

THE BEREAN CALL

Article Collection

Reading Assignment for the School of Discipleship
The Word to the World Ministries
Semester One

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES	2
AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE	7
LOVE, JUSTICE, AND JUDGMENT	12
THE SECRET SEDUCTION	18
TOWARD THE PRIZE	24
VICTORY IN CHRIST	29
WEANING EVANGELICALS OFF THE WORD - PART 1	35
WEANING EVANGELICALS OFF THE WORD - PART 2	41
WEANING EVANGELICALS OFF THE WORD - PART 3	47
“WHEN WE SEE HIM...”	53
WHY EVERYTHING IS THE WAY IT IS	58
THE WORKS-SALVATION DELUSION	64

Copyright © The Berean Call 2016. All rights Reserved.

<https://www.thebereancall.org/>

Used with permission.

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

December 1, 2007

Hunt, Dave

The Bible makes uncompromisingly clear to all mankind its claim to be the infallible, inerrant Word of the only true and living God. It denounces all other gods and scriptures as false, as well as the religions they represent. Of Jesus, God's Word declares, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (**Jn:3:36**). Peter told Jewish religious leaders (and was beaten, imprisoned, and killed for testifying to Christ's resurrection): "There is none other name...given among men whereby we must be saved" (**Acts:4:12**).

Such unequivocal statements cannot be misunderstood. Jews would not have been persecuted and killed had they presented Yahweh as just one more god to be added to the Roman Pantheon. Christians were considered an even greater threat because in obedience to Christ they preached the gospel everywhere and thereby "turned the world upside down" (**Acts:17:6**). Even they would not have been persecuted and killed had they presented Jesus Christ as merely one of many possible saviors. It was their firm proclamation of Christ's claim, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (**Jn:14:6**), that threatened Caesar and aroused such vicious hatred. Today, however, to avoid the

objectionable exclusivity of their faith, "Christians" often compromise and many ecumenically deny the biblical gospel.

Christianity is a biblical faith, and the Bible is not an "ecumenical" book. It makes no compromise with any of the world's religions. Those who support ecumenism to any extent, no matter how loudly they defend their orthodoxy, are not Bible-believing Christians. At worst they are deliberate frauds; at best they are confused into simultaneously professing two contradictory beliefs (syncretism). Which do they really believe? Speaking out of both sides of their mouths is a popular ploy today of both political and "Christian" leaders.

Anyone is free to invent any new religion-but not free to call it Christianity. That faith is founded upon facts: Scripture, history, and prophecy, all of which are a matter of clear record and none of which can be changed. These facts cannot honestly be denied.

What must we say of "Christian" leaders and even entire denominations that do not follow Christ and His Word? We have exposed many by name and have documented in these pages their inexcusable hypocrisy and deceit, which must be summarily rejected. Away with all duplicity!

Whoever (Bush, Rice, et al.) insists that [Islam](#) is a "religion of peace" and that Allah is the God of the Bible is either deceived or lying. [Islam](#) has its founding prophet, Muhammad, who began his career with numerous murders, attacked peaceful villages and caravans, and beheaded hundreds who surrendered in exchange for his sworn promise of peace and safety. [Islam](#) has its scriptures (the Qur'an and Hadith) and 1,350 years of the bloodiest and most violent history of any religion ever known, including the merciless slaughter of millions (more millions in the take-over of India than Hitler killed in all of Eastern and Western Europe).

We fully document the truth about [Islam](#) in [Judgment Day](#), which every Berean ought to donate to his or her local public library. One can only say that all those (from Bush and Rice on down) who turn a blind eye to the indisputable truth about [Islam](#) and call this violent religion "peaceful" are engaged in a cover-up.

It is indisputable that today's Islamic terrorism may not honestly be blamed upon "extremists." This is true [Islam](#) as it always has been from the beginning! Terrorists are sincere Muslims following both the teaching and example of Muhammad, the obedient example set by his loyal followers, and [Islam's](#) scriptures, which command the take-over of the entire world and death to all who will not convert. True, not every Muslim is a terrorist, but nearly every terrorist is a Muslim!

The scriptures and history of any religion are a matter of permanent public record that cannot be disputed, much less reinvented. Both those who attempt to do so (whether with Christianity or [Islam](#)) and

those who accept and pass on their lies are guilty of the same deceit.

While terrorists are genuine Muslims who follow Muhammad and the Qur'an, the Crusaders were not biblical Christians. They followed Rome, not Christ and His Word. The popes had their own agenda of world conquest by force. Crusaders waved the Cross but denied Christ by killing His brethren, the Jews, wherever they went. Attempting "in the name of Christ" to retake the "Holy Land" from the atrocity-committing Islamic invaders violated Christ's declaration to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world [or else] would my servants fight" ([Jn:18:36](#)).

Yes, [Israel](#) was commanded to wipe out the Canaanites, a particular people in a very small part of the world with clearly defined borders-to execute God's judgment upon their unspeakable wickedness and perversion. [Israel](#) was not told to "convert" them or anyone else with the sword nor to take over the world by violence-as both the Qur'an and Muhammad (claiming an edict from Allah) declared from the beginning to be [Islam's](#) mission. This fundamental teaching of [Islam](#) cannot be changed without renouncing [Islam](#).

Equally important to understand is the fact that the Bible, in contrast to the so-called scriptures of every religion, gives the proof of its claims. I don't say "every *other* religion" because biblical Christianity is not a religion; it is a *relationship* as children to a loving Father, which every true Christian has with God through Jesus Christ.

The God who inspired the Bible through His prophets and is presented therein does not demand "blind" faith, as Richard Dawkins and other atheists blasphemously assert. He

offers proof and is willing to reason with skeptics and unbelievers, if they will honestly do so: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD..." (**Isa:1:18**). Faith in God and in His Word is the only reasonable response to the questions with which the universe confronts us and to the answers God provides in Scripture. Peter reminds us that true followers of Christ do not threaten unbelievers but are "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh...a reason of the hope..." we have in Christ (1 Pt 3:15). We have proved these facts so often in this newsletter that I will not repeat the proof now. The major proof, of course, that God offers of His own existence and that the Bible is His Word is prophecy. It foretells events centuries and even thousands of years in advance. Biblical prophecy is always fulfilled right on time in every detail. Prophecy is absolutely unique to the Bible, being found in no other religious scriptures (though some contain false prophecies). [Israel's](#) prophets offered hundreds of prophecies concerning the promised Messiah so that He could be identified beyond question when He came as a humble, virgin-born child. After the resurrection, the apostles preached the gospel to everyone and everywhere, as Christ had commanded them. The two primary pieces of evidence were: 1) their own personal sworn testimony as eyewitnesses of what Christ taught and did (including His crucifixion and resurrection), though it cost them their lives as martyrs for refusing to ecumenically deny the truth they knew; and 2) the many prophecies in Scripture given centuries in advance, which

were fulfilled to the letter in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

There was no excuse for all of [Israel](#) not to have been anticipating and not to have welcomed Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah. How could they have closed their eyes to the fact that this healer of thousands, who did so many miracles witnessed by multitudes (even raising the dead), who was the talk of all Judea and Galilee, had arrived at the very time their prophets had foretold the Messiah's coming? The precise day (**Dan:9:25**; **Neh:2:1-9**) that He would present Himself to [Israel](#), riding on "the colt...of an ass" (**Zec:9:9**), was the date Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (now celebrated as "Palm Sunday"), was hailed by mobs lining the road down from the Mount of Olives (**Mat:21:2-11**), then, four days later, was crucified—a shocking twist but exactly as foretold (**Ps:22:14-18**; **Zec:12:10**). Then the resurrection!

Unquestionably His body was gone, the tomb empty, in spite of the platoon of Roman soldiers guarding it. Frank Morison, (who, as a skeptic, examined the evidence, determined to disprove the resurrection), presented a fascinating story in his book [Who Moved the Stone?](#) He showed beyond doubt that the only possible explanation was the resurrection, exactly as the disciples testified, though it cost them their lives to do so.

America is no less guilty than [Israel](#) for her rejection of Christ. We have even more proof today than the Jews had then. A false Christianity's perversion and rejection of the gospel has stricken America with a blinding madness. Nowhere is that more clearly seen than in the attempt of

"Christians" to embrace [Islam](#) as a partner religion. The president sought to curry Muslim favor by boasting that he had welcomed into the White House library a copy of the Qur'an-an aggressively anti-Christian document. How could any sane person sincerely insist that [Islam's](#) Allah, who hates [Israel](#), is the biblical God who 12 times calls himself "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...this is my memorial throughout all generations" (Ex 3:15,16), and who 203 times is called "the God of [Israel](#)"?

Surely, with so many advisors (many of them professing Christians), Bush must know that the Qur'an aggressively opposes every *foundational Christian doctrine*. Excusing themselves because of the President's example, church leaders persist in attempting to embrace [Islam](#) as a peaceful partner with Christianity. Yet the Qur'an contains more than a hundred exhortations to convert the world by violence. Sixteen times it declares that Allah is not a father and has no son, denies that Christ is God, declares that He did not die for our sins but someone died in His place, denies the resurrection, and declares that belief in the Trinity sends one to hell! All of this (and there is much more of the same genre) makes Allah the God of the Bible and [Islam](#) the friend of Christianity?!

At a recent student panel of "Pluralism at Harvard" (moderated by William A. Graham, Dean of the Divinity School), Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies and director of the Pluralism Project, who speaks approvingly of [Islam](#), reminded the audience:

By the mid-1990s there were governors... and mayors who were recognizing Ramadan.... [In] 1996... President and Mrs. Clinton invited members of the Muslim community to the White House to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan.... In subsequent years we are seeing an increasing presence of this religious phenomenon in the American religious landscape... the observance of Iftar in the Pentagon.... Madeline Albright hosted an Iftar at the State Department for the first time in 1998.... A week ago, we had President Bush holding an Iftar dinner at the White House [his seventh!].... [On] the White House home page there's a whole list of Ramadan events....

Persisting in the lie that [Islam](#) is peace is like the United States responding to Nikita Krushchev's "We will bury you," with "We know you'll do it peacefully."

Muslims continue to kill thousands of Christians in Algeria, Indonesia, Nigeria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, etc., and to burn down Christian churches wherever they can. More than 3,000 churches have been destroyed in the last three years in Indonesia, 2 million killed in Southern Sudan for refusing to convert, plus thousands elsewhere. Muslims further demonstrate the true meaning of "[Islam](#) is peace" by continuing to slaughter one another in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told the "World Without Zionism" conference, October 26, 2005, that "[Israel](#) must be wiped off the map." He has repeated this threat of "Islamic peace" elsewhere. All of the high profile Islamic

political and religious leaders of "peaceful [Islam](#)" have for at least 70 years boasted that they will soon achieve their long-standing ambition to annihilate [Israel](#). Arafat declared, "Peace for us is the destruction of [Israel](#)"-and he was given the Nobel Peace Prize! Those holding this wicked passion seem unaware that three times the God of the Bible calls [Israel](#) "the apple of his eye" (Deut 32:10; [Lam:2:18](#); [Zec:2:8](#)) and declares that He will protect her.

Millions of evangelical Christians were tortured and murdered by the Roman [Catholic](#) Church throughout history, yet many forgave their tormentors with their dying breath. Their modern successors, however, stricken with the ecumenical truth-denying insanity we've been describing, insist that Roman [Catholicism](#) is the same as evangelical Christianity, though it preaches a gospel of [salvation](#) through rituals, works, prayers to the dead, suffering in purgatory to pay for one's sins, and submission to the pope

The few verses that we have quoted above make it clear that God does not "dialogue" with man, as though He might be willing to take some suggestions and modify the gospel to suit His deluded and wicked creatures. Christ agonized in the Garden because He was going to be "made...sin for us... [i.e., treated as though He were sin itself] that we might be made the

righteousness of God in him" ([2 Cor:5:21](#)). The full penalty for sin had to be paid, and Christ would pay it for all mankind. All God's wrath against sin was going to be poured out upon Him as He took our place.

Jesus pleaded with His Father not to make Him suffer this agony if sinners could be rescued any other way: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..." ([Mat:26:39](#)). No other way was possible. The full penalty had to be paid, and He was the only one who could pay it. So Christ, in love for His Father and for us, submitted to His Father's will. In fact, Christ's suffering the infinite agonies of an eternity in the Lake of Fire for our sins had already been foretold by the prophets. This was the gospel [good news] that Paul preached: "how that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day *according to the scriptures*" ([1 Cor:15:1-4](#)).

The New Testament explains, "That he, by the grace of God should taste death for every man" ([Heb:2:9](#)). That death would have had to include the experience of the "lake of fire [which is] the second death" (Rv 20:14) for all mankind for eternity.

May we stand firm in our love for all, robbing no one of heaven by compromising the biblical gospel, which alone is "the power of God unto [salvation](#)" ([Rom:1:16](#)).

AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

August 1, 2007

Hunt, Dave

As part of the fallen nature inherited from Adam and Eve, all mankind is plagued with an endemic "earthly-mindedness." Locked into that perspective, men "call their lands after their own names" (**Ps:49:11**) as though their days on earth will never end. Of course, we all intellectually recognize that our time on earth is temporary, but we still think and act as though it were not. No wonder Moses wrote, "So teach us to number our days [i.e., to truly understand their brevity], that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (**Ps:90:12**).

Death is a fate that we all imagine we will somehow avoid, at least for quite a while—until some serious illness or accident strikes without warning as a shocking wake-up call. In fact, no matter how healthy one may seem at the moment, death is always only a breath away. The very fact that this is an unpleasant subject we don't like to think or talk about proves Moses right. We need God's help through His Word to fit our few days into an eternal perspective.

Solomon said, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart..." (**Eccl 7:2**). But modern funerals, with their beautiful flowers and kind remembrances of the deceased, seem almost designed to keep the

mourning to a minimum in order to help the living remain detached from the unspeakable event that has drawn them together. We cannot bear, for ourselves or for others, to dwell upon the fact that death inevitably puts its terminating stamp upon every earthly passion, position, possession, and ambition.

He lives as a fool who forgets the solemn reminders that Scripture gives of the brevity of this life. Even Homer's eighth century BC *Iliad* declared: "Death in ten thousand shapes hangs ever over our heads, and no man can elude him." Death comes with the same regularity as birth. One is greeted with joy, contentment, and great satisfaction. The other is fought off as an alien intruder come to rob us of that to which it has no right. When, always too soon, it overtakes those whom we love, we understand the anger expressed in Milton's *Paradise Lost* that anyone should ever become "Food for so foule a Monster."

No matter how long a life the deceased may have lived, those who are thoughtful understand Lady Capulet's inconsolable grief as she laments over Juliet: "Death lies on her like an untimely frost upon the sweetest flower of the field." Still, we try to ignore the irrepressible truth that we as

well, and all too soon, will be swallowed up by that same "foule monster." Death seems especially nonthreatening when all is going well.

In one of Christ's parables, a rich man's fields yielded so abundantly that he told himself, "I have no room where to bestow my fruits....I will pull down my barns, and build greater....And I will say to my soul...thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said...Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (**Lk 12:16-21**).

The brevity of life is not the most serious consequence of death. More sobering still is what the Bible warns will follow: "after this the judgment" (**Heb:9:27**). For us as Christians, death has lost its sting because of Christ's death and resurrection on our behalf. Yet who can say that he or she has always lived in a way that would give one confidence to face the judgment seat of Christ without any regrets or shame and only with joy? I'm sure there will be tears of deep sorrow and remorse on that day.

I am often overwhelmed by the solemn and fearsome reality that grows nearer every day of standing before my Lord and Savior at last. I know that His love to me is infinite and eternal, but as well as being my Redeemer, He is my Creator to whom I must give an account of what I have done with the brief life He has committed to my use!

Thankfully, we are assured that God "shall wipe away all tears" from our eyes (**Rv 7:17; 21:4**) and every true believer "shall...have praise of God" (**1 Cor:4:5**). Tears will give way to the eternal joy of sins forgiven through Christ's full payment of sins' penalty.

Atheists try to convince themselves and others that "when you're dead, you're dead; that's the end of all sensation." Yet the universal and overpowering conviction has persisted in every culture since the dawn of time that death does not end human existence. The fact that man is a spiritual being who survives the death of the body in which he temporarily lives on earth is a basic human instinct that can be denied only with great effort. Moreover, even apart from Scripture, the scientific validity of this universal belief is easily proved.

It is undeniable that our minds can hold intangible ideas such as truth or justice or grace. Mankind understands and applies hundreds of similar nonphysical concepts daily. These common concepts defy physical description, have no physical properties, do not occupy space, and are clearly not part of the scientifically observable universe of time and sense. Obviously, nothing physical could originate and hold such thoughts—a fact that eliminates the brain as the source of any thinking at all. We do not wait for the brain to tell us what it wants us to do! We—the persons of soul and spirit living within each body—initiate our thoughts.

In fact, all thoughts are nonphysical. No thought of any kind has any spatial location

or any physical substance. The conclusion is inescapable: man is a nonphysical being living in a temporary, physical body. Not his brain but man himself is the originator and guardian of his thoughts.

Though death separates man from the house he has inhabited on this earth, the spirit and soul, which are his real self, do not and cannot cease to exist. What about animals? While we have bodies much like theirs and a superficial physical likeness in many ways, which has spawned the ridiculous and unscientific theory of evolution, there is a great and eternal difference between mankind and the animal world. What is it? As Mortimer J. Adler (a brilliant former atheist and now professing Christian) points out in his book, *The Difference of Man, and the Difference it Makes*, man's ability to form nonphysical conceptual ideas and to express them in speech confines all non-human life to the other side of a chasm that evolution could never bridge.

The fact that our thoughts do not originate with the brain can be proved in many other ways. For example, it makes no more sense to credit the physical brain with morals and ethics than to speak of an "honest liver" or an "immoral kidney." Nor can anyone absolve himself from any thought or deed by saying "my brain made me do it." Clearly, the selfless and volitional commitment of love, the appreciation of truth and beauty, the loathing of evil, and the longing for ultimate fulfillment do not arise from any quality of the atoms, molecules, or cells that

comprise any part of the body—including the brain.

within and made the conscious and willful choices for which, not the body but the thinker responsible for thoughts, words, and deeds, will be held accountable. Inasmuch as the real person inside depends upon the body for no more than temporary housing and the means of functioning in this physical universe, there is no reason to believe that death ends a person's conscious existence. We are driven rather to conclude that death releases the soul and spirit from its bodily confinement to experience another even more real dimension of being.

Without doubt, death ends our bodily existence. But the death of the body cannot end the existence of the soul and spirit, which were not part of it. They resided

Some 250 years ago William Law portrayed a "very prosperous and busy young tradesman" who was "about to die in his thirty-fifth year." The young man had this to say to the friends who came to express their sympathy:

You look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepared to meet the Judge of quick and dead, but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life.... And yet what folly of the silliest children is so great as this?

Our poor friend Lepidus died...as he was dressing himself for a feast. Do you think it is now part of his trouble that he did not live till that entertainment was over? Feast and business and pleasures and enjoyments seem great things to us—but

as soon as we add death to them they all sink into an equal littleness....

If I am now going into the joys of God, could there be any reason to grieve that this happened to me before I was forty years of age? Could it be a sad thing to go to heaven before I had made a few more bargains or stood a little longer behind a counter?

And if I am to go amongst lost spirits, could there be any reason to be content that this did not happen to me till I was old, and full of riches...? Now that judgment is the next thing that I look for, and everlasting happiness or misery is come so near to me, all the enjoyments and prosperities of life seem vain and insignificant....

But my friends, how I am surprised that I have not always had these thoughts...! What a strange thing it is that a little health or the poor business of a shop should keep us so senseless of these great things that are coming so fast upon us!

The tragic person who commits suicide imagines that he is putting an end to his existence with its pains and sorrows. In fact, he is launching himself into what could very well be eternal torment. One of the memories that may torment him the most for eternity will be that he rejected the forgiveness of sins that Christ purchased for him and doubly sealed his righteous doom by throwing away his own life and with it his last chance to be saved!

Through the lives and deaths of two men, Christ describes the two destinies, one or the other of which everyone faces at death.

This is not a parable about fictitious people but a true story because one of the characters is named—something Christ never did in His parables. He declared:

...a certain rich man...clothed in purple and fine linen...fared sumptuously every day...[and] a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table...The beggar died [and received a royal welcome by Abraham among the redeemed]. The rich man also died [all the riches in the world will not extend one's life a nanosecond]...and in hell [Gr., *hades*] he lift[ed] up his eyes, being in torments (**Lk 16:19-31**).

No matter how long it lasts, this life is very short at best. James said, "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas 4:14). Moses declared, "for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (**Ps:90:10**). Compared with the endless ages of eternity, man's average lifespan is nothing at all. When we live life from this eternal perspective, we clearly see the folly of trading a few short years of pleasure, popularity, and power for eternal torment in the Lake of Fire. As Christ said, it's a shortsighted, bad bargain: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (**Mt 16:26**)?

Even as a young man, Moses made his choice from an eternal perspective: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to

enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt..." (**Heb:11:24-27**). In contrast, many a soul has traded eternity in heaven with the Lord for momentary earthly rewards.

Momentary? Yes. Satan showed Christ "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" (**Lk 4:5**). From an eternal perspective, a moment is how long the kingdoms of this world last. Surely, he is a fool who barter an eternal reward in heaven for the fleeting momentary honors that can only be had from Satan, "the god of this world" (**2 Cor:4:4**), by denying the Lord.

It is easy for us to see the vanity of earthly honors in the case of Daniel, whom Belshazzar offered to be "clothed with scarlet, have a chain of gold around [his] neck, and be the third ruler in the kingdom" (**Dan:5:16**). Daniel wasn't even being asked to compromise his beliefs to receive these honors. Daniel's response was, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another" (**v 17**). He knew that the kingdom would fall in a few hours.

Nevertheless, at Belshazzar's command, "they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation...that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

And Darius the Median took the kingdom..." (**v. 29**). This was one of the shortest lived promotions in history! Nor can any reward that this world may offer last any longer in comparison to eternity.

"Give thy rewards to another," should be the Christian's response in the face of every temptation to seek or to accept the praise of men. Sadly, the church has an entire stable of the horses of temporal honors that many Christian leaders love to ride in pride's parade. How many pastors, preachers, authors, and Christian leaders have phony doctorates in front of their names—and even insist on being called by that title, which they basically purchased from a diploma mill. It is a scandal among evangelicals today! They would never have been tempted by such vanity had they kept an eternal perspective.

Nor can anything so motivate us to share the gospel of Christ with others as the same eternal perspective. Each soul we meet is an eternal being who will never cease to exist but will either enjoy eternal bliss in God's presence—or eternal torment. May I, and each Berean, keep that eternal perspective firmly in our hearts. May we seek to rescue as many as we can from the broad road that leads to destruction, bringing them onto the narrow way that leads to life everlasting

LOVE, JUSTICE, AND JUDGMENT

June 1, 2007

Hunt, Dave

Most of the world has little concern for the Nazi Holocaust with its 6 million victims, or for the earlier Muslim holocaust of far more millions from France to China, or the more recent Islamic outrages of 9/11, and the ongoing slaughter in southern Sudan, which almost daily adds to the 2 million already slain there by Muslims practicing *sharia* imposed by Khartoum. Some, however, cannot forget the sacrifice of innocent lives and are tormented by the question, "How could a good God allow such untold suffering?" At a "Candlelight vigil...for a peaceful world" at Harvard Divinity School,

The...words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were rehearsed [and] those of Mohandas Gandhi. A song about the Rwandan massacre was recited, with the wrenching appeal to a silent God--"Where were you?"¹

God was right where He's been for thousands of years: eager to bless mankind but restrained by His wisdom and integrity from rewarding unrepentant rebellion. The Creator loves mankind too much to surrender the world to proud fools. If He does not fulfill His warnings of judgment, who could believe His promises of blessing?

But is God really silent? Or is the world deaf to His voice? How is it possible to overlook Christ's loving plea from the Cross, "Father, forgive them..." (Lk 23:34)? Yet, how can we bring together that prayer with Christ's solemn declaration that "the Father...hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (Jn:5:22)? Can love, justice, and judgment coexist?

How can we reconcile the idea of Christ willingly suffering for the sins of the world with "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather...them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 13:41,42)? Why would Christ, whom "the Father sent...to be the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn:4:14), send people to hell for whom, with infinite and sacrificial love, He died in payment of the penalty for their sins?

How can we fit "God is love" (1 Jn:4:8,16) into the fact that God "hath appointed a day, in...which he will judge the world in righteousness [by Jesus Christ]..." (Acts:17:31)? Judgment that will sentence perhaps billions to eternal torment doesn't seem to agree with David's grateful praise:

"The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works" (**Ps:145:9**). How could the "tender mercies" of a God who is "good to all" consign *anyone* to eternal doom?

Can we really wrap in one package "For God so loved the world" (**Jn:3:16**) with "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rv 20:15)? How about, "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pt 3:9) and the "great white throne" judgment (Rv 20:11,12)? Surely multitudes will perish, being taken directly from that final verdict to the Lake of Fire. Is God contradicting Himself?

If God is really "good to all" and is sincerely "not willing that any should perish," why doesn't He welcome everyone to heaven? Why must so many spend eternity in the Lake of Fire? Couldn't there be another way? Has man's choice brought a just doom upon his head? Shall we blame God--or His creatures--for eternal punishment? Where is God's love?

Unquestionably, the Bible teaches love, justice, and judgment. But must God's justice and judgment trample on His love? How can "the gift of God is eternal life" (**Rom:6:23**) agree with "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (**Jn:3:36**)?

These are vital questions, which we must contemplate prayerfully if we are to understand and know God as He desires: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his

might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (**Jer:9:23,24**). What do lovingkindness, judgment, and eternal doom have to do with one another?

The Cross of Christ is the only answer to such questions. Does God really love us? "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (**Rom:5:8**); "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (**1 Jn:4:9**). Christ said, "For God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..." (**Jn:3:16**). How great God's love for all mankind must be to give His son "into the hands of sinners" (Mt 26:45) to be rejected, falsely accused, mocked, despised, spat upon, and nailed to a cross--yet to make that cross the means of man's [salvation](#)!

Consider the awesome and incomprehensible statement, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him [to] make his soul an offering for sin..." (Is 53:10). God the Father was *pleased* to punish Christ for the sins of the world, even for the sins of those who would curse God and mock and reject His Son? Yes! We must ponder such questions if we are to understand God.

No greater proof could be given of the evil that lurks in every human heart than what

man did to Christ. And at the same time, the Cross is the greatest possible proof of God's love and desire to bless all mankind. No wonder Paul rejoiced, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (**Gal:6:14**)! In life's trials, defeats, and losses, those in whom Christ is truly Lord can take refuge in Paul's logic: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (**Rom:8:32**).

Solomon declared, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting, get understanding" (Prv 4:7). We have the promise, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God...and it shall be given him" (Jas 1:5). God wants us to understand His character and will, to meditate deeply upon the means and the price of our redemption--and in the Cross "to behold the beauty of the LORD" (**Ps:27:4**) as we otherwise could not.

Is there anything more wonderful in the history of the universe than God's gift of His only begotten Son to the world? How can we be content with only a shallow understanding of the Cross? No wonder we lack the depth of gratitude Christ's sacrifice deserves. And how tragic that we could ever allow an entire day or even more to pass without expressing our deep heartfelt thanks to our God for mercifully and graciously saving our souls!

I think often of the words, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Sometimes it

causes me to *tremble, tremble, tremble...*!" Yes, we were there--it was our sins he "bare...in his own body on the tree" (1 Pt 2:24). The earth shook, rocks were ripped asunder by God's hand, and angels must have trembled with rage to see such despicable creatures treating their Lord with hatred and contempt! Time and eternity were split in two. Heaven and earth would never be the same. The universe and course of history were forever drenched in the shed blood of Christ!

And today, the world could not care less about that all-defining event. How grievous it is that mankind in general never thinks of, never honors, and never acknowledges the God who gives life to all. Governments imagine they can do whatever they please. Political and religious leaders, thinking they are in charge of this world, meet in their international conclaves to make peace on earth--and God is left out of the entire process. All man wants is a religious "blessing" upon his plans, and any god will do.

Incredibly, many who claim to believe on Christ are foremost in mocking Him. He promised to send the "Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive" (**Jn:14:17**), to lead us "into all truth" (**Jn:16:13**). In flagrant contempt and unbelief, declaring that the world has another source outside God's Word of "the truth [that] shall make you free" (**Jn:8:32**), the evangelical church has turned aside to [psychology](#), the "wisdom of this world," which God "hath...made foolish" (**1 Cor:1:20**). And those who preach this foolishness are looked up to by evangelicals

worldwide as the most insightful authors and conference speakers.

Christ said, "because I live, ye shall live also" (**Jn:14:19**). What did He mean? This was Christ's thrilling assurance that He would live His resurrection life in those who put their trust in Him. Paul rejoiced, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..." (**Gal:2:20**). He referred to "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (**Col:1:27**), declaring that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (**Col:3:4**).

Imagine, then, the contemptuous insult and brazen slap in the face to Christ when those in whom He dwells as their very life complain that the life He desires to live in them doesn't suit them. Adding unbelief to insult, they claim that His Word is not true, that His promises don't work for them! Who can fathom the unthinkable tragedy that those purchased by His blood, to whom Christ wants to impart "life...more abundantly" (**Jn:10:10**), turn to Freud, Jung, Rogers, Maslow, Adler, et al. (atheistic anti-Christians to a man), for help in living the Christian life! Could there be a more hurtful rejection of our Lord by His own, whom He has redeemed with His blood?

That arch heretic, Norman Vincent Peale (who said on national TV that there are many other ways to God besides Jesus Christ) was praised by Billy Graham and other church leaders. It was Peale who brought [psychology](#)/psychiatry into the church some 70 years ago. For decades, the entire evangelical community rejected this

enemy intrusion as heresy destructive of the faith before succumbing to its siren song. Today, secular [psychology](#) and psychiatry, the most atheistic of all professions, are the darlings of the evangelical church.

How could this happen? It happened through baptizing [psychology](#) by attaching the word "Christian" to it. That deceit convinced Christians of the outrageous fiction that God's Word does not provide sufficient guidance for today's living but that we need additional help from rank unbelievers and Christ haters in order to live for Christ. As *Newsweek* reported long ago:

Christians are realizing that being born again is no vaccine against mental and emotional illness. One result: Christian psychotherapy, a for-profit movement aimed at mining new markets by offering evangelicals a Bible-based approach to problems from anxiety and depression to sexual abuse and schizophrenia.

"We use the same teachings and principles as other psychiatrists," says psychiatrist Steven Schultz, medical director at LifeCare's Ft. Worth center. "But we do it in the context that we're Christians."²

What a damning confession; and what delusion! There is no "Christian context" for psychotherapy, which didn't exist until 1,800 years after Christ paid the penalty for our sins and the gospel began to be preached (**Mk 1:1**; **Phil:4:15**). Schultz could

not have said more clearly that, for Christian psychotherapists, Paul's "Christ in you, the hope of glory" is an empty slogan without meaning for today's Christians! Besides, if everyone believed on Christ, found "peace through the blood of his cross" (**Col:1:20**), and obeyed His Word, *the truth* would make them free (**Jn:8:31,32**)--and psychiatrists and psychologists, "Christian" or not, would be unable to earn a living for lack of clients. That "for-profit" growth industry is jealously protected and promoted by its adherents at the eternal cost of souls!

Under the leadership of some "crept in unawares" (Jude 4), the steady decline in respect for and defense of "the faith once delivered to the saints," though foretold, is utterly staggering! Hundreds of examples could be given. The YMCA and YWCA, begun as Christian organizations, are now strongholds of yoga and godlessness and as far from the gospel of Jesus Christ as possible this side of hell. The Reformation's gospel of [salvation](#) by grace through faith in Christ alone has been betrayed and wed to Roman [Catholic](#) works and rituals by Lutherans, Calvinists, and others who practice infant baptism for [salvation](#) and boast of the "real presence" of Christ in the bread and wine of remembrance. "Protestant evangelical biblical scholars" quoted in the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* openly reject the inspiration, authorship, and prophecies of Scripture--yet are highly praised by evangelical leaders. (See TBC, Aug. 2005.)

All of America's first Universities (Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Dartmouth, et al.) were founded by Christians as centers for spreading the gospel of Christ to the glory of God. Instead, these schools today proclaim [atheism](#) and false religions. As only one example, Harvard was founded in 1636 to train evangelical ministers. Today, its Divinity School prides itself on being open to any religion. Recently headed by a Roman [Catholic](#) priest, its current dean is a scholar of Islamic history highly regarded by Muslims. The director of its Center for the Study of World Religions, a scholar of Buddhism, has rewritten the Sunday school chorus to say, "Buddha loves me! This I know, for the Dharma tells me so." With its multi-billion dollar income and endowments and backing by Christians, Harvard and its Divinity School are bastions of liberalism, ecumenism, pro-abortionism, radical feminism, relativism, and anti-Christian rhetoric. And this is progress toward a greater truth?

Man thinks he is in charge of the universe. He believes that the God who made it is supposed to honor the serpent's promise of Godhood to Adam and Eve, step back, and let man run the show. God has been letting man do just that for 6,000 years, except for answering righteous prayer, intervening appropriately on behalf of His own, and executing judgment when absolutely necessary, as in the case of [Israel](#), to maintain His integrity.

How can we wrap love, justice, and judgment in the same package? Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rv 3:19). If God were not absolutely faithful in fulfilling

His warnings of judgment, who could believe His promises of forgiveness and blessing? Love, justice, and judgment do go together. There is no justice without judgment and no love without justice.

It would no more be love for God not to punish evil than to fail to rescue those caught in Satan's net. But **salvation** can come only on the righteous basis of the penalty being fully paid--and then only for those who accept that payment by Christ on

their behalf. And that saving faith in Christ can only come in the confession that He was justly punished in our place.

May the love of Christ constrain us to weep for the lost and present the gospel to all who will hear. And in accepting the life He gives, let us live no longer unto ourselves but "unto him which died for [us], and rose again" (2 Cor:5:15).

Endnotes

1. Alec Solomita, *Harvard University Gazette*, November 7, 2002, from its archives.
2. Kenneth L. Woodward with Susan Miller, "These Souls Were Made for Shrinking: 'Christian therapy' is winning more converts," *Newsweek*, September 14, 1992, 60.

THE SECRET SEDUCTION

July 1, 2007

Hunt, Dave

The latest occult scam to capture the imagination of the West is called *The Secret*. The book by that name, a top *New York Times* bestseller, has quickly sold more than 6 million copies and the DVD over 2 million copies. Both contain numerous errors, misrepresentations, false premises, and false promises. Who cares? You should. With the following information, you could rescue someone from hell.

The numerous misrepresentations begin with the title itself. *The Secret* is not a secret at all, but recycled Hinduism, shamanism, and New Age folly. One of many huge lies is its claim: "You create your own reality with your mind." This was the serpent's false promise to Eve--the promise of godhood (**Gen:3:5**). Embracing that delusion cost Eve and her descendants Eden's paradise--and would have barred mankind from heaven had not Christ died for the sins of the world. In the 6,000 years since Eden, the serpent's promise has not been fulfilled in *even one person's life*.

Misinformation and false claims follow one another in a dizzying parade of absurdities. Sprinkled throughout the book and DVD is the claim that the Secret is scientifically proved to be true. For example, "It has been

scientifically proven that an affirmative thought is hundreds of times more powerful than a negative thought."¹ When? Where? How?

No scientific tests ever measured positive and negative thoughts, nor could there be any such tests because thoughts are nonphysical and their "power" cannot be measured. Thoughts exist outside the realm of physical [science](#). Nor is there any such thing as "mental [science](#)" or a "[science](#) of the mind." That fact is only one of many reasons why [psychology](#) could never be a [science](#), in spite of decades of claiming that it is.

The bait on the hook of *The Secret* is stated repeatedly: "*The Secret* gives you anything you want: happiness, health, and wealth....You can have, do, or be anything you want....We can have whatever it is that we choose."² Common sense replies, "Thanks, but no thanks." But millions being introduced to the Secret are excited and eager to make it work for them.

The foundational lies are basically that there is no personal God who created the universe and who makes laws that man must obey. The universe has always been here, yet we create it with our minds through numerous

occult laws that exist to serve our selfish desires. One of the most enticing is "the law of attraction": whatever thought (health, wealth, disaster, gain, loss, pain, joy, etc.) you hold in your mind, you will attract to yourself as a reality of your life. We are all gods who create our individual destinies with our thoughts.

The amorality of the Secret ought to be evident to anyone who stops to think. Hitler was no more responsible for the Holocaust than were its victims who collectively created it with their minds. So it was with the Titanic, the crash of every plane, and the victims of every rape and murder.

The book and DVD are based upon nothing more than statements of a number of supposed experts in the area of success motivation and positive thinking. Who are they? A "nonaligned, transreligious progressive... spiritual luminaries... teacher of spiritual metaphysics... Feng Shui master... successful business leaders... founders of the New Thought movement... a modern-day spiritual messenger, et al." They are certainly not in the same class as Jesus Christ, who proved His deity with His sinless life and miracles, died for our sins, and rose from the dead. The "experts" cited and quoted in *The Secret* are not a group into whose hands anyone should trust their lives, much less their eternal destiny.

In the book and DVD, like a broken record, the same appealing but transparent lie is repeated over and over: "There isn't a single thing that you cannot do with this knowledge... *the Secret* can give you

whatever you want... if you see it in your mind, you're going to hold it in your hand... you create your life with your thoughts... your thoughts are seeds, and the harvest you reap will depend on the seeds you plant... your life is in your hands...what you think about you bring about.... You will attract everything that you require. If it's money you need you will attract it... like Aladdin's Genie, the law of attraction grants our every command... the moment you begin to 'think properly'... this power within you that's greater than the world... will take over your life... feed... clothe... guide... protect... direct you, sustain your very existence. If you let it. Now that is what I know, for sure...."

Now this is what I know for sure: while the historic individuals named and quoted in the book and DVD achieved some temporary material possessions and success, they all failed in that which is far more important: health. Yes, most, but not all, maintained a satisfactory level of good health most of their brief lives, but the health of every one of them eventually failed. One mark of failure they all share: they all died. In the end, the Secret could not keep them alive, though they tried every technique it offered. And those proponents of *the Secret* still alive today will inevitably suffer the same fate.

According to what these supposed masters of the Secret all declare with great confidence, they should not have died. If the Secret were true and they properly applied it--"The Secret can give you whatever you want"--they should all still be alive. In fact,

none of the masters of the Secret even exceeded the normal life expectancy--but they surely should have if *the Secret* were true. The obvious fact is that the Secret is a deception that offers a false hope, which continues to deceive mankind--and an unconscionably amoral hope at that.

Let's take a quick look at some of these "masters of the Secret." Ralph Waldo Emerson is one of the most highly praised. He declared, "The secret is the answer to all that has been, all that is, and all that will ever be." But Emerson lived in a state of deteriorating health and financial need for his last 10 years. He died at age 79. Surely he wanted to live a longer, healthier, happier life. Why didn't he hold such thoughts and, by the law of attraction, bring what he wanted into actuality? For the same reason that no one else ever has or ever will. "The Secret" is a lie from Satan, "the father of lies" (**John:8:44**). It keeps those who believe it from faith in the true God and the [salvation](#) He provided for sinners through Christ's sacrifice for the sins of all mankind upon the Cross.

What about Prentice Mulford, another of the supposed masters of the Secret and a founder of the New Thought movement, which is based upon the same delusion? He said that there is a material mind and a Spiritual mind; a lower self and a higher Self, and the latter receives thoughts from the "Supreme Power."

But that "Power" failed him. It gave him the thought that he wanted to be a member of the California State Assembly. Mulford was nominated, but lost the election. Why didn't his thoughts bring about his desire? The Secret, and New Thought, its mirror image,

didn't work for him, one of the "experts" held up as an example in the book and DVD. Finally, the Secret failed him entirely: he died at the age of 57--surely a shorter life than he had hoped to live.

Or what about Wallace Wattles, a diligent student of the Secret most of his short life and another founder of New Thought? His most famous book was [The Science of Getting Rich](#), yet he lived most of his life in poverty. This crowning achievement of his life was published in 1910. He died in 1911 at the age of 51. Wouldn't he have wanted to live longer to see the success of that book and to write more about the marvelous benefits of "*the Secret*," though it failed him? But he couldn't add one minute to his life. *The Secret* didn't work for Wattles, one of its chief proponents.

The book and DVD also contain factual errors. The statement is made that through applying *the Secret*, the Babylonians, "became one of the wealthiest races in history." No, it was through their military might at the cost of the lives, torture, and slavery of multitudes of victims. Babylon was one of the cruelest empires in history. And this commends *the Secret*? Thankfully, Babylon is no more. Why did it fall? Did *the Secret* fail the Babylonians, or did they fail to apply it? The evidence is overwhelming: *the Secret* is a lie.

This delusion that reality is created by the mind has been offering false hope to mankind for thousands of years. It is the standard teaching of Christian [Science](#), the Church of Religious [Science](#), Unity School of Christianity, New Thought, and other Mind [Science](#) cults. Never before, however, has it been packaged so attractively and cleverly for promotion to the general public as in *The*

Secret. Disillusionment of multitudes will follow.

Most of the quick spread of this new presentation of the ancient and well-known supposed *Secret* is due to promotion by Larry King and Oprah Winfrey. Millions of their fans bought the book and DVD. On April 5, 2007, Oprah Winfrey discussed *the Secret* with alleged nonphysical entities "channeled" by *Secret* promoter, Esther Hicks. As we have often shown, so-called "spirit communication" with the dead that used to occur in séances (strictly forbidden in the Bible as demonic - **Deut 18:11, Lev:20:6**) is now called "channeling" and has long been promoted openly on radio and TV. Anyone with even a small amount of common sense would recognize many moral and practical problems. What *The Secret* promotes is completely amoral and self-centered: "The law [of "attraction"] responds to your thoughts, no matter what they may be....People who have drawn wealth into their lives...think thoughts of abundance and wealth...nothing else exists in their minds." "You've got to feel good about money to attract more to you....Start to say and feel...I am a money magnet. I love money." (The Bible says not money itself but "the love of money is the root of all evil" - **1 Tim:6:10**).

What about selfless love, kindness, mercy, goodness, charity, compassion, generosity, sharing with others? Such thoughts would interfere with the single-minded goal of drawing wealth to oneself. *The Secret*, believed and applied, cannot help but increase one's selfishness and bring those applying it into conflict with one another.

Let's say that "Jones" believes that *the Secret* will give him anything he wants.

Wanting to be the president of the X corporation where he works, and using the "law of attraction" to get what he wants, Jones holds in his mind the thought, "I am the president of X Corporation." Will Jones's thoughts oust the current president and put himself in his place? Suppose there happen to be twenty other ambitious and avaricious people, from factory workers to janitors, from secretaries and bookkeepers to the vice president, who also want to be president of X corporation and are each relying upon *the Secret's* "law of attraction" to fulfill their passion. To help accomplish their selfish desire, they each visualize themselves in the president's chair behind the big desk in his plush office. Will *the Secret* simultaneously make each of them the president? Who will win this battle of minds in the selfish competition that this ancient, amoral, alleged secret has spawned?

One of the supposedly successful practitioners of the occult principles who is quoted in the book, Lisa Nichols, is described as a "powerful advocate of personal empowerment"--more selfishness. She says, "Thank God that there's a time delay, that all your thoughts don't come true instantly."³ What "God" does she mean? Where would God fit into a universe He neither made nor controls and that is being recreated by human thoughts continually--a universe that stands ever ready to give mankind whatever selfish desires are directed toward it?

Advocates of *the Secret* and New Thought do not believe in the personal, living God of the Bible, who asks for man's love and submission to His will. Their god is impersonal, a sort of Star Wars Force or

universal Mind that has no mind of its own but exists solely to give us whatever we want. Joe Vitale is another one of the expert practitioners of *the Secret* quoted in the book and DVD. On *Larry King Live* a caller asked, I'm just curious, where does God come into "*the Secret*"?

Vitale responded, "God is all of us. God is the secret and everything about it. This is a law from God."⁴ This, of course, is nonsense, the ancient religion of pantheism: you're God, I'm God, the tree is God, everything is God. Then "God" is both good and evil, death as well as life, has no morals, etc. If everything is "God," then "God" means nothing. Pantheism is virtual [atheism](#).

Another ancient occult technique used by shamans for thousands of years is visualization: the belief that a mental picture held firmly in the mind will eventually manifest itself in the physical universe. Of course, this too is a delusion. No one has ever been able to demonstrate this ability. If we all had the power that *The Secret* promises, ours would be a terrifying existence with billions of Darth Vaders and Obe Wan Kenobies zapping one another with mind power!

Many Christians, as we have seen, teach basically the same occultism taught to C.G. Jung by "familiar spirits" (1 **Sam:28:9**; **Isaiah:8:19**). Yonggi Cho has taught and practiced the same for years, as have numerous Christian psychologists and charismatic leaders. Visualization to create one's own reality was the heart and soul of all that Norman Vincent Peale taught and practiced: "The idea of imaging...has been implicit in all the speaking and writing I have done..."⁵ Robert Schuller has long taught

the same occultism: "I have practiced and harnessed the power of the inner eye and it works....Thirty years ago we started with a vision of a church. It's all come true."⁶

Cho, pastor of the largest church in the world, claims that the Holy Spirit told him that he must visualize a clear picture of what he was praying for, or his prayer could not be answered. But all Cho could hold in his mind was the gross outline of what he wanted; he could not "see" or even imagine the atomic structure of these objects, which was their underlying reality.

Anyone who is willing to believe that mankind creates the universe with its collective thoughts (or that any individual, by visualization, can bring into existence anything that would be part of daily experience) has willfully given himself over to Satan and is susceptible to any other lie he offers. Obviously, the universe was here before man. To believe that the vast expanse of the cosmos with its trillions of stars and moons that no man has ever seen, including the many subatomic particles no one has even imagined, is all being created and held together with the collective thoughts of humanity, is to commit intellectual, moral, and spiritual suicide.

Those who believe such lies as *The Secret* offers have deliberately turned from the true God who has revealed Himself in each [science](#) and in the universe He made and have opened themselves to demonic delusion that will eventually lead them to eternal separation from the God who loves them and the Christ who died to redeem them. Let's rescue as many as we can!

Endnotes

1. Rhonda Byrnes, *The Secret* (New York: Atria Books, 2006), 1.
2. *Ibid.*, 22.
3. *Ibid.*, 194.
4. *Larry King Live*, March 8, 2007.
5. Norman Vincent Peale, *Positive Imaging* (Fawcett Crest, 1982), Introduction.
6. Robert Schuller booklet, *The Power of the Inner Eye*.

TOWARD THE PRIZE

October 1, 2007

Hunt, Dave

Paul was a man of fervent prayer, with a seemingly endless list of dear ones on his heart. To the believers in Rome, even before he had been there, Paul wrote, "without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (**Rom:1:9**). Likewise, to those at Ephesus whom he knew well, "I...cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (**Eph:1:16**). The number of believers he mentioned by name in his epistles and for whom he daily prayed supported his statement: "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" (**2 Cor:11:28-29**).

Of course, Paul's prayers expressed much that he desired God to provide for various believers. First and foremost in his heart, however, was one passion he had for all believers everywhere and in every time of history--and that would include us today. He expressed it in various ways in his epistles. Here it is in his prayer for the Ephesians:

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him [to] know what is the hope of his calling [and] the exceeding

greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead...." (**Eph:1:17-20**)

Paul wanted believers everywhere to know and understand God's ultimate eternal purpose for them. His prayer was not that this purpose would be accomplished one day in eternity. There was no question about that, nor could Paul's prayer play any part in its ultimate realization. God had already determined to accomplish this goal for every Christian without fail, and He would do it by the very power with which Christ was raised from the dead. That it will be realized for every true Christian is as certain as our [salvation](#). What was it, then, for which Paul prayed? That we would here and now in this present life know and understand "the hope of his [God's] calling."

What is this hope? And if it unfailingly will be realized for eternity in glory, no matter what we may do or not do, why is it so important that we understand it ahead of time? Herein lies one of the key elements in a victorious life of fruitfulness to the glory of God and fullness of Christ's joy and ours.

The Apostles understood this hope well. Paul declared that we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (**Rom:5:2**). This passage and many others make it clear that "the glory of God" is not only something that will surround us in heaven but it will be revealed in us: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (**Col:1:27**). He calls it a "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints" (**Col:1:26**). The fact that this promised "glory" is future and as yet unseen is likewise clear: "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (**Rom:8:24-25**).

Paul referred to "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" as "that blessed hope" (**Titus:2:13**). How does that relate to "the hope of our calling?" Why would the hope of Christ's appearing at last to His own, in glory, be specially blessed?

We don't look to our own reasoning and speculation in seeking to understand the Christian's ultimate hope. We search the Scriptures, and the more deeply we understand, the more clearly we see that the Bible is indeed the Word of the true and living God, one integrated love letter to mankind from Genesis to Revelation.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...." On the sixth day, "God created man in his own image" (**Gen:1:1-27**). That statement has nothing to do with man's physical body, male or female, for "God is a Spirit" (**Jn:4:24**). We can only

conclude that man was made in the spiritual image of God to manifest to the universe the beauties of God's holy character: His selfless love, compassion, grace, gentleness, patience, holiness, and moral purity--as well as the power of choice. The latter, of course, was essential if man was to love God and his fellows--but that power, necessarily, opened the door for man to choose for himself rather than for his Creator!

In Adam's irrational and unthinkable rebellion against the God to whom he owed his very existence, Self (the autonomous self as "god") had its awful birth and, in partnership with Satan, has been trying to take over mankind's destiny ever since. Battles rage within and without as each individual Self competes not only with God but with every other Self for supremacy: conflict between husbands and wives, children and their siblings, parents and children, in a cacophony of "I, My, Me, Mine."

The moment man rebelled, the Spirit of God departed from man's spirit, and the image of God in which man had been created was shattered. Self was left to the unhappy loneliness of its insane pride. Imagine worms boasting of their power and glory and one gets a picture of the pitiful creature called man, mired deeply in sin, parading his positive self-image and self-esteem before the throne of God!

Jesus declared that the only hope for any man was to "deny himself [that wicked Self born in Eden], and take up his [individual] cross, and follow me" (**Mat:16:24-26**; Mk

8:31-34; Lk 9:23). In defiance of our Lord's command, Christian [psychology](#) (which is trustingly looked to for guidance by almost the entire evangelical church) declares that man's great need is, instead, to nourish and cherish the Self. Rejecting Christ's command, the evangelical church now follows Christian psychologists, who have become the new infallible priesthood. They have brought into the evangelical church the foolish wisdom of the world (**1 Cor:1:20**) with the excuse that "all truth is God's truth." That mantra confuses mere facts of logic or [science](#) with "the truth" found only in "the word of truth" (**Ps:119:43; 2 Cor:6:7; Eph:1:13; Col:1:5; 2 Tim:2:15; Jas 1:18**), which alone "shall make you free" (**Jn:8:32**).

Rather than denying self, "Christian [psychology](#)," thinking it can improve God's infallible and all-sufficient Word with the theories of atheistic anti-Christians, coddles rebellious Self with the offer of "self-esteem, self-love, self-acceptance, self-image, self-improvement, self-assertion," and all the other selfisms, ad nauseam. Bruce Narramore admits that these theories are not found in "the word of truth," but Christian psychologists have borrowed them from Christ-defying humanists:

Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem. It is a good and necessary focus.¹

[James Dobson](#)'s ministry is built upon this same humanist foundation. We have quoted

him saying that Christian [psychology](#) is a good career for any young Christian to aspire to, "provided their faith is strong enough to withstand the humanism to which they will be exposed." So the evangelical church, under the influence of Christian psychologists, has been reduced to reliance upon humanists for instruction in how to provide essential moral and spiritual counsel, which the Holy Spirit somehow failed to include in the Word of Truth, even though it claims to give us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3).

How can so many Christians turn from the clear teaching of Scripture to Satan's lies? There is widespread ignorance of God's Word in the evangelical church. Even worse is the eagerness to follow the world in contemptuous disregard of what the Bible unmistakably teaches. Much of the blame must be placed upon Christian psychologists, who have led the way in this rebellion. The effect is everywhere. [Robert Schuller](#) (who for years has had the largest TV audience each Sunday morning), in a book with an introduction by his mentor, arch heretic Norman Vincent Peale, boldly defies God:

Self-love is a crowning sense of self-worth. It is an ennobling emotion of self-respect...an abiding faith in yourself. It is sincere belief in yourself.

It comes through self-discovery, self-discipline, self-forgiveness and self-acceptance. It produces self-reliance, self-confidence and an inner security, calm as the night.²

Self has taken the place of God. Sadly, the specious belief that humanists can teach us how to counsel from the Bible through psychological techniques is widely accepted among evangelicals today. Church leaders are taking their flocks into one false teaching after another (from the avid pursuit of "signs and wonders" to numerical growth at the expense of sound doctrine). Many such errors have been exposed in these pages. Here again Self, inflated by Christian [psychology](#), is the culprit. Jesus said, "If any man will [i.e., wills to] do his [the Father's] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" ([Jn:7:17](#)). Scripture will not be understood nor sound doctrine valued and defended as long as Self has not been denied in surrender to the will of God.

In our lives, we need God. We need the Holy Spirit. We need Christ as our very life itself, allowing Him to restore in and express through us the image of God in which we were created. We have forgotten heaven and become enamored of this world, living our lives as though the only plans God has for us pertain to earth. Yes, some of our works seem good and spiritual: preaching the gospel and giving out tracts, writing Christian books and making Christian films, building missionary organizations, larger churches, and Christian universities, doing charitable deeds-and on and on it goes, keeping us so busy serving the Lord that we can scarcely find time to love and worship Him.

Believing the lie that one can become so "heavenly minded" as to be of "no earthly

good" (surely Christ was the most heavenly minded man who ever lived, yet He was also the most earthly good!), we have lost sight of "the hope of his calling." I do not minimize the lust, self-indulgence, entrapment in sin, failure to pray, neglect of Bible study, the forsaking of Christian fellowship, and the carnality that is rampant today among those who claim to be born-again evangelicals. These failings, however, are easily recognized by anyone who knows the Lord and has a modicum of [conscience](#).

It is a deadly error, however, to imagine that victory over these sins comes through getting "busy for God." No matter in what we are falling "short of the glory of God," the problem is the same: we have lost sight of (or perhaps never understood) what Paul says is "the hope of our calling."

Perhaps no one served Christ as wholeheartedly as Paul. At the same time, no one loved Him more. Consider carefully Paul's explanation of the secret of his life: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" ([Philippians:3:13-14](#)). Paul then exhorts, "Be followers together of me..." ([Philippians:3:17](#)). What is this prize that we should all be pressing toward, as Paul did?

Clearly, it is not an individual award given to a "winner" in competition for excelling others. The prize is "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" itself that Paul desired for all Christians to understand and press toward. This "high calling" is why Christ died

and rose again for us! Peter explains that "the God of all grace...has called us unto his eternal glory" (1 Pt 5:10). Falling short of that glory is the biblical definition of sin (**Rom:3:23**). The restoration of that glory is fully assured in eternity for every true disciple of Christ, yet we are to pursue it even now. Laying everything else aside for this goal was the secret of Paul's remarkable life!

Of Christ it is written, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (**Heb:12:2**). That joy was twofold: knowing that He had faithfully accomplished what the Father had given Him to do; and "bringing many sons unto glory" (**Heb:2:10**) in His very image. The "hope of his calling" is the joy set before us: the joy of at last fully becoming all that the Father's heart of love desires for us so that Christ will "see of the travail of his soul [and] be satisfied" (**Isa:53:11**). The "hope of his calling" is beautifully expressed in this old hymn (excerpted here) written by John Nelson Darby, one of the founders in the early 1830s of the so-called "Plymouth Brethren":

And is it so? I shall be like thy Son? Is this
the grace which He for me has won?
Father of Glory (thought beyond all
thought), In glory to His own blest
likeness brought!
O Jesus, Lord...myself the prize and
travail of Thy soul! Yet it must be!

Thy love had not its rest were thy
redeemed not with Thee, fully bless'd.
That love that gives not as the world but
shares all it possesses with its loved
co-heirs.

Nor I alone: Thy loved ones all, complete,
in glory round Thee there with joy shall
meet;

All...for Thy glory like Thee, Lord: object
supreme of all, by all adored....

The heart is satisfied, can ask no more: all
thought of self is now, forever, o'er.

Christ, its unmingled Object, fills the
heart: in bless'd adoring love its endless
part.

Father of Glory, in Thy presence bright all
this shall be unfolded in the light!

The angel Gabriel told Daniel, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (**Dan:12:3**). John explained when and how this transformation would occur: "When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (**1 Jn:3:2**).

Though that transformation will not be fully realized until we see Him face to face, yet even now, though "we see through a glass, darkly" (**1 Cor:13:12**), we are, as we keep our eyes upon Him, being "changed into the same image from glory to glory...as by the Spirit of the Lord." Let us lay all else aside to press on toward the prize "of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

Endnotes

1. Bruce Narramore, *You're Someone Special* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 22.

2. Robert H. Schuller, *Self-Love, the Dynamic Force of Success: Learn to Love Yourself—the secret of happiness in life, in love, in everything you do* (New York: Hawthorn Books, W. Clement Stone, 1969), 32.

VICTORY IN CHRIST

November 1, 2005

Hunt, Dave

Due to his transforming encounter and continual communion with the risen Christ, Saul of Tarsus “turned the world upside down” (**Acts:17:6**) and established many of the early churches (**2 Cor:11:28**). His epistles account for nearly one-third of the New Testament. What an amazing transformation—for the “chief of sinners” (**1 Tim:1:15**) to become the “chief apostle” (**2 Cor:12:11,12**)! What could have changed Saul from “breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (**Acts:9:1**) to becoming one of them, knowing that he, too, would be hated, persecuted, imprisoned, beaten, and eventually martyred? What “recovery program” helped Paul in this remarkable deliverance and consistent, triumphant life, so that he could say, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (**1 Cor:11:1**)?

Was there a “Murderers Anonymous” or “Persecutors Anonymous” that helped Paul along the path of “recovery” from his wicked past? Was he part of a “small group” of former haters of Christ who found comfort and support in weekly confessing to one another that they were still struggling with impulses to oppose Christ’s church? How else could Paul declare in triumph, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet

not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (**Gal:2:20**)?

If such questions are absurd, what does that say of today’s “recovery programs”?

In fact, neither Paul, nor his fellow apostles, nor anyone in the early church, nor any of the millions who loved Christ so much and were so fervent for “the truth [as it] is in Jesus” (**Eph:4:21**) followed any “recovery program” at all yet were “faithful unto death” (Heb 11). The early church was made up of former “fornicators... idolaters... adulterers... effeminate... abusers of themselves with mankind [i.e. homosexuals/lesbians] ... thieves... covetous... drunkards... revilers [and] extortioners...”. After listing these sins, Paul reminds the Corinthians, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (**1 Cor:6:9-11**). There is not a word about any special programs to keep them “recovering” from their sordid past.

Is it surprising that such wicked people, without any “recovery programs,” were completely delivered from deeply ingrained evil habits to live victoriously in Christ? Of

course not! Such transformation is what our Lord promised to all who would believe in and obey Him! This is the normal Christian life that missionaries for centuries have seen lived out by converted natives in the darkest and most pagan areas of the world. Even in the asphalt jungles of today's world, multitudes are being instantly delivered from "addictions" of every kind and are living victoriously and joyfully for their Lord. It all begins with confessing one's guilt before God and believing that Christ paid the full penalty His justice demanded for sin. Immediately follows the glorious new birth—becoming branches in Christ, the True Vine (Jn 15), who becomes the very life of those who know, love, and obey Him. Newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word (1 Pt 2:2), feed upon it, and begin to grow. Then comes responsibility to live out by faith what God is doing in one's heart:

Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue... knowledge... temperance... patience... godliness... brotherly kindness... charity... that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind...and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore...brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall....(2 Pt 1:5-10)

But Christianity has lately fallen into the hands of leaders who have lost confidence in the sufficiency of Christ, His Word, and the Holy Spirit to live the life of Christ through them and others. They have also destroyed the confidence of their followers.

That lack of faith spawned "Christian psychology" (borrowed from godless humanists who were themselves drowning in sin), with its multiple therapies that the early church never heard of and, without any of them, triumphed gloriously. From this godless source came the many "recovery programs" that are even more popular among Christians today than simple faith in Christ and His Word.

The victorious new life that Christ promised and will Himself live within all who know and trust Him is available to every Christian and requires no special program—just simple faith and obedience. The problem with all "therapies" is that they inherently deny the sufficiency of Christ and His Word to save, sanctify, and keep the worst of sinners. Thus, it is hypocritical for a "program" to claim to be biblical when its very existence denies what the Bible teaches and what the early church knew and proved to be sufficient.

Paul refers to the way unsaved Gentiles live as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God...given...over unto lasciviousness [and] uncleanness with greediness" (**Eph:4:17-22**). Addressing the believers, he says, "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus...." The truth we have been taught must be lived out in our lives. This can only be by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Yet Paul continues in language that makes our responsibility clear:

Put off...the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind...put

on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour...let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour....Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth...grieve not the Holy Spirit....Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us....But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting...but rather giving of thanks. For this we know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words...ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light....(Eph:4:22- 5:8)

There is not a word about any programs to assist in the above. Methods and techniques not found in Scripture that would supposedly suppress the fleshly desires that plague even Christians seeking to live for Christ had not yet been invented in Paul's day. Why are they needed today? They aren't! Isaiah was very blunt: "If they speak not according to this Word [i.e.,

Scripture]...there is no light in them" (8:20). But today the Scripture is being denied.

Certainly no one in the early church (or for centuries thereafter) even imagined that there could possibly be a need among Christians for anything but Christ himself—His cleansing blood and power—to triumph over sin, Satan, and the world. A fervent love for Christ enabled millions for nearly 2,000 years to follow their Lord faithfully, even unto martyrdom, with joy. The secret of their victory has and will be declared to cowering demons and rejoicing angels and as a testimony to the universe for all eternity: "They overcame him [‘the great dragon...called the Devil, and Satan’] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev:12:9, 11).

Christ declared, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (Jn:14:23). Love is the greatest motivating power in the universe. It caused Christ to bear, at infinite cost, the judgment deserved by those who hated and crucified Him—because He loved them. True love would sacrifice anything, including one's own self, for the one loved. No "addiction," lust, or selfish desire can overcome love! Those who claim to be Christians, yet who need some special "deliverance ministry" or "recovery program" to keep their behavior in line with what Christ has commanded, either don't know Him or do not love Him as they ought. So says the Word of God.

To Christians consumed by a passionate gratitude and love for Christ, victory has always come through simple faith in God's promise: "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not [allow] you to be

tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor:10:13). So it has been with the redeemed through the centuries—and ought to be today.

Yet in all ages there have always been those for whom Christ alone through the power of His Word and Spirit was insufficient—who said, in lack of love and unbelief, "I've tried, but it doesn't work; I'm a special case; things are different today; I need some additional help." Some of them became monks and tried to suppress the flesh by abusing it, living in caves and depriving themselves of the blessings God gave to all to be freely enjoyed with thanksgiving, even flagellating themselves, in order (so they thought) to become holy. Many well-meaning Roman Catholic and Orthodox priests and monks still do this today. It's not their sincerity that we doubt but their true knowledge of Christ and their love for Him, which are the only remedy.

Many of the so-called "desert fathers" (See TBC Extra, Oct '05) adopted occult techniques, later popularized as the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. They thought that if they could visualize Christ and biblical events in their imagination, the Bible would become more real and they would mature spiritually. That delusion is still promoted by many Christian leaders today such as Richard Foster, Calvin Miller, Karen Mains, and others. Foster enticed thousands with the deceitful promise of spiritual maturity through occult methods such as the following in Celebration of Discipline (R.

Foster, Harper and Row, Pub., 1978, pp. 24-27):

[Begin] with a daily period of from five to ten minutes...learning to "center down"...[using] two brief exercises....The first [is] called "palms down, palms up"...placing your palms down as a symbolic indication of your desire to turn over any concerns you may have to God. Inwardly you may pray "Lord, I give to You my anger toward John. I release my fear of my dentist appointment....I surrender my anxiety over not having enough money to pay the bills...my frustration over trying to find a baby-sitter for tonight." Whatever it is that weighs on your mind...just say, "palms down." Release it....After several moments of surrender, turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord... "I would like to receive Your divine love for John, Your peace about the dentist appointment, Your patience, Your joy." Whatever you need, you say, "palms up." Having centered down, spend the remaining moments in complete silence....

Another meditation aimed at centering oneself...seated...comfortably, slowly become conscious of your breathing [to] get in touch with...the level of tension within. Inhale deeply, slowly tilting your head back as far as it will go. Then exhale, allowing your head slowly to come forward until your chin nearly rests on your chest. Do this for several moments, praying inwardly something like this: "Lord, I exhale my fear....I inhale Your peace. I exhale my spiritual apathy. I

inhale Your light and life.” Then, as before, become silent....

After you have gained some proficiency in centering down, add a five- to ten-minute meditation on some...tree, plant, bird, leaf, cloud, and each day ponder it carefully and prayerfully. God...uses His creation to show us something of His glory and give us something of His life...as Evelyn Underhill [says]...begin with that...contemplation which the old mystics sometimes called the “discovery of God in His creatures.”

Having practiced for some weeks with the two kinds of meditation listed above, you will want to add the meditation upon Scripture....Take a single event....Seek to live the experience, remembering the encouragement of Ignatius of Loyola to apply all our senses to our task. Smell the sea. Hear the lap of water along the shore. See the crowd. Feel the sun on your head and the hunger in your stomach.... Francis de Sales [says] “represent to your imagination the whole of the mystery on which you desire to meditate as if it really passed in your presence....” As you enter the story...remember that since Jesus...is not bound by time, this event in the past is a living present-tense experience for Him. Hence, you can actually encounter the living Christ in the event...Jesus Christ will actually come to you.

This is, of course, rank occultism. The visualized “Jesus” often takes on a life of its own and does indeed “speak.” This is not the

Lord Jesus Christ come down from the right hand of His Father in heaven, but a seducing spirit, exactly as Paul warned would occur: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron...” (1 Tim:4:1, 2). There is no excuse for falling into such delusion, which is so contrary to the Word of God.

The early Christians lived in the expectant faith that Christ, “who is our life” (Col:3:4), would live that life through them in victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil (1 Jn:2:12-17). Christ promised: “Because I live, ye shall live also” (Jn:14:19). Then why does the church adopt techniques that come from worldly wisdom in order to gain “deliverance” from so-called addictions?

For Paul, every temptation and carnal desire was swept aside by his overpowering passion: “that...Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death” (Phil:1:20); “that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death...that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus....This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil:3:10-14). Is this not what we ought to hold before ourselves to empower our lives to forsake all for the love of our Lord?

As the chorus says, “After all He’s done for me; after all He’s done for me, how can I do less than give Him my best, and live for Him

completely; after all He's done for me!" This

is the response of true love, and it will prevail over all.

WEANING EVANGELICALS OFF THE WORD - PART 1

February 1, 2007

McMahon, T.A.

[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 veneer 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 (**Psalms: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.

WEANING EVANGELICALS OFF THE WORD - PART 2

March 1, 2007

McMahon, T.A.

Last month, in part one of this series, we quoted the Apostle Paul speaking about how Christians would view doctrine in the time prior to the return of Christ for His church: “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). Obviously, biblical doctrine will not be looked upon favorably. The implication is that doctrine will be regarded as rather burdensome, something that Christians of the future won’t want to “endure.” Conforming to sound doctrine involves spiritual discipline, thoughtful diligence, and making choices based on God’s Word that go against the desires of the flesh.

What is sound doctrine? Very simply, it is the teachings of God, including His instructions, His precepts, His commandments—in short, it is every word that He says from Genesis to Revelation. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke:4:4). Yet in the

Last Days, many if not most Christians will not endure sound doctrine.

So what will be left? [Apostasy](#)—a form of Christianity that is a mere shell of what the Bible teaches. It will accommodate the lusts of the flesh under the guise of godliness, as Paul tells us in his second epistle to Timothy. Furthermore, there will be an ample supply of persuasive Christians around who will, wittingly or unwittingly, subtly and not so subtly (but nonetheless surely), subvert sound doctrine. And the process is already well underway.

As we pointed out in part one, Satan’s chief strategy in the seduction of mankind is to undermine, pervert, distort, corrupt, libel, denigrate, and deny the Scriptures by any and every means he can. The end product of his mission will be an apostate religion and church in which its adherents will worship and follow the [Antichrist](#), the man of lawlessness whom Satan will empower. Fulfilling his mission involves a rather simple formula that was terribly effective in the Garden of Eden and throughout the Old Testament and Apostolic times. It has continued throughout church history right up to our present day: to induce humanity to

deviate from and then ultimately reject what God has said. Adam and Eve were the first to succumb. An inherited sin nature made their offspring easier prey for the adversary, the devil, who goes about as a roaring lion, “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter:5:8).

God continually declared to the Israelites that if they obeyed Him they would be blessed, and if they walked in disobedience they would suffer the devastating consequences of their sin: their separation from God, and God’s separation from them, the loss of righteous guidance and protection, and the various disciplinary actions of God, including being subjected to His wrath. Israel’s wilderness experiences in Exodus and through the cycles of rebellion and repentance in the book of Judges testify to the fact of God being true to His word and His warnings. Deuteronomy seems to be an exercise in redundancy as Moses again and again issues God’s instructions to the children of Israel and cautions them to carefully obey what He has commanded. It wasn’t just a matter of law, but of life: “And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life” (Deuteronomy:32:46,47).

Samuel, the prophet and judge, echoes Moses’ exhortation more than three centuries later: “Serve the LORD with all your heart; and turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain” (1

Samuel:12:20,21). Not only is turning from God a pursuit after vanity, something worthless, but the process itself is wickedness: “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Samuel:15:23). Samuel’s inspired analogy underscores not only the evil of rebellion as it relates to idolatry but it provides insight that helps us recognize Satan’s inducements to disobedience that are prevalent in the church today.

Idolatry was the dominant issue. The children of Israel were commanded not to make graven images or gods of silver or gold (Exodus:20:3,4, 23). What was their reply? “All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exodus:24:7). Yet days later, when Moses failed to return from Mount Sinai and fear set in, they turned from the words of God to what they supposed would better meet their emotional and spiritual “felt needs.” They fashioned a physical object to worship—a golden calf.

Although their act was unmitigated rebellion against God, let’s consider what very likely influenced their thinking. Their spiritual leader had disappeared. Panic gripped them. They were more comfortable with the physical forms of worship learned from the Egyptians than with instructions from an invisible God. Perhaps Aaron thought the best way to pacify the people was to give them something their physical senses could relate to—something experientially reassuring.

What’s wrong with taking a wholistic approach, i.e., meeting the needs of body,

mind, and spirit? Wouldn't their worship of a physical thing, as well as the spiritual stimulation of ritual, be "acceptable," as long as it was directed toward the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Aaron must have thought so. He crafted a golden calf, built an altar, oversaw the liturgy, and dedicated the feast "unto the Lord." The Israelites' response was a precursor to the spirit of religious ecumenism and compromise, so prevalent in our day, which is also based upon lies: "These be thy gods, O [Israel](#), which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (**Exodus:32:4**).

We urgently need a biblical understanding of what idolatry comprises. Old Testament examples and the admonitions against it are given by God. Why would they be relevant for us? Because the evangelical church today is following Aaron's example! Most Christians would define idolatry as "whatever takes the place of God in our lives." True. Yet, too often, that rather general answer fails to help us understand the ways and means by which idolatry works. Consequently, we may not have the discernment necessary to be on our guard against it.

Why is idolatry so critical? Let's start with the obvious: The Bible defines idols as false gods (**Psalms:96:5**). They are items of deception and, even worse, the creations of men and devils. To worship them is delusion. The veneration itself often consists of debauchery and depravity, ritual activities completely given over to the physical senses. Idolatry involves materialism and experientialism, totally oriented toward the

flesh. The so-called gods are physically represented and sensually worshiped. Most evangelicals know all this, but what many seem not to understand today is the nature of idolatry and how it subverts our worship of the true and living God.

The worship God desired from the Israelites, His people whom He set apart to receive His Messiah, stands in stark contrast to the religious endeavors of the heathen nations. Rather than giving them images, Moses spoke the words of God to them, and then he wrote the words in a Book. "And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD...and he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people" (**Exodus:24:4,7**). He told them (then wrote it down) that the making of images to represent God is condemned: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (**Exodus:20:4-5**).

Why would God give such a command? Because no image that man could ever draw, engrave, paint, sculpt, fashion through any medium, or conjure up in his mind could truly represent Jehovah God. He is infinite (**1 Kings:8:27**). He is spirit (**John:4:24**). He is invisible (**John:1:18**). Even the God-prescribed places of worship were drastically different from their pagan counterparts. There was nothing physical to worship! The Holy of Holies within the tabernacle, and later in Solomon's temple, contained not the image of God but the

Word of God, represented by the Ark of the Covenant. Contained within the Ark was the Testimony of God, the second set of tablets written by God's own hand (**Deuteronomy:10:1,2**). Again, by the design of God, the emphasis is on the Word.

God has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through words, not images. In like manner, worship must be through His Word, according to His Word.

No doubt He selected words because they are best suited to convey precisely what He wants mankind to know and to do. Words have definite meanings and can be interpreted objectively. Only words, spoken or written, can come close to accurately communicating attributes of our transcendent God and His divine nature. On the other hand, worship aroused by imagery is based upon the imagination rather than upon the teachings of Scripture. Religious images can at best only convey information in a symbolic and superficial way. Their interpretations are mostly subjective, experiential, and rely mainly upon the imagination of the observer. The message of the Bible, however, is not about aesthetic gratification but about our redemption; it's not about our feelings but His truth, which images can never express but only oppose. Jesus prayed to His Father for His disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (**John:17:17**).

The theology of the Bible is instructional. It is given in words so that man can understand it. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (**Proverbs:4:7**).

The Bible encourages faith that is founded upon evidence, logic, and reason. No image-reliant belief system can make those claims, and when the people of the Book turn to religious imagery, they are abandoning reason and following idolatry. That happened to the Israelites throughout their history, including when they were instructed by God to make a bronze serpent as a symbol that ultimately pointed to Christ's death on the Cross, in payment for the sins of the world. They later turned it into an object of idolatry and as a consequence God told them to destroy it (**2 Kings:18:4**).

Throughout its history, Christendom has likewise succumbed to idolatry through imagery and liturgical ritual. Roman Catholic tradition credits St. Veronica as having captured the image of Christ upon her veil, which supposedly became the source for later icons, paintings, and engravings of Jesus. St. Veronica continues to be venerated today when Catholics observe the ritual of the Stations of the Cross. Eastern Orthodoxy developed icons of Christ, Mary, and the Saints as devices for mystically transcending the temporal through imagery that enables one to "spiritually see" indescribable divinity. In the ninth century, the Russian Orthodox Church incorporated icons as a central part of their worship, including a form of divination known as "praying through the icons." Again, this is religious rebellion, which the Scriptures tell us is as the sin of witchcraft.

The Emperor Constantine did much to introduce idolatrous imagery into

Christianity in order to appease the multitudes of pagans he coerced into joining his newly favored religion of the realm. It was during the Middle Ages, however, that the Roman [Catholic](#) Church greatly increased its use of visual imagery. Religious statues, paintings, reliefs, the display of relics, as well as expanded liturgies with the use of luxurious vestments, incense, candles, and processions were increasingly emphasized to encourage the participation of the mostly illiterate population. Rather than educate the people, the Church of Rome fed them an experiential, visual theology that prolonged their ignorance of the Scriptures and bred superstition. By God's grace, Gutenberg's printing press in the fifteenth century and the Reformation in the sixteenth century were instrumental in helping to turn those who "protested" against the abuses of the [Catholic](#) Church back to the Bible.

Astonishingly, the evangelical church is progressively sliding into idolatry as it turns from the Word of God to visual imagery. A goal of the American Bible Society is to put the entire Bible on video to accommodate our visually oriented generation (which has little interest in reading). The Jesus Film, a dramatic representation of the Gospel of Luke, has been the staple of Campus Crusade's overseas evangelical efforts. The very [Catholic](#) movie *The Passion of the Christ* became a runaway box-office hit, largely due to the overwhelming support it received from evangelicals. Biblically conservative mission organizations such as Gospel for Asia are using Mel Gibson's Hollywood production as part of its outreach program. Millions of *The Passion*

of the *Christ* DVDs were purchased by evangelical churches for their Sunday schools, Bible studies, and small group meetings.

Religious movies are on the rise (e.g., *The Nativity Story*, *One Night with the King*) as evangelicals "partner" with Hollywood and demonstrate that they are an eager and profitable market. One pastor, whose church bought out theaters for private showings of *The Passion* (which produced only "one conversion") repented. He came under the conviction that rather than partnering with, his church was, in fact, "pimping for Hollywood." As true as that may be, and as praiseworthy as his repentance was, if he doesn't understand the serious nature (as explained above) of attempting to represent God's Word in dramatic visual form, he is vulnerable to repeating the same error with visual idolatry.

This is not a blanket condemnation of the film/video medium, but films cannot be used to present the Scriptures visually without becoming idolatrous. Not only are the images historically false (they are conjured up from the imagination of a screenwriter or director) but they must also conform to the mechanics of the medium (acting, cinematography, art direction, lighting, music, sound effects, etc.), which are designed to manipulate the senses and the emotions for dramatic purposes (see *Showtime for the Sheep?*, www.thebereancall.org a more detailed explanation).

Biblical movies are just one trend among dozens that are contributing to weaning evangelicals off the Word of God and producing biblically illiterate Christians. This is especially true regarding our visually oriented youth. In the final part of this series, we want to give more extensive examples of movements within evangelical Christianity that are aggressively turning our next generation away from the Scriptures and toward an idolatry of experientialism.

We serve a merciful God who can rescue a soul out of the darkest of circumstances but who will not support by His grace man's religious ways and means in their attempts to serve Him. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (**Isaiah:55:8**). To the degree that we deviate from His way, we are lapsing into idolatry. As Jesus explained, "God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (**John:4:24**).

WEANING EVANGELICALS OFF THE WORD - PART 3

September 1, 2007

McMahon, T.A.

The previous two parts of this series made some observations that should be of great concern to those who consider themselves Bible-believing Christians. Paul warned that there would come a time when “sound doctrine” (**2 Timothy:4:3,4**) would give way to what “seemeth right unto a man” (**Proverbs:14:12**) in determining what is true. There will be apostate “teachers” who advance an experiential mode that panders to the lusts of the flesh, promoting self-serving “fables” or myths. Furthermore, these “deceitful workers” and lying “ministers of righteousness” (**2 Corinthians:11:13,15**) would draw upon the teachings of “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (**1 Timothy:4:1**). Paul certainly had such teachers in mind as he warned the Ephesian elders that after his departing “grievous wolves” would enter among them and teach “perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20: 29,30). There is no doubt that these verses are being fulfilled in our day.

Although there are far too many examples of [apostasy](#) influencing the church today to cite in this brief series of articles, there is one spurious trend that encompasses nearly

all of what the above verses address. It’s called the [Emerging Church](#) Movement (ECM). The ECM is a development among evangelicals that appears to have some worthwhile goals: 1) It professes to speak to today’s culture about the relevancy of Christianity and the value of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and 2) It desires to keep young evangelicals continuing in the faith. The movement involves a number of churches (mostly non-denominational), some supportive ministries and parachurch organizations, and the support of a number of prominent evangelical leaders and authors.

The ECM has no official organization or leadership, although some of its adherents have “emerged” as recognized leaders and spokesmen. For many of those helping to promote the movement, their motivation to “try something different” grew out of the frustration of their own very limited success in evangelizing and discipling young people. Some of the leaders were in seeker-sensitive and purpose-driven churches, and they saw firsthand that their church-growth marketing schemes were not effective for drawing those in their late

teens, 20s, and early 30s. The main fare of most consumer-driven churches features contemporary music with shallow, repetitive choruses, topical 30-minutes-or-less sermons (mostly [psychology](#)-based), a host of social programs to attract the lost (and the fleshly nature of Christians), and “Bible studies” that address everything but the Bible (see “Consumer Christianity I & II”, *TBC*, [2/05](#) , [3/05](#)). For a surprising number of young adults, that was a spiritual turnoff.

In his book *The [Emerging Church](#)* (with contributions and endorsement by [Rick Warren](#)), Dan Kimball relates his own breakthrough in overcoming the frustrating experiences in trying to motivate the young people in the evangelical church where he was youth pastor. He tells about watching a concert on the youth-oriented MTV network late one night that was a candlelit, all-acoustic performance. Recognizing that MTV certainly knows its audience and the youth culture, he refashioned his church’s youth room into a subdued, “catacombish,” candlelit environment and had the worship band use acoustic guitars, forgoing their usual flashing light show and loud electric music. He was delighted by the reaction of one usually unresponsive teen who said, “I like this. This was really spiritual.”

That was an epiphany for Kimball. As he expanded the service with what he considered more “authentic Christian” elements and liturgy, it attracted hundreds, young and old alike. He is convinced he’s found what the church of today needs: “As the [emerging church](#) returns to a rawer and more vintage form of Christianity, we may

see explosive growth much like the early church did.”

On the contrary, the “explosive growth” in the early church came from an approach that is almost nonexistent in the ECM. Peter’s confrontational address to the crowd on Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 is directly at odds with the *modus operandi* of the emergent leaders. In the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter’s preaching brought conviction of sin, repentance, and belief; 3,000 came to Christ that day. Kimball’s “vintage form of Christianity,” featuring rituals, ceremony, candles, incense, prayer stations, and images to create a spiritually experiential atmosphere for evangelicals is “vintage” only in the sense that it is an imitation of the later unbiblical Eastern Orthodox and medieval Roman [Catholic](#) liturgies. The early New Testament church knew nothing of this idolatrous and sense-oriented worship.

Ironically, emergent churches around the world, in their attempt to “reconstruct” the church, are passing each other like ships in the night. Kimball’s efforts at spiritual stimulation by introducing to young evangelicals the liturgical bells and smells of [Catholic](#), Orthodox, Lutheran, and high-church Episcopal and Presbyterian rituals, stands in contradiction to some European cathedrals and churches going emergent. Europeans are trying to revive their congregations, deadened by centuries of imagery and ritual, by covering their gothic interiors with decorated drapery, exchanging the organ and traditional hymns for electric guitars and contemporary

choruses, and adding throw pillows for comfortable seating to create a seeker-friendly environment. These churches are abandoning the very things that are “spiritually” alluring to American emergent evangelicals. Regarding both sensual approaches, Scripture tells us, “the flesh profiteth nothing.”

In reading the works of the ECM leaders, we would agree with many of their criticisms of current Christianity. There is plenty to oppose as [apostasy](#) and the abandonment of the Word increases in Christendom. The ECM’s corrections, however, rather than having restorative value for the church, are just as contrary to the Scriptures. Even worse, they go far beyond subtly “weaning evangelicals off the Word” to rendering the Bible and its doctrines as *the enemy* when it comes to drawing the world in general and, specifically, our postmodern culture, to the love of Jesus.

The Emergent Church Movement claims to desire—above all things—to show the love and life of Christ to a culture that is distrustful of the Christianity it perceives as oppressive and absolutist. We’re assured by ECM writers that “numbers of postmoderns are attracted to Jesus but detest His church” and can therefore be reached by the [emerging church](#) approach. It professes to be more amenable to the culture, more viable in its practice of Christianity, and truer to what Jesus had in mind for His church on earth.

Admirable—but let’s see how true it is to the Scriptures. As Isaiah exhorted, “To the law

and to the testimony [i.e., God’s Word]: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” **Isaiah:8:20**).

First of all, one has to wonder what a postmodern—a person characterized chiefly by his or her general disdain for authority and absolutes, particularly those dealing with moral issues and religion—thinks about this “Jesus” to whom he or she is supposedly drawn. The critical question is “Jesus who?” Is it the *biblical* Jesus they like, the one who declared absolutely, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (**John:14:6**)? What about the *authoritarian* Jesus, who announced, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love” (**John:15:10**)? His words weren’t referring only to the Ten Commandments but rather to every *instruction* He gave. Is that the Jesus a postmodern desires? What about the Jesus who gave mankind an ultimatum: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (**John:3:36**)?

The biblical Jesus certainly does not accommodate postmodernism, which is one more example of humanity’s rebellion against its Creator. The good news is that Jesus offers deliverance from the delusion of postmodernism, as well as all the other man-centered *isms*: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (**John:8:31,32**). The bad news is that the [emerging church](#) approach attempts to accommodate Jesus and the

Scriptures (actually “another Jesus” and a corrupted and emasculated Word) to our postmodern culture.

Although some regard the [Emerging Church Movement](#) as nothing more than a passing spiritual fad among young evangelicals, its potential for shipwrecking the faith of our next generation (should the Lord not yet return for His saints) is staggering. Here are just a few of the faith-destroying beliefs as espoused in the writings of the emergent leaders. First of all, foundational to the ECM is the subversion of the Bible. It’s akin to Satan’s scheme to destabilize Eve’s trust in what God commanded: “Yea, hath God said...?” (**Genesis:3:1**). They give lip service to the importance of God’s Word while undermining its inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency.

Rob Bell writes in *Velvet Elvis*, following 22 pages of weakening the authority of the Bible (making statements such as “It is possible to make the Bible say whatever we want it to, isn’t it?” and “With God being so massive and awe-inspiring and full of truth, why is his book capable of so much confusion?”): “[L]et’s make a group decision to drop once and for all the Bible-as-owner’s-manual metaphor [i.e., God’s specific instructions for mankind]. It’s terrible. It really is...We have to embrace the Bible as the wild, uncensored, passionate account it is of experiencing the living God.”¹ No! “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pt 1:21).

His view, common to most emergent writers, is that the key to the authority of Scripture is one’s interpretation, and that is most authoritative when the interpretation takes place in a community and validated by a “group decision”: “Community, community, community. Together with others, wrestling and searching and engaging the Bible as a group of people hungry to know God in order to follow God.”²

Although we find thousands of times throughout the Bible clear, direct, and absolute commands prefaced by phrases such as “Thus saith the Lord” and “The word of the Lord came to me,” we’re now told that understanding and obedience to what God said are subject to a community’s interpretation. Consequently, ECM churches disdain preaching and authoritative teaching, yet they delight in discussion, causing some to dump the pulpit in favor of a dialogue-led Starbucks environment. As the goals of the community change, we’re told the interpretation may also change.

The claim that the ECM approach has not jettisoned sound doctrine is either a delusion or an outright deception. This becomes clear when one asks for a biblical position on an issue. Kristen Bell acknowledges in a *Christianity Today* [emerging church](#) article, “I grew up thinking that we figured out the Bible...that we knew what it means. Now I have no idea what most of it means, and yet I feel like life is big again—like life used to be black and white, and now it’s in color.”³ Brian McLaren, the

most prominent of the emergent leaders, echoes Bell's "doctrine" of avoidance regarding what the Bible says about homosexuality:

Perhaps we need a five-year moratorium on making [doctrinal] pronouncements. In the meantime, we'll practice prayerful Christian dialogue, listening respectfully, disagreeing agreeably. When decisions need to be made, they'll be admittedly provisional. We'll keep our ears attuned to scholars in biblical studies, theology, ethics, [psychology](#), genetics, sociology, and related fields. Then in five years, if we have clarity, we'll speak; if not, we'll set another five years for ongoing reflection.⁴

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.

Regarding the seductive nature of such things, few evangelicals, young or old, have a defense. Too many function as biblical illiterates, meaning they know some things about the Bible and are capable of reading it but simply haven't made any effort, outside of following along with their pastor's

teaching on Sundays. They are the spiritual con man's delight.

Satan's seduction of Eve began subtly, "Yea hath God said?" It was a confusion tactic, setting her up to believe his lie and reject what God had said: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die." That was his punch line to destroy the human race. Eve fell for it; Adam went along. One finds a strikingly similar approach in the writings of the ECM leaders in regard to destroying faith in the gospel: Brian McLaren leads with doubts about what God had said:

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.⁵

He says elsewhere, "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."

British emergent leader and Zondervan author Steve Chalke delivers the punch line that unabashedly rejects the essential gospel belief that Christ paid the full penalty for the sins of mankind necessary to satisfy divine justice. Incredibly, he condemns that doctrine as a form of "cosmic child abuse" and a "twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith."⁶ This is where these emergent pied pipers, wittingly

or unwittingly, are seductively leading our youth.

Hopefully, the above will move you to prayer and action regarding the biblical strengthening of your own children and the youth in your fellowship. If you need more motivation (this brief article allowed me to

give you only the tip of the “emerging” iceberg), see our *TBC Extra* page with multiple emergent leaders’ quotes helpfully compiled in Roger Oakland’s latest book *Faith Undone: The emerging church...a new reformation or an end-time deception?*

Endnotes

1. Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 044-45, 062-63.
2. *Ibid.*, 053.
3. Andy Crouch, “The Emergent Mystique,” *Christianity Today*, November 2004, Vol 48, No 11, 36ff.
4. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/leaders/newsletter/2006/cln60123.html>.
5. Brian McLaren, *The Last Word and the Word After That* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 134.
6. Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 182-83.

“WHEN WE SEE HIM...”

November 1, 2007

Hunt, Dave

There are many proofs, which no one can refute, that the Bible is the Word of the true God, who is the Creator of mankind and of the unfathomable universe in which we find ourselves. Although the hundreds of unailing Bible prophecies are the most powerful proof, one of the most obvious is the amazing *consistency* found in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Remember that most of the prophets through whom it was written lived at different times in history, in different cultures, and never met one another. The only rational explanation for this consistency is what they all declared with one voice: that they were each inspired of the one true God. These claims were not hidden or tentatively stated but boldly and repeatedly affirmed.

For example, in the Pentateuch alone the declaration is made literally hundreds of times that Moses was reporting what God had said directly to him "face to face" (Ex 33:11; **Num:14:14**; **Deut 5:2-5**; **Deut 34:10**). Biblical prophets were not inspired indirectly through an angel (as both Muhammad and Joseph Smith claimed they were) but declared that they had personally heard from God himself! Like Moses, [Israel's](#) many other prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, make this claim hundreds of additional times. More than 60 times

Ezekiel swears that "the word of the Lord" came to him with the command to pass it on to mankind. So it was with the other biblical prophets.

The Book of Job is believed to be the oldest book in the Bible, yet the major biblical themes of redemption, resurrection, and the Second Coming are clearly expressed. This is done in perfect harmony with all that would be declared by prophets of God in the remaining pages of Scripture over the next 1,600 years. Consider this powerful and pointed declaration:

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another....(**Job:19:25-27**)

Here Job clearly declares that his physical body will be resurrected, even after being eaten by worms in the grave. He also knows that the Redeemer who will make this possible is an eternal Being who will one day come to earth and that he (Job), in his resurrected body, will see the infinite God for himself. So it must be for us also. This is an awesome, even frightening, prospect,

which, were it more real to us, would transform our lives!

Could the Redeemer, also called the Savior, to whom Job refers, actually be God? He doesn't say so directly, but the implication is there. Like later prophets, Isaiah makes it very clear: "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour....Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (**Isa:43:11; Isa:45:22**). So God, the Creator of all, is the Savior who becomes a man through a virgin birth and dies for our sins on the Cross! How can that be possible?

Prophets who lived after Job, in writing additional Scripture, added detail upon detail but never contradicted what was said before or what followed later. In many cases they contributed additional Scripture without having seen what had previously been written-and still without contradiction. By comparison, there are no prophecies at all in the Qur'an, the Hindu Vedas, Bhagavad-Gita, sayings of Buddha or Confucius, or in the scriptures of other religions, all of which contain many internal contradictions. Prophecy is unique to the Bible, and it is the great proof that is overlooked by most preachers and apologists.

The Bible's perfect internal consistency is presently our focus. The first mention of the promised virgin-born Redeemer/Messiah/Savior (called the woman's seed) coming to earth is found in God's pronouncement of judgment upon the serpent who beguiled Eve: "Her seed...shall bruise thy head [a death blow]" (**Gen:3:15**). Rebellion brought death not only to Adam and Eve but to all their descendants, separating mankind from the Creator.

Temporary reconciliation to God was granted in the death of sacrificial animals: first in the death of animals to obtain skins with which God covered Adam's and Eve's nakedness when He cast them out of the Garden and withdrew His presence from them (**Gen:3:21-24**); then in the lamb that Abel, and presumably Adam and Eve, offered as a sacrifice to cover their sins until the Messiah would come and pay the full penalty (**Gen:4:4**).

In Isaiah, the mystery of the Redeemer unfolds further. A baby boy would be born, who is both the Son of God and God the Father: "A child is born...a son is given [whose] name shall be...the mighty God, The everlasting Father" (**Isa:9:6**). The Son and the Father are One, as Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (**Jn:10:30**). This eternal One, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," would be born in Bethlehem (**Mic:5:2**). He would ride into Jerusalem on the colt of an ass and be hailed as the Messiah (**Zec:9:9**) exactly 483 years (**Dan:9:24-26**) after the command had been given to restore Jerusalem from its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. That edict by world emperor Artaxerxes Longimanus was given on the first of Nisan, 445 BC (**Neh:2:1-10**). The fulfillment of this prophecy, therefore, had to occur on April 6, AD 32. That very day-now celebrated as Palm Sunday-Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

The theme of the Lamb, which begins in Genesis as a promise of the coming Messiah who would pay the penalty for the sins of mankind, is progressively and consistently developed by prophets and apostles throughout the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. [Israel's](#) deliverance from slavery in Egypt was through the blood of

the Passover lamb. The promise of Redemption through a coming One who would die in sacrifice for our sins continued through the Levitical sacrifices. Its fulfillment in the Messiah began to take shape with John the Baptist's declaration of Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (**Jn:1:29**)-and it will culminate with the focus of heaven on the Lamb slain for the sins of the world (Rev 5 and Rev 6), and God's eternal throne finally revealed to be "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (**Rev:22:1**). In spite of the prophesied enthusiastic welcome that Jesus of Nazareth received on that first "Palm Sunday," the prophets foretold that the Messiah would immediately be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (**Zec:11:12-13**), rejected by His own people, and crucified (**Ps:22:14-16**). That prophecy was given 500 years before crucifixion was known. The prophets declared that three days later the Messiah would rise from the dead, show Himself to His disciples for 40 days, then ascend to heaven. No one could qualify as the promised Redeemer without fulfilling all of these and many other prophecies. There are no rivals offering their Messianic credentials. These prophecies and many others given in the Bible to identify beyond question the Messiah were fulfilled by only one Man. The many irrefutable prophecies and their fulfillment prove that Jesus Christ, and He alone, is the Messiah. Yet most Jews refuse to this day to accept what their own prophets foretold-and they remain in unbelief, as do the vast majority of Gentiles. In preaching the gospel to their Jewish contemporaries after Christ's resurrection,

the apostles recited these and numerous other detailed prophecies given in advance so that the Messiah could be unmistakably recognized when He came. They pointed to what all in Jerusalem knew: that these prophecies, given centuries and even thousands of years before to identify the Messiah, had all been fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. For two thousand years, these facts have been the solid foundation of the Christian's faith that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah of [Israel](#), Savior of the world, crucified for our sins, resurrected, now in heaven, and soon to return to catch up His own to be with Him in the Father's house forever. He is also coming as the judge to punish the unrepentant-a part of the gospel often overlooked.

Presenting this proof was the *modus operandi* of the apostles in preaching the gospel (**Acts:17:2-3**); and this remains the way, though neglected, that we are to preach it today. Incredibly, the prophetic foundation of the gospel is scarcely referred to by most pastors, preachers, and evangelists. Instead, lost souls are offered testimonies of celebrities and athletes and invited to "dialogue," as though unchangeable truth can be revised to make it acceptable to an alleged "[post-modern](#)" generation. The only "Scripture" most of today's uncertain souls know is an emasculated, paraphrased "Bible," rewritten to eliminate conviction of sin and catering to the rebellion of those who insist upon having the gospel modified to suit their unbelief. God will not accommodate their rebellion!

Of them, the Scripture says there is "no fear of God before their eyes" (**Ps:36:1**;

Rom:3:18). That indictment applies also to many of today's most popular televangelists, as well as to their followers whose ears they tickle. If they believe in God at all, that alleged belief is scarcely reflected in the ministries and lives of Benny Hinn, Oral Roberts, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Pat Robertson, the Robert Schullers (father and son), the Crouches, et al. They, and many others like them, demonstrate by what they say and do and by their praise of one another and their scorn of God's eternal truth that they don't really believe in God or expect to see Jesus and give an account to Him one day. To face God and Christ in judgment cannot be a real prospect for such men and women, or their lives and preaching would reflect a holy fear that is totally absent.

Indeed, not only most unbelievers but most professed Christians as well do not live as though they really expect, like Job, to stand before God as their holy, righteous Judge-at least not soon. Being caught up to heaven in the Rapture one day, which is supposed to be the "blessed hope" (**Titus:2:13**) eagerly anticipated by every true Christian, is increasingly denied by many evangelical leaders and their followers. Nearly all Presbyterians, as well as Calvinists of other varieties, and even many so-called watchdogs (such as Hank Hanegraaff) who claim to guard the church from error, firmly oppose an imminent Rapture and insist that the church has replaced [Israel](#).

There are, of course, many evangelicals who preach sound biblical truth yet deny it in their lives. The prospect of soon seeing Jesus, whose eyes are "as a flame of fire" and at whose feet John, the disciple whom Jesus loved (**Jn:13:2**; **Jn:13:23**; **Jn:20:2**;

Jn:21:7; **Jn:21:20**), fell "as dead" (**Rev:1:17**), ought to arouse the fear of God in our hearts! I think of this often, and I tremble. On the one hand, the prospect of suddenly finding ourselves in the glory of Christ, the One who loves us so much that in great agony He suffered for our sins, thrills us and fills us with excitement and joy-but at the same time it ought to fill us with awe and life-changing fear. Yet how often do most of us even give this imminent possibility a passing thought? Shame!

The irreverent and ignorant attitude of many pastors and their followers is betrayed in their confident and casual talk about "hanging out with Jesus" in heaven, as though He's just one of the guys instead of the Creator of the universe! He knows our every thought, word, deed, and motive. At last, standing before our Lord at His Judgment Seat, we will see, revealed in the light of His perfect holiness, the blackness of our deceitful, desperately wicked hearts (**Jer:17:9-10**). He will wipe tears of shame and remorse from our eyes, never to be remembered again, enfolding us in His infinite, eternal love.

The awesome reality of being in heaven, falling on our faces before Christ and the Father on their throne, does not grip us as it should. It all seems far away and unreal, obscured by good health, the prospect of earthly joys, and the delusion that we have unlimited time to experience them.

The hope of being snatched from this world at any moment, if really believed, would have a powerful purifying effect upon us. Most of what seems so important to us in our busy lives would become exceedingly embarrassing in its pitiful triviality if the light of eternity shined upon it. Take your

highest ambition, most irresistible lust, your greatest pleasure, dearest passion-and as soon as you add death to these things they sink into nothingness. How sad that death must stare us in the face before we receive this wisdom.

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, where "we must all appear...that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor:5:10), the issue will not be [salvation](#) or hell but reward or loss. There we, the Bride of Christ, will be given pure white robes of righteousness for the wedding!

Though "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom:3:23), wonder of wonders, the "God of all grace...hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (1 Pt 5:10). Our Father's goal is not only to have us in heaven but to transform us into the glorious image of His beloved Son. The glory that Adam lost was pale compared to the glory that the redeemed will reflect as a display to the universe for all eternity.

That transformation should be in process now for each of us. We are, in fact, being changed into His image "from glory to glory." Our progress is disappointingly slow, however, because "now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face" (1 Cor:13:12). As we behold Him by faith, we are changed into His image "by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor:3:18). David's greatest desire was to continually behold "the beauty

of the LORD" (Ps:27:4). Is that the passion of your heart-of mine? It ought to be.

This poem was found in Darby's Bible after Christ called him home:

Low at Thy feet, Lord Jesus,
This is the place for me;
Here I have learned deep lessons:
Truth that has set me free.
Free from myself, Lord Jesus,
Free from the ways of men;
Chains of thought that have bound me
Never can bind again.
None but Thyself, Lord Jesus,
Conquered this wayward will,
But for Thy love constraining,
I had been wayward still.

When we see "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor:2:8) in glory, "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn:3:2). So it is our failure to see Christ clearly while we are here below that hinders us from being fully transformed into His image. We are blinded by this world.

One day soon, however, by death or by the Rapture, the veil will be removed. We will be with Him and shall see Him as He really is. When that clear understanding awakens within us, we will truly be like Him. What a glorious, eternal day will have dawned at last.

WHY EVERYTHING IS THE WAY IT IS

April 1, 2007

Hunt, Dave

The prevailing view in today's media, public schools, and surrounding society is that the Bible isn't true, no educated person believes in God, and [science](#) is the key to life's mysteries. The lie of evolution becomes so deeply implanted that deliverance is increasingly difficult.

The world rejects "God says" and accepts "[science](#) says" as the ultimate truth. Few realize that [science](#) cannot answer the important questions: why the universe and life exist, and why every child knows the difference between right and wrong and believes that God exists until taught "better."

Few know what leading scientists admit. Max Planck, father of Quantum Theory, declared: "[Science](#) cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature."¹ We don't know what time, space, matter, or energy are—much less the soul and spirit.

Why? cannot be addressed to the universe but only to its Creator. One cannot reason with an earthquake or a hurricane. There is no sympathy in "Nature." Nobel laureate Erwin Schrödinger, one of the architects of quantum mechanics, wrote:

The scientific picture of the real world around me is...ghastly silent about all that...really matters to us....It knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity....

Whence came I and whither go I? That is the great unfathomable question...for every one of us. [Science](#) has no answer to it.²

[Science](#) knows nothing of truth—only physical facts. Lee Smolin, founding member of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Canada, has said: "When a child asks, 'What is the world?' we literally have nothing to tell...."³

The question why? irritates atheists because the maker decides the purpose for whatever is made. Without a Creator, neither the universe nor life has any meaning. Without God, there is no reason for a rose bud or for the dew that makes it shimmer in the morning sun —or for anything else that we hold dear and enjoy, including human existence itself.

Why is everything the way it is? Because God is the way He is. But who is this God? Is he Zeus of the Greeks, Brahman of the Hindus, Allah of [Islam](#)? Does it matter? Can't we just acknowledge a "higher power"?

Higher than what? Power? No impersonal “power” could create personal beings. Nor could any “force” conceive and write in words on DNA the directions for constructing and operating all living things.

[Atheism](#) leads to numerous absurdities promoted by otherwise intelligent people. Sir Francis Crick, Nobel laureate as co-discoverer of the DNA language, begins his book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*:

You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.⁴

If this is the way the universe made us, why does Crick call it Astonishing? He knows it is contrary to common sense. Yet to cling to his [atheism](#) he must persist in such madness. However, most people would firmly object to Crick’s description. Any thinking person knows he weighs choices carefully, experiences joys, sorrows, hopes, ambitions, fears, remorse, and regrets that are very real. But “[science](#) says” is a holy mantra that causes every knee to bow—except those who will not worship Baal (**1 Ki:19:18**). Biologist Richard Lewontin defiantly boasts:

We take the side of [science](#) in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs...for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.⁵

Arch atheist and outspoken enemy of God, Richard Dawkins, claims that we are merely vehicles through which “selfish genes” perpetuate themselves. Yet he says genes have no foresight. They do not plan ahead.

Genes just are. He also states, “Much as we might wish to believe otherwise, universal love and the welfare of the species...are concepts that simply do not make evolutionary sense.”⁶ What an admission!

If evolution makes us incapable of true love, morals, or ethics, why do we admire these qualities? How can we be so unnatural, if we are the offspring of nature? Crick and Dawkins seem embarrassed that many of the human qualities that everyone possesses could not have been produced by evolution. We do not think and act like we should if we were evolved from lower creatures.

The language component in the human gene “is identical in every particular to [that in] a snail. [Only] the sequence of building blocks is...different....”⁷ The organizational genius behind DNA is breathtaking. Using the same four letters for plants, animals, and man, distinction is maintained not only between all kinds of living things but between individuals of each kind. This ingenious arrangement sets bounds which make it impossible for DNA of one kind of life to change into DNA of another kind.

Unquestionably, the DNA language, which is the basis of all life, did not and cannot evolve. The similarity between man’s DNA and that of all animals is no more evidence that man evolved from animals than is the similarity in human and plant DNA evidence that we evolved from plants.

Evolution did not make us. God made us. But atheists cling to evolution as an escape from accountability to God. Darwin’s theory was his revenge against the god he could no longer believe in, the “god” that had allowed his daughter, Annie, to die. Darwinism’s [atheism](#) prevents [science](#) from knowing why

things are as they are. Without God there is no answer to the why for anything. Yet here we are in a vast and awesome universe and common sense cries out for a reason for its existence and ours.

Why is everything the way it is? Only because God, who created it all, is the way He is. And why is God the way He is? Because, unlike the capricious gods of non-Christian religions, God revealed Himself to Moses thus: "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex 3:14). Consistently the Bible's God declares, "I am the LORD, I change not (Mal:3:6)." God is outside of, and untouched by, the time and change so evident in our world.

Dawkins says, "Genes just are." No, genes are not self-existent and eternal. They had to have a Maker. God alone has no maker but is the Maker of all: self-existent, uncreated, unchanging, perfect, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. For God to be God, this is who He must be.

Why is everything the way it is? Because God, who made all, is the way He is. Of the newly created universe, we read: "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gn 1:31). Why was everything "good"? Because God who made everything is good: "There is none good but one, that is God" (Mt 19:17).

Even in its present corrupt state, much in the universe is still so beautiful that it thrills and moves us deeply because the God who made it is beautiful. David wrote: "I seek [to] dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord..." (Ps:27:4). We need greater appreciation of God's beauty!

Why is there some apparent "good" even in a Hitler or a Stalin? Nazi extermination

camp guards who had presided over the murder of Jews all day could come home at night, kiss their wives, play with their children, and enjoy listening to Wagner. This is because God, who is good, made man in His image (Gn 1:26,27). Although sin separated all mankind from a holy God, a remnant of the image of God in which we were created remains. Yet everything man touches, even love, is corrupted.

The man who persuades a woman to live with him without marriage tells her, "I love you." But what he may mean (perhaps unknown even to him) could be, "I love myself, and I want you." Only too late they may discover that this is what both of them mean by "love."

Why the blight, rot, and death that taunts us everywhere? This, too, is because God is the way He is. Without God, whose character reveals and condemns it, there would be no sin; and without God's law written in man's conscience, there would be no knowledge of sin: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things" (Is 45:7).

How could a good God create evil? The same way the God who is light creates darkness. A person who was born and died in a cave in total darkness would not know he was in the dark until someone shined a light. The light suddenly reveals the darkness for what it is; and God's holy perfection reveals evil for what it is. The haunting memory of paradise lost lingers elusively in man's heart. Why must it be this way? Because the God who is good is also holy and just—and man, made in His image, rebelled.

What about eternal torment in the Lake of Fire? That, too, is because God is love and

God is just. He created man to live forever in the joy of His love—not as an “extra” but as man’s very life. Those who reject God’s love consign themselves to the eternal torment of a burning thirst for the One who made them for Himself. Heaven will be the eternal satisfaction of the living water flowing “out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rv 22:1). Hell will be eternally dying from burning thirst for God, the horror of fully knowing one’s sin and rebellion, and the realization that one is there only because of rejecting Christ.

“God is love” (1 Jn:4:8,16). Love is the essence of His being. He loves us and wants to forgive us; but He is also holy and just. For God to forgive sinners without the full penalty being paid would contradict His justice and make Him our partner in evil. Christ fully paid that penalty for our sins—but the pardon must be willingly and gladly received. God will not force anyone into heaven.

Atheists scoff, “How could a good God create this evil world? If God can’t stop suffering and death, He is too weak to be God; and if He could but doesn’t, He is a monster unworthy of our trust.” In fact, this is not the world God made but the one we made in rebellion against Him. Don’t blame God for what we have done to His once-perfect world!

Why did God allow man to rebel? That fact, too, is true because “God is love.” We can neither receive and enjoy His love nor love Him in return (or love one another) without the power of choice. Love is from the heart. The ability to say “yes” means nothing without the equal ability to say “no.” Tragically, Adam and Eve, chose to say “no” to God and to follow Satan. The entire

universe suffers as a result: “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now... waiting...” (Rom:8:20-23).

Those who reject the truth reject God. Sir David Attenborough, producer of decades of TV programs promoting evolution, argued:

The God you believe in...an all-merciful God created...a parasitic worm...that can live in no other way than in an innocent child’s eyeball [in West Africa]?⁸

No, that is not the way the universe was at the beginning. And during the millennial reign of Christ, the world will be restored to its original condition, without animals devouring one another, without microbes and parasites preying on other living things: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb...the leopard shall lie down with the kid...the calf and the young lion...together; and a little child shall lead them....The lion shall eat straw like the ox...the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD...” (Is 11:6-9).

In Christ alone, and His payment of the penalty for our sins upon the Cross, we find reconciliation to God and ultimate meaning and purpose. “All things were made by him...” (Jn:1:2). O mystery! The babe born in Bethlehem was and forever is “the mighty God, the everlasting Father” (Is 9:6). Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (Jn:10:30).

How can we understand and better know this infinite God? He made us for Himself, and we naturally thirst for Him: “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God...”

(**Ps:42:2**). Yet those in rebellion foolishly attempt to quench that thirst in earthly possessions, pleasures, and pride. It was to reveal God to man as the only One who could fulfill that inner longing that Jesus, God’s “only begotten” Son (**Jn:1:14; 3:16**, etc.) was born into this world.

The suffering that Christ endured at men’s hands revealed the evil in all of our hearts. That suffering, which we inflicted upon Him, could not save us. It was the punishment for our sins that Jesus suffered on the Cross under God’s wrath against sin that made it possible for all to be forgiven who believe on Him. It is because He fully paid that penalty in our place that He can say, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (**Jn:7:37**).

He who was born of a virgin and fully man is also fully God: “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (**Col:2:9**); who being the brightness of his [God the Father’s] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power...by himself purged our sins...” (**Heb:1:3**).

Paul declared, “Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tm 3:16). Though now we only dimly understand (“we see through a glass darkly [and] know in part” – **1 Cor:13:12**), we have the glorious promise that the more we by faith look upon, meditate upon, and understand our Lord Jesus Christ, the more

clearly we see Him and become like Him: “But we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (**2 Cor:3:18**).

The revelation of Christ, for which our souls thirst, thrills us increasingly as we more clearly understand who He is in all His fullness and what He accomplished to reconcile us to Himself. Something of His glorious person is beautifully expressed in Graham Kendrick’s hymn:

Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity,
In perfect harmony—the man who is God;
Lord of eternity, dwells in humanity,
Kneels in humility, and washes our feet.
Father’s pure radiance, perfect in innocence,
Yet learns obedience to death on a cross;
Suffering to give us life,
Conquering through sacrifice—
And as they crucify, prays, “Father, forgive.”
Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible,
Love indestructible in frailty appears;
Lord of infinity, stooping so tenderly
Lifts our humanity
To the heights of his throne.
Oh, what a mystery—Meekness and majesty;
Bow down and worship,
For this is your God,
This is your God!

Endnotes

1. Max Planck, “The Mystery of Our Being,” in *Quantum Questions*, ed. Ken Wilbur (Boston: New Science Library, 1984), 153.

2. Erwin Schrödinger, quoted in *Quantum*, 81.
3. Dennis Overbye, "Physics awaits new options as Standard Model idles," *Symmetry*, vol 03, issue 06, August 06.
4. Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1994), 3.
5. Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons," *The New York Review*, January 9, 1997, 31.
6. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford University Press, 30th anniversary edition, 2006), 2.
7. Dawkins, *Selfish*, 22.
8. M. Buchanan, "Wild, Wild Life," *Sydney Morning Herald, The Guide*, March 24, 2003, 6.

See the featured video: <https://youtu.be/LohJBXENumc>

THE WORKS-SALVATION DELUSION

June 1, 2010

McMahon, T.A.

*I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if
righteousness come[s] by the law, then Christ is
dead in vain.*

Galatians:2:21

When we compare biblical Christianity with the religions of the world, using the Scriptures to guide us, we see that the gap between them is unbridgeable. In fact, one is forced to the conclusion that there are really only two religions in the world: biblical Christianity--and all other religions. (Note: I refer to biblical Christianity as a "religion" only for comparative purposes: a religion is a manmade belief system, whereas biblical Christianity is what God has revealed to mankind.)

These two "religions" are set apart primarily by what they teach about [salvation](#)--how one can get to heaven or paradise or Valhalla or Nirvana or the abode of God, or whatever else people believe about the afterlife. Each of the two can be placed under one of two categories: Human Achievement and Divine Accomplishment--or, to put it simply, the religions of "Do" and "Done." I'm referring to the fact that either there are things you must do (Human Achievement) or there is

nothing you can do because it has already been done (Divine Accomplishment) to earn entrance to heaven.

Biblical Christianity alone comes under the heading of Divine Accomplishment. All the other religions of the world must be placed under the label of Human Achievement. Let's first consider some of the major religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, [Islam](#), Judaism, and certain denominations or cults that profess to be Christian.

Hinduism has about 330 million gods who must be appeased through some type of ritual. A couple of years ago I was given a tour of a massive Hindu temple just outside Chicago. The parking lot was filled with luxury cars. There was imported stonework from Italy. No expense was spared. Inside, doctors, lawyers, and engineers, among others, according to my guide, were serving meals to the idols, Hanuman, the monkey god, and Ganesha, the elephant god.

Hinduism is a system of works--things that one must do to reach *moksha*, the Hindu heaven. It involves the practice of yoga, which, contrary to what many have heard, has never been for improvement of one's health but is rather a means of dying to one's body in the hope of delivering oneself from the physical realm. This is supposed to yoke one to Brahman, the Supreme Deity of

Hinduism. Reincarnation, a system that supposedly enables one to work one's way to heaven through many births, deaths, and rebirths, is one of the teachings of this religion.

Buddhism is also all about works. Buddha believed that the key to reaching Nirvana, which is allegedly the state of perfect peace and happiness, is through an understanding of the Four Noble Truths and by practicing the Noble Eightfold Path.

In essence, the Four Noble Truths declare that we endure suffering because of our desires or cravings. These "Truths" claim that suffering will stop when we cease trying to fulfill those desires. According to Buddhism, we can achieve this by following the Noble Eightfold Path, which has the elements of "right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration." This is all done by man's *achievement*, i.e., "doing things right" in order to reach Nirvana.

In [Islam](#), paradise is attained when Allah weighs a follower's good works against his bad deeds on a scale at Judgment Day. The Qur'an declares: "For those things that are good remove those that are evil" (Surah 11:114). It's a quantitative process. Good deeds need to outweigh or blot out evil deeds. From the Qur'an again: "The balance that day will be true: Those whose scale [of good works] will be heavy, will prosper: Those whose scale will be light will find their souls in perdition" (Surah 7:8,9).

Here's an interesting example of what a Muslim faces to get into paradise: On April 3, 1991, the Egyptian magazine, *Akher Saa*, recorded a heated debate between four female journalists and Sheik Doctor

Abdu-Almonim Al-Nimr, who holds a high position at Al-Azher Islamic University. One of the journalists asked him: "Is the *hijab* [veil or head covering] obligatory for women in [Islam](#)? If I do not wear the hijab, shall I go to hell in spite of my other good deeds? I am talking about the decent woman who does not wear the hijab."

Dr. Al-Nimr replied, "The ordinances in [Islam](#) are many, my daughter, Allah made us accountable to each. It means if you do that ordinance you earn a point. If you neglect one, you lose a point. If you pray, you earn a point; if you do not fast you lose a point, and so on." He continued, "I did not invent a new theory...for every man there is a book in which all his good and evil deeds are recorded...even how do we treat our children."

The journalist said: "That means, if I do not wear the hijab, I will not enter the hell fire without taking into account the rest of my good deeds." Dr. Al-Nimr replied: "My daughter, no one knows who will enter the hell fire...I might be the first one to enter it. Caliph Abu-Bakr Al-Sadik said: 'I have no trust concerning Allah's schemes, even if one of my feet is inside of paradise who can determine which deed is acceptable and which is not.' [See *TBC*, 10/91] *You do all that you can do...and the accountability is with Allah. You ask him for acceptance* [Italics added for emphasis]."

In Judaism, heaven is attained by keeping the Law and its ceremonies. Obviously, that isn't consistent with what the *Tanakh* (the Old Testament) teaches, yet that has been the practice of Judaism for millennia. As Jesus said, "In vain they do worship [God], teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (**Matthew:15:9**).

His words also apply to a number of "Christian" denominations and cults that stress works as necessary for [salvation](#). Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, the Church of Christ adherents, Roman Catholics, Eastern and Russian Orthodox members, Lutherans, and many others all include something that needs to be accomplished or is necessary for [salvation](#), whether it's baptism, the sacraments, or joining their particular organization and fulfilling their requirements.

Here is an example from the first 30 years of my own life as a Roman [Catholic](#). I lived by a religious system of laws, many of which a [Catholic](#) is obligated to keep. It began with baptism. If one is not baptized, the Church says he can't enter heaven. It also says that although baptism is required, it is *no guarantee*. There are many other such rules that a [Catholic](#) must keep.

I have a book in my office called the *Code of Canon Law*. It contains 1,752 laws, many of which affect one's eternal destiny. Sins recognized by the Roman [Catholic](#) Church are classified as either mortal or venial. A mortal sin is one that damns a person to hell, should he or she die without having had it absolved by a priest. A venial sin doesn't need to be confessed to a priest, but whether confessed or not, all sin adds to one's temporal punishment, which must be expiated either here on earth through suffering or good works or else be purged in the flames of purgatory after one's death.

There are obligations that a [Catholic](#) must fulfill regarding both beliefs and deeds. For example, one is required to believe that Mary was conceived without sin (an event called the Immaculate Conception). If a

[Catholic](#) doesn't believe that, he commits a mortal sin, which carries the penalty of eternal damnation. The feast day of the Immaculate Conception is a holy day of obligation, a day on which all Catholics are *required* to attend Mass. Failure to do so could result in commission of a mortal sin.

All the belief systems that I've mentioned, and many others as well, consist of doing or not doing certain things to reach "heaven." All are based upon human achievement. But what about biblical Christianity? How is that different?

Ephesians:2:8-9 spells it out for us: "For by grace are ye saved *through faith*; and that [[salvation](#) is] not of yourselves: it is the *gift* of God: *not of works*, lest any man should boast [emphasis added]." That's pretty straightforward. Our [salvation](#) doesn't have anything to do with our *achievements*.

Verse 8 tells us that it is by *grace* that we are saved. Grace is unmerited favor. If any merit is involved, it cannot be by grace. It's the gift of God. So if it's a gift, it can't be of works. That should be obvious. Someone puts in a tough month of work and his employer comes to him with his paycheck and declares, "Good job, Joe, here's your gift!" No--Joe *worked* for what he was paid. No gift was involved.

Regarding a person who works, **Romans:4:4** tells us that his wages are a payment for the debt his employer owes him, and his paycheck has nothing to do with grace or a gift. A worker who has done a good job can boast or feel a sense of pride in the work he has accomplished. Yet all of that is contrary to grace or a gift. Grace rules out any sense of merit, and a gift does away with any sense of something earned or paid for.

Paul's teaching in Ephesians is affirmed in his epistle to Titus, chapter 3, verse 4:

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, *not by works* of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
[Emphasis added]

We can see that this is consistent with **Ephesians:2:8-9**. It's not by our *works* that we are saved--not by works of righteousness that we have *done*--but it's by *His mercy* that we are saved.

You may well imagine that, as a Roman **Catholic** conditioned by a life of Church rules and rituals, I had great difficulty believing that *faith* was the only basis by which I could enter heaven. It didn't make sense to me.

Well, not only does it make sense--it's the only possible way anyone can be saved. It is *miraculously sensible!*

First of all, what keeps anyone from heaven or eternal life with God? We know that the answer is "sin." Here is a small sampling of the applicable verses: All have sinned (**Romans:3:23**); the wages of sin is death (**Romans:6:23**); sin separates us from God (**Isaiah:59:2**); the soul who sins shall die (**Ezekiel:18:20**); sin brings forth death (**James:1:15**).

In Genesis 2, God explains to Adam the consequences of disobeying Him. Adam was told not to eat from a certain fruit in the

Garden of Eden. It was a commandment that was related to obedience and love--not of God's withholding something from Adam, as the Serpent implied. Remember, Jesus said "If a man love me, he will keep my words," that is, His teachings (**John:14:23**). Our love for God is demonstrated by our obedience. What was God's penalty for disobedience? **Genesis:2:17**: "...for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam and Eve loved themselves more than they loved God, because they didn't "keep [His] words." They disobeyed Him, and the consequence was death. "The day you eat of it you will surely die." In the Scriptures, death always involves separation, and in God's judgment upon them, two applications are found: 1) physical death (the degeneration of the body, leading ultimately to its separation from the soul and spirit), and 2) eternal separation from God.

Adam and Eve did not die instantly, but the death process began at that point for them and for all creation. However, their *spiritual* relationship with God changed immediately and forever. God's judgment for sin is eternal: separation from God *forever*. It's an infinite penalty. And God, who is perfect in all of His attributes, including justice, had to carry out the punishment. He couldn't let them slide by and just give them another chance. That would have meant that He was not perfectly true to His Word. The penalty had to be paid.

So what could Adam and Eve do? Nothing, except die physically and spiritually, which is to be separated from God forever. And what can the rest of mankind do, seeing that *all have sinned*? Nothing. Well, one might ask, what if we do all sorts of good deeds that

might outweigh our sins, or if we go to church a lot, or get baptized, do religious things, receive the sacraments, and so forth? None of those things will help us. Why? Because they don't pay the penalty. So what *can* we do? There is nothing that we can do--except to pay the penalty ourselves by being separated from God forever.

Our situation would be absolutely hopeless except that God has some other attributes in addition to being perfectly just. He is also perfect in love and mercy! "For God so loved the world" that He sent His only begotten Son to pay the penalty for us (**John:3:16**).

And that is exactly what Jesus did on the Cross. It is incomprehensible to us that during those three hours of darkness (when He cried out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?") He took on the sins of the world and suffered the wrath of His Father--for us. On the Cross He "tasted death for every man" (**Hebrews:2:9**), that is, He experienced and paid the infinite penalty for everyone's sins.

When that *divine accomplishment* ended, Jesus cried out, "It is finished," meaning that the penalty had been paid in full. It was a *divine* accomplishment because it was something that only God could do! God became a man and died physically, because physical death was part of the penalty. Yet, as the God-Man, he was able to experience fully the penalty that every sinner would experience--being spiritually separated from God forever.

God's justice demands payment. Either we pay the penalty ourselves or we turn to Jesus by faith and receive the benefits of His sacrificial atonement. What does Roman 6:23 say? "For the wages of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus

Christ our Lord." The Bible could not be more clear that *salvation* can only be "the gift of God" and that we can only appropriate that gift by faith.

Any attempt to merit *salvation* by our works is not just futile--it is impossible: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (**James:2:10**). Worse yet, it is a denial of the infinite penalty that God imposed, a rejection of God's "unspeakable gift," and a repudiation of what Christ accomplished for us.

It used to be that most evangelicals would agree. This is no longer the case as the *apostasy* gathers momentum in these Last Days. Recently, a Pew Forum survey of more than 40,000 Americans found that 57 percent of those who said they were evangelicals believed that Jesus is not the exclusive way to heaven. Since Jesus is the only one who provides divine accomplishment, all that remains is the futile delusion of human achievement for *salvation*.