

Let the Biblical Buyer Beware!

T.A. McMahon

Today's church is experiencing two new and deadly influences: "biblical" marketing and "biblical" movies. Nothing in recent history has impacted evangelical Christian churches as pervasively and powerfully as these phenomena.

"Biblical" marketing is an attempt to use the latest sales concepts and marketing principles to attract the lost in the hope that they will be won to Christ. The approach begins with a survey and an analysis of the community in order to discover what would motivate the lost to attend a local church. Once the survey is evaluated, the structure of the organization is conformed to accommodate the stated desires of the unsaved. Such changes usually include key elements that will make the lost feel more comfortable: a contemporary and entertaining style of music, a positive, non-convicting, feel-good message with dramatic illustrations and stimulating programs oriented more to the flesh than to the spirit. One of the theories is that the more the church reflects the culture familiar to the lost, the more likely it is that they will continue to attend.

The potential problems with such an approach have been addressed in more detail in the February and March 2004 issues, but it's important to reiterate that the gospel *cannot* be marketed to the lost. Why not? Because the biblical gospel doesn't fit into what marketing is all about. All basic definitions of marketing emphasize that the customers themselves are the priority; their particular wants and perceived needs must be identified. The customer's satisfaction is critical and he must be accommodated—even to the point of making "positive" changes in the product, i.e., self-indulging modifications.

It should be obvious to anyone with a basic understanding of God's Word that the biblical gospel is clearly at odds with a marketing approach. The gospel is the gift of eternal life for all those who come to the end of themselves, who recognize that they are sinners separated from a holy God and that there is absolutely nothing they can do to merit salvation. Self-oriented desires, i.e., "felt needs," "making the customer feel good about himself," and all other such marketing devices are the *enemies* of the gospel of grace.

The Apostle Paul, whom God inspired to present the gospel with absolute clarity throughout his epistles, wrote, "This is a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tm 1:15). That understanding must be in the heart of anyone who would receive Christ.

Try a massive marketing campaign with such a message today. Any ad agency would laugh it to scorn! Is it possible that Paul could have missed a more effective "felt needs" approach? Or perhaps the time was just not right to introduce marketing the gospel? Hardly. Paul not only knew his day, but the Holy Spirit gave him a view of our day: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves..." (2 Tm 3:1,2). Our self-serving bias began at mankind's fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, and the focus on self has risen to "perilous" levels as the Lord's return draws near. Again, marketing to *self* is not the way to introduce biblical salvation. Self itself is the problem.

Astonishingly, pointing out this very simple yet fundamental error of attempting to market the gospel is all too often met with responses such as: "Yes, but our church is using it with great success"; "If just one person gets saved, it makes no difference what your arguments are!"; "The church needs to adopt twenty-first century methods to speak to our twenty-first century culture!" Somehow, for many Christians, when the subject is of a spiritual nature, unreasonableness is acceptable if not preferred. But what if the subject turned secular, and involved, say, an investment opportunity, and it was recommended that the following new formula (backed up by a host of personal testimonies) would substantially increase one's bank account: "two plus two equals five"?

The blinding influence of greed aside, Christians would reject the proposal outright because it simply didn't add up. Furthermore, even if it initially began to produce big returns, nearly everyone could see that those foolish enough to invest in such a program would soon reap the disastrous consequences of a foundationally unsound endeavor. On the other hand, when it comes to fundamental errors regarding the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), there is a growing tendency for believers to take a leap beyond reason, common sense, and, ironically, biblical sense.

Part of the problem is that aggressive marketing nearly always produces impressive results. At the very least, it generates activities and excitement that are interpreted as a proof of success. As a friend of mine puts it, "Most church-growth schemes do produce nickels and noses!" In going about God's

business, however, the Lord is very clear that He wants us to do things His way. The prophet Jeremiah warned, "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (2:13).

What makes today's so-called biblical marketing approach far more ominous than other secular trends and fads that the church has implemented in the last century is the *core philosophy* from which the marketing approach is drawn. It is basically a management theories system that is humanistic and transformational, which means that the purveyors of this philosophy are working toward solving community problems (and ultimately the world's) *without God* by getting people to think in a new way (i.e., their way). Their objective is to produce a humanity that has exchanged a *mindset* for a "mindflex;" that is, those willing to give up fixed beliefs (such as biblical doctrines and absolutes) in order to pursue the middle ground in the hope of reconciling differences that hamper "building relationships." The goals are peace, harmony, inclusiveness, and tolerance, for the greater good and productivity of the community.

Although the goals and methodology certainly sound good in general (and even better when mixed with biblical terminology and ideals), they are "a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death" (Prv 14:12). Proponents of "systems theory" thinking have targeted the church as an agent for transforming society—but certainly not according to the "narrow way" Jesus declares in Matthew 7:13,14. The church itself must undergo a transformation: from being Christ-centered, submitted to His Word and *only* His solution for mankind's salvation, to a man-centered endeavor in support of humanity's social welfare. *Contenders* for "the faith" (Jude 3) must become simply "people of faith," working for the "good of society." Since pastors and pastoral staff members are the teachers and trusted leaders of their congregations, they are potentially the ideal agents for this transformation. The process is gradual and seductive, beginning at a very pragmatic level, with church growth being the magnet. Marketing and management systems principles are promoted, and the pastors are exhorted to function as "corporate managers" and "change agents" of their churches.

Evidence of this trend is manifest throughout Christendom, most particularly in the "seeker-friendly way of doing church." The two men most influential in spreading

the marketing/management systems (with their globalist and communitarian goals) to evangelical churches are Peter Drucker, whom the business world recognizes as the elder statesman of modern management theories, and Bob Buford, head of Leadership Network, an organization that trains pastors and staffs of large churches in marketing/management principles. Buford also heads up the Peter Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management.

In an extensive interview with Drucker, *Christianity Today* notes their wide influence: “Over the last 20 years Drucker has had a good deal of interaction with what he calls ‘pastoral’ churches. These include megachurches like Bill Hybels’s Willow Creek or Rick Warren’s Saddleback Community. Bob Buford’s Leadership Network has invited Drucker to speak to conferences of large-church leaders and has linked them to many pastors seeking [church-growth] advice.”¹ Rick Warren is especially taken with Drucker’s concepts: “I read everything Peter Drucker writes. His book, *The Effective Executive*, is a favorite I re-read every year.”² Drucker, in turn, is gratified to see his humanistic concepts take hold in increasing numbers of churches and parachurch organizations, which he regards as playing a new and central role in a new form of society.³ Willow Creek, according to Drucker, stands out as an example of “what business can learn from non-profits,” and Saddleback’s mega-church model, he states, is “the most significant phenomenon of the second half of [the twentieth] century.” Would the undiluted teachings of Christ ever win such acclaim from the secular world?

No doubt few of the biblically oriented churches and pastors that are participating in this systems-theory laden approach to church growth understand what they are buying into. Nevertheless, they have (wittingly or unwittingly) taken on worldly baggage and are headed down a road littered with anti-biblical means and methods. How far-reaching is the damage? Simply go to the Willow Creek and Saddleback websites to get a sense of their influence.

Warren’s book, *The Purpose-Driven Life* (which is peppered with General Systems Theories concepts couched in pseudo-biblical language—check our website or contact us for a detailed critique of *TP-DL*), has sold upwards of 15 million copies (used by organizations from the White House staff to the Oakland Raiders). Over 20,000 churches have participated in “40 Days of Purpose.” More than 320,000 pastors and church leaders (including Catholics and Mormons) from around the world have attended “Purpose-Driven” seminars, while 115,000 pastors subscribe to “Rick Warren’s Ministry Toolbox,” which gives access to his sermons and guidance in how to “group-develop” sermons with other pastors. Willow Creek, with its Association of churches

numbering around 10,000, is another major herald of integrating this management/marketing approach into church life, which one discerning critic perceptively labeled “Outcome-based religion.”

Surely Warren and Hybels are aware of the roots of what they are promoting. Why are they and hundreds of thousands of shepherds (many, I’m sure, from Bible-oriented churches) leading their flocks down this path paved by man’s methods and means? Where is biblical discernment? Where is awareness of what they are feeding their sheep? By trusting in men, are they leading them to “conform to the world” (Rom 12:2) and unintentionally directing them away from the *Word*?

Then there is the second pervasive influence—the “biblical” movie.

Is the world in the church and the church in the world to such an extent these days that most believers can no longer discern biblical truth from religious counterfeits? It was disturbing enough that the evangelical church became the primary audience for Mel Gibson’s intentionally Roman Catholic movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. But it was utterly shocking that reviews of the movie by evangelical Christian leaders, scholars, and (incredibly) apologetic organizations called it “biblically accurate”!

Not even fifteen minutes into the film the audience was subjected to a host of Gibson’s screen interpretations of the writings of a soon-to-be-canonized “Saint”—an eighteenth-century nun, whose mystical visions were received from spirit apparitions. It opens in the Garden of Gethsemane, where the Jesus character appears terribly anxious over the *physical* sufferings he knows he’s about to endure, followed by Satan tempting him (wrong angel in the wrong garden!) and directing a large serpent toward the praying “Christ” that he crushes with his foot, followed a little later by the Jesus character being dragged along by soldiers who then pitch him off a bridge from which he dangles by his chains while being given the opportunity to confront the traitor Judas, who was hiding beneath the bridge. Criticism directed at the unbiblical content of the above scenes and the multitude of others, equally unbiblical, throughout the movie was answered by evangelicals claiming “artistic license” on director Gibson’s behalf—while at the same time declaring the film to be faithful to Scripture. How does one reconcile “artistic license” with “biblical accuracy”? (See *Show-time for the Sheep?* for a detailed critique.)

As with “biblical” marketing, here again we have problems that go deeper and will have long-term effects upon the church. For all the adverse influence of *The Passion*, biblical critics took some comfort in the hope that its impact on the church would be limited to the time of its theatrical run, which lasted only a month or so. In other words, out of sight, out of mind, resulting in limited spiritual damage. Alas, wishful thinking. The recently released

DVD/video sold 4.5 million copies the first day, thanks to an aggressive marketing campaign directed at the church. First-year sales are predicted to exceed 20 million. (Amazon.com, the largest “bookstore” in the world, offers *The Passion of the Christ/The Purpose-Driven Life* discount package—their two bestselling religious items!) This means that evangelical churches throughout the U.S. and abroad will be using what Gibson calls his “very Marian film” as an ongoing resource for their Sunday school programs, Bible studies, Wednesday evening group meetings, outreach programs, and so forth.

Even more troublesome, however, is the enthusiasm *The Passion* has created for allegedly presenting the Bible visually. Why is that a problem? Interpreting the Scriptures in a visual medium is the most subjective and least accurate of any method of presenting God’s Word. No matter how dramatic and emotionally moving a biblical production may be, it nevertheless is *not* God’s Word but a series of *interpretations*: how a film director personally “sees” what is declared in the Bible, how an actor *thinks* a biblical character would act (including the God-Man Jesus!), how the art director and set decorator *imagine* the scenes of thousands of years ago to have appeared—the details of which (for God’s own reasons) the Bible does not supply. That’s only a partial list of man’s additions to God’s Word, to which *nothing* must ever be added.

Concerning “biblical” marketing or “biblical” movies, the bottom line for the believer is this: Do we want to do things God’s way or man’s way? Will the Bible be our absolute authority in how we go about living our lives, growing in the faith, and sharing that faith with others—or not? The Lord tells us that in His Word He has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him” (2 Pt 1:3). Why, then, are we turning to the world’s means and methodologies? Could it be that in opting for the unbiblical process of pragmatism (because it seems to work), we don’t see that we are essentially turning away from the Scriptures?

Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4). It’s imperative that in these days marked by the church’s obvious appetite for the world, that we hunger for His objective Word, not the subjective opinions of men. If paraphrase Bible versions are a plague upon biblical literacy (which they are indeed), then visual Bible “versions” sound its death knell. Weep for our next generation, which is now being progressively weaned off the *written* Word of God.

Let us all take to heart and mind the sobering words of God to Israel: “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” (Jer 6:16). Let the biblical buyer beware. **TBC**

Quotable

[Explaining why the early Christians faced such fierce opposition]: [Their] religion... was exclusive. It denied... every article of heathen mythology, the existence of every object of their worship. It accepted no compromise... It must... overthrow every statue, altar, and temple in the world. It [cannot] be said that a design so bold as this could in any age... be carried [out] with impunity....

This was not setting forth... some new competitor for a place in the Pantheon, whose presence might be discussed... without questioning the reality of any others; it was pronouncing all other gods to be false, and all other worship vain.... This was not what it would be in popish countries, to add a saint to the calendar, [but] to abolish and tread under foot the calendar itself.

Wm. Paley (1743-1805), The Evidences of Christianity, pp. 12-13.

True it is that a great part of the most ancient records... treating of... the antiquity of those churches have been industriously sought after and committed to the flames by their bloody persecutors... so the truth... might lie... in perpetual silence. Nevertheless, God has been so gracious... in preserving... by miracle, many authentic pieces... compiled and written by the ancient inhabitants in their own proper language [and this history was drawn from such documents]....

These churches of the Valleys of Piemont remained united... with that of Rome so long as it retained the true religion which was planted throughout all Italy by the Apostles, their disciples and successors. But when the church of Rome began to corrupt itself, and would by no means be persuaded to retain the purity of Apostolic doctrine and divine worship, then those of the valleys began to separate themselves from them, and to come out from amongst them, that so they might not be partakers of their sins, nor receive of their plagues [Rev 18:4] and this is evident by divers very ancient manuscripts... which do directly strike at and oppose the errors of the church of Rome.

Samuel Morland, The History of The Evangelical [Waldensian] Churches of the Valley of Piemont (London, 1658), III, pp. 8-9.

[The Waldenses of northern Italy were in full fellowship with and had the same doctrines as the Albigenses in southern France, and other primitive churches that Rome maligned and destroyed.]

Q&A

Question (from a Muslim): Doctors tell me that I have cancer and only 2 months to live. I am only 45 years old and know nothing about God. Is Muhammad alive and can I trust him and pray to him? Is Jesus alive and can I appeal to Him? How can I go to heaven? I do not have time to study religion. I need urgent help. I am dying!

Answer: I am sorry to hear this, but death comes, sooner or later, to all mankind—and after that comes judgment. Jesus died for you, for your sins, so you could be forgiven. He is God who became man without ceasing to be God. Even the Qur'an admits that He never sinned. He rose from the dead, is alive, and gives forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe in Him. He is your only hope.

Muhammad was a sinful man. The Qur'an tells him to confess his sins to Allah—but Allah is not the true God and never claims to have a just basis for forgiving sin. Islam says to do the best you can, hoping that at the “last day” your good deeds will outweigh your bad. You know that no court on earth would allow such injustice. You can't even pay for a parking ticket by parking legally the next time! To save the lives of a hundred people from drowning would not make up for murdering one! We cannot pay the penalty for breaking the law in the past by keeping it in the future. If you lived a perfect life from now on (even if that were possible), you thereby could not make up for having sinned in the past, because you get no “extra credit” for doing what the law requires. “Good deeds” cannot nullify “bad deeds”—and that Islam offers such fraud proves that it is a false religion.

Muhammad is dead, cannot hear your prayer, and can do nothing for you. Muhammad's grave in Medina is still occupied with whatever remains of his dead body. Christ's tomb at Jerusalem is empty; He rose from the dead. No one could kill Jesus Christ, but He willingly gave up His life for your sins; Muhammad was poisoned by the widow of a man he murdered. Muhammad did not die for anyone's sins but for his own.

Muhammad promised paradise as a reward from Allah to those who die in *jihad*. But your conscience knows that any “god” who rewards suicide bombers with paradise for killing innocent women and children is not the true God and is unworthy of your trust. Muhammad also promised paradise without dying in *jihad* to a select few, of whom Abu Bakr, his father-in-law and successor at the head of

all Muslims, was the first. But Abu Bakr said that even if he had one foot inside paradise, he could not trust Allah, who might push him out!

Common sense tells you that Muhammad, a sinner, had no right to promise paradise to anyone. He deceived those who believed him. God alone decides our eternal fate, and that can only be on the basis of justice. The penalty His law demands must be paid.

We have all broken God's laws and are unable to pay the penalty because God's justice is infinite, and we would suffer in hell forever. Since Christ is God and man in one person, He was able to pay that penalty for all mankind. You cannot earn His forgiveness; you only need to believe on Him as your Lord and Savior, and you will live forever with Him in heaven. Trust Christ and rest in His promise.

God says that He loved the world so much that “he gave his only begotten Son [Jesus Christ], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Believe in Him and accept this endless life!

Question: Is it biblically wrong to watch or to own *The Lord of the Rings* or any of that series?

Answer: This series is all about occult powers—some from evil creatures and some from supposedly good beings or spirits. The rings themselves supposedly have “magic” powers, but this is outright occultism. Those in favor of these books and movies attempt to see true spirituality and the power of God in them. In fact, the way even the supposed “good” powers operate is the antithesis of how the true God works. Sadly, any “spiritual” lesson one may learn from these films would only lead one astray.

There is no “power” in these movies that offers a biblical picture of God (nor could there be). Whether you watch or own them is up to your own convictions and conscience before the Lord. I certainly would not!

Question: Where does the apostate ecumenical church fit into the events of the last days?

Answer: The Antichrist is not an atheist or irreligious. On the contrary, he causes the Jewish temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt and the sacrifices to be resumed. Of course, his intention is to double-cross the Jews, stop the Jewish sacrifices, put his own image in the temple, and demand to be worshiped as God—which he does.

Antichrist will, I believe, pretend to be Christ. Therefore, for at least a time, he needs the apostate church as much as

she needs him. Furthermore, the apostate church already has in place the institutions worldwide through which Antichrist can work. In the end, however (as stated above), Antichrist will turn against and destroy the Vatican and her consorts.

Question (from an anonymous “concerned” Catholic): I have noticed with a great deal of growing alarm your singular obsession with the Spanish branch of the Inquisition...and this most especially in your debates. It is my fondest and most ardent prayer that the information enclosed herein you will actually read with an OPEN MIND. I also pray that it will cure you of your obsession once and for all. [Enclosed were seven pages by Phil Porvaznik, well-written, with the air of expertise and authority denying my *A Woman Rides the Beast* quote of Canon Llorente, Secretary to the Inquisition in Madrid, that “in Spain alone the number of condemned exceeded 3 million, with about 300,000 burned at the stake.” He then quotes me as responding that “Instead of trying to discredit my figures, these critics ought rather to admit that the Spanish Inquisition swallowed up far more than 300,000, whether Llorente said it or not.” Then follows a series of quotes from a number of authors criticizing Llorente’s figures and defending the Inquisition as not as bad as commonly reported, one author even calculating that less than 2,000 were burned. Porvaznik adds an impressive bibliography. Especially criticized is my statement that millions of true Christians were killed by Rome in the 1,000 years before the Reformation.]

Answer: You refer to “the Spanish branch of the Inquisition”—an admission that there were other inquisitions also. In all, the various inquisitions lasted about 600 years—and I didn’t even deal with them. You don’t like my figures for Spain. I didn’t even mention the 30,000 “secret Jews” (i.e., Jews accused of only pretending to convert) killed in Spain (See *The International Jerusalem Post*, April 16, 2004). The Spanish Inquisition went as far as Holland, where more than 30,000 were killed. My wife’s ancestors were Dutch Mennonites who fled the Inquisition in Holland. In France, 70,000-100,000 Huguenots were slaughtered in one event known as St. Bartholomew’s massacre, beginning the night of August 24, 1572, and lasting about a week. The Pope (Gregory XIII) had a medal struck of an angel exterminating the Huguenots with a sword and commissioned the Italian artist Vasari to paint a mural in commemoration, a painting that still exists in the Vatican. Another 200,000 or more Huguenots were killed in other massacres,

and from 500,000-1,000,000 fled France. We have found their descendants as far away as South Africa.

The “Inquisition” would have to include even the Crusades, during which many thousands of Jews were killed all across Europe and on into the “holy land.”

The first pope to inaugurate the Inquisition (at one stretch, 80 popes in a row continued to sponsor it) was Innocent III, who, in what he called “the crowning achievement” of his papacy, wiped out the city of Beziers, France. Estimated fatalities range from 20,000 to 60,000. It took the popes about a century to exterminate the Albigenses, of whom Peter de Rosa, a Catholic (*Vicars of Christ*, p. 73), says that “hundreds of thousands” were put to death in southern France—to say nothing of the Waldensians of northern Italy, the extermination of the Hussites—and on and on it goes.

I’m surprised at the time and effort exerted in selective research by Porvaznik to bring the figures of those killed in the Inquisitions down to a few thousand, when there are single events such as the slaughter of Beziers or St. Bartholomew’s massacre, etc., that are so well established and involve hundreds of thousands. What is your point?

It is disappointing that neither from you nor from Porvaznik have I heard a word of remorse for the horrors perpetrated by your Church down through the ages, to say nothing of the innocent lives destroyed by the thousands through the pedophilia presently in the news. You ought rather to mourn its wicked record than to persist in defending a church that is “drunk with the blood of the saints”!

News Alert

The Barna Update, 7/10/04 [Excerpts]: Mel Gibson’s controversial movie about the last twelve hours of the life of Jesus, *The Passion of the Christ*, stunned the movie industry by becoming the eighth highest-grossing domestic film of all time. Much of that success can be attributed to the fervent support of churches, many of whom labeled the movie as one of the greatest evangelistic tools in history. A new national survey of more than 1600 adults, conducted by The Barna Group, examines not only how many people saw the movie, but what impact the film had on their life.

If the statistics concerning the spiritual inclinations of viewers are projected to the U.S. population, then the study would estimate that approximately 36 million adults who saw the movie were born again Christians and an additional 31 million were not born again.

Overall, one out of every ten viewers of *The Passion* (10%) indicated that they

had changed some aspect of both their religious beliefs and practices in response to the movie.

Among the most startling outcomes drawn from the research is the apparent absence of a direct evangelistic impact by the movie. Despite marketing campaigns labeling the movie the “greatest evangelistic tool” of our era, less than one-tenth of one percent of those who saw the film stated that they made a profession of faith or accepted Jesus Christ as their savior in reaction to the film’s content. Equally surprising was the lack of impact on people’s determination to engage in evangelism. Less than one-half of one percent of the audience said they were motivated to be more active in sharing their faith in Christ with others as a result of having seen the movie.

LifeSiteNews.com, 9/10/04: Pregnant mothers from Quebec whose unborn children are beyond 24 weeks gestation, are being sent to Wichita, Kansas for late-term abortions, at the private clinic of controversial abortionist George Tiller. Each procedure costs Canadian taxpayers at least \$5000.00 U.S. and the procedure entails mortal danger not only for the unborn child but also for the mother.

While late-term abortions are not illegal in Quebec, there are few abortionists willing to commit the gruesome procedure, especially since the unborn child is fully formed at the late stage of pregnancy and can in most cases survive outside the womb from 21 weeks gestation.

“Most unborn children at that advanced stage of pregnancy can survive outside the womb. Why are we spending \$5000.00 US for an elective abortion when health dollars are so tight?” asked Gillian Long of Campaign Life Coalition.

Last year 30 Quebec late-term abortions were committed in Kansas and New York. So far this year from April to August, nine women have been sent to Kansas for abortions.

LifeSiteNews.com spoke with Troy Newman of the U.S. pro-life group Operation Rescue West. Newman keeps close tabs on Tiller’s clinic and was shocked that Canada would entrust its citizens to “Tiller the Killer” for care. Newman noted that Tiller “has been dubbed ‘Tiller the Killer’ not only for his abortion business, but also for the frequency with which women are sent to hospital by ambulance after receiving his abortion services.”

Endnotes

- 1 “The Business of the Kingdom,” Tim Stafford, *Christianity Today*, 11/15/99.
- 2 www.jobsnorthwest.com/stories/story_970901.htm.
- 3 “The Business of the Kingdom,” Tim Stafford, *Christianity Today*, 11/15/99.

Dave's Itinerary

Oct. 9-14	Calvary Gospel Chapel Southampton, Bermuda 011 44 234-3250
Oct. 20-23 25-28	Congresso Chamada Brazil Pocos de Caldas Campina Grande 011 55 51 3241-5050 from the USA 0300 789-5152 only in Brazil www.chamada.com.br
Nov. 5-7	Shenandoah Valley Baptist Church Stephens City VA (540) 868-4023
Nov. 10-15	Vienna, Austria 011 43-1-87893-721
Nov. 17	Mission Valley Christian Fellowship Meeting at First United Methodist San Diego CA 619-683-7729
Nov. 19-20	Calvary Chapel Chino Hills Chino CA 909-393-7100
Nov. 21 am	Calvary Chapel Hemet Hemet CA 909-927-6117
Nov. 21 pm	Calvary Chapel Chino Valley Chino CA 909-464-8255
Nov. 28	Bayside Community Church Tampa FL 813-837-6007 (Sundays 9-10 a.m. only)
Dec. 5	Calvary Chapel Fort Worth Fort Worth TX 817-838-8381

Letters

To The Berean Call Staff,

Thank you for your book *The Nonnegotiable Gospel*. I don't remember how I got it or how long I've had it. But I finally read it! You really cleared away "the brush" and made the sweet clover accessible to all. Jesus said that His words are for "him who hath ears to hear...let him hear." Well, the wax is out and I'm hearing. (Okay, I've just finished the book and I'm clearly "pumped" to finally get my actual "Christ-life" well-lived out!) MK (IL)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am very thankful to receive monthly *TBC* newsletters. Actually, I can't wait to read your next newsletter each month. The good news, comments, conclusive researches that you make, and your Q&A bring me such pleasure and insight. ...Your information is biblically based and accurate. I remember when I was still spiritually young. Your newsletter was so difficult for me to read and understand, but today I can hear God speaking to me through the newsletter and am able to share the information with other brothers. The information encouraged me to read the Bible in an analytical way with the aim to confirm what I read. MG (South Africa)

Dear Friends,

Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ* has propelled the ecumenical movement years ahead of schedule. As a delivered, traditional Catholic, I saw the movie for what it really was, the gospel of Rome. The script was according to John Newman's 14 Stations of the Cross...Words cannot express how I regret going to see [this] R-rated movie. We were encouraged by our pastor to see [it] as a church body. Ultimately, it was my decision to go. I have asked my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to forgive me. PC (FL)

TBC:

I am writing to order two more copies of your book *A Woman Rides the Beast*, perhaps the most motivational alarm against ecumenism with Rome available today. RM (MD)

Dear Dave,

Praise God for your book *What Love Is This?* I can only say the Lord hears our cry for truth. Fourteen years ago, we left one denomination to join another, knowing nothing of Calvinism. Yet the doctrine of election seemed to raise a red flag. Being a young Christian, I felt not qualified to debate or even challenge such a widely accepted doctrine. So for 14 years I searched the Word and found a holy, fair, and loving God who does not wish any to perish. ...As for your book, it was God-sent. I praise Him for that and thank you for being obedient. ...Yes, truth shakes the walls of hell and makes the spirit of error tremble. A lie that becomes tradition, practiced long enough, is defended as truth. EH (NY)

Dear Mr. Hunt and Mr. McMahon,

Most of your teachings are worthy of favourable comment, but I wish to make special mention of your critique on *The Passion of the Christ* in the May issue of *TBC*—"Showtime for the Sheep?" The comparative significance between Christ's physical and spiritual suffering was presented with knowledgeable clarity. For the first time, I had my eyes opened to the real meaning of those final hours of Christ's earthly life. Thank you for heightening my appreciation of God's ultimate sacrifice through His love. GK (South Africa)

The Berean Call Ministry:

We are being bombarded on all sides to reject or add to the teaching of the Bible and how to teach it by sources like Rick Warren, *DaVinci Code*, Alpha Course, *The Passion of the Christ*, etc. ...All deviate from the Bible. ...Evangelicals are falling for anyone who believes he is better qualified to interpret the Bible. NL (CA)

Dear Friends,

I appreciate your ministry even though I do not share your views on God's sovereignty in salvation. It only makes me realize that none of us have it *all* right—this, too, shall be cleared up someday! SN (MN)

Dear Sirs:

It has come to my attention that you think the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, is really bad and Catholic in its content. I doubt you have even seen the movie. It's very disturbing to think a small group of judgmental Christians are getting this message out. All the Bible scholars like Chuck Swindoll and many other knowledgeable people are praising the movie. You should be happy that people are seeing for the first time the death of Christ on the cross. As far as I'm concerned, it's wrong for you to be so critical of this movie when it has blessed so many people. Surely there is something more constructive you can do for the cause of Christ than picking things apart. I have been a Christian for many years and have a close walk with the Lord. SS (TX)

TBC Notes

Help Us to Stay on Task

Sometimes we need your help to do what the Lord has called us to. Although we love to hear what you're thinking about and what your concerns are, there are a few things we would like to share:

- 1.) Please do not send books, unpublished manuscripts, or video, audio, or music tapes or CDs for evaluation or promotion.
- 2.) We don't have the staff to provide personal answers to questions on topics not yet researched by TBC.
- 3.) The Q&A column remains our most practical means of addressing issues of concerns to the church. We welcome your questions, but please realize that they will not always be included in our newsletter.
- 4.) Please remember to keep us in your prayers as we seek the Lord's will in all that we do through this ministry.

T.A. McMahon
Executive Director

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The Ways of God and the Ways of Man

The Christian who has dedicated his life to God... will discover that the ways of God and the ways of men are not equal... [Man's] tried and proven methods for getting things done will fail him when he attempts to apply them to the work of the Spirit. The new Adam will not surrender to the old Adam nor gear His new creation to the methods of the world. God will not share His glory with another.... It is "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

The essence of true religion is spontaneity, the sovereign movings of the Holy Spirit upon and in the free spirit of redeemed men.... When religion loses its sovereign character... this spontaneity is lost also, and in its place come precedent, propriety, system.... Back of [this] mentality is the belief that spirituality can be organized. Then is introduced into religion those ideas which never belong there: numbers, statistics, the law of averages, and other such natural human things—and creeping death always follows.
—A. W. Tozer

Col 2:8: Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Col 3:2: Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Col 2:6,7: As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught....

Eph 2:2: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Col 2:20: Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances....

Mt 7:13,14: Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:...strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Jer 6:16: Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Jer 2:13: For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Rom 12:2: And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Jn 17:14: I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

1 Cor 3:18,19: Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

James 4:4: Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

2 Cor 6:14-16: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God....

Eph 4:17,18: This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

Gal 3:1-3: O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

2 Tm 4:3,4: 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.

Heb 10:38: Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Is 8:20: To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Jn 17:17: Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Rom 8:14: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

John 6:63: It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Galatians 5:25: If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Is 30:1-3: Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.