
Editorials

BLOWN TO SMITHEREENS!

David asked the question in Psalm 11:3, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" David may have been referring to Saul's defection or the corruption of the priestly leaders, but he was stricken and alarmed by defection and corruption at the top. The question is shouting for an answer today.

On July 22, 1946, the extremist Jewish underground led by Menachem Begin, blew up the south wing of the King David Hotel, which housed the headquarters of the British government in what was then Palestine. The Secretariat building was the administrative nerve center for the thousands of British troops trying to keep peace between Jews and Arabs. Hundreds of pounds of explosives were smuggled into the lower Regence Cafe in large metal milk containers and placed against four pillars that were the foundation of the entire six-story southern wing.

The infiltrators were disguised as Arab workers and appeared familiar. Around 12:40 p.m. the building shuddered and was brought down with a massive roar heard miles away. The aftermath was reported by the *Palestine Post*: 41 dead, 53 injured, 52 missing. This was the beginning of the end for British rule.

A similar outrage has overtaken the Church via Charismatic extremism. Disguised as sheep, infiltrators have crept in. Pillars are being undermined. If they are

blown away, we will be left standing in the rubble, crying out the words of David: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Unfortunately, though the Jewish underground called in bomb warnings to the King David Hotel, no one took it seriously and no one responded. *Then it was too late.* Will the Church at large just keep waiting and just keep quiet?

Sadly, many "leaders" from the mainstream aid and abet the collapse by either indifference or tacit endorsement with appearances on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, mingling in the midst of heresies of the worst kind. Their silence is their approval. Many times it is exchanged for book endorsements.

The four pillars under attack are:

1. *The concept of the sufficiency of Scripture.* The extremists are constantly touting "new words," "now words," or "fresh words," as if the Scriptures have no relevance. They may give the Bible lip service, but know their followers want prophecies, visions, stories, angelic appearances, dreams, voices, and visions. The new stuff makes the Bible pale in comparison. Scripture is twisted and made to say things it never was intended to say.

2. *Honesty and integrity.* Healings are claimed, but follow-up shows no healings; many of those purportedly healed actually have died with their disease. But to those who are entertained by these "miraculous" shows, the
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clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14).

The Serpent knew Eve could not resist self-exaltation. We, the offspring of Adam and Eve, cannot resist it either. We are idolaters. We are self-worshippers. John Calvin wrote that "we may gather that man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols."¹⁰

Over the past several decades, the concept of self-esteem has had a powerful influence on the Church. Christians, who have generally thought of self-esteem as sinful, continue to be prompted by Christian authors in their books to develop a "healthy" self-esteem. These authors have warned that a negative self-esteem is the basis of most psychological problems and that it even leads to sinful behavior.

If the advocates of self-esteem are right, we must change our emphasis from man's unworthiness and focus on man's worthiness and his right to esteem himself. The Church will need to recognize the tremendous signifi-

cance that this teaching will have in the lives of its members.

But if the advocates of self-esteem are wrong, then clearly the Church's fascination with self-esteem is heretical. Jesus called His followers to imitate Him in denying themselves (Matthew 16:24). While not endorsing all of his positions, we agree with T.B. Maston when he stated:

"The cross, with all that it symbolizes, permeates and gives meaning and unity to all the ethical teachings of Jesus."¹¹

Jesus consistently tied together self-denial and the cross. The call of God into the Christian life is a call to self-denial. The cross — self-denial — is the path of every Christian. The antithesis of the cross is self-love. Therefore, self-love is classified as a "different gospel" (Galatians 1:6), opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Endnotes:

1. Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1973, pg. 13.
2. James Dobson, *Hide and Seek*. Grand

Rapids, Mich.: Flemming H. Revell, 1979, pg. 21.

3. John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Vanishing Conscience*. Dallas: Word Publishing Company, 1994, pg. 19.

4. Andrew Murray in William Law, *Freedom From a Self-Centered Life / Dying to Self*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1977, pg. 6.

5. L.E. Maxwell, *Born Crucified*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1973, pg. 56.

6. Thomas Watson, *The Duty of Self-Denial (and Ten Other Sermons)*. Morgan, Penna.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1998, pp. 14, 29.

7. Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*. Carlisle, Penna.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968, pg. 189.

8. John T. McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, Vol. 1, pp. 691-694, (Institutes 3.7.2,4).

9. Martha Peace, *Attitudes of a Transformed Heart*. Bemidji, Minn.: Focus Publishing, 2002, pg. 41.

10. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, op. cit., Vol. 1, pg. 108, (Institutes 1.11.8).

11. T.B. Maston, *Biblical Ethics*. Waco, Texas: Word Books Publishers, 1967, pg. 162.

Editor's Note: A fuller treatment by Dr. Tyler of the self-esteem gospel is available in his work, *Jesus Christ: Self-Denial or Self-Esteem?* (Timeless Texts, 2002). 

EDITORIALS

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facts do not matter. False prophecies are proclaimed and the false prophets are revered all the more. The lying prophets go on record and their record shows them to be fabricators and dissemblers. Claims are made with no documentation. Outright lies are constructed. When the lies are confronted, the response is, "touch not the Lord's anointed," yet it is obvious they are not the Lord's anointed. They live in obscene luxury, but are given a pass because money is equated with the blessing of God. There is no financial accountability.

3. *The local church*. The epistles bear out the importance of the local church in God's program. However, that is not the emphasis of the wandering apostles and prophets. Anointing centers, mass meetings, healing encounters, following the next "revival" or "breakthrough" are more important. Find a "blessing" center (code for adrenalin out of control) or a place where God may be doing divine dentistry, dispensing gold dust, or leaving angel feathers. One can always be "slain in the Spirit," which makes local church meetings seem downright dull.

Scream, shout, let it all hang out, shelve your mind, go into altered states, but don't dare talk about the local church.

4. *Sound doctrine*. There is a frightening cross-breeding of heresies today that will produce more mutant doctrines warned about in Scripture. Oneness Pentecostals pollinate across Assembly of God lines. Deniers of the Trinity such as T.D. Jakes and Tommy Tenney mingle with orthodoxy as though they were straight on the doctrine of God. Arch-heretic Finis Dake is promoted via his study Bible.

Benny Hinn promises he will break financial bondage if one will send the prophesied amount of \$77. His God resembles a slot machine in Las Vegas or Atlantic City more than a Heavenly Father. Then there's the outrage of Jerry Falwell endorsing "Brother Benny."

Jesse Duplantis claims to have a car that raptured him in a cloud from place to place and people believe it. Duplantis revels in referring to himself as the "Ragin Cajun" and has more the demeanor of a hokey professional wrestler than a man of God. Oh yes, Duplantis talks routinely about meeting Paul and Jesus in heaven and it never dawns on listeners that he is suggesting a

form of communication with the dead that is forbidden by Scripture.

A new Jesus who had to suffer in hell and be born again is welcomed. Utopia is promised and redemption of the body offered *now*, though it is never delivered. Salvation, sanctification, and glorification are mixed, matched, and mingled in incredible confusion. Doctrine is shockingly referred to as “doo doo” and there is no outrage! People are so far in the gutter that the sewer cannot be far away.

These shameless charlatans are the devil’s instrument to weaken the Church, even though Paul says it is the pillar and ground of truth. Their television broadcasts, along with their book deals, allow them maximum exposure to perpetuate massive heresies as they cavalierly undermine Scripture, raze honesty in ministry, belittle the local church, and disregard sound doctrine. “If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?”

For over three decades, Christians have been encouraged to write the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in protest of a fictitious petition. The petition (known as “Petition #2493”) is purported to be an effort by infamous atheist Madalyn Murray O’Hair to remove all religious programming from the television airwaves. The petition is pure fiction, but attempts to stifle it continue to circulate within Christian circles. As a result, letters of protest from Christians steadily pour into the FCC’s office. (The fact that O’Hair was murdered in September 1995 has done little to deter the crusade against the spurious campaign attributed to her.)

In one very real sense, we could say, “Oh, that the O’Hair petition were true.” The Church would be better served if Christians signed their name, not on letters of protest, but on just such a petition to remove religious broadcasting. Pulling the plug on “Christian television” with its destruction of the four pillars noted above, would be a tremendous advantage for the local church. The local church is God’s arrangement for worship, teaching, fellowship, encouragement, ministry, evangelism, and so forth. It is not, and never will be, “Christian television,” despite Paul Crouch’s repeated exclamation, “We’re gonna have church tonight!”

It is safe to say that the outlawing of religious broadcasting by the FCC will never take place. So what should Christians do? We can start by turning off religious television and reading our Bibles, becoming active in a local church (investing time, talents, and finances), supporting good apologetics ministries, and writing letters of protest to the false prophets, calling them on their lies and lunacy. There needs to be an outcry, and it needs to start now. We need to speak out to the managers of so-called Christian bookstores that are promoting poison by the boatload. That is what the righteous can do. *Act now while there is still time.*

—GRF

NEWS UPDATES

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York City, pointing out what appears to be a face in the ascending smoke. The apparitions are more readily visible in a still photograph and probably would not have been recognized at the scene by an unaided eye. Newspapers that publish these photos usually define the apparition but leave any further interpretation to readers.

Not so for Arnold Murray, televangelist and pastor of the Shepherd’s Chapel in Gravett, Ark. Recently, Murray called attention to a facial image found in the gigantic clouds of ash rising at the eruption of Mount St. Helens, adding to it his commentary that works the United States’ most famous and greatest natural disaster into end times prophecy.

On Sunday, May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens, a volcano in southern Washington state, erupted with the energy of 27,000 atomic bombs. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* ran a dramatic aerial photograph of the volcano’s primary eruption which spewed rock and ash 16 miles above the mountain. On the left side of the rising cloud is said to be the “face” in Mount St. Helens. As with a stone that Murray says contains the 10-million-year-old footprint of an angel, the Mount St. Helens photograph is a favorite “show and tell” resource for Murray.

Murray fuses this twentieth-century cataclysmic event with biblical prophecy through the unorthodox use of the phrase “vapor of smoke” found in Joel 2:30. He connects the dots of Joel 2 (eighth century B.C.) with Acts 2 (first century A.D.) and then leaps right off the biblical pages to the contemporary Pacific Northwest. “What smoke and vapor came up from the earth on Pentecost day to show maybe that we could be in the latter days?” he asked his viewers during his broadcast on July 10, 2003. Murray outlines, in great detail, the facial features he says appear in the cloud rising from Mount St. Helens.

“God allowed the picture ... fire, smoke, and brimstone to lock in a benchmark of time in the final generation ... He gives enough signs that you cannot help but believe His Word,” he told his audience. The point not to be missed for Murray’s followers is that on Pentecost Sunday 1980, God bolstered His Word with the effects of a volcanic eruption. Other than claiming it to be a “sign” of the “final generation,” Murray did not say why it was a “face” — and not some other object — that appeared in the smoke.

Murray’s prophetic observation is flawed on key issues. First, seeing images and patterns in clouds of smoke are the products of one’s imagination. When Jesus told His followers to understand the times, He did not instruct them to employ pareidolia — that is, the art of seeing His face in a rusty road sign or the Virgin Mary on the side of a weather-worn barn. Christians are never to engage in such a frivolous, abstract, and subjective practice as cloud watching. The signs which Christ said