

The Issue of Authority and Its Impact on Prophetic Studies

Paul R. Wild, March 14, 2020

I have no 501(c)3 non-profit ministry. I have no church backing. I don't take donations. I have no Th.D. or Ph.D. from a seminary. I self-funded the publication of my books and the ongoing promotion of them that I'm attempting to do. In contrast, the big names in prophecy often are pre-funded by a publisher who is willing to cover the publication and promotional costs up front because of the likelihood the big names will turn a profit for them. Not a problem. In my thinking, the big names have paid their dues and are worthy of a reward, along the lines of I Timothy 5:17-18: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." Some folks interpret these verses as God's endorsement of people making a living from their full-time vocations of propagating the gospel. I take no issue with that, although I do take issue with those who use the gospel to deceive the flock for the sake of wealth:

⁷For a bishop [To keep it simple and general, let's just say for the sake of argument that we can stretch beyond the "bishop" to include those Christians who are viewed as authorities of some type by other Christians, say, for example, televangelists] must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; ⁸But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; ⁹Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. ¹⁰**For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision** [meaning Jews, and now in these modern times, Gentiles]: ¹¹**Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.**

But I'm not a full-time-gospel-propagator guy or one in authority in the Church. I'm just a tentmaker of sorts, like the Apostle Paul, but instead of making tents I make reports for people who need information. I'm a scientist, not a professional theologian. It turns out that some people see that as a deficiency and suggest that what I have to say is trumped by the professional theologians. It gets back to the issue of making arguments from authority. Wikipedia, which I jokingly refer to as the source of all knowledge in the universe, says this about arguments from authority:

An **argument from authority** (*argumentum ab auctoritate*), also called an **appeal to authority**, or **argumentum ad verecundiam**, is a form of defeasible argument in which a claimed authority's support is used as evidence for an argument's conclusion. It is well known as a fallacy, though some consider that it is used in a cogent form when all sides of a discussion agree on the reliability of the authority in the given context. Other authors consider it a fallacy to cite an authority on the discussed topic as the primary means of supporting an argument.

To illustrate the fallacy of the argument from authority, would you say that a non-meteorologist would be wrong in saying that the dark, black, storm clouds on the horizon indicate a coming rainstorm just because that person is not a meteorologist? Would you reject a non-chemist's claim that acids and bases react to produce water and a salt just because that person is not a chemist? No, you would not, at least not if you're being rational. In the same vein, I'm asking my audience to not reject my doctrinal positions simply because I'm not a professional theologian and take into consideration that, over the last 45 years, I've done the level of work comparable to what the professionals have done.

I've stated all this as an introduction to a recent event that has greatly disturbed me. I liken it to a drive-by shooting. On Amazon, a reviewer of my book, The Timing of the Rapture, essentially told the reading audience: (1) I'm just another post-Tribber, suggesting I have nothing of value to say, (2) I'm not a good theologian, because I'm only a scientist, and (3) consult the professional theologians to get good information on the rapture rather than Paul Wild. It was as if he was saying, "Move along, people, move along; there's nothing to see here." He provided no detailed analysis to controvert my positions but only vague assertions with no meat. I replied to the person, but my reply is buried down in the Amazon web page where most people will never find it if they don't know which link to click on.

Now, I'm pretty thick skinned and used to legitimate criticism (like most everyone else, I sometimes find it unpleasant, but I don't come unglued), which is good to have in my industry since multiple sets of eyes see my reports and have the opportunity to shred my work. Fortunately, shredding very, very rarely happens anymore, since I got that out of the way many years ago as a novice in my field. Supporting the thick-skinned idea, one of my business partners likes to poke fun at me about any number of things, such as my voracious appetite, and when I jokingly respond that he hurt my feelings, he replies with, "You have feelings?" But when it comes to propagating truth about something that I'm passionate about and something that is critical for the Church to get right, I get downright resolute and have some very intense feelings.

If I were wanting to be popular and have a better chance of recouping my costs, I would offer up a doctrine that tickles the ears and gives every reader a warm, fuzzy feeling about the future. I'd tell them that they're going to get a pass and miss out on all the bad stuff that Jesus warned about in the last days. Paul warned about teachers in the last days who would tickle people's ears, and he stated that portions of the Church would not endure sound doctrine. You don't apply the term "doctrine" to unbelievers – they don't care about doctrine – you apply the term to believers. Far be it for me to be any part of that; James has a stern warning for the Church to be selective on who it recognizes as teachers and warns of a stricter judgment for failure to do so. That being said, I **want to get it right** for fear of adversely affecting another Christian's life because of lousy doctrine. Moreover, I fear the Lord (in a good way).

Yes, folks, I'm a post-Tribber, but I was a pre-Tribber for 18 years. I know the pre-Tribber arguments exceptionally well and know how to slice and dice them. The issue of the timing of the rapture is serious business, and there is no margin for error. If you're a pre-Tribber

and correct that you're not going to be here for the Tribulation, assuming you're alive long enough to make it to the rapture, whenever it may be, then you've gained everything and lost nothing. However, if you're incorrect and unprepared for the Tribulation, then you may lose everything and gain nothing except martyrdom. However, martyrdom is ultimately OK, because you'll find yourself landing in the arms of Jesus. But wouldn't you rather be one of those who Jesus speaks of in Matthew 10:22, i.e., "...he that **endureth to the end** shall be saved"? Wouldn't you rather be "A prudent man [that] foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself..." rather than "...the simple [who] pass on, and are punished"? (Proverbs 22:3) My concern is for my brethren, God's precious babies, who will be in the uttermost state of shock and entirely susceptible to all the bad events described in Revelation if they are not prepared, under my belief that the Church will go through the Tribulation. Therefore, the cavalier attitude exhibited by the brother who flippantly rejected my positions in the Rapture book without serious analysis is, in my thinking, foolish.

Beloveds, I'll put it to you in the way that the great French mathematician and philosopher, Blaise Pascal, put it. It's called Pascal's wager. The wager states that God may or may not exist. If God exists and you choose to believe in God, then your reward is substantial, meaning eternal life in heaven. Alternatively, if you do not believe in God but He does exist, your punishment is also substantial, meaning eternal damnation. If God doesn't exist, neither the person who believes in God nor the person who doesn't believe in God gains nor loses anything. If it's a 50/50 bet that God exists or does not exist, then the best wager is to choose the one that has the best payoff, meaning that God does exist. Of course, we know that there's more to it than simply believing God exists, for if the god you believe in is not Jesus, then you lose everything.

But the point is made. With respect to the pre-Trib/post-Trib argument, which position would be safer to take? What kind of a gambler are you? I'm urging my audience to wager that I have some sound, reasonable, legitimate things to say about the rapture and its timing, for my concern is for my brethren who continue to believe in a doctrine that will leave them unprepared for the coming holocaust. If I wanted to be popular and have a better chance of making a bunch of money, I'd be an ear tickler and preach something different.