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FEBRUARY 2007

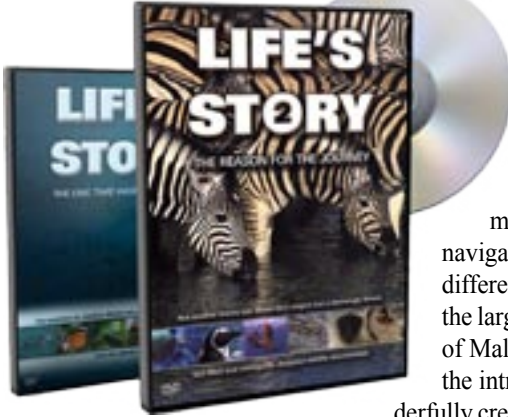
WEANING EVANGELICALS OFF THE WORD-1

by T.A. McMAHON

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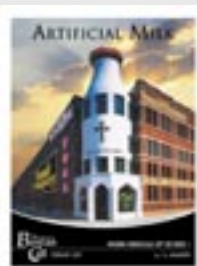
anything but Intelligent Design. In this inspiring account, the author recounts why he—as a young man—chose to be an atheist...although he confesses, "I was always very unhappy and empty inside." Holding a degree in mathematics, Dr. Cagan was well educated and superbly studied in the deeper things of science. After coming to the realization that he had no answers to his many questions about the meaning of life, who he was, and why he was here, or where he was going—he met the God of the Bible. The author documents how nature and science both point to God and includes scientific facts proving the accuracy and truthfulness of the Holy Scriptures. This powerful testimony is a tremendous witnessing tool for your unbelieving acquaintances. Whitaker House, 169 pages.

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ABOUT THE COVER: Not only is the church-at-large serving watered-down milk to spiritual babes that cannot eat "strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12-14), but its teachings are often the products of men rather than the Holy Spirit. Packaged under many attractive labels, this artificial milk is a non-nutritive substitute for the Word of God that will, at best, produce sickly sucklings; at worst, it will destroy the faith of many "seekers" and immature believers who consume it. [The artwork is a composite digital rendering based on historic photographs of the Richmond Dairy building in Richmond, Virginia; its portrayal as a church here is only symbolic. After several failed attempts at renovation, it reportedly now serves as an apartment complex.]

THE BEREAN CALL

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

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FEBRUARY 2007

Weaning Evangelicals Off the Word—Part 1

T.A. McMahon

Apostasy is rampant within the evangelical church today. At least that's my perspective as one who has observed religious trends and developments for three decades. Before I present my specific concerns, let me define some terms. The use of the word "evangelical" in this article simply refers to those who would say that the Bible is their authority in all matters of faith and practice. "Apostasy" consists of those teachings and practices that are contrary to the Word of God yet seduce and deceive both professing Christians and true believers. "Biblical apostasy" is a falling away that will result in a false Christianity under the control of the Antichrist: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away..." (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Although the culmination of the Apostasy takes place after the Rapture of the church, various aspects of this apostate religion have and will continue to ensnare many believers throughout its development.

At a certain point in the future, there will be a total rejection of biblical Christianity, succeeded by the religion of the Antichrist; it will maintain a *vener* of Christianity that will prove acceptable to all religions. This perversion of Christianity doesn't just suddenly happen once the Antichrist appears. The deception process began long ago in the Garden of Eden with Satan's seduction of Eve, and it is becoming more and more of a corrupting influence within Christianity as the time of the appearing of the false messiah, whom the entire world will worship (Revelation 13), draws near.

Satan began his dialogue with Eve by planting seeds of doubt regarding what God had commanded: "Yea, hath God said...?" (Genesis 3:1). This opening line of the Adversary has been the basis ever since for his principal strategy in inducing rebellion against God. Its implications impugning the character of God and sanctioning the rationalizations of man seem endless: Why would God keep something good from you?; Is He *really* in charge?; Does He make the rules?; You misunderstood His commands; There are no absolutes; You need to consider what He says from your own perspective, and so forth. Eve, although reiterating God's command for the most part, adds her own erroneous thought to what God actually said: "...neither shall ye touch it" (3:3).

This is what happens when dialogues take

place regarding absolutes: the truth is either added to or subtracted from. Tragically, many Christians see nothing wrong with rewriting God's Word. They are perfectly content with Bible versions that have done exactly that.

In response to Eve, Satan blatantly rejects God's warning that death would result from sin: "You will *not* surely die." Making God out to be a liar or dismissing Him altogether has always been Satan's game. The Serpent then convinces Eve that obeying God's command would rob her of enlightenment, godhood, and knowledge—and thus severely limit her potential: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (3:5).

Variations of these basic lies from the one who was a liar from the beginning (John 8:44) have successfully deceived humanity throughout history. "Yea, hath God said...?" (Satan's direct attack upon God's Word) has even led both professing and true Christians into the Apostasy.

Questioning or rejecting what God has said in the Scriptures is at the heart of instigating religious rebellion. The reasons should be obvious: 1) If the Bible cannot be trusted as God's specific communication to mankind, then we are left with nothing more than man's opinions and guesses about God and what He desires; 2) Finite humanity's speculations about its infinite Creator are not only terribly erroneous—they are evil, because they are generated by man's sinful, self-serving nature; 3) Even a true believer could be led into darkness without the light and lamp of God's Word (Psalm 119:105).

Although the Bible has been under various attacks for centuries, the latest "Yea, hath God said...?" strategy may be the Serpent of Old's most deadly. The process involves weaning evangelical Christians away from the knowledge of, an understanding of, and a dependence upon the Word of God. The objective is to produce biblically shallow Christians who are *functionally illiterate* regarding what the Bible teaches, and who therefore have no accurate basis for, or interest in, discerning biblical truth from error. By "functionally illiterate" I mean that such evangelicals know how to read, and they have Bibles (of some sort), but they rarely read them, preferring to get their biblical content from some other source.

Conditioned by a subversive weaning process, these biblically shallow Christians have little or no concern about doctrine. They major in the *experiential*, with their

feelings almost exclusively determining what they believe. The Apostle Paul, speaking prophetically of the Last Days, seemed to have these specifically in mind: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3,4). Sensual "lusts" of the flesh and imagination are implied here.

A couple of decades ago, the extreme Charismatics and Pentecostals would have been the obvious reference point regarding Paul's warning, given their obsession with healing, prosperity, and a spirituality energized by seeking after signs and wonders. Today, experiential Christianity has extended far beyond the bounds of what was considered a fringe evangelical element. It now pervades the entire church, including those denominations and movements once known for their conservative doctrinal views and biblical adherence. They have vigorously blocked the lying signs and wonders seduction at their front doors while opening wide their side entrances and youth rooms to the purveyors of the experiential in less obvious yet equally disastrous forms.

Before examples of today's antibiblical experiential Christianity are presented, it needs to be understood that true Christianity is both *doctrinal* and *experiential*. It includes a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that begins when one has understood the doctrine (i.e., biblical teaching) of salvation—the Gospel of Christ—and has accepted it by faith. When this happens, the Spirit of Christ indwells that person (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30, Romans 8:9). As one understands all that He did for us, true love for Jesus follows.

Then, as one grows in his relationship with Jesus through knowing and obeying the Scriptures, one's affection for Him increases. Furthermore, as one matures in the faith, the fruit of the Spirit is increasingly manifested: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. These certainly involve the experiential. So what is the problem, then, with experiential Christianity?

The chief error today in the evangelical church is that experiences (feelings, emotions, passions, intuitions, etc.) have become the guide for entering into and attempting to establish true spirituality. Rather than subjective feelings and emotions being present as a *result* of one's adherence to sound doctrine, they have become the

judge of whether or not something is truly Christian. Instead of testing a teaching or practice or situation by the Word of God, the arbiter becomes “how one feels about it.” This puts the human imagination in the seat of judgment. That thought alone should provoke an emotion in the heart of every Bible-believing Christian: sheer horror! Doctrinally however, it’s even more frightening.

Twice in the Book of Proverbs, in almost exactly the same terms, we are told, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). In other words, if a man goes by what he thinks or feels, independently of and in opposition to what God has declared, the consequences for him will only generate destruction. Death is separation, the spirit and soul from the body; moreover, the ways of death include separating man from the light of God’s truth. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

Experientialism (what *feels* right to man) is a leaven working its way through the entire church as it undermines biblical truth. Today there are many infectious manifestations, with heavy emphasis upon the following: signs and wonders, faith-healing and prosperity, *logos* vs. *rhema*, the new apostles and prophets, kingdom-dominion, redeeming-the-culture missions, strategic spiritual warfare, inner-healing, 12-steps, Christian psychology, evangelical social-activism; ecumenism, church growth, purpose-driven, emerging church, contemplative/mysticism, church entertainment, contemporary worship, culturally accommodating Bible versions, and visually translated Bibles. All of these movements are in opposition to the clear teaching of God’s Word, yet multitudes follow them eagerly.

Although these diverse endeavors often overlap in terms of concepts and methods, they share a common trait: while giving lip service to the Scriptures, they all, whether through ignorance, self-delusion, or planned deceit, critically subvert its teachings. The way that seems right to a man—the way that *feels* right, produces numerical growth, *seems* more spiritual, moves one emotionally, appears to move God on one’s behalf, brings people together, makes people *feel* closer to God and better about themselves, is more positive, fills more pews, impresses the world, is not judgmental, etc.—that way is systematically eliminating any concern for sound doctrine in the church. This is experientialism in opposition to doctrine among evangelicals, and it has the church helping to usher in the Apostasy.

There is not enough space in this article to explain all the movements listed above. We

have been writing about most of them for years. Many of them can be found by searching TBC’s website for related articles or the books we offer. Although they are connected at times by individuals, similar methodologies, or goals, the basic glue that essentially holds all of the movements together is the propensity for subjective experience over the written Word. All are working from this same unbiblical premise.

Extreme Charismatics and Pentecostals have a foundational teaching that God’s mode of communication today is to speak outside the Bible directly to His people, particularly through a new breed of apostles and prophets. This “new way” is called the *rhema* of God, a supposed contrast to *logos*, which is categorized as the old written form. One of its foremost leaders, C. Peter Wagner, claims that God is instructing the church in new ways of doing things through His modern prophets. Therefore, the Bible is of little or no value for judging what’s being promoted. This teaching is not only antibiblical but it has been the catalyst for the most spiritually spurious rituals of the last century, from the proliferation of false prophets to the so-called binding of territorial spirits to taking dominion over cities, countries, and ultimately the world “for the Lord.”

Hearing from and drawing experientially closer to God through techniques (e.g., occult visualization and meditation) is the practice of today’s evangelical contemplatives and mystics. Richard Foster and others have derived their so-called spiritual formation approach from Catholic “saints” and mystics. Foster created *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* to biblically support his mystical approach, yet its commentaries libel the Scriptures and demean sound doctrine. Foster introduced Eastern mystical techniques to the church decades ago in *Celebration of Discipline* (quickly adopted as mandatory reading for Campus Crusade leadership). Now his spiritual formation agenda is foundational to the Emerging Church, a widespread movement of 20-to-30-year-old evangelicals who are attracted to the sensual liturgies (candles, incense, chanting, vestments, rituals, statues, icons, etc.) of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy as a supposed means of enhancing their spiritual formation.

Eugene Peterson, a contributor to *The Renovaré Bible*, has his own extremely popular Bible version (*The Message*). Experientialism through alleged poetic license is blatantly manifested throughout this humanistic and culturally acceptable perversion of God’s Word, which Rick Warren has done much to promote. Consider Matthew 16:25 in *The Message*: “Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself,

your true self.” Try finding any hint of one’s “true self” in any other Bible translation of this verse! This is the leaven of psychotherapy (which is wholly experiential and subjective) that has permeated the church.

Although on guard against the biblical abuses of the Charismatics, even the most conservative evangelical churches have been seduced by the self-oriented and feelings-sensitive methodologies of psychology. Nothing in contemporary Christianity has raised the cry of “Yea, hath God said...?” in challenging what the Scriptures clearly teach as has so-called Christian psychology. From psychobabble-ized and Christianized 12-Steps programs (e.g., “Celebrate Recovery,” which Saddleback has spread into thousands of churches) to the occult-ridden inner-healing ministries (e.g., Elijah House of John and Paula Sandford) to the humanistic self-teachings of Focus on the Family, the psycho-spiritual leaven spreads unabated.

The seeker-sensitive church-growth movement has pushed experientialism (and its close kin, pragmatism) into overdrive through the power of marketing. Sound doctrine, necessarily, is left by the wayside while churches meet the “felt needs” of consumers who are targeted as potential Christians.

Conviction of sin doesn’t feel good, nor does it sell well. The wishful thinking of a purpose-driven church that would attract the lost by turning to the world’s methods has become a Titanic that has ignored warnings and jettisoned its compass of the doctrine of Christ. While the orchestra searches for a contemporary chorus replacement for “Nearer My God To Thee,” the vessel is sinking into the depths of compromise while dispensing temporal lifejackets to save the world from its problems. This is the way that seems right to the world and to an astounding number of those who profess to believe the Bible.

Ironically, our day is seeing *more* Christian media and entertainment, and *more* Bibles of every sort. Yet, the result is a corruption of God’s truth because there is no heart for sound biblical doctrine, especially since marketing departments are now leading the way! At best, the evangelical church in the U.S. reflects the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14-17): rich and increased with experiential goods that can only yield shallow Christians; at worst, it has become a willing contributor to the end-times delusion.

Yet even in the face of so troubling a situation, we have reason to be both encouraged and fruitful, that is, *if* we will obey Paul’s inspired exhortation: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee [from the growing apostasy]” (1 Timothy 4:16). Let us pray for one another to that end.

Quotable

Our Lord Jesus is ever giving and does not for a solitary moment withdraw His hand as long as there is a vessel of grace not yet full to the brim....He is a sun ever shining; He is manna always falling...a rock in the desert, ever sending out streams of life from His smitten side; the rain of His mercy is always dropping; and the well-spring of His love is constantly overflowing....

Who has ever risen from His table unsatisfied, or from His presence unfulfilled?... Every grain of sand which drops from the glass of time is but the tardy follower of a myriad of mercies.....

How shall my soul extol Him who daily ...crowns me with lovingkindness? O that my praise could be as ceaseless as His bounty! Miserable tongue, how can you be silent? "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, excerpted from *Uplook*, October 2006

We cannot withhold our conviction that the professing church is as much damaged by laxity and indistinctiveness about matters of doctrine within as it is by skeptics and unbelievers without. Myriads of professing Christians nowadays seem utterly unable to distinguish...what is true and what is false.... If a preacher...is only clever and eloquent and earnest...he is all right, however strange...his sermons.... They...cannot detect error.

Bishop J.C. Ryle, one of the strongest defenders of the evangelical faith within the Church of England, 1816-1900

Q&A

QUESTION: When will "every eye see Him" (Revelation 1:7) and every knee bow (Philippians 2:10)?

RESPONSE: This will not occur at the Rapture, because at that time Christ does not come to earth but catches up His espoused bride to meet Him in the air. Only the redeemed who are taken to heaven will see Him: "Looking for that blessed hope...the glorious appearing of...Jesus Christ..." (Ti 2:13); "When he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 Jn 3:2), etc.

It will be at the Second Coming, when He returns to earth in power and judgment that "every eye shall see him...and all kindreds of the earth shall wail..." (Rv 1:7). Then "every knee should bow...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:10,11), etc.

QUESTION: [similar to several others]: While I was in a Baptist church I heard nothing but "whosoever will may come,"

"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved," "as many as received Him..."—all of this from man's standpoint. I don't remember any emphasis on the sovereignty of God, election, foreknowledge, predestination or the work of the Spirit drawing to salvation. When our Baptist pastor came under the teaching of some Presbyterians and began teaching these things, it caused a stir in our church. I asked, "God, which am I supposed to believe?"

I was helped greatly by Horatius Bonar's *God's Way of Holiness* and by Jonathan Edward's view of the will. That man has been endowed with a free will by his Creator is undeniable. But what makes the will make its choices? According to Edwards...our choices are determined by what we think is the most desirable....

[But] the mind of the sinner never thinks God to be a good choice....So unless the Spirit of God moves upon the person and the mind is changed through the miracle of the new birth, our mind... will lead us away from God. Yes, Jesus invites us to come to Him (John 7:37)... but who is it that wills to come? Only...the Father and the Holy Spirit [can] cause... the renewed sinner [to] embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Even Jesus said, "No man can come to me unless the Father...draws him" (John 6:44).

In view of this, the controversy between brothers in Christ...could be put to rest.... I appreciate your stand for the truth [but] am grieved with the ongoing controversy over Calvinism and the free will of man.

RESPONSE: I respect your earnest concern. Bonar and Edwards were highly esteemed Christian leaders, but the Bible, not any man, is our authority.

You say that God gave us "free will"—but then you ask, "what makes the will make its choices?" If something or someone "makes the will make its choices," free will is not free. You say that no one has a desire to come to Christ until they are regenerated and "the Father and the Holy Spirit...cause... the renewed sinner to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior." Surely you see the grave contradiction!

If Calvinism is true, God mocks the vast majority of mankind. He calls, "Come unto me," to those who can't respond because He doesn't *cause* them to come. Yet He will send them to the Lake of Fire for not coming, even though He could have caused them to come! The literally hundreds of times in the Bible that God calls men to repent and weeps over Israel through His prophets are a further mockery. And He damns forever in the Lake

of Fire for not believing the gospel those who *can't* believe unless He regenerates them and gives them the faith—and yet He refuses to do so? Is this the "God" in whom you believe? I hope not.

Of course, God is sovereign and can do whatever He pleases, and we cannot complain. But He assures us that He loves the entire world (Jn 3:16) and would "have all men to be saved" (1 Tm 2:4). Indeed, "God *is* love" (1 Jn 4:8,16). But this Calvinist God damns multitudes He *could* save. The biblical God does all He can to bring *all men* to Himself, but each one must choose. Of Israel, He laments, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Is 5:4). Jesus wept, "How often would I...and ye would not!" (Lk 13:34).

The word "freewill" appears 17 times in the Old Testament. Calvinists deny free will. They say that only those whom God *causes* to repent and believe the gospel will do so. Only after He has "regenerated" the sinner can God supposedly, by "irresistible grace," give him faith to believe. But the Bible says, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rv 22:17).

Calvinism says we must be regenerated before God can cause us to believe. The Bible says we are regenerated by believing the gospel: "being born again ('regenerated')...by the word of God...which by the gospel is preached..." (1 Pt 1:23-25). John writes, "that believing ye might have life [i.e., be regenerated] through his name" (Jn 20:31). The Bible teaches a new birth through believing the gospel. Calvinism teaches that "regeneration" comes by an act of God before the sinner even believes the gospel. That is clearly not biblical.

This is not "hyper-Calvinism" but the Calvinism of "moderates" such as John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, John Piper, D. James Kennedy, et al. They say that God loves all men—but has a "different love" toward those for whom Christ didn't die and does not want in heaven and thus will not regenerate. That is hardly love, which is why we titled my book, *What Love Is This?* Have you read it? In it I deal with your question in depth. You would benefit from its thorough treatment of the subject.

Does God really want all mankind to be saved (as the Bible says) or just a select elect? Did Christ die for all (as the Bible says) or just for a select group? These are vital questions that deserve our attention. On our radio programs (*Search the Scriptures Daily*), all available on our website, and in our articles and Q&As of the past 20 years, you won't find an undue emphasis on Calvinism.

You say I deal with Calvinism too much. Yet you complain that only Calvinists talk about the sovereignty of God, election,

foreknowledge, predestination, or the work of the Spirit drawing to salvation. Must we remain silent in the face of false views that are presented on these important subjects? Everywhere I go, Christians tell me that Calvinism is causing confusion and division in increasing numbers of churches.

I appreciate your concern and often tell the staff that I prefer not to mention Calvinism—but we try to answer the questions we are asked. I have attempted to avoid direct reference to Calvinism unless absolutely necessary. Ironically, you have caused me to respond to these things once again.

QUESTION: [composite of several]: You object to the idea that there was any death, even of animals, prior to Adam's sin. Yet the scripture you use says "... by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Death passed upon all men. Animals are not mentioned and certainly don't sin. What would preclude animals from dying prior to the fall? You also insist that creation took six literal 24-hour days. Yet Peter said, "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). This seems to indicate that God's idea of a day can include much more than 24 hours. Please respond in TBC.

RESPONSE: First of all, the words "day, day's, days', and days" are used thousands of times in the Bible. How can you say that Peter was referring not to any of the other usages but only to the "days" in Genesis 1? And if that really were the case, how can you change his "thousand years" to *billions* of years in order to accommodate the pseudo-scientific evolutionary process? You can't justify that belief from Scripture. This is eisegesis, not exegesis. Had secular science not come up with this idea, surely no one reading the Bible ever would have. And why did secular science do this? Solely because evolution requires *billions of years*. So this is an evolutionary theory, not a biblical one.

Secondly, 1,500 years before Peter, Moses had said: "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Ps 90:4). Was Peter contradicting Moses? How long is a thousand years with the Lord—a day, or a watch in the night? It can't be both.

Obviously, neither Moses nor Peter said that a day equaled a thousand years with God—and they certainly didn't declare that the six days of creation actually covered billions of years! Both of these spokespersons of the Holy Spirit are simply pointing out that God dwells outside of time and that what seems like a long, long time to us is nothing with God. One cannot read any

more than this into these two passages.

As for animals dying *before* Adam's sin, which brought God's judgment of death upon the entire creation, God had pronounced everything He had created as "very good" (Gn 1:31). It seems unreasonable that He would call fighting and eating one another and the death of animals or any other creatures "very good." You are correct that Romans 5:12 doesn't mention animals. But Romans 8:19-23 clearly states that all of creation shared in the curse pronounced upon Adam for his sin and will be delivered from that curse upon "the manifestation of the sons of God" at the resurrection of the redeemed.

QUESTION: Given the ecumenical thinking of many evangelicals today and the acceptance of Roman Catholics as Christians, how would you answer people who say you don't need to evangelize Catholics because they are as saved as we are?

RESPONSE: First of all, one would never say that Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, et al., are all saved. There are many unsaved in the average church congregation. Many Protestant churches have unsaved pastors and few if any real believers as members. This would be true among many churches, even among those that once preached the gospel.

So even if their Church were biblical, Roman Catholics would need to be evangelized. But the situation is far worse. That church not only has not preached the true gospel but has actively and often violently opposed it for more than 1,500 years! Some apostate Protestant churches and denominations still have statements of faith that include the true gospel—but not the Roman Catholic Church. Its doctrines, as stated irrevocably by Church Councils and catechisms, plainly deny the true gospel and teach a false gospel instead.

Yes, Rome does officially teach that Jesus Christ is God, that He came to earth through a virgin birth, that He died for our sins on the Cross, rose from the dead the third day, and is coming again. But each of these statements carries an unbiblical meaning according to their beliefs: Mary is still a virgin; Jesus is still a babe or hanging on the Cross; forgiveness of sins through Christ's death and resurrection comes only through the Church, its priests, its sacraments (beginning with infant baptism for salvation), and through Mary, the "saints," and good works. The sacrifice of the Mass is essential, during which bread and wine are allegedly transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ to be ingested by the faithful for forgiveness of sins.

Not even the Pope can be sure of his salvation. Roman Catholics represent the largest mission field, badly neglected, as we

explain in *A Woman Rides the Beast*, which has led many Catholics to Christ and out of that false church. (See offering list.)

News Alert.....

Adnkronos International 12/7/06: Pope Benedict XVI's moment of prayer at Istanbul's Blue Mosque has opened up a "new horizon in interreligious dialogue" according to a top Italian Roman Catholic cleric: "For the first time a Pope appealed to God in a Mosque. Not even Pope John Paul II did it in the Damascus Mosque."

ChristianWorldviewNetwork.com, 10/17/06, [Excerpts] Ted Baehr writes: When the paganization of America is reported in the *New York Times*, one begins to wonder if one needs a new pair of reading glasses. On Oct. 6, 2006, Laurie Goodstein of the *New York Times* said that the number of Evangelical Christian teenagers could be declining rapidly from 35 percent among baby boomers to 4 percent among today's teenagers, "if current trends continue." The *Times* quoted many young Christians who had trouble keeping the faith in the midst of peer pressure, consumerism, cynicism, and lust inflamed by the mass media of entertainment.

According to the Barna Research Group, 9 percent of Americans are Bible-believing Evangelical Christians and 36 percent of Americans are Born-Again Christians. Barna also reports that 49 percent of Americans born between 1946 and 1964 attend church on a given Sunday, but only 43 percent of Americans born between 1965 and 1983 and 33 percent of Americans born between 1984 and 2002 do that.

This is a serious problem. If the United States becomes as Post-Christian as Britain and Europe, then the world will become a ripe plum ready to fall under the hands of Islam, a religion that heretofore has only advanced by the sword. People who don't believe in something will believe in anything.

The Good News is that there are still many Evangelical Christian leaders who are working with our nation's youths to bring about the kind of Revival necessary to stem the negative tide of death running rampant in our culture and in our education system....Regarding the mass media of entertainment degrading influence, MOVIEGUIDE® (www.movieguide.org) and the Christian Film & Television Commission™ are part of that vital effort to stop the paganization of America.

[TBC: We agree that we have a serious problem among evangelical Christians today, especially evangelical youth. However, the recommended "vital effort to stop the paganization" process is unwittingly fostering it. We will explain in next month's feature article.]

Speaking Schedule

Feb 6-11 (Dave)	Mexico Meetings Guadalajara area http://mexhighlands.org/events.php
Feb 23-24 (Dave)	Bible Skeptics Conference Whitby ON (905) 922-2589 www.bibleskeptics.org
Feb 25 (Dave)	Bayview Glen Church Toronto ON (905) 881-5252
Mar 9-11 (Dave)	Westside Bible Church Meridian ID (208) 938-9424
Apr 13-14 (Dave)	Southern Manitoba Prophecy Conf Winkler MB (204) 325-6714
Apr 20-21 (T.A.)	Discerning the Times Bible Conf Saskatoon SK (306) 717-0374
Apr 25-May 9 (Dave)	Various Assemblies of Believers in Albania GEOSTURM01@aol.com

Letters

Berean Call:

I love *TBC*. It keeps me informed on the issues that the fundamentalist sect of Christianity is concerned with....I'm an "informed atheist" in that I'm just as knowledgeable about the Bible, its god and related subjects as either Dave or T.A. Tell Dave as per his request I read *In Six Days*. That book confirmed why sectarian religious views and science are incompatible. I was saddened at the waste of the 50 authors' minds. As you are aware, the greatest enemy of religion is reason (Martin Luther), for it exposes "faith" as the emperor's new clothes that it is. All one has to do to overthrow atheism/other schools of thought is to *obey* Paul when he says the gospel isn't word only, but a demonstration of the Spirit's *power*. How hard can it be for an *In-Six-Days* god to put arms, legs, and other missing body parts on the fine Christian men/women who were deceived by Bush to

fight for God and country in Iraq? Perhaps Biblegod could "stop" the sun—which Hezekiah says is a "light" thing....Even something as easy as causing an iron axehead to "swim" will suffice. How hard can any of this be for a *real* God? (Humans making excuses for their God's inaction is unworthy of a real, divine being.) Man has invented close to 6,000,000 gods! All of you at The Berean Call are atheists concerning all but *one*! I have simply added that *one* to the pile of would-be gods. Love your newsletter. HB (AZ) [*See March issue for response*]

Dear Dave Hunt,

Please send *TBC* to my son and his wife also. Your books have been a real wake-up call to their Christian life and the church we at one time all belonged to. It has gone over to Rick Warren's "biblical truth" and Richard Foster's contemplative prayer. I no longer attend. I know this evil for what it is. The Lord Jesus Christ led me from 13 years as a Hindu disciple by reading the Bible on my own and then leading me to a church and baptism. At present, I attend an evangelical church and count myself blessed to see, hear, and be taught nothing but Scripture... WB (England)

Dear Staff of Berean Call,

A letter from 2006 said, "Catholics don't pray to Mary, they pray through Mary to God." While I think Mary was blessed...to have been chosen to bear the only begotten Son of God, she is not to be venerated. God alone receives our prayers and worship. While Catholics may use wordplay for continuing to advocate Mary's importance, the Word of God says there is one mediator between man and God—the Man Jesus Christ. My life of sin led to sentences totaling 85 years, with little hope of ever being released. But God's grace set me free from the bondage of sin and death, and soon I shall be free to walk the streets as well. The Word of God as found in the Holy Scriptures is the only truth I need. MK (prisoner, TX)

In Memoriam

It is with great sorrow that we announce the death on January 18, 2006, of our much loved Bob Zachary, one of the original board members of TBC. The Lord led him, by faith, to leave a successful secular career in 1968 at the age of 32 to attend Prairie Bible Institute. At that time, Bob and his wife, Patty, had five young sons—a daughter would be born later. Finishing a two-year special course, Bob served at two interim churches and then for 33 years as the faithful and exceptionally fruitful pastor of the Madras Conservative Baptist Church, about 40 miles north of Bend. Having retired in 2004, he was still preaching, traveling, and otherwise actively serving our Lord when stricken with untreatable cancer early in 2006. On January 18, 2007, Bob temporarily left his wife, Patty, five sons, and a daughter for the Father's house of many mansions where he was surely given a triumphant welcome by our Lord himself. We are certain that either through death or the Rapture we will all join him there very soon. Along with his family, former church members, and so many others, all of us at TBC will miss him sorely. As for Bob, he is rejoicing in what it really means "to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil 1:23).

TBC Notes

Keep It in Prayer

Here is the latest info for our second TBC Conference in Bend, Oregon. God willing, the conference will begin Friday morning, August 10 and close Saturday evening, August 11. A pre-conference open house at TBC offices Thursday evening is scheduled as well as an outdoor service Sunday morning.

The theme of the conference is "Judgment Day: Israel, Islam, and the Nations in Prophecy." Speakers are Dave Hunt, Randall Price, Israeli General Shimon Erem (Retired), and me. Our hope is that this conference will again provide encouraging fellowship, edification, and spiritual insight, along with a greater love and prayerful concern for the people of Israel.

August is a delightful time of the year in Bend. Although our dates are confirmed, the details necessary for registration have not yet been finalized. Last year's conference was a wonderful experience for both the attendees and our staff; so we are looking forward, God willing, to the upcoming event with great anticipation. We shall keep you posted.

On Another Note

Here are a couple of highly recommended suggestions for 2007: 1) If you are not participating in a local, Bible-believing church, make every effort to find one and do so. 2) If that has become an exercise in futility in your area, start a Bible study with those who desire to know God's Word. 3) Get involved in a Bible study even if you are attending a Bible-believing church. 4) Make it your goal to read through the entire Bible this year, and encourage your family members, especially your children, to do likewise. (Update for those who thankfully harangued and helped me to do so last year: I'm through the first five books so far this year and have added note-taking to my readings. Those recent experiences definitely confirm what I was told: the more you read the Bible the more you want to read it.) Have a blessed year in the Lord.

T.A. McMAHON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Millstone Merchandizing Part 2

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things” (Phil 4:8).

Several years ago, when *Doonesbury* was still occasionally humorous, cartoonist Gary Trudeau ran a strip in which two mothers were lamenting the violence of boy’s toys. One of the mothers noted that she had bought her son a “boy” doll as a solution. The final panel of the strip shows the boy popping up from behind the sofa yelling, “rat-a-tat-tat!” while holding the doll as one would hold a submachine gun. The point was, “boys are boys,” and violence is a natural element in males.

Regardless, violent and often occult games and toys go far beyond a boy picking up a stick, pointing it a friend, and saying, “Bang, I shot you!”

Today, video games offer unending opportunities for how best to slaughter one’s opponents. In 1992, *Mortal Kombat*’s depiction of the winner ripping out the heart of his onscreen opponent raised parent’s concerns.

It’s not gotten better. *Grand Theft Auto*’s violence (with generous blood spatters) may be interrupted to pick up prostitutes. Other games are just variants on a theme. A player’s hand holds different types of firearms. Only the background is different—catacombs, fortresses, space stations, or other structures containing opponents to be hunted down and killed, amid splashes of blood.

Evidence strongly suggests (for those without a financial interest in the game), that this violence influences real-life violence. Even a writer for *Salon* (a liberal publication) said, “It’s been a while since I last played Quake or Doom. But when the news came out that Littleton [Colorado] killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were devotees of those games, and that their appalling revenge on the world was perhaps shaped in part by playing them, I had to reflect on my own experience with first-person shooters—and acknowledge that, yes, they very likely did have something to do with it” (“Quake, Doom and blood lust,” *Salon*, May 12, 1999).

“Christianity” has embraced this culture of violence through the *Left Behind* series video game. The goal is to convert the unsaved, but should that not prove possible, the next best thing is to blow them away in a hail of gunfire, providing “great occasion” (2 Samuel 12:14) for the enemies of God. “This game immerses children in present-day New York...The game rewards children for how effectively they role play the killing of those who resist becoming a born-again Christian. The game also offers players the opportunity to switch sides and fight for the army of the Anti-Christ, releasing cloven-hoofed demons who feast on conservative Christians and their panicked proselytes...” (“The Purpose Driven Life Takers, Part 1,” Hutson, *Talk to Action*, May 29, 2006).

Along with violence, many toys today are literally soaked in the occult, bringing violence to the soul. From the still-popular He-Man and the Masters of the Universe to newer and yet more grotesque combinations of man and beast, many of today’s action figures have

the names of pagan gods, and nearly all look quite capable of lopping off heads with their stylized medieval weaponry. One of the companies designing toys is suggestively called “Four Horsemen.” The world seems to have a good idea of where their inspiration comes from. So much for the 1960s’ dream of a time when “peace will guide the planets and love will steer the stars.”

Of equal concern are the numerous role-playing games appealing primarily to boys. Once again, the world recognizes the dangers of games like *Dungeons and Dragons*. Psychiatrist Dr. Thomas Redecki (chairman of the National Coalition on Television Violence), testified at a number of murder trials involving defendants with links to *Dungeons & Dragons*. He has said, “I’ve found multiple instances of attitudes, values and perceptions of reality that were strongly influenced by an immersion in these games. When someone spends 15 to 30 hours a week dreaming of how to go out and kill your opponents and steal treasure, it’s not surprising that the desire to act it out in real life occurs.” (Debbie Messina, “Playing with Danger? Fantasy Game Debated,” *The Virginian-Pilot and The Ledger-Star*, March 17, 1991, p. A6).

Wizards of the Coast is the game manufacturer responsible for *Dungeons and Dragons* as well as the newer *Magic: The Gathering*. This card game originally featured a number of cards with demons. With negative media attention, Wizards of the Coast removed these cards for a time. “Later, believing that the concept of ‘demons’ was becoming less controversial, Wizards of the Coast abandoned this policy and started reprinting demons and cards with ‘demonic’ in their name in 2002” [our emphasis] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic:_The_Gathering).

Some say *Magic* and its clones are just card games. Nevertheless, even individuals who have previously invested their time in discrediting Christian concerns have been shocked to grim reality by paying attention to the evidence.

“I always thought this was the most tremendous crock....That is, until I started reading sites like Barbelith, where people talk about using RPG’s [Role Playing Games] as “hypersigils” and to do magickal workings. I’m curious as to how that type of thing got started: when did ritual magick actually start finding it’s way into role-playing games? It seems to me like a very recent development, although hysterical Christians would have us believe it was there all along” (<http://www.timboucher.com/journal/2005/06/24/role-playing-games-gateway-to-occult/>).

Mr. Boucher needs to do more investigation. The occult elements were always there. Satan always seeks an opening for establishing a foothold. As Christians we should know better. Paul wrote the Ephesians, “Neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27). There is a reason why these characters, games, and other toys have the names of gods from various mythologies. This world is being led into the darkness of paganism, away from the uncomfortable light of the Gospel: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

As Christians, we have better promises: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Let us therefore walk in this knowledge and do what we can to communicate these truths to our children.

—Edwin Newby

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York—Are Christians required to keep the law as a condition of salvation? Even today there are some who teach that believing on Jesus, plus keeping the Ten Commandments, is

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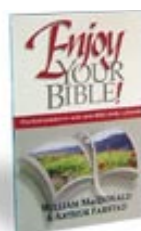


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Lockyer—A compendium of all the prophecies in Scripture concerning the promised Messiah. If you have been considering

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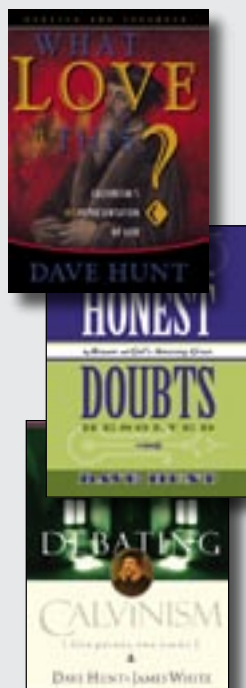
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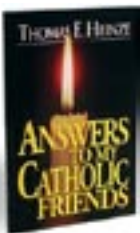


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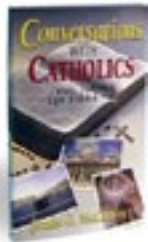


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Heinze—As an evangelical missionary in Italy for over thirty years, the author has found that there are certain things Roman

Catholics would like to know about the faith of the Protestants and about the Bible. Chick Publications, 62 pp.

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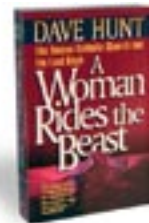


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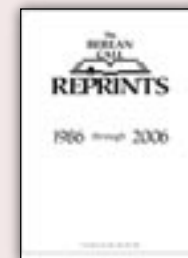
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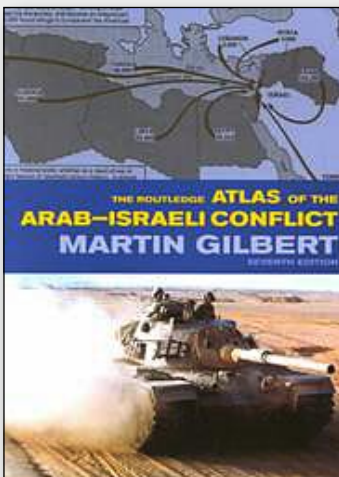
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