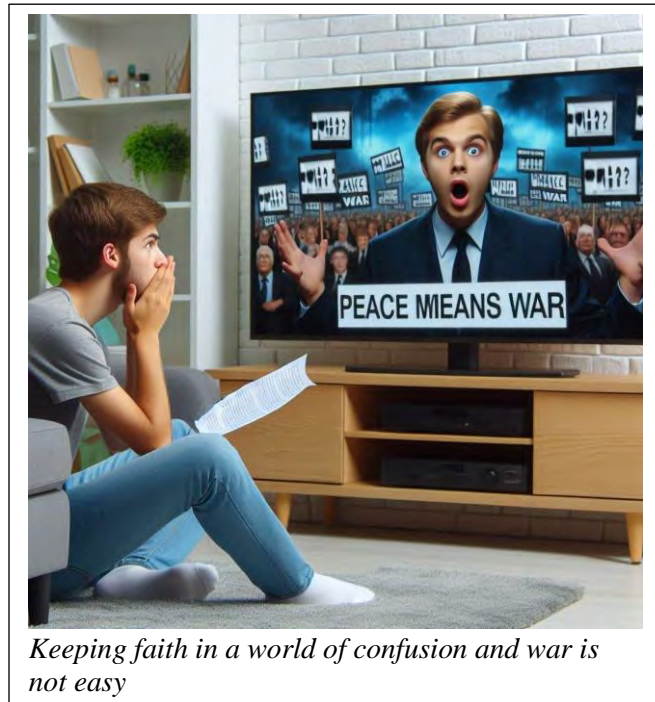


## FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Michael Balcomb on Facing Deep Fakes, Confusion, War - Keeping Faith

Knut Holdhus  
October 13, 2024



*Keeping faith in a world of confusion and war is not easy*

**God longs to see his dream - his ideal - realized, yet in a world of strange teachings, idols, deep fakes, confusion, war, keeping faith in the ideal is not easy**

Part 2 of extracts from a sermon titled "Yesterday, Today and Forever", that Dr. Michael Balcomb, the President of the Europe and the Middle East Region of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#), gave at the Sunday service in Geneva, Switzerland on 6th October 2024. Slightly edited.

See [part 1](#)

Actually, the next verse is very interesting. It says,

"Do not get led away by diverse and strange

teachings [...]" (Hebrews 13:9, RSV).

I could add here, "nor by idols". These days, we don't make idols of stone and wood, but actually we have many idols in our life: our career, our work, our children, our home. There are so many things that we're tempted to start putting ahead of [God](#). We all are susceptible to it.



*Michael Balcomb, here delivering a sermon in London September 15, 2024*

Also - and it's been a problem for the last 2,000 years - we tend to be a bit gullible. Do you know what gullible means? It means we believe things too easily without checking to see if they're true or not. And even if we find out that they're not true, the residue of that confusion remains.

On the way here, I read a very interesting and disturbing article from America, from the city of Baltimore. [...] Baltimore is a big city, halfway between Washington and New York. And historically, a lot of black people live there.

One day there was this bombshell of an audio recording. It said the principal of a local high school was complaining about his students. And in this audio, he was saying,

"How long do I have to put up with these ungrateful kids? They come late, they don't work, and the teachers are not much better either."

Of course, this spread. And very quickly there was an uproar, and the police had to be called to protect the principal. Pretty soon the whole community was asking, "Hey, how can this be?"



*A deep fake AI-generated image: Donald Trump wading through floodwaters*

But then somebody started to investigate. They found out this was a deep fake. It wasn't him at all, actually. It was one of his staff who'd been fired for theft and had used his computer skills to create this entirely false audio. So, it was reported,

"Sorry, everybody, it was false. It wasn't true."

But actually, six months later, still half the population believed it was true. Because in that first moment, it must have touched something

deep inside them that they were already thinking. And it confirmed for them,

"We live in a racist town, and our principal is racist."

Even though it wasn't true, even though it was proved not to be true, still the poison remained.

And if you think about it, this happens a lot. We hear something. We don't like what we hear. We're busy, so we don't necessarily really check it out because we think,

"Yeah, I always thought that."

So here are two things to bear in mind. The background of this message is a community that's in trouble. They were in trouble from the outside because there's persecution, as there is, for example, in Japan these days, but also in trouble from the inside because there's confusion and even fatigue. We have been doing this for a long time, and we begin to wonder,

"Did we make the right choice? Are we really heading for the [Cheonilguk \(Kingdom of Heaven\)](#)?"



*God is our Parent. [Father](#) and [Mother Moon](#) proclaim a simple message. Here in Washington DC, USA April 16, 2001*

The [True Parents'](#) message is actually very simple. When you boil it right down, the message is that [God](#) is our Parent who wants to live with his and her children and grandchildren in peace forever. It really couldn't be more simple.

But of course, as we know through the [Divine Principle](#), this dream was lost. And it's always been lost. There's never been any human being ever who saw the dream of [God](#).



*Fighters from the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah carried out a training exercise in Aaramta village in the Jezzine District, southern Lebanon, on Sunday, May 21, 2023*

So even to believe that it exists requires effort, right? It requires commitment, "Yes, I believe that dream is true."

And now [True Mother](#) says the time of fulfilment is now. You heard it right here on this video we watched, right? It's now, not in the distant future. Then you check the date on the video, and you see that was in 2020. That's already four years ago.

And meanwhile, when we look at our world, what's going on in Israel, in Lebanon, in Ukraine and Russia and Yemen, it takes real effort, actually, to believe that the [kingdom](#) is now, because it definitely doesn't look like it. It looks like things are going backwards.

I can't help remembering when I was working in Israel and Palestine 20 years ago, and the kind of easy, cordial relations - despite everything - that we had with Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders - how peaceful it was and how we managed to fill up the park in the middle of Jerusalem with people to crown Jesus. It's astonishing.



*From a peace rally in Independence Park in Jerusalem in October 2003*

I think that could not have happened today. So this is a challenge. What we see with our eyes, what we hear with our ears, is not the same as what we profess. Am I the only one who has this doubt?

[...] If you believe that progress is somehow linear, you start low, and you keep going higher and higher and higher. If you then see this sudden drop off, you will be very disappointed, because you'll think,

"Well, that's it. We were winning for a time, and now it looks like we're going backwards. And who knows if this will change? Doesn't look like it."

It's possible then, that we start thinking,

"Have I made a mistake? Did I join the wrong church, or did I come to the wrong city? Should I have taken that job instead of this job? Should I have become a missionary, or should I have stayed in Japan?"

I think those thoughts are out there. The other great reformer, Martin Luther, not John Calvin, said,

"You can't help it if the birds of temptation and confusion fly around your head. You can't help it, but if they make a nest in your hair, you can help that."

You have to chase away those thoughts when they come.

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To be continued. Part 3 coming soon.

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# 3 Stages Any Spiritual Community Goes Through

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• October 12, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



**Dr. Michael Balcomb describes in sermon the 3 stages a spiritual community goes through, according to the Book of Hebrews**



Dr. Michael Balcomb, here delivering a sermon in London 15th September 2024. Photo: FFWPU

**Part 1** of extracts from a sermon titled "Yesterday, Today and Forever", that Dr. Michael Balcomb, the President of the Europe and the Middle East Region of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, gave at the Sunday service in Geneva, Switzerland on 6th October 2024. Slightly edited.

See [part 2](#)

You may recognise my title "Yesterday, Today and Forever". It's taken from the scripture reading we had, where it says,

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8, RSV)

One of my favourites from the Book of Hebrews, is chapter 13, the last

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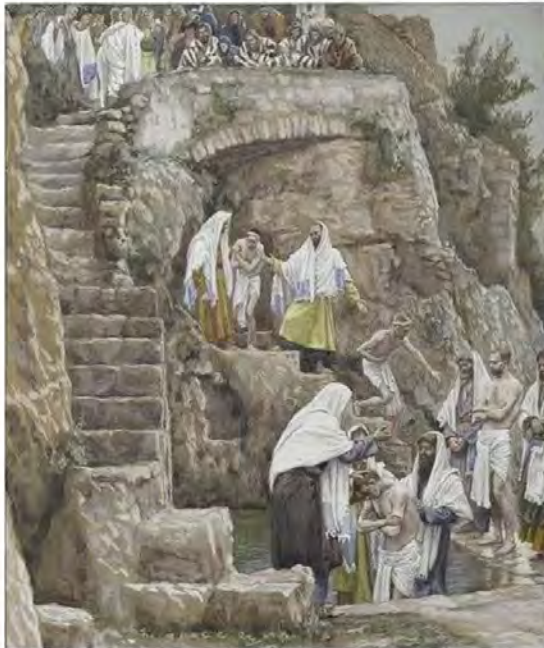


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chapter, and the **final encouragement to the community**. [...]

As you know, I went to the theological seminary, and one of the things we did there was to look into the background of the different books of the Bible. We don't think about that so much these days, but the Book of Hebrews is a mysterious book. First of all, nobody really knows who wrote it. In the beginning, people thought it must be Paul, because most of the other books of the New Testament are by Paul.

But already, by the first century, people realised it's not Paul. It doesn't sound like him. It's not a letter; it's really a sermon. And it's a sermon directed at a very particular group of people. They think they're Hebrews, meaning those Jews who'd become Christians, probably around 60 to 70 AD. That was the time when Nero persecuted the Christians in Rome and throughout the Roman Empire.



Hebrews turned Christians: The Disciples of Jesus Baptize. Watercolour painting by James Tissot (1836-1902). Photo (2008): Brooklyn Museum. [Public domain image](#). Cropped

In this book, the author goes through the **three stages of that spiritual community**, which I think is pretty much the three stages of any spiritual community, including our own.

**The first stage** is the exciting one, when the community was established by disciples and evangelists who had met Jesus themselves, probably. They were **full of the Holy Spirit** and came to witness and be missionaries and pioneers.

And there were **lots of miraculous works**. Today, we might call them "great works". But people were healed, and there were revelations. People felt this enormous encouragement of the Holy Spirit.

And that lasted for a while; we don't know how long, maybe 5 to 10 years or so.

But **then they entered the second stage**, and the second stage was much more difficult because they **started to receive persecution and attacks**.



The stoning of Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Painting by Hans von Aachen (1552-1615). Painting is now in Church of St. Stephen, Krakow, Poland. Photo: Wikimedia Commons. [Public domain image](#)

That wasn't so bad, because as religious people somehow, we almost expect to be attacked from the enemy. We know that **Satan wants the world to remain godless**, and so we're not so surprised then, when there are attacks. [...]

But **then there started to be internal persecution, and the community started to divide**. People **started having arguments**, according to the Book of Hebrews, **about things like property and doctrine and who their real leader was**.

We're talking about Hebrews now, not about any other organisation you may have heard of that has experienced such problems. This was

a time of persecution, but still, because such matters aroused passion,

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the church moved forward. But now in the stage that the writer is describing, the **community has begun to lose power, they began to lose their spirit.**

And some of them, [...] began to think, "I wonder if we should have stayed Jewish." It was a bit like when the Israelites left Egypt, and halfway they began to think,

"I wonder if we should have stayed in Egypt. It seems like it was better there than it is here."

The author of Hebrews, his mission, or her mission perhaps, was to try to persuade people,

"Don't lose hope, don't give up, don't be tempted to go back, **don't settle for the second best, because the real prize is ahead,** and we should have confidence in that."

**We too should give each other confidence,** because, as you know, once any organisation or team loses confidence, everything can fall apart really quickly.

I like football, and I support a terrible team, but they're winning at the moment. But sometimes they can be winning by a lot, and then something happens. They kind of switch off in their brains, and suddenly they're losing. And the players are the same, the ball is the same, the opposition is the same, but **they've lost their confidence. And because of that, everything seems too difficult.**

Through much of the Book of Hebrews, the author encourages people,

"Actually, what we have in Jesus is much better than anything else that's ever happened and ever will be. This is it. This is the moment."

And of course, I would add to this, not "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever" – although, of course, that is true – but what I want to talk about this morning is "The True Parents, the same yesterday, today and forever".

*Continued in [part 2](#).*

**Featured image** above: *Dr. Michael Balcomb giving his sermon in Geneva, Switzerland 6th October 2024. Photo: Screenshot from video by [FFWPU](#).*

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