



Storming Fortresses

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,
but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

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A Word:

There is no cross or misery that befalls the church of God or any of his children, but it is related to God.

Samuel Rutherford

It is a genuine evidence of true godliness when, although plunged into the deepest afflictions, we yet cease not to submit ourselves to God.

John Calvin

The real problem is not why some pious, humble, believing people suffer, but why others do not.

C.S. Lewis

Twin Towers, Symbol of Hypocrisy!

Part 1: I Believe! I Believe! What Do I Believe?

by

Murray McLeod-Boyle

Introduction

As we start this series that looks at the twin towers tragedy it is important for us to outline some parameters in which the following review takes place.

In particular, we wish no offence to those who viewed these towers as part of their city and an important icon and symbol. For Australians it would be like removing the “Coat Hanger”¹ from Sydney or the MCG² from Melbourne.

It is not unusual for residents in a town or state to attach importance to a building or geographical structure. Indeed it is not

uncommon for such structures to be held in the highest regard and for deep-seated emotional links to form. Proof of this can be seen in any tourist shop. If you are on holidays and you go to buy a postcard,

you do not purchase a blank card with only the town’s name on it. No, you look for a picture of something that identifies the local area! People who have travelled in caravans often have a range of stickers identifying the places to which they have been. Some adorn hats with badges. Others adorn jackets with patches. Whatever the method, one thing does not change, namely, people use buildings and geographical points like a compass. These sites can inspire hope, give a sense of comfort, or simply be a symbol for home.

1. The “Coat Hanger” is the euphemism used to describe the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Our overseas readers may be familiar with its shape from pictures televised during the 2000 Olympic Games.

2. Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Therefore, in what fol-

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lows, be assured that we are not attacking this aspect. Such connections are normal and are only to be criticised in the extreme case where a person's attachment goes beyond the generally considered norm.

This said, we now turn to look at September 11, 2001, and, in particular, the ramifications of that event.

It is unlikely that anyone who saw the graphic pictures of *those* planes flying into *those* buildings will ever forget the sense of horror and bewilderment that they felt. I remember the day distinctly. I had come home from work in the early hours of the morning and so had not been in much of a state to arise early. About 10:30 a.m. my mother rang and asked if I had heard the news about the plane crash in America. I said that I had not and a brief conversation followed. My mother was clearly agitated and ended the call with the phrase, "I do not know what is happening in America."

My reaction to my mother's call was fairly nonchalant. A plane crash

in America is, after all, a fairly frequent occurrence. What perplexed me was why a plane crash would cause her to be upset. Curious, I went and turned on the television. The answer was soon revealed. As I saw the pictures live from America, a very real sense of dread descended. The pictures quickly revealed more than a simple plane crash. Commentators spoke of two planes; two planes each hitting a tower of the World Trade Center. Then the pictures of the second plane hitting the South Tower began to be broadcast. Pictures of people scrambling for their lives filled the screen. Tears. Devastation. Chaos. Terror. Fear. Bewilderment. Emotions beyond number were there for us to see and attempt to absorb.

These pictures left an indelible mark on those who watched. However, the aspect that was seared most onto people's minds was the fact that this was no accident. Incontrovertible evidence showed that the pictures on our televisions *were not* the result of human error or accident. *Rather they were the result of a calculated and precisely executed plan.* A plan that aimed at making a statement—the same statement that failed to be made in 1993. A plan that was constructed around the ending of life—if all else failed the terrorists piloting the planes and any passengers aboard would die. A plan that hoped to claim more lives in its execution—you cannot fly massive planes into highly populated high rise buildings and not have the intention of killing people.

This was the sticking point in the minds of those who witnessed the horror of September 11. Regardless of whatever else people felt, most could not escape this very salient point. The smoke. The debris. The crushed vehicles. The shattered lives. The chaos. No matter which way they were turned or from which angle they were viewed, it came down to

one inescapable reality, *viz*, these varying portraits of carnage were the results of a plan made and executed by Man!

When the walls of the World Trade Center crashed down, the beliefs of many likewise fell. Just as the metal of the Trade Center buckled and collapsed because of the intense heat from the fires, so to the philosophical framework of many was torn apart by what they had witnessed. The scenes applied heat and pressure to their worldviews. The weaknesses of these worldviews were exposed and in a short while the edifice crashed to the ground.

Why is it so? Precisely because Humpty was pushed! September 11 was not an accident. Men—men with wives, men with children, men with friends, men who played with neighbourhood children, men with a lot to live for—chose to hijack four airliners and turn them into missiles!

A Time of Introspection

In times of catastrophe we are all forced to examine ourselves. It does not matter what your belief system is, it will be shaken. On September 11 there were atheists who became theists. These are people who praise the evolutionary process for the life of Man and for his technological prowess, but who blamed God when Man deliberately flew his machine into a skyscraper. Then we have the Christians who became atheists. These are the type of people who go to church, who claim to believe in God and who have absolutely no explanation for why they escaped September 11, except for the fact that they were *lucky* or that *fate* smiled upon them.

Now it is an interesting aspect of Western Culture that horrific accidents can be explained or rationalised in some way. Once the smoke clears it enables the witch hunt to begin for

a scapegoat, fall-guy, or patsy. In our psychological age, blame is necessary to bring closure. So finding the person responsible is all important.

Events like September 11, 2001, present a new problem. There is no pilot error. We cannot besmirch the reputation of an otherwise fine pilot. He had not had an argument with his wife that morning and, as a result, forgotten a flight procedure which caused the crash. Neither was he an alcoholic who was simply in no state to be in charge of an aircraft. We cannot blame Boeing or some other aircraft manufacturer for building faulty aircraft. There was no fault in engineering or in manufacture. Rather we are confronted with a cold and callous act of Man. When this happens, the explanation is never easy because it challenges the very essence of what we are as Man. It challenges our morality, our ethics, our religion, our philosophical base and it raises those ugly, but age old, questions, "Who and What am I?"

These questions are as relevant for Christians as they are for anyone else. Not only are they relevant to the Christian, they serve as an important test for the Christian.

Every man has a world view. The Christian has a special, a peculiar, worldview. This world view is derived from God's Self revelation. The question for us is, how pure do we keep this worldview? Much is passed off today as Christianity, but

very little of it is legitimate. These bastardised forms exist because they have never had to stand up to serious scrutiny, particularly the test of time or the rigours of catastrophe.³ It is catastrophe that makes us search deep within ourselves and within the pages of Scripture to see whether or not we hold fast the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

Dancing to the Wrong Tune

Deism suffered at the hands of catastrophe. When natural disaster struck, their worldview cracked. God, impersonal as He may be in their system, is still perfect and set laws by which this world would run. An earthquake did not come into their



calculations. Was God imperfect? Did He make a mathematical mistake in setting the laws for the universe and thereby cause this disaster? If not, Did God actually break in to history and act? "Well," says the Deist investigation Committee, "this is a hard concept to accept as, our major tenet states the exact opposite."

Deism was tested. It failed.

Liberalism was strong until World War Two. It had grown and flourished for a century. Whilst it

continued after that time it was never quite the same. The war shattered any belief in Man's innate goodness and righteousness. The Jesus of the Liberals, who was myth and legend and whose life was only designed to impart ethical stories, had nothing to say to men in foxholes and men defending their families against tyranny.

Liberalism was wanting.

Liberalism still exists in a weakened form, but it is still wanting for real answers. All Liberalism has succeeded in doing is immunising a generation against true Christianity. It ceased to be a bridge between religion and man and has become the reason for man to give up religion.

In their efforts to find the real Jesus, the denied Him. In their efforts to "demythologise" the Scriptures, that is to remove the supernatural elements, they denied the reality of transcendence and immanence. Thus they made God human. The placed the world into a closed system with no possibility of an almighty, eternal, God entering in. Sin was no longer a ethical transgression, it was a personal issue. It was, therefore, solvable by man. In short, the Liberals effort to make God acceptable to Man worked. They turned god into Man and thereby convinced all that god was not necessary for life. Those who seriously peddle Liberalism today are nothing short of a living anachronism.

These were and are bastardised

3. In some cases they have been scrutinised and found wanting. However, because of the Church's 'open and affirming' stand, criticism is not acceptable and error is allowed into the fold.

forms of Christianity. They took names and titles that belong to our God and applied them to gods of their own making. However, they are not alone. We have many more of these illegitimates in our day.

Think about Charismania as a prime example. Week in and week out people gather for services in which Christ is supposed to be worshipped. Yet the lives of many of these people are never changed in a positive way. They are not given tools for living life and taking all things captive to Christ. Instead their heads are filled with trivialities and irrelevancies that only serve to debilitate. They are taught meaningless mantras. They sing choruses that are non specific and which could be applied to anyone. With their mantras and choruses they whip themselves into a frenzy. The result of this is a placebo effect. They feel great. They have had their fix. Yet they remain, sadly, ill equipped for the battle that the Lord Jesus is conducting. Instead of bringing glory, they bring scorn and derision.⁴

Examples! Try the couple who were devastated when her father died. They had prayed over him and he was meant to get well, but the opposite happened. No victory here. No real testament to Christ. Just a whole heap of guilt and questions. "Why was my faith not strong enough?" "What failing caused him to die?"

These people had question beyond number because their heads had been filled with rot about ecstatic gifts. They had never been taught the

truth. You see, it is this simple. There is not one promise in the Bible that says everybody will live forever in this present state. Eternal life is in Jesus Christ, the righteous Son of God Almighty. Nowhere else. Faith is not a magic spell. It is a means whereby the righteousness of Christ is apprehended. It is in Christ that we have life. If anyone doubts this, then, please, read the story of one lad named Lazarus. In particular, please note John 11:25-26:

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Lazarus lived though he was dead. Many are dead even though they live. Lazarus was resurrected to the glory of God. The power of the Almighty breathed life into him a second time. He was alive/alive (spiritually/physically).⁵ At the voice of his redeemer he came forth from the tomb. Did he live forever? No, he did not. Lazarus is now alive/dead (spiritually/physically)! He died a second time. Even as a recipient of God's power, Lazarus was not given impunity against death's call. The same can be said of the righteous who were raised when Jesus was crucified (Matthew 27:52). If the power of God, which gave life a second time to these saints, did not give them eternal life here and now, what right do these blasphemers have to fill people's heads with such notions!??

As a second example, there is the lad who strolled into my office recently. Toward the end of our con-

versation he mentioned that he had "given his heart to the Lord" some years before. This interested me so I invited him back that afternoon to have a chat. Boy! Was I in for a surprise.

It turns out that this chap had ended up in a charismatic setting in out-back Australia. All went well while he was isolated. However, once he returned to civilisation all his problems came back to haunt him. Since he has been in this area he has not had a red cent to his name. He has had problems with alcohol. He has people sharing a residence with him who cause problems. He is in a bad area of town and he is scared of the evil spirits.

In an effort to combat the spirits and his fear, he had one of the guys from a church (wacky) come around to "pray the blood of Jesus." His conclusion upon completing the job was that there were lost spirits in the house.

The temptation was too great. I just had to ask, "Why were you unable to pray yourself?" His answer was that he was weak. We spoke about prayer, about the mediation of Christ and the way being open to the throne of grace. We explored the fallacy of "praying the blood" around the house. What was the basis for this? What text of Scripture? No answer. In all, this poor bloke just sat there. He had not really heard any of this before.

Sadly, there was more. The question came, "Why am I thirty, no wife

⁴ Is this not exactly what the Apostle stated many years ago (1 Corinthians 14:23). What did the Toronto Blessing do for the Church?

⁵ We are not positing a gnostic heresy here, just in case you wondered. The wages of sin is death. In its simplest form death is the division of body and spirit. In its greatest sense it is separation from God. For now there is separation of physical and spiritual. This is death. When our Lord returns he shall reunite body and spirit for all. There shall be no more physical death. Then there shall be a second death where united body and spirit shall be separated from God for all eternity. We are speaking purely of the physical death of the here and now.

and no children, when there are others younger than me who have both.” I told him that God was not a Santa Clause type who threw presents around. This news was not taken so well. Why? Very simple. This poor soul, desperate for some answers, had found a church, a Pentecostal church. They had sold him the old lie—Jesus has a wonderful plan for your life. Then they added the new lie—the wonderful plan is, health, wealth, and Miss Universe begging you to allow her to bear your children.

Bastardised Christianity! This guy’s life is three parts in the sewer because of this illegitimate form of Christianity. Rather than placing power in this person’s hands; rather than giving a means of victory; rather

than a true freedom, this poor soul has been enslaved again to a different bondage. Instead of being placed under the Word, the chief means of grace, and being given tools to grow and face the challenges of the day, he has had his head filled with superstitions and has been placed in captivity to them.

This blasphemous version of Christianity cannot help this soul deal with simple domestic issues. How will it ever help people come to terms with September 11 and events like it?

The time has arrived for serious introspection.

Therefore, the important question at this point is, “Christian! How is

your worldview holding up after September 11?

As Christians we need to have credible answers. When a catastrophe causes men to look to us for answers, it does us little good to be seen sitting in the corner shaking our heads with a bewildered look on our face. This is akin to the supposedly Christian rock group who, when interviewed, said that they “did not have the answers”, but hoped to inspire people despite this.

We will never be credible witnesses for our King, Jesus Christ, if we never grapple with theology and come to a proper understanding of the Scriptures. As we have noted elsewhere, clichés will be rent asunder by the pressures of the real world.

