



## Some Reflections on Religious Babble

By

Jackie M. Stearsman

While taking a few days with some of my family in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas, I read an opinion in the local Jonesboro Sun (Wednesday, June 13, 2007, A5) written by Charley Reese entitled "Don't Sweat Global Warming." While the comments by Mr. Reese were on what he terms the "babble" of speculation on the subject, I could not help but reflect upon his analysis of that subject and realize that the same "babble" is observable in religious matters. Here are his words that underscore the issue.

*We live in a world of babble that goes on 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We are drowning in information, probably 90 percent of which is false, only partially true or entirely irrelevant." Again, "Let the scientist, most of whom are grant hogs, babble. Let the media, the most unreliable source of information you can find, babble on. Remember, the media have to turn everything into a story, even if it's just a passing rain shower.*

Why did these words cause me to reflect upon religion? His words vividly portray the religious climate of our culture.

(1) Go into any religious book store and what will you find? Babble! "Probably 90 percent of which is false, only partially true or entirely irrelevant."

(2) In these same religious books stores, it will be difficult to find a reliable translation of the Bible. By reliable, I have in mind one that correctly represents the message of the original Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament, and Koine Greek of the New Testament. Most modern translations have an agenda to promote. At best they want to present to the readers what they have predetermined the original writer had in mind.

Some do not intend to translate the original and leave it to the reader to determine what was the intent of the writer. "The goal is to reconstruct, as closely as possible, the message which the ancient Greek writer intended for the original readers." (Ray Summers, *Essentials of New Testament Greek*, Broadman & Holman, 1995, 33).

Questions: Is Bible study to be a personal duty? Who is to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance (every form, ASV) of evil" (1 Thess. 5:21-22)?

You can not study and understand for me, nor can I for you. God holds each individual accountable to study, understand and apply His truth (2 Pet. 3:14-18).

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

"But there were false prophets also among the people,

even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

The original message and language of the Bible does not change. If the language spoken and written by people does not change so rapidly that there is a need for constant changing of translations (How often do the translations of the classics change?), the motive must either be to alter the message or for financial gain.

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(3) If you understand the teaching of the Bible, you surely recognize that the babble that comes over the radio and TV programs is "90 percent ... false, only partially true or entirely irrelevant." How many times have you witnessed the perpetual request for funds by program after program. The obvious motive is to profit the foundation or individual producing or responsible for the program.

Informed students of the Bible know that the Bible warns its readers about the dangers awaiting those who suppose that godliness is a way of material gain (1 Tim. 6:5).

(4) It is possible to base religious convictions on what some "scientist" may assume. However, the scientist upon whom reliance is had may not be qualified in the field at all. A person qualified to speak in the field of religion is certainly not qualified to speak in the field of nuclear science unless he has qualified himself in that field as well. Yet some seem to feel that a person is qualified to speak in one field that makes him qualified to speak in other fields in which his or her knowledge is limited, uninformed, or misinformed.

(5) Many base their religious convictions on what is presented in the media. Yet as our author quoted above states: "Let the media, the most unreliable source of information you can find, babble on. Remember, the media have to turn everything into a story, even if it's just a passing rain shower."

The media may present

truth, but it is not true because the media presents it. **Truth is that which corresponds to reality.** A given statement, scientific or religious, is true in spite of the publicity given or not given the matter at hand. People of integrity must be willing to investigate for themselves and to act only on what is true and reject speculative babble.

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

### Conclusion

Whenever we hear a scientist or read a statement of a scientist, we should always ask ourselves these questions. Is the statement true? What is the evidence presented to sustain the assertion?

Likewise, whenever we hear a religious person speak or read a statement from a religious person, we should ask, is the statement true? What is the evidence presented to sustain the assertion?

Whenever we read editorials or news reports, let us recall what one of their own has stated: "Let the media, the most unreliable source of information you can find, babble on. Remember, the media have to turn everything into a story, even if it's just a passing rain shower."

Are our religious convictions based upon religious babble? In the questions of God to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:9-13), we ask: Where are we religiously? Who told us what

we believe or do not believe? What have we done or what are we doing?

Are our religious convictions supported by true and valid reasoning (1 Thess. 5:21-22) based upon properly handling the word of truth? "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Tim. 2:15-16).

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### Why Are Good Preachers Hard to Find?

By

Gene Burgett

Because of my association with the Florida School of Preaching, I often receive phone calls from representatives of congregations looking for a preacher. Almost without exception these callers make a comment about the difficulty of finding a good preacher. I am in sympathy with the comment as I am an elder in a local congregation. I do not know of any task an eldership faces with greater dread than that of finding a preacher.

On one occasion I recall finding a lot of irony in the complaint that a good preacher is hard to find, when I heard those words escaping the lips of a man who had previously wondered aloud: "How difficult can preaching really be?" It was the task of finding a preacher that taught him it can be difficult indeed.

What is hard to understand is why it is so difficult to get churches to support institutions whose very purpose is to train men to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5), while they complain about the difficulties involved with finding a good preacher. Many congregations that have never had fellowship in the work of preacher training are reaping the benefits of the few who give generously of their means. Many congregations have a well-trained, hard-working, *qualified* man filling their pulpit because others were willing to make the sacrifices necessary to support preacher training schools. Even a rudimentary sense of fairness would seem to indicate that, if at

all possible, churches and individuals ought to support that from which they reap benefits.

Yes, it is true that good preachers are hard to find, but it is also true that people who are willing to support that which generates good preachers are hard to find. I know this to be true first-hand as it is my job to

*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).*

find these people. In the realm of voting we often hear people say those who do not vote have no right to complain. Let me also add that those who are able and

purpose not to help in the training of preachers ought not complain that good preachers are hard to find.

The focus of this little essay has been on those who do not support preacher training. The difficulty of finding those who are willing to support preacher training makes me truly appreciate those who are willing to make the sacrifices necessary that our work may continue. The Florida School of Preaching will always need financial support. Will you help us find good men to train, and to financially assist us in our goal to train preachers and edify the church?

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