rabbis sit in Moses’ seat” and are therefore to be obeyed. That the apostles gave the reason for disobeying this command as “we ought to obey God rather than man” applies, I believe, in the case of Judge Moore as well.

The apostles were commanded to refrain from preaching in Christ’s name, but obeyed Christ’s command to do so. Judge Moore was commanded to remove the display of the Ten Commandments from a public place where, in fact, they ought to be displayed as a witness to the fact that God has written these very commands in every human conscience. He likewise refused for the same reason.

The display of the Ten Commandments was not on private property belonging to a business. It was public property and a courthouse where law is supposed to be upheld. The law of any land must be

based upon the Ten Commandments given by God to all mankind (minus the Sabbath observance) and engraved on every human conscience. It was more than “moving a stone out of a courthouse.”

Judge Moore was not an employee preaching the gospel on his employer’s time. That would not be ethical. No time was taken from his duties by the display of these commandments.

We disagree, but praise God, can do so amicably.

## News Alert

**United Press International, 3/18/2004:** Wilmington, NC—A school library book checked out by a first-grader, in which a prince and a prince live happily ever after, has a North Carolina family upset.

Michael and Tonya Hartsell of Wilmington read along with 7-year-old Olivia every weeknight before bed, but when they started reading her new book, “King & King” they were stunned at its content, the *Wilmington Daily Star* reported. Especially on an elementary school level.

In the book, the queen tells her son he must get married and take over for the king, but the search for a spouse doesn’t go as expected. He waves off all the eligible princesses, falling instead for another prince and they are married. The last page has them kissing.

The Hartsells are hanging onto the book until the school agrees to remove it from the elementary school. The school says it will look into the matter. The Hartsells, meanwhile, said they may move Olivia to another school.

**Religion News Service, 3/12/04:** Sex advice, music reviews and tips on looking good...no, it’s not the latest issue of *GQ* or *Maxim*. It’s the Bible—for the mind of a teenage guy. *Refuel* is the New Testament that looks like an entertainment magazine, and it hits secular and religious bookstores in April. Featuring quizzes and dating hints alongside the Word of God, *Refuel* caters to young Christian men who aren’t otherwise reading Scripture.

“It really was birthed from research we did that said teens don’t read the Bible because it’s too big and too intimidating,” said Laurie Whaley, a spokesperson for Thomas Nelson, Inc., the publisher of *Refuel*. “We removed the intimidation factor, so it’s fun—and it’s a Bible.” *Refuel* is written in a modern and easy-to-read translation, and is priced for a teen’s budget at \$16.99. It features recommendations for Christian pop CDs and columns such as “Inside Her Head: Real Girls Give Their Opinions.”

## Dave & TA's Itinerary

April 17-18 Calvary Church Port Orchard  
Port Orchard & Bremerton WA  
Meetings in two locations  
(360) 876-7288  
veronicaw\_calvarypo@hotmail.com

Apr 23-25 Heritage Bible Church  
Dave & TA Terrytown LA  
(504) 392-4900  
toll free (866) 68 GRACE  
www.heritagebiblechurch.com

Apr 29- May 9 Tirane, Albania & other locations  
Georg Sturm + 355-68-223-1763  
GEOSTURM01@aol.com

May 24-25 Niagara Falls Prophecy Conf.  
Midnight Call Ministries  
Niagara Falls, CANADA  
(800) 845-2420  
(803) 755-0733

June 20-22 Calvary Chapel  
York, England  
44-1904-638777  
york@calvarychapel.com

June 28- July 2 Word of Life  
Schroon Lake NY  
(518) 494-6000

## Letters

Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon,

A friend introduced me to your website. I find your [radio] program to be uplifting and informative. The truths you share are stifled among the secular world and, unfortunately, even Christians are unwilling to take a stand....Hearing you speak and expound on things on the air is extremely helpful. I do pray that you will be able to keep your ministry alive and well, and I realize that in doing so, I will be praying for God to show me what role I am to play in supporting it. LS (KS)

Dear Mr Hunt and Friends at TBC,

Thank you for your attention to detail and your commitment to presenting the truth through your publications....I have been incarcerated for the last seventeen years. Until about three years ago, I was unaware of your ministry. When I began reading your material, such as *Occult Invasion*, and, of course, *The Berean Call*, I was immediately impressed that I could trust your publications. They have been instrumental in helping me mentor young Christians since then. As you are probably well aware, the prison systems in the U.S. are "stocked ponds" for spiritual fishing. Unfortunately, too often—because people feel so bad when they arrive in prison—they are prime targets for ministers of "feel good" faiths and religions that promise pseudo-intellectual/spiritual growth (self-aggrandizement). By carefully and consistently working with those who are interested...the men have been able to see the false hope of emotional and intellectual attainments and put their faith and energy to work in bringing their thoughts

and actions into conformity with God's Word. LH (prisoner, FL)

Dear The Berean Call,

I'm so glad to receive the first of your newsletters to me titled "Road Map to Armageddon" (Jan '04). It's an eye opener to many naïve Christians (like me) who do not really know what is going on in this Planet Earth. When I went to an Internet café, I mistakenly typed www.thebereancall.com and got to an entirely different website, and without my knowledge to the extent, I signed the guestbook with my particulars. God delivered me from the hands of these false brethren through another concerned brother who perceived that I (and indeed many others) had been misled. So he picked our emails from the guestbook and emailed me. Then I discovered that indeed there are many people out there who are just [hoping] to deceive innocent brethren who would want to know Christ and be known by Christ genuinely. I am glad to know about you. SA (Nigeria)

Dear Berean Call,

Please take me off your mailing list. I have found your resources very helpful in the past, particularly in sorting out my understanding about my Catholic background....I was offended by your condemnation of all contemporary churches in your recent newsletter. You generalized and condemned music style as well as some no doubt bad teaching....There is nothing wrong with using Postmodern art, music, and language to articulate Jesus to a Post-modern culture that desperately needs to understand Him and accept Him! JD (MI)

Dear Dave,

Thank you so much for your comments in the February ('04) newsletter regarding Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*. Our pastor is taking the congregation through this study, and everyone is very fired up about it. Somehow I could not get excited about it, but rather have become more and more troubled....every church seems to be getting on board. Just knowing that Rick Warren was a graduate of Schuller's institute is enough for me. TC (CA) [TBC: Please see the supplement regarding Rick Warren and Schuller's Institute on this page.]

Dear Sirs,

Up front I want to again express my appreciation for your ministry and commitment to God's truth. I just finished a study of Phillip E. Johnson's *Darwin on Trial*. My memory pulled up some of Dave's *What Love Is This?* in a comparison of the two as to determining truth....As Darwinianism's concept of evolution is essential to maintain the humanist's position of "scien-

tific fact," so Calvinism must maintain [the Calvinist's] concept of God's sovereignty. In both instances, they are dependent upon a philosophical premise, which foundation collapses in the light of *truth*. To quote from Johnson's book, "Scientific methodology exists whenever theories are subjected to vigorous empirical testing, and it is absent whenever the practice is to protect a theory rather than to test it" (p. 154). GB (ID)

## Supplement

In the Feb. '04 issue of *TBC* we stated that Rick Warren was a graduate of Robert Schuller's Church Growth Institute. It is unclear whether or not Warren actually graduated. He did attend the Institute, according to a 2002 *Christianity Today* article and was listed as a 1997 Schuller Institute faculty member.

When Schuller developed his principles of church leadership and growth, he decided that appealing to man's self esteem was the best way to draw them in. Norman Vincent Peale advised him to modify the gospel to fit this new method. In response, Schuller called for a new reformation, going from a theocentric (God-centered) to a "human need" approach, certainly radical surgery to the body of historic and biblical theology. Warren seems to follow Schuller in this.

## TBC Notes Mail Call

Please don't be upset if you take the time to write to us and you don't receive a reply. Though we continue to grow as a ministry, we are trying nevertheless to keep TBC's operation small and personal, as well as economically efficient. Three of us answer letters among our many duties. Every letter is read, and its input greatly appreciated; but we cannot answer them all.

It is our desire that our newsletter and the books and tapes we recommend will continue to be the ministry's primary information resource. The reprints of back newsletter issues have also proved to be tremendously valuable to our readers, providing answers to a great percentage of questions.

T.A. McMahon  
Executive Director

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### God's Words Compared With Eugene Peterson's Words in *The Message*

He dares to call this "a version of the Bible." But the following examples—a few among many—show that he *substitutes* humanistic language, *dilutes the power of*, and even *changes* the very words of God!

#### KING JAMES VERSION

#### THE MESSAGE

"In the beginning was the Word..." (Jn 1:1)

"The Word was first...." [*First?* There is no first or second in the Godhead!]

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (Jn 3:5)

"Unless a person submits to this original creation—the 'wind hovering over the water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it's not possible to enter God's kingdom." [*Original creation?! To be "born again"?*]

"...that the world through him might be saved." (Jn 3:17)

"He came to help, to put the world right again." [*Help?* Political, social action?]

"He that cometh from above is above all...." (Jn 3:31)

"The One who comes from above is head and shoulders over other messengers from God." [*Head and shoulders?* No, *infinitely!* Above *all!*]

"...the wrath of God abideth on him." (Jn 3:36)

"All he experiences of God is darkness; and an angry darkness at that." [In God there is "no darkness," nor is wrath mere darkness!]

"...shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (Jn 5:24)

"...is no longer condemned to be an outsider. This person has taken a giant step from the world of the dead to the world of the living." [*Outsider?! No! Eternal damnation! Giant step by man? No, God does it.*]

"...ye shall...die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come." (Jn 8:21)

"...you're missing God in this and are headed for a dead end." [*Missing God* instead of "die in your sins?" Dead end? No, eternal doom!]

"...ye are of this world; I am not of this world...." (Jn 8:23)

"You're tied down to the mundane; I'm in touch with what is beyond your horizons." [Mundane is not the biblical meaning of this world. Beyond your horizons? No, heaven!]

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...." (Rom 1:16)

"It's news I'm most proud to proclaim, this extraordinary Message of God's powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts him." [*Proud?* God condemned all pride. Gospel, Christ, and salvation are not even mentioned.]

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report." (Heb 11:1).

"...faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living...what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd." [Changed meaning completely!]

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus...." (1Pt 5:10)

"It won't be long before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ—eternal and glorious plans they are!—will have you put together and on your feet...." ["Put together and on your feet" in this life instead of eternal glory?!]

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Rv 3:22)

"Listen...to the Wind Words blowing through the churches." [The Holy Spirit speaks *Wind Words?*]