

THE DANGERS OF CYBERSPACE

There are about twenty-five million interactive visitors to the Internet in the United States, experts say. The network has long been a search tool—a link for scholars and students to a vast store of information, and each other.

But in the '90s, it also became a popular way to talk to people with similar interests, no matter how unusual, how bizarre. How out there.

"...[T]he assumption of anonymity is surely one of the lures of communicating via clicking keyboards and coolly lit screens," writer Daphne Merkin told *U.S. News & World Report* in 1996.

"It is increasingly clear that the twilight, mediated world of the Internet is a perfect breeding ground for the victims looking to be victimized."

"Denuded of the human aspect and shielded by an impersonal atmosphere, how easy it is to invent yourself and objectify another person."

Cyberspace is not just the American frontier, but the World Frontier. And there are villains wandering among the plain folk... Even death stalks the Internet.

One of the earliest, eeriest and the most heinous cases of cyberspace crime occurred on October 16, 1996, when a lonely housewife... was strangled and buried behind the ramshackle trailer of her Internet pen-pal, who was charged with the murder.... Far more common Net crimes involve the deviates who stalk cyberspace. The crimes differed; the allure was the same.

Space, lots of space, to hide or metamorphize into whatever creature you could imagine.

"It's just that there's something about a medium where you can make yourself up as you go along," Doug Davis, a psychology professor at Haverford College told the *New York Post*.

The crimes don't all end in murder, but their occurrence—and frequency—is startling and disturbing enough.

...Even the mass killer once known as the most hated man in America got his own website. "The Charles Manson Home Page" is run by loyal followers who post quotes, photos and information about the convicted killer on the Internet. At his parole hearing on March 27, 1997 the sixty-two-year-old serial killer and ex-cult leader shocked prison officials by declaring he didn't want to leave prison because he was working on his Internet site.

What has grabbed the politicians' attention with far more urgency has been cybersmut, which some people have perceived as a persistent and troubling Internet menace for the past several years. At issue is the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which made it a crime to put indecent words or pictures online where children can find them. "The Internet threatens to give every child a free pass into the equivalent of every adult bookstore and every adult video store in the country,..."

For the time being, the cybercriminals roam free—or at least until they get caught up in a snare of their own making.

In general, cops know they'll have to jump on line to catch the criminals lurking there. The *Detroit News* reported five hundred U.S. police departments are online. So is the FBI, the nation's premier law enforcement agency, which posts its Ten Most Wanted list on the World Wide Web and has captured at least one dangerous criminal with a tip received from a Net surfer.

There may never be a child-proofed sanitized Internet. By its very nature—and that of its users—it cannot be.

Online services have "allowed people total anonymity," one female user told the Post and Courier of Charleston, South Carolina in 1996. "Because of that anonymity, they feel a greater freedom to explore their darker side. They just feel totally liberated. It's almost as if there's no moral constraints on them anymore."

...Experts on such groups have warned that such uncensored cyberspace can also link isolated kooks with the movements that love them.

In fact, it is all too easy to find websites operated by neo-Nazis, skinheads and other racist groups. "We correctly label these groups as lunatic fringe." Rabbi Cooper told the *New York Times* in 1996. "But it is a mistake to think they lack sophistication. They have embraced this technology quicker than any other group of society. For them it is a technology made in heaven."

Excerpts and quotes are from the book "Heavens Gate: Cult Suicide in San Diego," by the Staff of the New York Post, published in 1997.

THE CLARION VOICE OF A TRUE PROPHET

And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. (Ezekiel 2:5)

And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them. (Ezekiel 33:33)

Standing with my family on one of the hills of Rome, listening intently as our Italian guide pointed out and described some of the ruins of that ancient city—the city the poets once praised as “the queen of cities,” “golden Rome,” “the home of the gods,” and “epitome of the world,” I tried to visualize Rome in its glory. We saw the remains of ancient buildings of government and religion, which once were some of the most prominent structures in the world. Our guide drew our attention to a solitary arch, partially obscured by trees, which would have otherwise gone unnoticed. The Arch of Titus, he explained, was erected to commemorate that famous General's victories. My attention was riveted to this structure, which was

still very much in tact after almost two thousand years. The great halls of government, constructed of costly materials by skilled craftsmen along grandiose architectural designs, have long since crumbled and ruined, leaving only the slightest evidence of their glorious past. Dilapidated ruins, leaving only a vague outline, are the sole remnants of temples erected in opulent splendor as homage to a host of man-made deities.

A tour of some of the prominent cathedrals of Rome give hint to the resplendent glory that once graced the skyline of that ancient metropolis. As we walked on beautiful marble floors, laced with tiny veins of gold, and gazed in wonder at the copious ornamentation of precious and semiprecious stones and metals, we actually walked on gold. Our guide explained that these precious materials were plundered and looted from those buildings, which now lay in ruins. I tried to visualize just how wonderful these ancient structures had once been. What care must have been given to their planning and construction. Yet, the Arch survived the barbarous attack on Rome that left much of that beautiful city in ruins. Why had that Arch been built? Why did it still stand, almost as if in defiance? These were questions I pondered as I left that scene, determined to know more.

The Arch of Titus still stands along the Via Sacra (The Sacred Way), the oldest road into the Roman Forum. It was along this road that the mighty Roman Army passed, both to celebrate victory and to ceremonially remove the blood of their enemies. They returned with the loot of war—slaves, animals and wagons loaded with the precious treasures plundered from hapless foes. When a campaign was especially successful, or particularly significant, the Senate would approve the erection of some memorial. The campaign of Titus was regarded as being worthy of such memorial, so the Arch was built to celebrate his military victories over Jerusalem when he destroyed Herod's Temple.

This picture shows a part of the



relief on the Arch, which portrays the sacking of the Temple in Jerusalem. The golden candelstick is clearly visible. *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* says the golden laver and the silver

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THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED ARTICLE IS FROM:

Elder E. W. Wheeler

TRIADS AND TRINITY

Egypt's Early Tradition

The triadic grouping of gods was an early persistent tradition in the religion of Ancient Egypt. The best-known example is perhaps that of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, and the relationship within the triad is often on a family basis of father, mother, and child, although there are triads with three gods or three goddesses, the leading deities of one locality being sometimes thus combined. A result of the prominence of this structural element in Egyptian religion has been the suggestion of some scholars, notably the late Siegfried Morenz, that Egypt may have well have influenced, in this matter, the formulation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Mithraism

The cult of Mithras was certainly known to several of the early Christian writers. Tertullian refers to the 'lions' of Mithras as reflecting the fiery aspect of nature; he has just mentioned Osiris as relating to its fertility. He attacks the baptismal rites of both Isis and Mithras and portrays Mithraic rites with a sword and wreath and with features of a sacred meal. Justin Martyr (Apol. I. 66) also compares the Eucharist with the Mithraic communion meal, although he ascribes the latter to the imitative urges of 'wicked demons.' Before that Justin (I. 65) mentions the trinitarian formula used in the first Eucharist of the newly baptized, but here he adduces no Mithraic parallel.

Triads and Trinity by J. Gwyn Griffiths, University of Wales Press 1996.

Mission Statement

Since our first publication in the early eighties, our mission has been to provide "doctrine and instruction in righteousness" to the churches in the Philippines (II Timothy 3:16). By request, we are expanding our circulation, trusting that God will bless and use it for the benefit of His Kingdom.



Hermeneutical Principles- "A Pure Gospel"

I read a book some time ago where the author promoted the idea that the devil does not care if we believe the gospel as long as it is mixed with something else. The mixture can dilute or alter, providing that it does not retain the original intent of the message. "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2).

The examples and their outcomes are limitless and are too numerous to cite. Because we are concerned with hermeneutical approaches—which in turn affects how we interpret the Bible, this article will address what preachers mix the gospel with. The gospel when mixed with philosophy for example, is distinctly different than a gospel that is mixed with Roman dogma and superstition. Mixing the gospel with the myriad methods of psychology will have an outcome that is far different than one mixed with the rancor of politics. And, of course, each of these mixtures gives birth to a gospel that is foreign to the one found in the Bible. Paul's warning is from one who understood the dire consequences of a tainted gospel: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6,7). Or as one version reads: "They want to distort the Good News about Christ." Another reads: "desiring to make changes in the good news of Christ." We need a pure gospel, one that is free from distortion and change.

The Apostles were ignorant and unlearned men—to the ecclesiastical establishment this would be an embarrassment by today's standards. They would need to have a theological degree of some sort before they would bestow such a lofty title on someone. They fulfill the Scriptural prediction of those that are—"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). They have knowledge, but it is simply not the right kind of knowledge. I wouldn't doubt that the Lord simply wanted to choose twelve men that were free from the influences of religiosity. He didn't want a Pharisee or a Sadducee; He didn't want a scribe or a lawyer; He wanted a vessel that could retain a pure gospel. One that was free from a potentially harmful mixture.

So, the Lord did His own mixing. He mixed His pure message by traveling, eating and living with them. The twelve watched Him minister to the crowds. He taught them, He preached to them, He rebuked and exhorted them, He prayed with them. It was His theological school. One that was free from the comparative stench of philosophy, psychology, politics, and such. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). He wanted to do the mixing then, and He still wants to do it today. That is why it is so important to pray; we need to mix with God. I believe that the best preached messages have come when men mixed with God.

The gospel will be mixed. What it is mixed with is up to us. We cannot help but be influenced by today's complex world. We need to make sure that we mix the gospel we preach with all the godly, essential ingredients that the Lord methodically and meticulously instilled in His disciples. Mixing our gospel with an assortment of talk-radio and non-religious books instead of prayer, study of the word of God and theological books will produce different outcomes in mindset. It is important to be up to speed on current events, but it is more important to be up to speed on spiritual events.

Is not the Word of God anointed? Why dilute it. We need to take care not to mix the gospel with pessimism, doubt or fear. This is the antithesis of how the Lord presented the gospel. The Word of God mixed with optimism, faith and conviction will help more people because it is the right kind of mixture. Some "traditions" are clearly detrimental, Jesus said, "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:13). Some traditions (like the wedding ring) have been promoted through Roman Catholicism. Unscriptural traditions will lead us down the wrong road and impede what we are trying to do. And, why would we want to be identified with Romanism?

Dare I mention cultural traditions? I guess it is all right to be proud of your culture or ethnicity to a degree, but doesn't that tend to take you back to your first and natural birth? We need to be proud of our new culture in God, to look more intently at a

profoundly more important second birth—the New Birth in Christ Jesus. We need to look past the color of our skin and preach the pure gospel of Christ. Does your music reflect your culture or God's culture? Does your music make an appeal on a natural, carnal level, with its driving rhythmic and repetitious intensities; or does it reflect the gospel and reach people on a spiritual level? Does your manner of dress and conduct reflect your natural culture or do you clearly represent Christianity? The question is: What are we promoting? We need a pure gospel.

The Bible is the pure, unadulterated Word of God, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). What we mix it with will determine how it is interpreted. Antonin Scalia, one of our Supreme Court Justices, claims to be an "originalist,"— he views the constitution as a legal document that needs to be interpreted as such. A view that is diametrically opposed to this is the belief that the Constitution is a living/progressive document and needs to be interpreted by today's standards and value system. The method that Justice Scalia uses looks to determine the original intent of the writers. This would be a good rule to remember when we interpret the word of God: to determine the original intent of the author before it is mixed with today's prevailing world-views. We need a pure gospel!

Commentaries, for example, are good as supplemental sources, but they are not pure and free from doctrinal error. They are simply the interpretations of men. They may or may not be accurate. So, proceed with caution! Trinitarian commentaries abound, and yes, they believe Jesus is God, but they are still looking for two more. On this most vital point they have missed the mark. Not just theologically (Dt. 6:4; I Tim. 3:16), but their human reasoning is flawed in that they believe three persons can be one. Trinitarianism is essentially Tritheistic. They think three, see three and hear three. They are not Monotheistic. So, their theology is wrong, and their reasoning is wrong.

Proceed with caution!

We need a pure gospel.

The world needs a pure gospel.

D.S. Garza

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("Prophet" continued from page 3)

ple, till there was no remedy" (II Chronicles 36:16). These people continued to harbor their bitter animus against God's men even as they were being taken into bondage for their persistent rebellion, as the next verse states.

Judah, ignoring lessons to be learned from her backslidden sister, also refused to hear a prophet (Jeremiah 26:4-9). People who do not want to hear the voice of a true prophet have deep spiritual problems.

The fourteenth chapter of Matthew records the death of John the Baptist. He spoke against the sins of the king who wanted to kill the prophet, but feared the people. It was the king's wife of an adulterous marriage who eventually arranged the conditions of the prophet's murder. People who are harboring sin tend to want to silence prophets.

For a true prophet, death is the surest road to widespread toleration or popularity. Even the hypocritical Pharisees loved dead prophets. Jesus made that clear. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them of them which killed the prophets" (Matthew 23:29-31). Luke's account (11:48) makes the charge a bit stronger by saying these people allow (give consent) that which their fathers did.

"The prophet is a lonely character in this world, sponsored by no foundation, paid from the coffers of the main office. He reports to no headquarters but heaven, has no retirement benefits. 'Priests retire, but prophets never.' He appears on no boards or committees, and if he shows up on a 'program,' he is usually shunted very cleverly into a minor spot, perhaps a 'devotional,' where he has little chance

of creating much disturbance. He is usually smart enough, however, to decline such invitations because he abhors being a puppet on anybody's string. He has no axe to grind and craves no man's bishopric. He has long since laid reputation and future on the altar of dedication to a prophetic ministry and is immune to both praise and blame. He knows that no prophet can ever be popular in his own day, and that he will be without honor in his own country and in his own house. The next generation may build a monument to him, and all medals will be awarded posthumously."⁴

Some of the very ones who despised, shunned and ridiculed the prophet come to his funeral bearing beautiful bouquets and flowery words. Some who were afraid to be heard making a decent statement about a true prophet while he was living, will stand in conference halls with words of praise for the man they could only tolerate after his death. Once the prophet has been dead for a while, they have the audacity to call his name in public expressing a need for his ministry. Hypocrites love dead prophets.

Pouring over the material for this article has directed this writer's thoughts to that special prophet and pastor in his own life, the late Elder Verbal W. Bean. What a wonderful and radical change resulted from coming under his ministry. Most of the remarkable things we read and hear about him today were accomplished before he came to pastor our church when he was thirty-five years of age. Yet, for quite some time, he struggled to survive, first living beside the church in a trailer, and later living in the church for quite a while. He did preach out some, and a few did respond to some of his needs, but so many of the places he had held such successful revivals ignored him at best. Many downright despised him. Now that he has been gone for most of a generation (since April 2, 1977), he is far more popular.

It was in Elder Bean's church that we were introduced to Elder Joe Duke, another prophet in his own rights. He too has become much more popular since he

died, in the early 70's. Some, who would not even invite him to preach, now speak his name publicly, wishing for a prophet like him. People obviously have not changed much, just their methods. We now have more sophisticated, bloodless executions, and afterwards garnish the tombs and build the sepulchers "posthumously." Their names are freely spoken and bits and pieces of their teachings are tossed out—not always with a very high degree of accuracy—in meetings where these men would be unwelcome should they be alive today. This generation has built its memorials to the dead prophets of the last generation; it is the living prophets that represent the real problem today. Unpredictable men just cannot be trusted.

What a study of human nature when we contrast the popular false prophet who speaks in vague, ambiguous terms. He can speak heresy and false doctrine if he will please the crowd with "smooth things." He can belong to the "jet set" if he will "prophesy deceits" along the lines of prosperity (see Isaiah 30:10). I know of no living prophets who have a higher degree of accuracy, nor better "track record" for helping churches than Elder Bean and Elder Duke, but I also know these men struggled financially through their itinerant ministries.

The voice of God is so clear. Even when phrased in symbolism, it becomes very clear once fulfilled. God does not have a history of being vague, ambiguous or apologetic. One only need read the Bible to realize how very pointed, clear and specific God really is. A man speaking as an oracle of God will be equally clear and specific because God actually speaks through His servant, the prophet. His voice gives a clear and certain sound. If he were to utter a prophecy that was not accurate there would be no end to the outcry deriding his name. Unfortunately, for so many, the same rule does not hold for the popular "feel-good" prophets. Be it blessing or cursing, warning or rebuke for a man or a nation, God always speaks in clarion tones—clear and distinct. "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound,

("Prophet" continued from page 4)

who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (I Corinthians 14:8).

The scripture text for this article was first apprehended at Elder Bean's memorial service when Elder Carl Ballestero spoke with such eloquence, accuracy and passion from the text—"then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them." Some learn sooner, some later; some to their blessing, others to their cursing; some for their edification, others for their delusion; some for their salvation, some for their destruction, but eventually, ... "shall they know that a prophet hath been among them." Standing among ruins, the Arch of



Titus is a grim reminder that, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

¹ A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings, vol. 2, p. 589.

² Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, Electronic Edition, by Dr. Paul Lee Tan, #2594.

³ A Treasury of Vance Havner, by Vance Havner, p. 166.

⁴ A Treasury of Vance Havner, by Vance Havner, p.169.

"DON'T LET THEM TAKE THE TURKEY"

Recently, in a place far from here, I was in a church service with several ministers present. During the service, one of the pastors turned to me and said, "Never turn loose of your convictions." That was all. So far as I could tell, it had nothing to do with the service. It was just a statement. I took it to be from God. It caused me to think.

Perhaps you heard the legend of the old Bedouin who had a turkey. His enemies stole his turkey. The old man told his sons, but they thought it so minor that they didn't want to make an issue out of the matter. It wasn't worth it. The next week the old man's enemies came and stole his camel. He told his sons, but they couldn't quite feel enough importance in the issue to pursue the enemies. The next week the enemies came and ravaged the old man's daughter. When he told his sons, they were irate and prepared for war. The old man simply said, "We would never have had this heartache, nor this war, if we had not let them take the turkey."

Hmmmm.

There are some things that aren't worth a fight, but we must not take our true convictions lightly.

—Galen Greg

QUOTES & EXCERPTS

"The time is at hand when the real heretics will be seen to be, not historical and theological investigators, but men of uncharitable and bitter spirit and of bad lives." *A Critical History of the Evolution of Trinitarianism--Levi Paine, 1900, (p.219).*

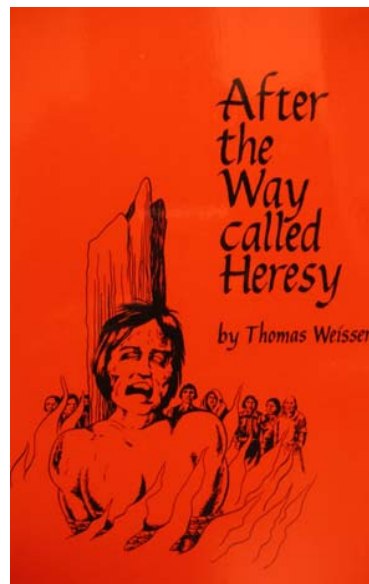
"It is certainly remarkable how little appreciation theological writers of the old school have had of the religious aspects of nature. John Calvin lived in Geneva surrounded by some of the grandest and most beautiful scenery in Europe. Mt. Blanc was in full view from his windows; yet there is not a single allusion, so far as I know, to those "wonderful works of God" in all his voluminous writings." *Levi Paine - A Critical History of the Evolution of Trinitarianism, 1900. (p.264)*

"Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterward." -- *Vernon Law*

"He is rich who owes nothing." --*Hungarian Proverb*

"Anyone can sympathize with the sufferings of a friend; it requires a very fine nature to sympathize with a friend's success." -- *Oscar Wilde*

"AFTER THE WAY CALLED HERESY" BY THOMAS WEISSER



Preface

My main points in writing this volume are these:

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and contains all that man needs to understand his beginning, meaning for existence, the person of God, and the way of salvation.
2. Man looking to man (Humanism) to understand his beginning, meaning for existence, the person of God, and the way of salvation is totally befuddled in his endeavor.
3. The Bible calls Jesus Christ the Father in flesh (Jn. 14:9,10). The Father, Son and Holy Ghost are merely offices of the one God whose revealed name to the Church Age is Jesus Christ. There have always been people who have believed this ever since the Church Age began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
4. The Trinitarian Dogma comes from man and not God. It is therefore Humanistic and does not Scripturally explain the person of God.

"After the Way Called Heresy"—by Thomas Weisser.
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Michael Servetus – Humanist and Martyr

Mounting the hill, the field of Champel was reached, and here on a slight eminence was the fateful stake, with the dangling chains and heaping bundles of [sticks]. At this sight the poor victim prostrated himself on the ground in prayer. In reply to the exhortation of the clergyman for a specific confession of faith, there was the cry, 'Misericordia, misericordia! Jesus, thou Son of the eternal God, have compassion upon me!' Bound to the stake by the iron chain, with a chaplet of straw and green twigs covered with sulfur on his head, with his long dark face, it is said that he looked like the Christ in whose name he was bound. Around his waist were tied a large bundle of manuscript and a thick octavo printed book. The torch was applied, and as the flames spread to the straw and sulfur and flashed in his eyes, there was a piercing cry that struck terror into the hearts of the bystanders. The [bundle of sticks] were green, the burning was slow, and it was long before in a last agony he cried again, 'Jesus, thou Son of the eternal God, have mercy upon me!' Thus died in his forty-fourth year, Michael Servetus Villanovanus, physician, physiologist, and heretic. Strange, is it not, that could he have cried, 'Jesus, thou Eternal Son of God!' even at this last moment, the chains would have been unwound, the chaplet removed, and the [sticks] scattered; but he remained faithful unto death to what he believed was the *Truth* as revealed in the Bible.

Michael Servetus Humanist And Martyr by John F. Fulton, 1953, (pp 25-26).

THE CLARION VOICE OF A TRUE PROPHET – CONT.

trumpets from the Temple were displayed on the Arch as relics of conquest.¹ Chiam Potok, a prominent Jewish author describes the bitterness his people feel toward the Arch for what it symbolizes. Messages of hate and vengeance are chiseled on the structure in Yiddish. It stands in tact among ruins, not only as a statement of victory for the conqueror, but also embodies a message of defeat and disgrace to a very proud people who have a rich history of their own victories. Beyond these messages, the Arch of Titus is a statement from God Himself—a statement about a murdered prophet. The Arch still stands to remind us that killing God's man does not change the message. Even the skeptic will eventually have to recognize a prophet for what he is or was.

The sixth chapter of Acts relates Stephen's appearance before the Council. False witnesses used their deceitful influence to condemn an innocent man. Part of their complaint was Stephen's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. "For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us" (Acts 6:14). The devastating campaign of Titus came as a fulfillment of that prophecy. After he laid waste to the city, temple-worship, as outlined by Moses, ceased and has never been revived. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he said this, he fell asleep'" (Acts 7:59-60).

Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple, saying, "...There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). Stephen's prophecy went a step beyond what the Gospels record. He prophesied that the destruction of the temple would also bring an end to temple-worship. Dr. Tan explains how Jesus' words were completely fulfilled. "When the Romans burned Jerusalem, the heat melted the gold overlay of the temple and seeped into the joints. The soldiers disassembled the building to get the gold from the joints between the stones."² When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Solo-

mon's Temple in 586 B.C., it disrupted temple-worship only until Nehemiah completed the reconstruction some forty years later. God fulfilled the words of His prophet; the Jews have not restored temple-worship, even after nineteen centuries.

Regretfully, those who have their sins exposed often want to destroy the messenger in an effort to suppress the message. God takes a dim view of those who despise His men. How can one reject the gift (the ministry is a gift according to Ephesians 4:8 & 11) without also despising the Giver? "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar" (Matthew 23:35). This verse implies that God has kept a tally of those who died because they dared to be God's mouthpiece and condemn others in their sins. For almost two thousand years, the Arch of Titus has withstood wars, the elements, barbarism and vandalism, as an eloquent and defiant vindication of a murdered prophet. Killing the messenger did not nullify the message. They killed the prophet, but God still sent a pillaging, marauding army to bring to a swift end the customs of Moses.

"The true prophet has slight regard for forms and ceremonies. He belongs to no boards or committees. He courts no favors and never runs for office. He is disconcerting to the System and irritates those who seek only to maintain the status quo. He does not fit into the neat little patterns of swivel-chair strategists far removed from the actual conflict. He is hated by all Ahabs and Herods, and Amaziahs and Jezebels and Queen Mary, the Pharisees, and politicians, who resent any disturbance in institutional religion. He does not fawn upon notables nor seek the favor of either mob or monarch. He is not remotely interested in being 'in' with the rich, wise, mighty or noble. He is not a guest in Herod's palace but may be a prisoner in Herod's jail. Like Savonarola, he may offend the Medicis and end up a martyr. Prophets are still

beheaded, not the gory original way, but with more finesse."³

The ministry of a true prophet is probably the most misunderstood, maligned and hated of the five ministries. God prompts him to speak His mind on unpopular and often sensitive issues. People who are unwilling to repent of their sins are inclined to hate those who expose them. Often, a prophet has to speak things others have not seen. Frequently, these revelations strain the imagination. The prophet has no visible proof—only the whispered voice of God. This gives opportunity for the guilty to spread cleverly devised falsehoods to keep people from accepting the fact of his or her sins. The guilty can get false witnesses (as in the case of Stephen) who offer cleverly contrived statements to fog the issue. Those who are deceived by this scheme, zealously repeat those pious lies with heartfelt conviction and purpose. Meanwhile, the guilty circulates among the Family of God, proclaiming his or her innocence. All the while, the prophet feels the wrath of a growing number of people. Perhaps some of those who "climb aboard the band wagon" have a vested interest in the anti-prophet-crusade, hoping to discredit the seer before he exposes their own sins, or the sins of someone who helps fill their coffers.

In Nehemiah 9:26-30, we see the low spiritual state of those who strive to quite the voice of a true prophet. No doubt silence would have improved the life-expectancy of these hapless servants of God. They were not hated and despised on a personal level, but because they dared to deliver an unpopular message from God. "Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear" (II Chronicles 24:19). This passage also gives us an example of the hard-headed-rebellion that fomented the ill-will suffered by God's faithful servants, the prophets. "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his peo-

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