



The Battle Over

TRUTH

for our

youth

The
Berean
Call

APRIL 2009

THE BATTLE OVER TRUTH—FOR OUR YOUTH

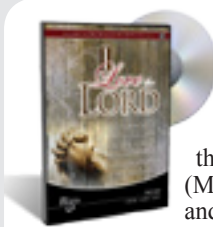
by T. A. McMAHON

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THE BEREAN CALL

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

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The Battle over Truth for Our Youth

T. A. McMahon

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. Psalm 119:9

Believers throughout every generation have experienced manifold problems in their attempts to live for Christ. Although circumstances and situations may vary greatly over millennia, God has nevertheless provided His remedy, which is both timeless and completely sufficient: *"by taking heed thereto according to thy word."*

When God has provided the solution, it doesn't take special insight to recognize that Satan, God's adversary, will make *God's Word* the chief focus of his strategy of subversion. It began in the Garden of Eden, when the Serpent, in dialogue with Eve, cunningly seduced her into reconsidering what God had commanded: "Yea, hath God said...?" Dialogues have a way of subverting God's absolutes by either adding erroneous content or subtracting critical truth. That has been Satan's amazingly effective game plan throughout the ages as he has "blinded the minds of them which believe not" and shipwrecked the faith of some who believed (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Timothy 1:18-19).

The "Yea, hath God said...?" tactic is nearly always followed by a direct rejection of Scripture, as took place in the beginning ("Ye shall not surely die" —Genesis 3:4) and opens the way for God's Word to be denigrated, scorned, distorted, mocked, lied about, and so forth. Although the Bible has been assaulted for thousands of years, Scripture tells us, and observation confirms, that the offensive against the Word will be unprecedented in the last days (2 Timothy 3:1; 4:3-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-2).

My personal observation of the Adversary's strategy began as a biblical Christian some three decades ago, beginning with my work with Dave Hunt in exposing the cults (*Cult Explosion* and *The God Makers* documentary films), and shortly thereafter, alerting the church to cultic beliefs and practices that had crept in among Christian fellowships (*The Seduction of Christianity*). For what it's worth, I've spent more than a quarter of a century observing and writing about trends within evangelical Christianity. Let

me identify the tactics that I believe best exemplify Satan's assaults on the Word in these last days before Christ's return.

I was a Roman Catholic before being born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," neither can he "enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5). I was both blind and separated from the kingdom of God until my spiritual rebirth, which Jesus declared was imperative: "Ye *must* be born again" (v.7). Although Jesus made it a "must," many if not most evangelicals today pay little heed to what He commanded, and they consequently have accepted the more than one billion Roman Catholics as "brothers and sisters in Christ." Among their numerous distortions of the teachings of Scripture, many Catholics profess to being "born again" based upon their having been baptized as infants. The Church of Rome similarly accepts all baptized non-Catholic Christians as "separated brethren."

Thirty years ago, some young adult evangelicals confronted me with the fact that I was not their "brother in Christ" and explained to me what the Scriptures taught, which alone could make that relationship with Jesus a reality. Today, the influence of organizations such as Evangelicals and Catholics Together, Promise Keepers, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, most parachurch ministries on college campuses, the evangelical-supported Catholic movie *The Passion of the Christ*, and the rapid growth of ecumenism have created an atmosphere of accepting Catholics as believers. Consequently, I (and many others that I know) have been rebuked by evangelicals for pointing out that the Roman Catholic Church has a gospel that is contrary to the Scriptures—and therefore can save no one. Moreover, we've been told that we have offended "fellow Catholic Christians" by witnessing to them. This is an unprecedented latter-day development among evangelicals, especially those in Christian universities and colleges.

Today's "twenty-something" age group, give or take a few years, has become a targeted generation by the Adversary in ways that are unparalleled in modern church history. This objective is in keeping with the undermining of the Word of God by diluting, even denying, its authority. What makes the strategy particularly insidious is that it's an inside job, i.e., it's being perpetrated by those who claim to be evangelicals or who

at least have evangelical roots. Referred to as the Emerging Church Movement, it's a development that is attempting to reach today's post-modern culture for Christ by "reinventing Christianity," making it more accommodating to the attitudes of young adults. For example, since the post-modern generation is characterized by a disdain for authority, whatever seems to suggest authority, such as preaching or teaching, is downplayed or revamped as "conversation." (See *TBC* 1/08,3/08,8/08,12/08)

Sound doctrine, which 2 Timothy 4:3 tells us will not be endured in the last days, is antithetical to this movement. Its most prolific author, Brian McLaren, demonstrates this throughout his writings: "The church latched on to that old doctrine of original sin like a dog to a stick, and before you knew it, the whole gospel got twisted around it. Instead of being God's big message of saving love for the whole world, the gospel became a little bit of secret information on how to solve the pesky legal problem of original sin."¹ Elsewhere he says, "I don't think we've got the gospel right yet. What does it mean to be saved?... None of us have arrived at orthodoxy."² On the contrary, I know a number of five and six-year olds who have "arrived at orthodoxy" by understanding and believing the simple gospel.

The Emerging Church Movement comes closer to fulfilling Paul's prophetic warning to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20: 28-31) than any other recent trend of which I'm aware. Indeed Emergent leaders are "speaking perverse things" and "drawing away disciples after themselves." TBC has received numerous letters from parents and evangelical pastors who find their young people seeking out emergent churches for the "new" experiences, which they offer in abundance: religious art (primarily impressionistic images of "Jesus"), "biblical" films, rituals based upon Catholic/Orthodox liturgy, "community," personal relationships, contemplative spirituality and mysticism (some include yoga), Bible "dialogues," ecumenical interaction with "people of faith," a social gospel, plans to save the planet, restore the kingdom, and so forth.

The "Yea, hath God said...?" strategy has been very successful in undermining the critical belief in the *sufficiency* of the Word of God. Although the Bible claims to be sufficient for "all things that pertain

unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3), many Christians who profess to believe the Bible no longer regard it as sufficient. This is particularly evident regarding counseling. Many evangelical churches have become a major referral source for secular psychotherapists; shepherds more often than not are committing their sheep to such God-denying hirelings for resolving life’s issues.

This may be Satan’s most cunning scheme in his assault against the Word and the Body of Christ. It is a process of *seduction* and *intimidation*. Psychological counseling has been advertized as a scientific endeavor that will help resolve the mental, emotional, and behavioral problems that Christians encounter in their daily life. Nothing could be further from the truth! It is neither scientific nor is it helpful (see *Psychology and the Church: Critical Questions, Crucial Answers*). Furthermore, its more than 500 psychotherapeutic concepts and methods are contradictory to biblical truth. Yet believers, especially pastors, have been intimidated by the myth that counseling is for professionals only and that only those with academic training are qualified to address a person’s mental and emotional problems. Not only is that a rejection of what the church has practiced for two-thousand years, it is at odds with current research showing that professionals do not possess demonstrably superior therapeutic skills compared with nonprofessionals. Moreover, studies reveal that professional mental health education, training, and experience are not necessary prerequisites in order to be an effective and God-ordained helper.

Foundationally, psychotherapy and the teachings of the Bible are diametrically opposed to each other. Psychology teaches that man has within himself, that is, his *self*, all that he needs for his mental and emotional wellbeing. His problems, therefore, stem from issues external to himself. The Bible declares that man has a sinful nature that he himself cannot change. His *heart* is the problem, for from it originates every sort of evil (Mark 7:21-23). When attempts are made by Christians to combine psychology with the teachings of Scripture, it is, wittingly or unwittingly, the addition of “a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12) and a variation of the “Yea, hath God said...?” dialogue, resulting in the corruption of God’s Word.

The influence of psychology has spread throughout the church today like a plague. The Apostle Paul prophesied that the root lie of psychotherapy would prevail in the days before our Lord’s return: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall

come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves” (2 Timothy 3:1-2). This humanistic cornerstone of self-love has become a new doctrine within evangelical Christianity, taught from many of the most popular pulpits. Sermons more often than not quote psychologists and teach their unbiblical psychological concepts for credibility. National evangelical conferences that do *not* include a prominent psychologist as an “expert” on problems of living are few and far between.

So-called Christian psychologists are often better known and more respected by evangelicals than preachers and teachers. In fact, the most prominent and most influential evangelical in America is not an evangelist, not a preacher, not a Bible teacher—but a psychologist: Dr. James Dobson. He heads up a list of “counselors” who integrate psychology with the Bible and have become household names among Christians, including Gary Smalley, John Trent, Henry Cloud, David Stoop, Larry Crabb, John Townsend, Les and Leslie Parrot, H. Norman Wright, and on and on. Chief among organizations that undermine Scripture by mixing it with psychotherapy is the evangelical-founded American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC). It recently produced *The Bible For Hope*, a “newly revised counselor’s Bible,” which features 116 theme articles—most of them contributed by those with psychological counseling backgrounds, from psychiatrists to clinical psychologists and to marriage and family counselors.

Although the AACC boasts “50,000 members and growing stronger every day!”, it pales in comparison to another entity of great influence that is producing hundreds of thousands of young people who are taught to integrate psychology with Scripture: Christian colleges and universities. The second most popular career choice among evangelical institutions of higher learning is the pseudoscience of psychology. The “Yea, hath God said...?” subversion of Scripture rages on today, with accepted “truths” from Freud, Jung, Maslow, Rogers, and a host of other atheists, humanists, and anti-Christians.

The battle for this generation of youth is intensifying. Dave Hunt addresses another onslaught, the new militant atheism, in his soon-to-be published book, *Cosmos, Creator, and Human Destiny*, and notes a particular assault that is without precedent: “The Blasphemy Challenge”:

The Rational Response Squad is giving away 1001 DVDs of *The God Who Wasn’t There*, the hit documentary that the *Los Angeles Times* calls “provocative—to put

it mildly.” There’s only one catch: We want your soul. It’s simple. You record a short message damning yourself to Hell, you upload it to YouTube, and then the Rational Response Squad will send you a free *The God Who Wasn’t There* DVD. It’s that easy. (<http://www.blasphemychallenge.com/>)

What can we do to prevent our young people from being seduced by the advancement of the apostasy? Teach them the Word. Disciple them. Teach them to be sound in doctrine.

I recently spent some time with young adult leaders here and in England. Many feel overwhelmed by what’s taking place but are not without hope. They see the apostasy as a flood that cannot be turned back (outside of a sovereign act of God), yet they are optimistic that many can be rescued. They are aware that most of their peers who profess to be Christians have not been grounded in the faith, many are distracted by and attracted to the world, and some even think they are Christians because of their family ties. Nevertheless, these committed leaders are hopeful that the older generation—those mature in the Lord and who love His Word—will reach out to the younger generation, whether in Bible studies or one-on-one situations, as disciplers, mentors, teachers, and encouragers in Christ. They believe that the Lord will help them to reach those who He knows are willing to take up their crosses and follow Him. Their continual prayer is for more seasoned laborers from the older generation to come alongside their peers.

The Bible is the most exciting book there is, yet for years here in the U.S. our children have been fed a “let me entertain you” diet with only a hint of scriptural nutrition. That’s part of Satan’s “Yea, hath God said...?” strategy. The consequence is an upcoming generation that is, for the most part, spiritually anemic and ripe for the various schemes of apostasy. Deprived of the objective truths of Scripture, they are easy prey for those who would entice them through the subjective and experiential, that is, their “feelings.” Nevertheless, our marching orders involve a rescue operation as found in 2 Timothy 2:24-25: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”

Pray for our young people that they would have a heart for truth, but then seek out those of their generation to whom the Lord would have you minister His love and truth. **TBC**

Quotable

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, but when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. —1 Peter 2:23

Every person who suffers can measure, according to the depths of his own suffering, the sublimity and divinity of our Lord—who, when he suffered, “threatened not.” Jesus did not retaliate or make threats toward the person or group who caused Him to suffer.

Jesus did not suffer because He was a wrongdoer. Oftentimes you and I have. One who suffers as a wrongdoer often responds in rancorous spite and with threats. Suffering, when the heart knows nothing of trust in God nor love for Him, is damning, not saving; it will respond in venomous threats and evil deeds.

Sarcasm, cynicism, slander, murder, war, and lawsuits spring from suffering—which springs from wrongdoing and a wrong temper.

Suffering is the heritage of the *bad*, the *penitent*, and the *sons of God*. All end at the Cross. The bad thief was crucified, the penitent thief was crucified, and the Son of God was crucified. All three represent the widespread history of suffering in our world.

Oswald Chambers

The following Q&As were selected from our archives.

Q&A

QUESTION: Doesn't the Bible use visual language? Didn't Jesus speak in parables and expect us to visualize?

RESPONSE: No, it does just the opposite. The Bible is, in fact, unique for its non-visual language. When you go back over the Bible and compare it with a novel, you will find that the Bible offers few descriptions, even in the parables. God's Word is written in the simplest of literary style upon which objective truth can be hung.

When you read something written by a novelist, you see in your mind a picture that the novelist is painting. This is a legitimate use of the imagination. An architect properly visualizes, as does a dress designer. If you think, however, that you can create reality with your mind or you can get God to do something for you, manipulate Him, then you've stepped over into the occult. God creates out of nothing while man is limited to the use of what God has created. To prove that fact, try to visualize a new prime color in the rainbow. It can't be done.

QUESTION: But don't most people think in pictures anyway?

RESPONSE: We do not think in pictures, but in words. Have you ever visualized justice, or truth? What picture would you have for God, who is not to be pictured at all?

Yes, the Bible does give visual descriptions of God and Christ. Let's look at some examples. Let's take the description of Jesus in Revelation 1. He has a two-edged sword coming out of His mouth. Are we expected to visualize a literal sword? No, the description is telling us something we can't even visualize. The image that is given is intended to teach us something deeper. Or how about in Psalms 91:4 where it says that He (God) will cover us with His feathers and under His wings we shall trust? Should we conjure up an image of a big bird and say that God is like that?

In every case where the Bible gives us what one would call visual language, it is to teach us something beyond the literal reality. In fact, visualization would only lead us astray.

QUESTION: Is it not true that the teaching in the gospels is for Israel and the millennium and that the teaching for the church is found in the epistles as the enclosed booklets teach?

RESPONSE: Was it not in the Gospels that Jesus said He would build His church? He trained and commissioned His disciples to do just that during His earthly ministry as related in the Gospels. In Matthew 28 Christ tells the twelve to make disciples. Shouldn't we? In Mark 16 they are told to “preach the gospel.” Don't we preach the gospel? Is it different?

No! Where does our authority to preach the gospel and to make disciples come from if not from Christ's command to the twelve? They were to teach the disciples they made to observe all that Christ had commanded them, which would include making disciples...down to us today.

If Paul was the one who brought teaching to the church and the Gospels are only for Israel, how do we deal with the fact that the church was formed before Paul came along! That wasn't Israel being formed or restored on the Day of Pentecost!

Peter and the other disciples preached the gospel before Paul was converted. It was clearly the same gospel by which Paul was converted and which he later preached. How can one say that Paul's epistles are for the church but that Acts was a “transitional” period between Israel and the church, when Paul wrote his epistles during the period of the Book of Acts?!

So, we cannot ignore the Gospels and

teachings of our Lord as though they apply to some past and future age but not to the church or Christians right now.

QUESTION: There seems to be a growing teaching that only those Christians who are living holy, victorious lives at the time of the Rapture will be taken by Christ to heaven. The rest will have to face the Antichrist and be purified by martyrdom. Is this biblical?

RESPONSE: I agree with those who are urging Christians to live holy lives of submission to Christ, His Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. We need more emphasis upon holiness and separation from the world.

However, the Bible does not teach that genuine Christians who are not living fully for Christ at the time of the Rapture will be left behind. If so, then what about Christians who at the time of their death were not living fully for Christ? They can't be “left behind.” Their souls and spirits, no longer having a living body to inhabit, must go somewhere. If those souls don't go to heaven then where do they go? We would have to propose some kind of evangelical purgatory! And if all Christians, on the basis of their saving faith in Christ, regardless of their lives, go to heaven upon death, why would not all Christians be raptured?

Moreover, if those left behind at the Rapture are purified by facing Antichrist, how will those who have previously died be purified? In fact, we will all be purified in heaven the same way: “For we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10). If one is truly a Christian, even though not living for Christ, the soul and spirit go to be with Christ at death: “absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8). In heaven, the redeemed are in conscious bliss in God's presence, awaiting the resurrection of their entombed bodies, which “sleep in Jesus” (1 Thes 4:14).

Paul's desire was to “depart and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil 1:23), though he was willing, for the sake of those who needed his ministry, to continue “in the flesh” serving them and Christ here on earth (v 24). Paul would not have wanted to leave this life of service to Christ and the church—and surely would not have called being with Christ “far better”—had it meant to slip into an unconscious state of “soul sleep” as some teach.

It is the souls and spirits of those who died trusting in Him whom Christ brings with Him (1 Thes 4:14) to rejoin their bodies at the resurrection. Notice that “the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them...to meet the Lord in the air...”

(vv 16-17). Surely “the dead in Christ” must mean all who died with faith in Christ. Therefore, “we who are alive and remain” must also mean all of the living whose trust is in Christ.

It makes no sense nor does the Bible teach that Christians alive at the time of the Rapture must be living better lives than many who have died, in order to join them in heaven.

QUESTION: My church seems to believe that one must be a “scholar” or a “theologian” to be a pastor or a credible Christian author or Bible teacher. It even seems to be implied that those without such degrees are not competent to question what those holding theological (and now even psychological) degrees teach from the Bible. That sounds to me like elitism. What is your opinion?

RESPONSE: I must agree with you. No degree in and of itself spiritually qualifies the one to whose name it is attached. Yet that is the mentality today, to such an extent that some pastors, authors and conference speakers are going to diploma mills to purchase (with little study) a “Dr.” to put in front of their names. Just those two letters (almost no one ever asks how or where acquired) seem to elevate the individual to a new level of biblical understanding and spiritual authority.

The Bereans certainly had no theological degrees. Yet they checked out the great Apostle Paul’s preaching against Scripture and were commended for doing so (Acts 17:11). Every Christian is both qualified and obligated to do the same with every Bible teacher and preacher, no matter how highly regarded or academically certified.

No one is immune from error or correction, and that includes this writer. Nor were the disciples “theologians” or “scholars.” Among them were fishermen, a tax gatherer, etc. The idea that those who have academic degrees from theological seminaries have thereby a monopoly on interpreting the Bible is both illogical and unscriptural. Such elitism is simply the Protestant version of Roman Catholicism’s claim that its hierarchy of bishops, cardinals and popes alone can interpret Scripture.

Christian leaders should be respected and honored. This regard, however, should not be based on degrees they may have acquired, but on the extent to which they demonstrate godly lives, biblically qualified and consistent leadership, and the teaching of sound doctrine based on their study of the Word.

QUESTION: The Bible tries to make morality consist of absolutes which are supposedly commanded by God. Yet most people

in the world never read the Bible, so they don’t know these rules. What could be more foolish than a book which claims to be God’s Word and sets rules that most people never heard of and then condemns them for not obeying these rules?

RESPONSE: It can be easily demonstrated that the Ten Commandments (minus the command to keep the sabbath) are written in the heart and conscience of every person. That fact accounts for the similarities in the morality of various religions. Thus it is not foolish at all for the Bible to hold mankind to these standards.

The atheist tries to discredit Christianity by showing that the applications of the Mosaic law expressed by Christ in His sermon on the mount are echoed in the sayings of a Buddha or Confucius. In fact, such similarities can be explained in no other way than that God exists and has written His law in every human conscience. And that the account of the giving of this law is found in the Bible is further proof that it is God’s Word.

The first chapter of Romans tells us that the fact of God’s existence is proclaimed and fully demonstrated in convicting evidence to every thinking person. The second chapter argues just as clearly that every man knows both that he is morally accountable to God and that he has violated the standards which God has set: “For when the Gentiles [non-Jews], which have not the law [that was given to Moses at Mt. Sinai], do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another...” (Rom 2:14-15).

Those raised in different cultures adopt habits and customs and regard taboos peculiar to their society. Nevertheless, beneath the surface of seeming differences, there lies a common fabric of moral conviction which is the same for all mankind. If morality were simply a matter of custom or legislation, there would be no basis for discussing whether such practices were good or bad, right or wrong. That there is a common conscience, which though dulled or warped by generations of peculiar and even contradictory custom, is nevertheless alive within all mankind becomes immediately apparent in any discussion with those of non-Christian and even primitive pagan cultures.

News Alert.....

(CNN) Wed March 4, 2009: Former Beatles Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr will reunite on stage next month to raise

money to teach transcendental meditation to children around the world to “help provide them a quiet haven in a not-so-quiet world,” McCartney said. The star-studded list of performers who will join them include two musicians who were with the Beatles when they journeyed to India’s Himalayan foothills in 1968 to learn transcendental meditation from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

“In moments of madness, it has helped me find moments of serenity,” McCartney said in the concert announcement. Profits from the April 4 show at New York’s Radio City Music Hall will fund the David Lynch Foundation’s program, which has already taught 60,000 children around the world how to meditate, foundation spokesman Steve Yellin said.

The goal of the project—which is called “Change Begins Within”—is to teach the meditation technique to a million at-risk children so they have “life-long tools to overcome stress and violence and promote peace and success in their lives,” Yellin said.

Schools across the United States have asked the group to bring the classes to their students, he said. “I would like to think that it would help provide them a quiet haven in a not-so-quiet world,” McCartney said.

Singer-songwriter Donovan and musician Paul Horn, who studied at the Maharishi’s ashram with the four Beatles, will also perform in the show. “How great to be playing with Paul, Ringo, and Paul Horn again—as we did in India in 1968,” Donovan said.

“It’s a real reunion, after 40 years, of Donovan, Paul Horn, Ringo and Paul McCartney,” Yellin said. “It’s quite an interesting thing that they are still talking about transcendental meditation.” The list of performers also includes Sheryl Crow, Eddie Vedder, Ben Harper, Moby, Bettye LaVette and Jim James.

[TBC: *Transcendental Meditation was originally named The Spiritual Regeneration Movement by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who changed it to TM when it was barred from schools for what it is—Hinduism. Furthermore, the words of Jesus need to be heeded here: “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” (Matthew 18:6-7)]*

Endnotes

1. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/november/12/36.html?start=4>.
2. Brian MacLaren, *The Last Word After That* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 134.

Speaking Schedule

Apr 1-3 **Tulsa International Prophecy Conf**
(Dave) Tulsa, OK
(918) 835-6978

May 1-2 **Saskatoon Bible Conference**
(TA) Saskatoon, SK
(306) 531-4733

Letters

Dear T.A. McMahon,

Thank you for the article ["Divine Opportunities"]. God timed it just right for me. It arrived 2/13/09 and I am scheduled for surgery 2/17/09....Since I have been feeling so rotten for so long, my thoughts are always turned inward and I know I need to trust God that He has a purpose in what He is allowing in my life. Your experience proves that completely. God is using your experience once again. (email)

Dear TBC,

Thank you for the article "Divine Opportunities." I am disabled and facing a number of insurmountable (or so it seemed today) difficulties. This article and Spurgeon's devotion[al] brought me back to the main focus and I can get my eyes back on Jesus and let Him do what He will. VP (email)

Dear Dave,

The LORD put you in my path almost two years ago when...I was studying the Scriptures to find the answer to my empty life. It had been a few months that I had accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, when one day I was in a Christian book store with two different DVDs in my hand. I remember praying to God for guidance [as to] what I should purchase, and when I finished praying I bought *Israel, Islam, and Armageddon*. Ever since, my family and I have been blessed by how the LORD has worked through you.... Now I search the Scriptures daily to see if those things are so. RI (email)

TA,

Thank you so much for being so transparent in your struggles. It ministered so much....Thank you for sharing the struggles; we need to hear these things, and yet also to hear of your victories! BM (GA)

Hi Tom,

Your article brought back my own memories of past sufferings....I'm 72 now and came to love the Lord. I called myself a "limbo Christian" 15 years ago as I was diagnosed with colo-rectal cancer. Only a year before that, it was bladder cancer, and

I began wondering about eternal things to say the least. With several months off from work, God gave me the opportunity to really slow down and seek Him through His word. As David...in Psalm 25:4-5, I asked Him to show me and teach me His ways, and He did. I thank the Lord every day, for without that affliction, I would have continued living in a dark world. If I could say anything about this lesson, it was that I found the light through the truth of Jesus Christ. (email)

Dear Mr. McMahon,

Just read your article in the *Berean Call*. Now it's my turn to have bowel cancer—was diagnosed just this month. Doctors are in a big hurry to save my life, but I'm 66 and have been ill for many years. My heart's desire is to be home with my LORD and Savior. Nevertheless, your article was encouraging to me to make this a time of witness as never before. I'm amazed at how many Christians are not looking forward to the Rapture or to dying and then being Raptured. I fail to understand why they cling to this earthly life so much. It is far better to be home with the LORD. No matter how often we get healed, we will still die (unless the blessed Hope, the Rapture should happen soon). Brother T.A., you have been an encouragement to me. I am full of the joy of the LORD at the turn of events....Many say, "Oh God wants to use you, he wants you to live," etc., but there is a day appointed for me; all my days have been ordered by the LORD before I even saw one of them. At the appointed time, I shall face Him whom I love.

Dave Hunt has been a great and unending blessing to me. I have been to the Winnipeg Prophecy Conference every year except one since the early 1990s. What a difference his teaching has made in my life! *Truth with love*....May you completely recover, both you and Dave....Thanks to both of you for sharing your experience and encouragement with me as I go through the valley. JD (Canada)

TBC,

Your "Divine Opportunities" in the February issue was one of the nicest, most powerful "sermons" I have read or heard. Thank you. It meant a lot to me. (email)

Dear Tom,

I just want to say thanks for the February newsletter article you wrote about your surgery and the blessings that came out of it. Our pastor is today starting tests, and I know your article will be helpful to him....Your acceptance of God's way of ministering to you through others, and your personal story will be helpful to him. Thank you so much, and God's blessings on your health issues and your ministry. BR (email)

Dear Berean Call,

I've greatly appreciated your material over my years of incarceration and how big of an impact it's had on my walk with the Lord! In fact, I just recently had my mother order a great amount of dvds/cds to send home for my listening pleasure after my [upcoming] release from prison....Thank you again for your concern and time. The Berean Call will continue to be my main source for material in order to "defend the faith." DR (prisoner, WI)

TBC Notes

Holding Fast

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Hebrews 10:23-25

The writer of Hebrews is exhorting Jewish believers not to withdraw from fellowship as persecution against them increases. The instruction here is that they need to be there for each other as the times become more difficult. Having just spent two weeks in England, I got a glimpse of some aspects of what the writer of Hebrews was addressing. What was once an empire where the sun never set is now a land that is shrouded in spiritual darkness.

Nevertheless, the flame (of God's truth) that English martyrs Ridley and Latimer hoped would not be extinguished continues to burn. I was greatly encouraged as I had wonderful fellowship with committed believers throughout the country. Although their numbers were not large, their zeal for the Word of God was tremendous. It reminded me once again of my similar experiences in Europe a few years ago—no matter how dark and turbulent the spiritual seas become, God has His remnant-manned lighthouses and safe harbors. "As we see the day approaching" in this country, I pray that we will continue to encourage one another in our commitment to Jesus through the fellowship we have in His name.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

T.A. McMAHON

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WOULD PAUL ANSWER THE CALL TO CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM?

Mark Dinsmore

A number of respected Christian columnists and pastors across our nation are sounding an alarm at the thickening shroud of global governance descending upon our nation. With the presidentially promised “change” now being delivered, the spectre of a militarized one-world spirituality is darkening the horizon of earth under the guise of “hope” and “peace.”

I understand—and share—the righteous anger over the sorry state of the church and its lackadaisical response to the evils of our time. Serious students of God’s Word, however, have been long alerted to these signs: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come... (1 Tm 4:1; see also 2 Tm 4:3-4). Though we take comfort that our Lord could return at any time for His Bride, it appears that even those whose blessed hope is in a pre-tribulation rapture should take heed and prepare for precipitous times ahead (1 Pt 4:12-16).

In light of increasing daily distress over our nation’s economic unraveling and corporate “bailout,” a number of states are introducing legislation to declare their sovereignty and withdraw from this mess, and some patriots have even called for a 2009 Continental Congress to “establish practicable strategies the People can take, en masse, to peacefully reclaim Liberty and restore Constitutional Order.” Indeed, that these are “perilous times” only confirms the prophetic import of increasing global “birth pangs.”

Many well-written books and DVDs document how our nation, and evangelicalism, came to this point, but this lament is not my chief concern, nor is it in suggesting a roadmap for political action. Rather, it is to articulate and apply a biblical response to the foreboding future tyranny that is prophesied (and proceeding) to unite the world in a Babel-like rebellion under Antichrist. Surprisingly, the cause and cure of our nation’s decline is a controversial subject even among conservative Christians. As one columnist whom I respect recently wrote, “A real Christian patriot would never allow his country to be taken over by a gaggle of elitist goons bent on stealing his liberties...”

“Christian patriot.” These two words are inextricably linked in the minds of most Americans who grew up with any kind of serious education regarding the nature of our Constitutional Republic and the faith of our Founding Fathers. The ideals of a “Christian Patriot” are indeed wonderful—to live in a nation that exalts our Creator and whose government is firmly rooted in God’s Word.

But is this our earthly hope and promise prior to Christ’s return? And, is this the mission to which the church is called—to establish “one nation, under God, indivisible...?” Is this the example of our *spiritual* forefathers?

Consider Daniel. Consider Joseph. These courageous men (both types of Christ, among many), were subjected to all manner of trials and temptation, and yet they did not resist the enemy with force. Still, God spared them. They both rose to prominence in pagan cultures that literally worshiped demon-gods—Satan himself—in various manifestations, but did either Daniel or Joseph attempt to overthrow these empires by political persuasion? Did they stir up the faithful to stage a protest or ignite a revolution?

“That’s the Old Testament!” some might protest. Then what of Paul? What of Peter? Did these equally courageous New Testament saints resist their captors with force? Did these powerful apostles of Christ start a political party to declare their independence from the pagan world in which they preached? To a man, no. All of Christ’s disciples except John were martyred—and not for their “inalienable rights” to live in a country that worshiped God nor for their right to “keep and bear arms.”

We have enjoyed (and oft taken for granted) the liberties afforded us at the expense of those who bled and died for our gain. This is a testament to their courage, faith, and God’s grace—but does this mean that the American Revolution is a *biblical* example and pattern of behavior for us to follow? To my own initial confusion and dismay (as it contradicts years of conservative Christian-heritage instruction) there is not a single example in Scripture of “armed revolution” of any kind as a pattern for the church.

Remember, it is the Lord who raises up kings (both just and unjust) and allows them to dictate the rules of the land in order to bring about His will for His people (Ps 75:7; Dn 2:21; Prv 21:1); and, as we have seen in the example of Israel, “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Pt 4:17).

Grievously, America is ripe for judgment...and so is the church. Though it is difficult for us to “count it all joy” (Jas 1:2-4), the persecution and trials that are coming upon us are for the purification of God’s remnant. As such, a true soldier of Christ seeks to “understand the times” (1 Chr 12:32) and prepare his household, his church, and his community—not for a revolution of might but one of heart and mind.

In fact, Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world... [else] would my servants fight” (Jn 18:36). Do not misunderstand—I am not a pacifist by strict definition. I support the Second Amendment; I’m teaching all three of my sons how to be responsible marksmen, whether for food provision or self- and family defense. But here’s the difference: the right to “keep and bear arms” was not granted to us by God. If (when) our government knocks on my door and demands my weapons under threat of violence or imprisonment, would it be a biblical response to resist or “open fire!”?

Thousands of neo-Patriots cheered, as did I, when former NRA president and “Moses” actor Charleton Heston declared that the only way he would surrender his weapons is when the enemy (our own government) “pried them from [his] cold, dead, hands.” But through study, prayer, and reflection, I’ve come to the conviction that it would be foolish to give my life for this “right” given to me by man. Though my flesh is reluctant, I pray that I will “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mk 12:17; Rom 13:1-7). If necessary, I’ll defend my family with my life *without* a rifle, but we must trust in God’s ability to deliver us from that “temptation,” or trial, when it comes (Ps 22:4; Jas 1:2-4).

My fear today is that if Christians answer a “call to arms” to fight whatever totalitarian regime is being plotted (in preparation for Antichrist), then godly men will be imprisoned or die, leaving women and children behind to be ravaged both physically and spiritually. Going down in a “blaze of glory” like the Revolutionary “heroes” sounds good to our own flesh, but how can dead men minister the gospel under whatever pagan ruler or communist culture rises to replace our Constitutional Republic?

We are in a spiritual battle, but we must choose on which hill we are willing to die. Dying for Nationalistic Pride or even for our “Rights” is not the same as dying for the cause of Christ. Far better for godly men to survive in a pagan nation and submit to rule of law (which God ordains) and to subsist by His Word—unless (or until) we are asked to bow down and worship a false god. Such an affront would still not be cause to take up arms. In the life-and-death trial of the fiery furnace, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah did not go into the flames as “National Patriots,” willing to die for their “Bill of Rights,” nor did they offer any physical resistance to their captors. Like Christ’s, theirs was a peaceful obedience and demonstration of submission to God, who alone is able to save (Dn 3:17-18; Jas 4:12; Heb 7:25).

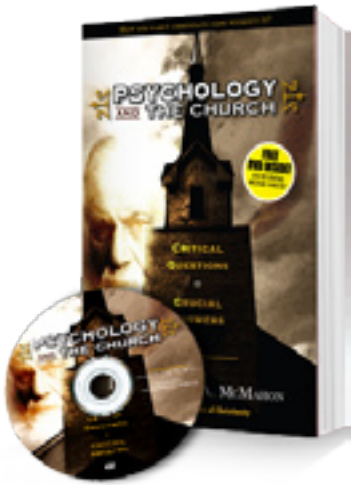
Does this mean, as some Christian “patriots” suggest, that I am weak, unfaithful, or lazy? Does it mean that I am consigned to our nation’s “fate”? No! On the contrary, I am reminded that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood,” which causes me to re-focus God’s precious resources of time and energy on eternal things—not on fulfilling the “American Dream” for myself and my posterity, nor on establishing God’s “kingdom now.” Rather, we must earnestly set about “redeeming the time” (Eph 5:16) with renewed fervor to preach the gospel and make disciples—not for an earthly hope of heaven *here*, but with an eye on his kingdom to *come* (Christ’s *eternal* kingdom). Scripture is clear that this present terrestrial globe “shall melt with fervent heat...and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pt 3:10). That includes every church building, every mansion, every monument, every false god, and every political power structure built or imagined by mankind—whether Democrat or Republican, Communist or “Christian.”

Scripture tells us that “peace on earth, goodwill to men” (Lk 2:14) cannot come until Christ rules and reigns on earth. As Christians, we should protect and defend human life wherever we are. We should never deny Christ in order to save our lives, but to throw ourselves in front of an advancing tank that threatens our “Constitutional” liberties would only crush and silence our voice for God, and would do nothing for the cause of Christ.

Even John Adams acknowledged that it is fruitless to force “biblical government” upon an “immoral people,” hell-bent on conspiracy against their Creator. In spite of the courageous speeches and admirable acts of our Revolutionary heroes like Paul Revere, was theirs a biblical response? Or, is the *Apostle* Paul our model of Christ, when he said, “Therefore I endure [suffer] all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tm 2:10).

These are difficult issues that one must prayerfully work through. May our Lord continue to sharpen us all for His glory and His purpose, “having done all, to stand” (Eph 6:13) and, as He commanded, “Occupy till I come” (Lk 19:13)—doing so not in a passive state but in a state of action for the gospel and cause of Christ. “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rv 22:20).

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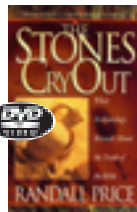
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