

REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 4

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SPIN DOCTORS: *Ancient and Modern*

BY ROBERT W. ANDERSON

The term "spin doctor" may be a relatively recent addition to the English vocabulary, but certainly there is nothing new about the practice. "Spin" and "spin doctor" are frequently used in connection with political posturing and selling, but these expressions may equally portray the practice in history — even in Bible times.

At its worst, "spin" implies "disingenuous, deceptive and/or highly manipulative tactics." The "spin doctor" uses this technique to manipulate people's understanding of the facts. The expression is used here with hesitancy, since it belongs to the category of slang. However, because it is currently often employed and so perfectly captures the essence of the practice past and present, we resort to it as a nail upon which to hang a thought.

The display of "spin" struck me in a recent devotional reading of Jeremiah 44. (To best appreciate the confrontation this passage records, the reader might

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"Fervent LOVE OF THE BRETHREN"

BY BRAD K. GSELL

In Peter's first epistle, he tells his readers that they should prepare to suffer for Christ, and endure trials and persecution. Although they will have "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8), yet for a time they very well might experience "heaviness through manifold temptations [testings]" (1 Peter 1:6). Despite their faithfulness to Christ, many will "speak evil of you, as of evil-doers" (1 Peter 3:16).

He then turns his attention to the relationship between fellow believers: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22).

Although a command to love our brethren in God's Word should naturally be taken to heart by all believers, yet Peter wants to make sure his readers do not think that just having a lack of ill will towards a brother, or a cursory fondness, is what is meant by "love." What God is here teaching believers is much deeper than this and goes to the inner recesses of the heart. Peter tells us that this love must be "unfeigned." In other words, it cannot be a surface, thoughtless expression, but

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The Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, family camp was held in Unicoi, TN, from August 4-8, 2014. The Rev. Chris Sidwell, camp director, is here seen welcoming those assembled for the opening night. See additional photos on pages 7 through 10.

JAMES RENWICK:

the Last Martyr of the Covenanting Ministers

BY MARK W. EVANS

By the 1680s, Scotland's faithful Covenanters had been reduced to a remnant. Executions, imprisonments, exiles and desertions had greatly diminished the flock. King Charles II and King James II, the last two persecuting monarchs, utilized a ploy to divide the preachers. They offered Indulgences that allowed, with restrictions, persecuted ministers to return to their pulpits. However, this required subscription to an oath of allegiance which necessarily included acknowledgment of the king's claim of supremacy over the church.

Johannes G. Vos quotes Patrick Walker's description of those who compromised: "Headlong they went to the unfathomable depth of defection. In their embracing of the Christ-dethroning, church-ruining, remnant-renting, zeal-quenching indulgence: where they lay in that puddle, with foul hands and garments...."¹ Vos also cited Patrick Walker's excerpt from a Covenanter's sermon: "There is not a clean pulpit in all Scotland this day, curate nor indulged: wherefore come out [from] among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not these unclean things, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"² Separating from the curates and indulged preachers meant worshipping secretly with small bands of believers and sometimes gathering in larger meetings known as canticles. Their separated, small assemblies were called Societies. Together they formed a body of 7,000 members, called United Societies. This separated remnant endured the

brunt of persecution that fell upon the land in the "Killing Times" of 1685-1688.

On June 22, 1680, Richard Cameron, Lion of the Covenant, led 19 Covenanters, mounted with weapons drawn, to the Town Cross of the village of Sanquhar. A crowd gath-



Inscription on the monument honoring James Renwick in Moniaive, Scotland.

ered to hear a formal Declaration dethroning and excommunicating King Charles II: "[A]lthough we be for government and governors, such as the Word of God and our covenant allows; yet we, for ourselves, and all that will adhere to us as the representative of the true Presbyterian Kirk and covenanted nation of Scotland, considering the great hazard of lying under such a sin any longer, do, by these presents, disown Charles Stuart, that has been reigning, or rather tyrannizing, as we may say, on the throne of Britain these years bygone, as having any right, title to, or interest in the said crown

of Scotland for government, as forfeited, several years since, by his perjury and breach of covenant both to God and his Kirk, and usurpation of his crown and royal prerogative therein...."³ The Sanquhar Declaration brought the wrath of Charles II upon the strict Covenanters.

One month after the Declaration, Richard Cameron sealed his testimony with his blood while defending himself against the King's soldiers. A year later, July 27, 1681, Donald Cargill, pastor of the United Societies, was executed. James Renwick gazed upon the spectacle and resolved to lift up the banner of the Crown Rights of Jesus Christ. His labors would cease when he entered glory, at the age of 26, as the last of the martyred Covenanting ministers.

In 1863, Renwick was sent to Holland to prepare for ordination. In less than six months, his instructor deemed him ready for examination. He returned to Scotland with his ordination papers. The United Societies called him as pastor and he zealously gave himself to the work. The following year he composed a document on behalf of the strict Covenanters, titled, "Apologetical Declaration and Admonitory Vindication of the True Presbyterians." The faithful adherents to the National Covenant testified concerning the unjust suffering of the Lord's people and warned of righteous punishment to fall upon their unlawful persecutors. The valiant defenders of Christ's Crown Rights called for those who wish "well to Zion" to support them in "this great work of holding up the standard of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Another document followed in 1865, called the Second Sanquhar Declaration. It gave witness to the remnant's rejection of the authority of the now deceased Charles II and of his successor, King James II. Johannes Vos writes: "The Covenanters had openly challenged the claim of King Charles II to the throne. They

had, in effect, proclaimed a revolution. For the time being they were regarded as traitors and rebels. But in a few short years, the Covenanters' rejection of tyrannical rulers became the nation's rejection, and what had been called treason and rebellion, became the deliberate act of the nation, in the Revolution of 1688."⁴

The King's Privy Council reacted with fury. Any who consented to the Declaration or refused to disavow it faced a death sentence. Military execution did not require a trial. Scotland was turned upside down in an effort to capture the young Renwick and his followers. Indulged preachers and other clerical enemies heaped lies upon the intrepid preacher until his name was despised.

Charles II died in February 1685 and his brother, Duke of York, a Roman Catholic, reigned as James II. Under his barbarous leadership, the persecution reached its highest pitch. W.H. Carslaw writes: "Many were cruelly and inhumanly murdered in the open fields, others were hanged, many thrown into prison and tortured with fiendish cruelty. Great diligence was also shown in searching for the fugitives, who were reduced to the utmost straits and forced to seek shelter in the wildest and loneliest places."⁵

James Renwick never wavered, always ministering to the scattered flock, traveling and preaching day and night, enduring harsh weather, inadequate sleep, constant fatigue, and facing life threatening dangers from enemies within and without. Although he had many astounding deliverances, the day of his capture arrived. On February 1, 1688, he was discovered at a friend's house in Edinburgh. In trying to escape, he received a wound that slowed his progress and ended in his arrest. When the captain of the guard looked upon the youth, he exclaimed, "What! Is this the boy Renwick that the nation hath been so much troubled with?"⁶ Once imprisoned and in irons he was able to pray, asking the Lord

"Lord, I die in the faith that thou wilt not leave Scotland, but that thou wilt make the blood of thy witnesses the seed of thy church, and return again and be glorious in our land...."

for "through-bearing grace, and that his enemies might be restrained from torturing his body...."⁷ His prayers were answered.

Renwick's mother and sister were allowed to visit him and heard his prayer two hours before his execution: "O Lord, thou hast brought me within two hours of eternity, and this is no matter of terror to me more than if I were to lie down in a bed of roses; nay, through grace, to Thy praise, I may say I never had the fear of death since I came to this prison; but from the place where I was taken, I could have gone very composedly to the scaffold. O! how can I contain this, to be within two hours of the crown of glory."⁸

On February 17, 1688, James Renwick climbed the steps of the scaffold with cheerfulness in the midst of pounding drums designed to drown out his words. Attendants heard him pray, "Lord, I die in the faith that thou wilt not leave Scotland, but that thou wilt make the blood of thy witnesses the seed of thy church, and return again and be glorious in our land. And now, Lord, I am ready; the bride, the Lamb's wife, hath made herself ready."⁹ He died with these words in his mouth: "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of Truth."¹⁰

Biographer, John Howie, states: "The Viscount of Tarbet, one of the counselors, one day in company, when speaking of him, said, 'That he was one of the stiffest maintainers of his principles that ever came before them. Others we used always to cause one time or other to waver, but

him we could never move. Where we left him, there we found him. We could never make him yield or vary in the least. He was the man we have seen most plainly and pertinaciously adhering to the old way of Presbyterian government, who, if he had lived in Knox's days, would not have died by any laws then in being."¹¹ •

¹Johannes G. Vos, *The Scottish Covenanters* (Edinburgh: Blue Banner Publication, reprinted 1998), p. 96.

²*Ibid.*, p. 100.

³<http://www.thereformation.info/sanquhar.htm>. John C. Johnson, *Treasury of the Scottish Covenant* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1887), p. 142.

⁴Vos, p. 122.

⁵W.H. Carslaw, *The Life and Letters of James Renwick* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Christian Books, 2009), p. 113).

⁶John Howie, *The Scots Worthies* (London: W.R. M'Phun and Son, 1858), p. 527.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 531, 532.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 534

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 535.



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REDEEMING THE TIME

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“Reading Books,” “Consulting Experts” and “Talks” or “Thus saith the Lord”? Evangelical Capitulation in the Face of Moral Disintegration

The reaction of evangelical institutions of higher learning to the threats and intimidation of “gay rights” organizations, accreditation agencies and government entities is not surprising, but it is nonetheless heart-breaking. The tragic results of New Evangelicalism, warned about by Bible-believing Fundamentalists in the last half of the 20th century, can be seen to an even greater degree as we progress through the 21st century.

Gordon College

Gordon College (started in the late 1800s as The Boston Missionary Training School) has recently come under fire on several fronts for a statements in its “Life and Conduct Policy” which forbids “sexual relations outside marriage,” and “homosexual practice.” The College’s accreditation became threatened when the President of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) stated publicly that these policies “may be inconsistent with the Commission’s standards.”

Previously the board of the Lynn, Massachusetts, public schools, rescinded an agreement whereby Gordon students helped at their schools and had use of the “Old Town Hall” building in Lynn.

Gordon president Michael Lindsay submitted material to the NEASC which attempted to show Gordon’s “history of respectful self-critique and of dialog with individuals of diverse backgrounds.” The NEASC and the College issued a joint statement that Gordon would submit a report to the September 2015 meeting of the NEASC “describing the process ... to ensure its ability to fos-

ter an atmosphere that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds, consistent with the *Commission’s Standards for Accreditation*.”

Christianity Today, October 2, 2014, reports: “Lindsay’s announcement that the college would enter a 12- to 18- month ‘period of discernment’ was a ‘thoughtful way for the college to proceed,’ Barbara Brittingham, president of the NEASC’s higher education commission, told the *Boston Business Journal*.”

The magazine further states: “The new working group [that will be undertaking this ‘period of discernment’], ... includes students, faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees, will read books, meet with experts, and talk with alumni, supporters, and others....” It is further revealed that some homosexuals are on this committee, and some faculty members and alumni have voiced opposition to Gordon’s policy on “lifestyle.” One recent graduate wrote publicly that “The current policy creates a sense of fear for LGBTQ students and is psychologically harmful to those in the community.”

Fuller Theological Seminary

Within recent years, Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena has officially recognized a student organization on its campus called One Table. Its website (onetablefuller.com) states: “OneTable serves to encourage, equip, and empower Fuller students, staff, and faculty to engage in dialogue with the LGBT community, regardless of their personal or theological convictions. At Fuller, OneTable stands for something different. Something counter-intuitive.

We believe that intentionally living in the tension of disagreement is the way of the gospel of Christ. Jesus teaches us what relational ministry looks like, and we hope that One-Table is helping the Fuller community to be more relational in how they think about their “other,” in this case the LGBT community.”

An ad for the January 2014 meeting offers a free lunch, which includes a presentation entitled: “Storytelling: Real Stories — Real Lives: 4 students open up about their own journey through faith, gender and sexuality.”

In the typical doublespeak of compromising evangelicalism, Fuller President Mark Labberton on one hand states that homosexuality is “inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture,” yet defends One Table as providing “a safe place to discuss issues related to sexuality and gender — issues that are vitally important, personal, and fraught with debate that is frequently divisive and contentious, not least in an evangelical context.” As if to persuade an incredulous audience, Labberton tries to convince us that the club “is not an advocacy group to alter seminary policy nor to direct any efforts in that direction.” Sadly, we could include documentation on situations in other Christian institutions where core principles of Biblical morality are being compromised.

We certainly recognize that we “see through a glass darkly” and that the truth of Scripture is gained by thorough and continual study. We all must strive to “rightly divide the Word of truth.” However, this must never be twisted to mean that everything in Scripture is debatable. Where Scriptural teaching is clear, settled and unequivocal, “fair speeches” and false humility are not pleasing to the Lord. Solid Christian institutions must humbly, but clearly, state “Thus saith the Lord,” and “we ought to obey God rather than man” — no matter what persecution may result. •

"FERVENT LOVE OF THE BRETHREN"

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rather something sincerely springing from the depths of one's being, by the work of God's Spirit. Transitory thoughts of kindness are insufficient. Rather, there must be fervency and genuine passion.

There are those who merely take note of the score of a football game, and others who watch every minute of it with great focus, expressing unfettered emotion as their team scores a touchdown or misses a pass. There are those who view their car merely as a means of transportation, and others who spend great amounts of time polishing the leather, tuning the engine and waxing the exterior to make it their "pride and joy." The first example in each of these cases shows a casual interest or benefit. The second examples show an inward zeal for something that is of great interest and value. Our love for our brethren is to be of the latter sort.

Peter repeats these admonitions throughout this epistle. 1 Peter 4:8-11 says: "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Matthew Henry, commenting on this passage, states: "Here is a noble rule in Christianity. Christians ought to love one another, which implies an affection to their persons, a desire of their welfare, and a hearty endeavour to promote it. This mutual affection must not be cold, but fervent, that is, sincere, strong, and lasting. This sort of earnest affection is recommended above all things, which shows the importance of it, Colossians 3:14. It is greater than faith or hope, 1 Corinthians 13:13.... It is not enough for Christians not to bear malice, nor to

have common respect for one another, they must intensely and fervently love each other. It is the property of true charity to cover a multitude of sins. It inclines people to forgive and forget offences against themselves, to cover and conceal the sins of others, rather than aggravate them and spread them abroad. It teaches us to love those who are but weak, and who have been guilty of many evil things before their conversion; and it prepares for mercy at the hand of God, who hath promised to forgive those that forgive others, Matthew 6:14."

Peter begins chapter 2 by listing some of the main sins which cause conflict between men, and instructs believers that they must rid them-

own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:21-24).

Peter could have allowed his readers to make their own application of Christ's "example" to their lives, but he brings the point home for us in the next chapter, with unmistakable clarity. Just as Christ, "when he was reviled, reviled not again," we likewise are not to "render evil for evil, or railing for railing": "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful [humble], be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called,

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22).

selves of these things: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings ..." (1 Peter 2:1). Even if a brother in Christ should do us wrong, all attempts to justify retaliation are devastated when we are confronted with the truth of Christ's great sacrifice, whereby He "loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God ..." (Ephesians 5:2).

This point is pressed by Peter: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his

that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it" (1 Peter 3:8-11).

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body ... (Colossians 3:12-15).

May we love Christ and one another *fervently!* •

BEHIND THE SCENES

An Update on the D'Souza Era at the King's College

Our readers will remember that we carried several articles in past issues of *Redeeming the Time* (winter 2011, spring 2011 and fall 2012) concerning the presidency of Dinesh D'Souza at the King's College. Although we appreciate D'Souza's clear defense of religious liberty and the principles of America's Founders, we objected to the board of an evangelical college placing a self-identified Roman Catholic in such a position of leadership. King's, after all, had been founded by the late Rev. Percy Crawford, known for his evangelical stance.

In response to a letter from us (see fall 2012 issue of *Redeeming the Time*), D'Souza stated that he had "never repudiated" his Catholic "heritage." He also spoke of his wife's evangelical faith and that through this he had "learned a lot from the evangelical style."

We did not know at the time that he and his wife had been separated for two years and that shortly thereafter he would be asked to leave the presidency of King's because he had been observed at a speaking engagement with someone he introduced as his "fiancée." Incredibly, D'Souza stated in his defense that he "had no idea that it is considered wrong in Christian circles to be engaged prior to being divorced."

Marvin Olasky and World Magazine

One of our concerns in those early articles was that the editor-in-chief of *World* magazine, Marvin Olasky, an evangelical, remained in a key leadership role at the College, and at first defended the choice of

D'Souza. After the news of D'Souza's Catholicism began to spread, Olasky sought to distance himself somewhat, causing *Christianity Today* to state: "This is a shift from what he [Olasky] told us in August [2010]."

Olasky Breaks His Silence

After an interval of several years, Olasky has broken his silence with an article entitled "Course Reversal" in the October 4, 2014, issue of *World*. It details some of the facts surrounding his departure as Provost of King's. The struggles with the board of that institution over the presidency of D'Souza are at the heart of the article.

Olasky recalls: "... the more I learned about what D'Souza believed, the more my distress grew. The clincher was his support for evolution. Disavowal of biblical teaching about creation is particularly serious because that perspective underlies so many other positions: "In dozens of once-Christian colleges a slip-sliding away from the first three chapters of Genesis has led to abandonment of the rest of the Bible...."

He continues: "The King's board, to my naive surprise, didn't focus on what D'Souza believed: His task was to lasso a desperately needed big donor or donors. One wealthy trustee said he didn't disagree with my theological concerns but asked, 'What choice do we have?' My response was 'Trust God,' but the trustee said, 'That's not enough.' He did not have sufficient confidence in God's sovereign mercy and, despite my words, neither did I: He thought King's without a moneymaker like D'Souza would die. I thought King's without

a discerning president would die." Later, Olasky writes: "It seemed to me that the King's board was serving Mammon...."

Olasky entertained the thought of going to the King's Board and forcing the issue, of "plotting a civil war." Instead, he resigned and privately advised the professors to "Keep your chins up in the classroom and your heads down in relation to the new administration. Wait and see what God will do." In the intervening years, King's has headed back in the direction of its former compromising evangelicalism, but it is difficult to have confidence in a Board which only decided that D'Souza had to go after a tragic moral scandal, rather than when the issue focused on his serious points of departure from evangelical Protestant Christianity.

Why did Olasky decide to wait two years after D'Souza's departure from King's to write this article?: "... upon leaving King's in January 2011, I promised freshmen recruited by me that I wouldn't write anything about the school's problems until after they graduated this year [2014]." We do believe the Bible teaches that there are times when Christians must work kindly and patiently to bring about a closer conformance to the Scriptures, but in such cases as this, the Biblical choice would have been to stand against that which would compromise the clear teachings of God's Word.

We are glad the King's College no longer has a Catholic president. However, its Board would do well to take to heart the unequivocal prayer of the founder of another Christian college: "Lord God if this school ... ever compromises, send an earthquake and shake these buildings into powder and dust. Don't ever let it stand here and encumber the earth and curse it by robbing people of faith in the Word of God ..." (Bob Jones, Sr., founder of Bob Jones University). •



FAMILY CAMP

Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church
August 4-8, 2014 • Unicoi, Tennessee





HEDGE FUND	KINGS	MINISTERS MEAL	MINISTERS JESUS	MINISTERS BOWLING
100	100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200	200
300	300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400	400
500	500	500	500	500





Missionary Panel





SPIN DOCTORS: ANCIENT AND MODERN

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wish to read chapters 41-43). The setting for this particular astonishing example of ancient day “spin” is in sixth century Egypt, to where a remnant of Jews had resorted after the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem. For 40 years before Jerusalem’s fall, the prophet Jeremiah, with his “thus saith the Lord,” had spoken to the Jewish nation of their sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come (5:14-17; 9:16; 14:11,12). In Egypt, he continued to preach on the same themes to the remnant.

Consider all the horrific scenes and experiences these people had lived through before they went to Egypt: Jerusalem’s wall broken down; the gates, temple and great houses burned with fire; famine and starvation so intense that mothers were eating their babies; the violation and death of family members and fellow Jews; the captivity of Judah’s king, princes, and many of her people; the loss of national status and liberty. In light of all this, which was precisely what Jeremiah had foretold, their response is incredible.

In the first half of chapter 44, Jeremiah faced the Jewish fugitives with their sin (especially idolatry) and the consequences of it sent from God by the Babylonian rod of correction. He writes, “Then ... a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah ...” (Jeremiah 44:15). The multitude is composed of “all the men” and “all the women” of verse 15. In the context, Egypt refers to lower Egypt; Pathros was a district in upper Egypt which had its center at Thebes (modern Luxor) and at which is located the Valley of the Kings, the site of the tomb of King Tut and other pharaohs.

How did the people respond to his sermon? Word by word the answer of the multitude works itself up to an unbelievable spin:

“As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine” (verses 16-18).

In this great crowd there would have been the unspoken but conscious boasting of numbers; spin likes the majority. There is in their very first words the hint of a critical bite: “As for the word that thou hast spoken...” They are not granting that Jeremiah had really spoken for the Lord, perhaps implying that he had only spoken on his own hook. They were not buying it any more. In the words “we will not hearken unto thee” (verse 16), there is a disdainful brush-off. In their “we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth” (verse 17a), there is a hardened, challenging belligerence. The stiffened resolve of the multitude “to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her” has a buttress. They buttress it with their own actions — “as we have done” (verse 17c). They had engaged in these acts of worship to the queen of heaven before, and they were going to do it again. Further buttress for their actions is found in the fact that such worshipful practices had been done by “our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah,

and in the streets of Jerusalem” (verse 17d). The Astarte worship had been engaged in by everybody who counted for anything. This was the mindset of Jeremiah’s “congregation”; this is the crescendo to the full-blown spin of their revisionist history.

The spin on their recent national history reaches its zenith, no, rather its nadir, in the last words of verses 17 and 18. To see the exiles in juxtaposition with Jeremiah is like the ominous sight and sound of the twin tornado funnels that twisted and roared their way across the Nebraska terrain (June 6, 2014), and their rationale would prove just as ruinous as were those two funnels. The rationale for restoring the forsaken Astarte is two-fold. The first funnel of their platform is found in these words: “For then had we plenty of victuals [food], and were well, and saw no evil.” The second funnel is the contrast: “But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine” (verses 17e,18).

The spin doctors lately moved down to Egypt sound very much like those nearly 900 years before who had just come out of bondage in Egypt. As the exiled Jews now complained to the prophet Jeremiah, so those centuries before complained to the Lawgiver, Moses, “Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full ...” (Exodus 16:3). In both cases we have an astonishing revisionist memory.

But had the Jewish exiles truly had plenty of good during the years they had been burning incense to the queen of heaven? Not when “the showers [had] been withholden, and there [had] been no latter rain” (Jeremiah 3:3). Not when Jeremiah

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had said early in his ministry, “Your iniquities have turned away these things [rain and harvest — Jeremiah 5:24] and your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jeremiah 5:25). Could the nation have been “full” when God had sent famine on them for their covenant disobedience? (see Leviticus 26:29; Deuteronomy 28:16-18,23,24,28ff). How could these exiles have possibly thought all had been well up in Judah and Jerusalem when Jeremiah had confronted their heinous actions with these words: “[T]hey have built up the high places of Tophet ... to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire ...” (Jeremiah 7:31)? How could they have asserted that, when still in their native land, they “saw no evil”?

It is unfathomable that they should spin such a tale when at that same time God’s threats of judgment by the voice of Jeremiah were rumbling ever more loudly like an approaching storm. Listen, for just one instance, to what God tells Jeremiah to answer the people when they ask him where they should go: “Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword, and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy” (Jeremiah 15:2,3). How could they say, “plenty to eat,” “were well,” “no evil” when, with rhythmic catastrophic drum beat across the 40-year duration of Jeremiah’s prophetic work, they had been made to see and hear their future? This spin that was retroactively being put on their history was awful, willful blindness.

The second spinning funnel which the Jewish exiles invented about their past is stated in verse 18: “But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.” The beginning of Jeremiah’s prophetic career had coincided with the time King Josiah put a halt to idolatry, at least external idolatry, early in his reign (see Jeremiah 1:2, 2 Chronicles 34:3). Perhaps the spin doctors are referring to that time in history.

Whatever they are referencing, the exiles of whom we are reading were engaged in spin, in self deception (which is the worst kind of deception), in attributing their calamity to the forced abandonment of the worship of Astarte, their queen of heaven. No wonder that earlier in his preaching Jeremiah had said, “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush ...” (Jeremiah 8:12). Down in Egypt, after having witnessed and survived the awful destruction of their country, they still could not blush at their idolatry or the spin they put on it.

The exiles were pathetically blind in both eyes. In one, they were blind to the fact that the good they remembered came from the Lord their God, not from the “queen of heaven.”

They were blind in the other eye for holding that their calamity was owing to their ceasing the worship of Astarte. At the commencement of his ministry, God led Jeremiah to exclaim over the people for their idolatry: “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate.... For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water ...” (Jeremiah 2:12,13). We

shake our heads in wonderment! Reading what these people claimed causes astonishment and trembling fear over the spin, the deceit and the twist and manipulation of facts of which men can be guilty, even where the light of God’s Word has been available to them.

Jeremiah offers some sound bites of long past spin doctors, but their voices are not the only ones we hear. There are those even older. There is Satan, the oldest of the deceivers and manipulators, who said to Eve, “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Genesis 3:1). The venerable Matthew Henry puts his finger on the spin when he writes, “He [the devil] quotes the command fallaciously, as if it were a prohibition, not only of that tree [the knowledge of good and evil] but of all.” That ever so small change spun by Satan on the prohibition of God led to what followed with all its calamitous results.

The infamous King Ahab asked the prophet Elijah, “Art thou he that troubleth Israel? (1 Kings 18:17). At the instruction of the Lord, Elijah had told Ahab, “As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1). At the end of the seven years of drought, when Ahab met up with Elijah, he implied that Elijah himself was responsible for the crushing drought. There was drought. That was the fact. That Elijah was to be blamed was the spin.

There are the words of Athaliah, the ruthless and bloody-handed woman of whom we read in 2 Kings 11. Upon entering the temple precincts, when she saw the coronation of the boy Joash, the rightful claimant to the throne of Judah, she rent her clothes and cried, “Treason, treason” (2 Kings 11:14). In that passionate outburst, the wicked Athaliah makes herself the paragon of patriotism and outlaws the best and most upright of Judah who rightly had

acted to unseat her from her usurped position. This is one small but notable illustration which shows the consummate expertise of those who, by way of spin doctoring, “call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness” (Isaiah 5:20).

Leave the confines of the Old Testament for the New, and in those still ancient times the distortions of truth abound. Jesus cast out demons, and so the Pharisees, with proud audacity, declared, “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils” (Matthew 12:24). Those words were a monstrous spin and the charge of the Pharisees against our Lord are closely connected with the “unpardonable sin.” He spoke of this just a few verses later: “blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men” (see Matthew 12:31,32).

If ever there was a man who spent his energies trying to right the world from its sin by the preaching of the gospel of grace, it was the Apostle Paul. But Luke reports what was said in Thessalonica by (in the incomparable language of the Authorized Version) “certain lewd fellows of the baser sort” (Acts 17:5). They brought some of Paul’s company before the rulers of the city, accusing, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also” (Acts 17:6). They were the spin doctors of the first century A.D. They have their counterparts in the modern world.

These citations from both of the Testaments illustrate and nail down the Bible’s doctrine of the natural and humanly incurable inclination of a fallen world to engage in deceit, distortion, or “spin.” When Moses in the Law says, “Keep thee far from a false matter” (Exodus 23:7), we are face to face with the ugly disposition of men to spin the thread of falsehood. David writes that “from the womb” the wicked “are gone astray ... speaking lies” (Psalm



Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, held its fall 2014 meeting at the Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, New Jersey, on September 26, 2014.

58:3). Jeremiah, of whom we have written so much, exclaims, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). He also laments of his generation, “[T]hey bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth” (Jeremiah 9:3). According to Mark’s gospel, Jesus listed many things which proceed from the heart of man, including

“deceit,” and He concluded, “All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:22,23). The apostles preached the same doctrine, as is illustrated by Paul in Romans, setting out the doctrine of the universal depravity and condemnation of mankind. “Being filled with all unrighteousness ... murder ... deceit” (Romans 1:29).

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Such disingenuous manipulation did not prevail only in the past. It shall dog all our days. Jesus in His Olivet Discourse warned that deceivers and deception would mark the future and would intensify as the end of the age drew near. He warned His disciples, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4). He followed that up with, “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (verse 5); and again, “... many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many” (verse 11).

Add to the admonitions of Christ the teachings of the supernaturally guided teachers of His truth. In his second epistle, John says, “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7). Peter, in the second of his epistles, has very much to say about the deceivers which spin the evil web of falsehood: “... There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily [secretly] shall bring in damnable heresies ...” (2 Peter 2:1). Further he asserts, “... through covetousness shall they with feigned [false] words make merchandise of you ...” (verse 3).

The religious spin doctors in time to come would manipulate many through their tactics. Jude paints the sinister portraits of “certain ungodly men” who shall be guilty “of turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness [lewdness]” (Jude 4). Paul sets the church at Rome on guard against those who “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple [naive]” (Romans 16:18). Elsewhere he says, “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and

worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13). As David was to say on one occasion, “Is not the hand of Joab ... in all this?” (2 Samuel 14:19), we must ask, “Is not the hand of Satan, who is “a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44) in this epidemic of false-speaking spin?

The Bible’s accounts of the spin of ancient spin doctors, together with its doctrine of the deceit that naturally resides in the heart of men, is the best way of illuminating the

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the earth; for they proceed
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know not me, saith the
LORD” (Jeremiah 9:3).**

present-day distortion of truth and manipulation of facts, which is done to protect reputations or promote ideologies and programs. See how the statements of more recent times put an evil spin on truths of Scripture and/or events of the day:

1. “Religion is comparable to a childhood neurosis”¹ (Sigmund Freud, psychologist, 1856-1939).

2. “Christianity is the most ridiculous, the most absurd and bloody religion that has ever infected the world”² (Voltaire, French author and playwright, 1694-1778).

3. “This week news broke that a recent briefing to Army soldiers at Camp Shelby in Mississippi featured and endorsed dangerous and false left-wing anti-Christian propaganda. In this briefing, Fox News writer Todd Starnes reports that U.S. Army troops were explicitly led to believe that the American Family Association (AFA) — a Christian ministry — was a ‘hate group’ which soldiers should avoid at all costs.”³

4. “Some particular examples of the bias against religion are sig-

nificant. One social studies book has thirty pages on the Pilgrims, including the first Thanksgiving. But there is not one word (or image) that referred to religion as even a part of the Pilgrims’ life. One mother whose son is in a class using this book wrote me to say that he came home and told her that ‘Thanksgiving was when the Pilgrims gave thanks to the Indians.’ The mother called the principal of this suburban New York City school to point out that Thanksgiving was when the Pilgrims thanked God. The principal responded by saying ‘that was her opinion’ — the schools could only teach what was in the books!”⁴ (Dr. Paul Vitz, in his book about censorship in children’s textbooks).

5. “I know what happened with me and remarriage after divorce. My change of mind was essentially a matter of vision and feeling.... I looked at the human search for love and companionship, I looked at the vision given me by Jesus, and I could not put our practice together with that vision. It wasn’t biblical texts that changed my mind. It was biblical vision....

“When we Episcopalians changed our minds about divorce and remarriage, our vision of what it is to be a loving community today overrode a rule intended for different people in different circumstances. We decided to see Jesus’ clear prohibition of divorce and remarriage not as applicable to all times and all circumstances, but as intended for a particular set of circumstances — for the protection of women in a world where they were treated as property, a world in which only men could seek divorce, a world in which divorce meant a woman’s destitution or prostitution”⁵ (The Rev. Warner White, retired Episcopal priest).

6. On April 17, 2013, New Zealand legalized same-sex marriage. A post titled “Gay marriage: time to reinterpret the Bible again!” pointed out that Christianity has “reinterpreted” the Bible each time

society decides certain moral rules are no longer acceptable. He wrote, “As morality progresses further and further away from so many of the set-in-stone teachings of the Bible, Christians will be forced to either abandon the Bible altogether, or else interpret it until it means exactly the opposite of what it says about these issues.”⁶

7. “In the last twenty years or so, as mainstream Christian churches have worried about declining church attendance and adherence to formal religious practices, considerable effort has been put into making the church more ‘relevant’ and into demonstrating that Australians are still spiritually aware, even if they express this awareness in ways not traditionally regarded as religious. Thus there were attempts, particularly in the 1980’s, to develop what was called an ‘Indigenous Theology’ and an Australian Spirituality, to ‘... sanctify the superficial symbols of secularized Australia.’ (Paul Collins, *Mixed Blessing: John Paul II and the Church of the Eighties*, Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1986, p. 208). People were encouraged to search for the spiritual within everyday life, to the point of sanctifying the everyday.... Much of the imagery used by theologians and religious commentators drew heavily on cultural artifacts, literature, and art; in this they encouraged, by an atmosphere of national pride, a feeling that Australians had something to say to the world”⁷ (Elaine Lindsay, Faculty of Education and Arts, Australian Catholic University).

8. Ever since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, it has been the policy to deny Jewish history and any connection to the land of Israel, in order to deny their right to existence as a nation. Following is a statement made on Palestinian Authority Television (PATV) about the Dome of the Rock: “There is a view that where it stands was the Holy of Holies of the fictitious

Temple — and by the way, that is merely an illusion. There is no remnant of it. It’s a myth. A story of no value, like the Arabian Nights and other legends.... Only in Palestine ... [after] 60 years of digging, and they’ve found nothing at all. Not a water jug, not a coin, not any earthen vessel, no bronze weapons, no piece of metal, absolutely nothing of this myth, because it’s a myth and a lie”⁸ (Dr. Jamal Amar, lecturer at Bir-Zeit University).

9. “The time has come for people of reason to say: Enough is Enough! Religious faith discourages independent thought, it’s divisive and it’s dangerous”⁹ (Richard Dawkins, scientist).

We may join Jeremiah in his dismay as he wrote, “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!” (Lamentations 4:1). Hearing the spin doctors, with their deceit that increases daily, we might grow discouraged. We might ask what Elisha’s servant asked when

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the enablement of God,
endeavor to be ‘blameless
and harmless, the sons
of God, without rebuke,
in the midst of a crooked
and perverse nation,
among whom [we] shine as
lights in the world; Holding
forth the word of life’
(Philippians 2:15,16a).”**

the Syrian army surrounded the town of Dothan: “Alas, my master! how shall we do?” (2 Kings 6:15). It is a daunting sight spread before us in the present hour. Here we are, each of us with the whole mass of unregenerate men at work around us, with false brethren around us,

with Satan and his kingdom active around us, with the traitorous remnants of sin within us, with men carried away with dissimulation like Peter and Barnabas at Antioch (see Galatians 2).

What is to be done? What shall become of us? We must “... try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1) and do so with the assurance that “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Let us “watch and pray, that [we] enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41). Let us take to heart our calling to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), and “stand fast in the faith, quit [behave] you like men, be strong” (I Corinthians 16:13). Let us be like Moses who “endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27). Let us take to heart the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets” (Luke 6:22,23).

What shall we do when the voices of spin clog and dominate the airwaves? We shall do what Jeremiah did. Without flinching, he reasserted to the multitude that gathered in Egypt what he had already said over the course of his 40-year service to God. He delivered God’s message to them: “Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good; and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them ... and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall

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stand, mine, or theirs” (Jeremiah 44:27,28). In the midst of deceit and even that strong delusion by which men believe a lie, may we, by the enablement of God, endeavor to be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom [we] shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life” (Philippians 2:15,16a).

Lastly, we may hope and pray that, wherever a witness for the truth is at work, the deceived will be alerted and come to the saving belief of the truth as it is in Jesus and set forth in the Bible. God turned us from “spin” as well as sin. May He use us to rescue others from the same. •

¹Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), p. 53.

²Voltaire, written in a letter to Frederick the Great, January 5, 1767.

³This report was released by the Family Research Council on October 15, 2013, and appeared on a number of other websites. To See Mr. Starnes article of October 14, 2013, go to <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2013/10/14/us-army-defines-christian-ministry-as-domestic-hate-group/>.

⁴Paul Vitz, *Censorship — Evidence of Bias in Our Children’s Textbooks* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1986), p. 3.

⁵Warner White, essay entitled “The Bible and Moral Change,” August 31, 2003. The Rev. Mr. White (Ret.), is an Episcopal priest who was affiliated with St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, Middlebury, VT, at the time this essay was written. <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/dojustice/j116.html>.

⁶<http://www.skepticink.com/reasonablyfaithless/2013/04/18/gay-marriage-time-to-reinterpret-the-bible-again/>.

“Take heed that no man deceive you”
(Matthew 24:4).

⁷Elaine Lindsay, *Rewriting God: Spirituality in Contemporary Australian Women’s Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi Bv Editions, January 2000), p. 1.

⁸Palestinian Authority Television, June 23, 2009.

⁹Richard Dawkins, “The Root of All Evil?” (later retitled “The God Delusion”), a documentary first presented on Channel 4 in London. Channel 4 describes itself as “publicly owned but commercially funded public service broadcaster.”



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