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'To Whom Shall He Speak Knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine...?'

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational faith ministry, *teaching, informing and equipping* the church.

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Editors Comments

This ministry is now 18 years old and the newsletter 12 years. In that time we have seen enormous apostasy enter the church at large. The very meaning of 'apostasy' is a turning from what was formerly believed. Most of the denominations have shifted so dramatically, even in the short space of 18 years. A look at the Confessions of Faith that denominations once used to state their doctrine, will show the extent of the abandonment of many previously scriptural positions.

I am often asked to give addresses on 'the state of the church'. It is not easy to do considering that apostasy is now so diverse and entrenched. However, two areas have been prominent in the last few years: *The Pentecostal/Charismatic infiltration* and *church music*. Firstly, Charismatic churches are growing rapidly in number in western countries. At least one out of every four churches in the US are now 'Charismatic'. Most Christians are unaware that the Pentecostal/Charismatic phenomena is not a 'Protestant' movement. The Protestant church originally stood firmly against Pentecostalism when introduced at the turn of the 20th century, and to a much lesser extent when it infiltrated Roman Catholicism and Protestantism - mid-twentieth century. Thus the 'Charismatic' phenomena was spawned. According to *Barna Research* statistics in the US, nearly one quarter of all Roman Catholics now fall within the 'Charismatic' classification.

Pentecostalism at its core teaches that, following conversion, a *subsequent* 'Baptism in The Holy Spirit' is needed and is 'evidenced' by 'speaking in unknown tongues'; and that the Apostolic 'sign gifts' (healing, miracles, etc.) are active today. ('Charismatic' teachings are similar but with variations on the 'gifts').

Today, Pentecostal/Charismatic influence has infiltrated nearly every church affiliation. Secondly, with this has come a range of other influences such as 'rock' music, female pastors/elders and pragmatic presentations to draw the so called 'seeker' - and with that a more liberal approach to scripture. One remarkable thing I have noticed is the lack of training required to be a Pentecostal/Charismatic pastor. Many have no formal training and are woefully ignorant of sound doctrine or theological issues.

These influences should not surprise us. *They reflect the trend of the world and the culture* of the west. The Charismatic influence, especially in music, is indicative of *worldly trends invading church culture*. It is a *natural* progression. The Charismatic leaders simply pick up on what *the natural man*, (dubbed the '*seeker*'), is 'wanting, needing and feeling'.

This has allowed to develop a dangerous 'generation gap' within the congregations, especially reflected in the music. (Most of these churches have a large proportion of young people). It is difficult at times to tell the difference between the music of the world and the choruses sung in most Pentecostal/Charismatic assemblies. An *Assembly of God* pastor recently and unashamedly told me: 'Yes, we are loud'.

Such is the state of the church, and to resist this and stand on the Word of God is to be found swimming upstream against an increasing tide of froth and bubble and doctrinal digressions. But did not the Lord warn us of nothing less? Come Lord Jesus!

Terry Arnold

Acts 9:7 / Acts 22:9 - a Contradiction?

I once found myself contending with several Mormon Missionaries about the inspiration and the inerrancy of the Bible. I showed them the many anomalies and contradictions in their *'Book of Mormon'* which they claim to be inspired by God. At a second meeting a more senior Mormon challenged me on a 'contradiction' in the KJV Bible. This 'contradiction' was one of their favourite arguments against the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible.

The 'contradiction' concerns the following passages: Acts 9:4-7 ***'And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?...7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man'***.

Acts 22:7-9 ***'And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?...9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me'***.

In such cases the first discipline of the Bible student is to follow sound hermeneutical principles, allowing *scripture to interpret scripture*; and to investigate the Greek words by doing *word studies* of the various *contexts* in which the Greek verbs and nouns are used. It may also help to refer to various *tools* such as lexicons, commentaries and interlinears. All Christians should have these methods available and should be conversant with them. You do not need to have a Masters degree to be involved in this kind of 'study'! This is simply part of the command to ***'study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth'***, (2Tim.2:15). It is sad that most Christians do not engage in deeper study and most churches are simply not teaching their flock how to develop in this area. (There are several free computer programmes available that can be 'tools' to studying words indexed to 'Strong's numbers' and with added commentaries, etc.)

So, how do we reconcile: ***'hearing a voice, but seeing no man'*** (Acts 9:7), with ***'they heard not the voice of him that spake to me'*** (Acts 22:9)?

The verbs *'hearing'*/*'heard'* come from the same root word *'akouo'* - 'to hear'. But the difficulty is not found in this verb but rather in *how it is heard*. This brings us to the noun *'voice'*. The Greek root word is *φωνη* (*'phoné'*). The word literally means: *'a sound or tone made or given forth'*. It is variably translated as: *'noise'*; *'sound'* and *'voice'*.

There are numerous scriptures that translate *'phoné'* as *'sound'*: ***'The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound [phoné] thereof, but cannot tell from where it came...'***, (John 3:8); ***'...his voice [phoné] as the sound [phoné] of many waters'***, (Rev.1:15); ***'...the sound [phoné] of their wings was as the sound [phoné] of chariots of many horses running to battle'***, (Rev.9:9).

This understanding of *'phoné'* is brought out clearly when the word is used for inanimate objects such as the trumpet: ***'And he shall send his angels with a great sound [phoné] of a trumpet...'***, (Matt.24:31); ***'For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, [phoné] who shall prepare himself to the battle?'***, (1Cor.14:8); ***'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, [phoné] as of a trumpet'***, (Rev.1:10)

Primarily, *'phoné'* does not refer to the words spoken but

rather to the *sound* or *tone* thereof: ***'And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice [phoné] of words...'*** (Heb.12:19); ***'And I heard a voice [phoné] from heaven, as the voice [phoné] of many waters, and as the voice [phoné] of a great thunder: and I heard the voice [phoné] of harpers harping with their harps'***, (Rev.14:2) - here what was heard was *not words* but the *sound* of the instruments.

In the following scriptures *'phoné'* clearly cannot refer to any specific words spoken but again to the *sound* and *tone* thereof: ***'And they were instant with loud voices, [phoné] requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices [phoné] of them and of the chief priests prevailed'***, (Lk.23:23); ***'I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice [tone - phoné]; for I stand in doubt of you'***, (Gal.4:20); ***'...I heard the voice [phoné] of many angels round about the throne...ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands'***, (Rev.5:11).

The word *'phoné'* is also translated as *'noise'*: ***'Now when this was noised [phoné] abroad...'***, (Acts 2:6).

Interestingly, the word *'phoné'* is used in 1Corinthians 14 to describe 'unknown tongues' as being 'voices' or 'sounds' that are *voiceless* (*'aphone'*): ***'There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices [phoné] in the world, and none of them is without signification [aphone - voiceless; without distinct sound]. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice [phoné], I shall be unto him that speaks a barbarian, and he that speaks shall be a barbarian unto me'***, (1Cor.14:10,11). (The play on words here is to show the difference between real tongues (known human languages) and unknown [meaningless, 'voiceless'] tongues, which Paul speaks against in 1Corinthians14).

With an understanding that *'phoné'* refers primarily to the *sound* heard, the passages in question (Acts 9 and 22) can now be understood more clearly: ***While the men with Saul heard the sound of the voice they did not hear the words that were spoken.***

A very similar event occurs in John 12:28 ***'...Then came there a voice [phoné] from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. 29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him'***. Clearly, the onlookers here *heard the sound but did not understand the words*.

In Acts 9 and 22 the men were *'afraid'*, *'speechless'* and *'struck to the ground'*. In Acts 9 *they heard sound*; in Acts 22 *they did not distinguish the words* - (ie. ***'the voice OF HIM that spake to me'***)*. A third passage in Acts 26:14 further attests to Saul himself as being the *only one who understood the words*: ***'And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me...'***. They that were with Saul saw the light but *they did not understand the words of the sound* of him that spoke to Saul.

Acts chapters 9 and 22 are thus harmonious, as is the inerrant and inspired Word of God - the Bible!

Terry Arnold

* For those students of Greek: The verb *'akouo'* - 'to hear' - governs *two different cases* of the noun which follows. In Acts 9 it takes the 'Genitive' (similar to English 'possessive' case) of the sound which is heard (*'phones'*); in Acts 22 it takes the 'Accusative' (similar to the English direct 'object') of the words or matter which is not heard (*'phonon'*). In Acts 9 the 'voice' that was heard is Genitive case. In Acts 22 the 'voice' that was not heard (the matter 'of him') is in the Accusative case.

Legalism - The Scourge of Christianity

We often meet good Christian people who have a strict list of behavioural 'do's' and 'dont's' or a particular social issue on which they like to be heard, and would have others agree. Many are bent on *legalistically imposing* these edicts upon other souls as doctrinal commands. Having standards is one thing, (and probably advisable in today's apostasy); however it is dangerous to present these 'standards' as Biblical doctrine if they are really 'preferences'. The difference is vitally important.

Some even go as far as insisting on adherence to Old Testament Law! The apostle John did say to keep God's commandments (Jn.15:10), but keeping His commandments is equated with keeping His Word (1Jn.2:3), and believing on His name, (1Jn.3:22).

The difference between what is scriptural doctrine and what is a 'preference' can be discerned if we practise 'Sola Scriptura'. Before we address issues of 'legalism' let's clarify some terms and lay a firm foundation for our doctrine.

Sola Scriptura:

'Sola Scriptura' is Latin for 'Scripture Alone'. It is mostly a term coined during the Great Reformation which went a long way to restoring Christian doctrine to its roots. 'Sola Scriptura' teaches *the Bible alone is sufficient for faith and morals*. This Biblical doctrine supports the all sufficiency, inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture as our only guide for doctrine and the spiritual life. ***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works***, (2Tim.3:16-17).

There are many today who claim to practice 'Sola Scriptura' but in fact abandon it when personal preferences, denominational bias or moralistic teachings take hold. Some Pentecostal discernment ministries (so-called) even claim to be 'Sola Scriptura' yet still validate extra Biblical prophecies and revelations. Other churches teach as doctrine what are really 'preferences', which cannot be sustained by any reasonable hermeneutics. This article will highlight possible examples of this and no doubt raise the ire of some readers who have strong views on some matters. To those readers our constant question is this: Can your *doctrine* on any subject be fairly substantiated from Scripture alone; is it in the spirit of 'Sola Scriptura'?

'Legalism':

Sometimes we in this ministry are accused of 'legalism'. This always shocks us as we have a deep and abiding hatred of extra-Biblical 'legalism'! Having come out of false religion and teaching, we have been exposed to our fair share of 'legalism'. Nowadays we ask our accusers for their definition of this charge - and often the answer is surprising.

Unfortunately today a person is often called 'legalistic' because he or she will not go beyond the Word of God or conversely ignore it. *The term 'legalism' has been given a new application*. One risks being labelled 'legalistic' when attempting to expose false teaching and contending for the faith (Jude 3); so too when one deliberately separates from error, false teaching, false teachers and from professing Christians who are living unholy lives. Such defence of the faith and application of Scriptural separation (1) is

increasingly bringing the charge of 'legalism'. Yet all these things are explicitly taught in scripture *as doctrine!* In fact, separation from error is one of the abiding themes throughout the Old and New Testaments.

'Legalism' is primarily defined as 'the theory that a man by doing good works or obeying the law earns and merits his salvation'. But legalism can take on a much more subtle nature when we stray from a philosophy of 'Sola Scriptura' when defining doctrine.

Man is by nature, legalistic. Religions are basically the outworking of that legalism. For example, Roman Catholics willingly put themselves under laws and rules not found anywhere in scripture, that they might ease the conscience over sin, thinking that works and sacraments might merit salvation in some way. But even Bible believing Christians are not immune to this. The Bible says the flesh wars with the spirit (Rom.7:23; 1Pet.2:11) and it is in the flesh that we will pursue the spirit of legalism, performance and self righteousness. We often 'strive' to please God in our flesh.

'Philosophy of Ministry':

The answer to the danger of legalism that lurks within all of us is found in our understanding of how God the Holy Spirit works in a Christian's life. This brings us to a very important 'Philosophy of Ministry': *How does God change the character and behaviour of a saved person?* And how does a pastor/elder/teacher, as a co-worker of God, see the desired change in a person's life?

There are two ways to affect change in people's lives. One is of God and one of man. One produces lasting fruit, the other is deceptively fleshly and legalistic.

The Scriptural method is as follows: The Word of God, the preaching/teaching of Scripture in the believer's own life, gives understanding and personal conviction by the Holy Spirit, (Heb.4:12). The person's attitude then changes. It is this Spirit inspired attitude and conviction that leads one to continued repentance and a change in character and behaviour. They should then practice what they believe and understand. They will be 'doers of the word', but from the right motivation - to glorify God. They will have been transformed by the renewing of their minds directly through the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, (Rom.12:1,2).

Biblical philosophy defined:

So this Biblical method for ministry could be defined as: *Doctrine > Attitude > Application*

This method takes a great load off the elder/teacher or those involved in discipleship! The teacher is responsible for the *teaching of doctrine* and thus points the recipient *to truth*; the Holy Spirit is responsible for taking the person *into truth* and thus producing the *conviction and attitude*. The resultant application will be spiritual instead of fleshly.

If the conviction and attitude is appropriated by the believer then it will be his or her own conviction and they will willingly change with a *compliant and contented* spirit. No one will have to make them do things and check up on them. There is no pressure or coercion required. However, the attitude developed is governed by where *we start*. We must start with the truth of Scripture and doctrine and trust the Holy Spirit to do His promised work *in His own time!*

Legalistic philosophy:

But what if we were to start in reverse as multitudes do - with 'application'?:

Application > Attitude > Doctrine...

...The pastor/elder/teacher sets the rules and standards or pushes his 'hobbyhorse' and preferences that he wants the believers to adhere to. As he finds more and more things that he sees as wrong behaviour he sets more rules in place. Likewise, the Pharisees continued to add to their already long list of laws. These kept people under bondage but also made it even harder for the Pharisees themselves to live up to these laws. Finally of course, they hardly bothered to observe them at all but continued to expect others to do so...*Legalism breeds hypocrisy!*

Because of the rules the pastor/elder/teacher has applied, he now develops an attitude of authority to administer these rules. To justify this he may go to the Bible for proof texts for his 'rules of behaviour'. So he preaches from 'application' rather than 'doctrine'. The starting point is wrong and it is the breeding ground for 'legalism'!

At this point it is important not to confuse legalism with standards or preferences. We do not need to forego all standards so as not to be 'legalistic'. For example, there is nothing wrong with a church setting a standard of reasonable dress for its leaders, preachers or for those who are in the public eye. This may be simply a preference or a requested standard to which most willing workers would submit to for the sake of unity and a good public image. It might also be based on modesty and not wanting to create a stumbling block, which is perfectly scriptural.

Biblical issues / or 'preferences'?:

Some issues are clearly addressed in Scripture such as homosexuality, adultery, etc. In other areas that are not so clear we may have personal convictions and some of these may even be strong 'preferences'. But do we have the right to expect people to have the *same* personal conviction as us unless the specific conviction is *clearly* and explicitly addressed in Scripture? The Word of God does not tell us that TV, the computer, internet, competitive sport, etc...is inherently evil. Many of these things are 'amoral', (morally neutral *in and of themselves*). But as we read Scripture or preach expositionally through Scripture we trust the Holy Spirit to address any area of idolatry, time wasting or selfishness that may be attached through the use of, and involvement in, these things. It is what *results* from certain actions and pastimes that scripture would deal with.

Someone may be personally convicted about, or greatly dislike such things as, TV, computers, a particular sport...or whatever else he sees as 'evil'. He then speaks out condemning those that are not necessarily troubled by these things. And in so doing applies *selective* Scriptures in an attempt to prove the evil of the matter. Although none of the Scriptures selected may have anything *explicitly* to do with the topic, nevertheless it is made clear to the reader or hearer that if one engages in the activity in question they are guilty of fleshly behaviour! Now the hearer may be 'convicted' but it may not necessarily be by the Holy Spirit, but rather by pressure brought to bear by the instigator of the 'doctrine'. The material presented has not been worked *explicitly* from scripture *as the starting point* for doctrine; or the Scriptures used have really nothing to do with the topic. The real Scriptural issues (such as, say, idolatry)

have not been addressed - because the 'rules' have been made without scriptural application. This method of discernment is not in the spirit of 'Sola Scriptura', and is not only legalistic but actually *a counterfeit, and opposed to the true work of the Holy Spirit!* As legalists develop methods of applying God's laws (and some of their own) to others, they soon become the authority and the administrator of their behavioural requirements.

In practical terms *legalism is someone or something taking the place of the Holy Spirit!* This approach has shipwrecked not a few pastors, families and churches. Many children of Christian families sometimes go 'off the rails' when they rebel against a 'conviction' that they had no real understanding of - *it was not their own!*

Rules and convictions without relationship and understanding may well foster rebellion.

The Bible alone is our authority in all things spiritual. The Holy Spirit is the administrator, the interpreter. If we want Holy Spirit conviction in peoples hearts we must begin with Scripture and *trust the Holy Spirit to do whatever He might (or might not) do*. If we want people to stop doing something they are doing (for their own good and growth) we should be able to clearly and explicitly show them it is wrong from Scripture alone and *Scripture as the starting point*. Otherwise it is nothing more than our '*personal opinion*'.

'Conscience Decisions':

Many areas that are not *explicitly* addressed in scripture may come under what some call 'conscience decisions'. These can be scripturally addressed in the following fashion:

1. *Will it be spiritually profitable?: 'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not'*, (1Cor.10:23)

2. *Will it master me?: 'All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any'*, (1Cor.6:12)

3. *Will it cover my sins?: 'As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God'*, (1Pet.2:16); *'For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another'*, (Gal.5:13).

4. *Will it help others?: Will it be a 'stumblingblock'?: 'But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak'*, (1Cor.8:9); *'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offense...'*, (1Cor.10:31-33); *'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men'*, (Acts 24:16); *'Abstain from all appearance of evil'*, (1Thess.5:22).

Examples of 'legalism':

Most readers would say they are not 'doing good works or obeying the law to merit salvation'. But often we forget about more subtle and dangerous forms of legalism.

Let us work from the obvious to the not so obvious:

The Bible says to *'Stand fast therefore in the liberty where with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage'*, (Gal.5:1). 'Liberty' here refers to 'freedom and independence from religious regulations and legal restrictions'. We are free from legalistic

Judaisers who would bring us back under laws with Sabbaths, foods, drinks, etc, (Col.2:16; Rom.14:5-21). This is an obvious form of legalism. These 'Sabbaths', feast days and other Jewish ordinances were 'shadows' or 'signs' of the real thing to come. Christ is now our 'Sabbath' (Heb.4). The law pointed to Him and He has fulfilled all. Today there are movements of professing Christians who immerse themselves in Jewish customs, keeping the feasts and practising Jewish rituals. These may well be 'preferences' at best but the Christian under Grace was never meant to be immersed in such lawful practices and they certainly can nowhere be found in the New Testament as a command.

We are thus free from anybody imposing upon our conscience anything outside of Scripture; likewise, people who would subtly *impose* upon us their dreams, visions, revelations, prophecies, and words that 'God told me'. Their 'hobbyhorses' and preferences, are simply not to be listened to.

Alcohol - a debatable example:

One example that has separated Christian friends, caused some debate in churches and hatched not a few legalistic teachings - is whether a Christian should or should not drink alcohol. Firstly, let it be said here that the two authors of this article are not here advocating that Christians drink alcohol! But it is our united view that too many of the arguments against Christians drinking alcohol are simply either not based on Scripture at all, or are misusing selective scriptures.

'Social' arguments concerning alcohol induced accidents and deaths may be valid in themselves but they are not scriptural to building a *doctrine* against alcohol consumption. So too, arguments concerning wine in the Bible being either 'alcoholic' and 'non alcoholic' are also seriously lacking credibility, particularly in the light of studies with Hebrew and Greek words. The original words do not clearly distinguish between alcoholic and non alcoholic wine, no matter how many semantic gymnastics are done to achieve this. In the New Testament there is just one word for wine - '*oinos*'. It is *obviously* referring to alcoholic wine in several places. The Israelites living too far away for attendance at the feasts were told to use their monetary gift to buy wine and 'strong drink' to be consumed in a 'rejoicing before the Lord', (Dt.14:26). No method of storing unfermented juice was known. In accordance with Jewish custom, at the marriage feast of Cana they were drinking *fermented* wine. The product had to be fermented, for if it had been mere grape juice, there would have been complaints rather than compliments. The best wine was normally drunk first and when the guests had well drunk of that - the inferior, less expensive product was served, by which time the guests were less able to tell the difference. The wine Jesus produced however, was a quality vintage.

At the 'Last Supper' Jesus passed around wine to His disciples. This was six to seven months after the grape harvest and there was no way to preserve unfermented grape juice. The phrase used here is '*fruit of the vine*', and as pointed out by *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, it was '*employed by the Jews from time immemorial for the wine partaken of on sacred occasions, as at the Passover and on the evening of the Sabbath. The Greeks also used the term as a synonym of wine which was capable of intoxication.*' There are also numerous other scriptures

which simply cannot refer to 'unfermented' wine, (eg. Ephesians 5:18 '*be not drunk with wine*').

The Bible simply does not come out and say explicitly that Christians should never touch a drop of alcohol. (Paul did tell Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach and Jesus did change water into wine...). We also are well aware of some eastern believers and other Christians who have a *cultural* preference for drinking wine with a meal. Are they violating scripture? Not a few believers have said to us that they do not drink alcohol because they want to feel 'clean'. Yet scripture is clear on this - it is not what one intakes that defiles a person, (Mk.7:18).

Yet there are scriptures that give fair warning of the dangers of alcohol and drunkenness. Proverbs 20:1 states, '*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*'. There are certainly problems attached to over-indulgence and it is widely accepted that our wine today is stronger than in Biblical times when it was approximately 3 parts water to 1 part wine. But *scripturally*, if you isolate the scriptures *for* and *against* alcohol you will actually find *numerous* favourable mentions of alcohol. Wine is often praised; it 'cheers' both God and men (Judges 9:13); it gladdens the heart of men (Ps.104:15); it gladdens life (Ex.10:19); it makes the heart exult (Zech.10:7); and it cheers the spirits of the depressed (Pr.31:6); etc...

Most, if not all the references 'against' alcohol consumption concern *drunkenness* or 'strong' drink. It is also interesting to note that many who advocate total abstinence conveniently make all of the positive references to wine relate to grape juice and claim that all of the negative ones apply to alcoholic beverages. Yet in every case *the words used are the same*.

In our opinion the best and most faithful scriptural argument concerning alcohol is the 'stumbling-block' issue. If drinking alcohol will cause a stumbling-block to others then this must be considered *in the light of scripture*. But whatever argument we use against the use of alcohol, it must not be based on selective scriptures that may warn of the dangers of strong drink and drunkenness yet might not explicitly show a doctrine of total prohibition.

Our writing here of Christians and alcohol will no doubt bring howls of protest from the prohibitionists. However, our purpose is not at all to put forward *our* view on the subject, but to show that many arguments for and against Christians drinking alcohol have taken on a shotgun approach rather than sound exposition of the texts involved. Put simply, if we are going to have a debate on this subject at least let us base it on scripture *in context* as opposed to opinion and scripture taken out of context.

There is no doubt that we are entitled to express our opinion on any issue, especially when questioned. Our opinions and personal convictions may range from interest only - to discussion - to a preference - to contending/ debating - and even to dying for them! Many, if not all 'preferences' are hardly worth debating and certainly not worth dying for? But more importantly, what is the final interpreting authority? Surely it is Scripture rightly divided?

More issues...Biblical /or preferences?:

What is the interpreting authority in such issues as: celebrating Christmas/holy days; mixed bathing at beaches; Christian 'dating'; going to the movies; watching TV; Christians in politics; Christians in the army; competitions

and playing/watching sports; having 'shares' in the stock market; wearing make-up; contraception/or pro-creative sex only; Christian vs Public schooling...etc? There are mature Christians of varying affiliations who have wide and differing views on these issues and arguably very few are based on sound hermeneutics?

Other examples of legalism might include: the demanding that women wear headcoverings; that Christians be re-baptised if they were baptised in another church; or a requirement that a particular Bible version be accepted as the only correct translation.

Christmas?:

For example, how a Christian decides to conduct himself concerning the tradition of Christmas is really a matter of personal choice, assuming that Christ and His person and work are uppermost in his mind. Let Christ honouring Christians decide if, and how they will celebrate these traditions, (Rom.14; Col.2:16). Arguably there is nothing in scripture against celebrating the birth of Jesus *on any day*. But if you put Santa Claus or anything else before Christ then one could bring a fair *scriptural argument* against celebrating the birth of Jesus at Christmas in that manner. If however, you rightfully place Christ above all the secular hype surrounding Christmas, surely one is free to spend that time as one sees fit?

Many who are aghast at Christians having any traditional celebrations at Christmas, ask: 'Where does the Bible mention 'Christmas?'; or, 'where are we taught to celebrate the birth of Christ?' But this is *an argument from silence!* The Bible obviously does not mention 'Christmas' or any celebration of the birth of Christ. But nowhere does scripture state that you *cannot* celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas or any other time! Too many argue *from silence* without realising that there are a multitude of things we are free to do that are also not found in the Bible. *Being 'Sola Scriptura' does not forbid what is not in the Bible!*

What is 'pagan' to one might be simply seen as 'traditional' to another. Yet many Christians actually invent pagan origins for many common superstitions. The 'Christmas tree' is said to be found in Jeremiah 10:3-5 as a 'pagan' practice. Yet the reference is actually referring to a trunk of a tree shaped and hewn by craftsman into an *idol*, and according to many commentators - in the form of either a man or a beast. (The same *idolatry* is mentioned also in Isaiah 40 and 44). The image was decked with silver and gold and is said to be 'dumb' and 'unable to speak'. We have yet to find a single commentary that even attempts to show this was the forerunner of any 'Christmas tree'!

If one believes it is evil to erect a 'Christmas tree' then let them follow their conscience. But to use this scripture in an attempt show that a Christmas tree is pagan in origin is surely using an interpretive method unknown to any worthy scholar of scripture? On the other hand, one wonders why some Christians also go to great lengths to explain how the Christmas tree reminds them of Christ and His Gospel message. Both arguments are not *anchored* in scripture!

The US dollar bill has the all-seeing eye of Horus upon it. Some believe this to be a Satanic symbol. Should one refuse to spend this money on that basis? If so, there are numerous evils in other forms that could well end up prohibiting us from leading a normal life if we became prey to such thinking! Jesus said: '*I pray not that you should*

take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil', (Jn.17:15). Jesus did not pray that we would be taken away from this evil but that we would be kept from being touched or affected by it. Is it possible by striving to achieve a form of purity and self-righteousness we can become an island unto ourselves? We may be successful in achieving that goal through a kind of Monasticism - but that would work *against* the teaching of John 17.

'Dating'?:

So too, there are many legalistic arguments we have heard concerning Christians 'dating' members of the opposite sex. Some of these arguments are moralistic to be sure, but have no real basis in scripture. Many are taken directly from Jewish traditions. Scripture simply does not give a clear-cut guide to 'dating' but rather only speaks of marriage. There are issues, however, with purity, trust, abstaining from the appearance of evil and not causing a stumbling block to others, that can be addressed and *are in scripture*. Any standard for such relationships should begin with scriptural issues, rather than with rules and laws that may seem moralistically righteous, but are based on a *reaction* to the immoral 'dating' that belongs to the world. Our emotional reactions to the evils of the world are too unreliable to be used to formulate rules and regulations! Scripture alone must determine these.

There is simply no problem with having a personal standard in any of these areas but to expect everyone else around us to accept that same standard when it is not based on scripture, is plainly legalistic!

The Sabbath question:

Recently we received a letter to this ministry saying: '*Dear editor, how should we observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy? Exodus 20:8-11 implies that worship is our first priority, and does that not mean observing morning and evening attendance at church, for it is the 'Lord's Day'...We are to rest from the labours of the week, such as our work and recreation which is lawful on all other days. The day is to be taken up without self pleasures or entertainment of any kind, the exception being works of necessity and mercy...*'

This thinking reveals the need to restate what it means for a person to practice 'Sola Scriptura' ('Scripture Alone') when defining Biblical doctrines. Firstly, most of this letter is quoting from the '*Westminster Catechism*' and not from Scripture. This Confession was produced by the Westminster Assembly of Divines, which had been created by the English Parliament in 1643 to settle various theological and ecclesiastical issues in the British Isles. It was presented to Parliament in 1646 and was an English Puritan document that didn't take hold in England, but was embraced enthusiastically in Presbyterian Scotland and later the English-speaking Presbyterian world. Although most of our denominations originally drew upon its teachings, it is mostly now used in Presbyterian, and especially Reformed Presbyterian circles. It is an admirable document but *should never replace scripture!*

The command in Exodus 20 was given specifically to *the Israelites*. Nine of the ten commandments mentioned there are repeated in the New Testament as at least a moral guide. But the fourth, concerning the Sabbath day, *is not repeated* and not commanded anywhere in the New Testament! This

commandment is mentioned in detail in Exodus 31:12-17 (see also Ezek.20:12) and is specifically *to Israel!*: ‘...**Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations...**’¹⁶ **Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. 17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever...**’ If this ‘sign’ is to be kept by Christians today, then we must observe many other procedures, rituals, and feasts given to Israel with this command as ‘statutes forever’?

The ‘Sabbath’ was given as a ‘sign’ pointing to Christ who is ‘our Sabbath’, our ‘rest’ (‘Sabbath’ - Heb.4). If we are going to obey Exodus 20 then why don’t we keep it correctly? - as the Jews did beginning with the seventh day - Saturday. We would not light fires and not travel more than one mile. Then add this: the Jewish Sabbaths fell on different days - it fell on the first day (Lev.23:39), sometimes it fell on the 7th day, (Ex.20:8) and sometimes on the 8th day, (Lev.23:39). Sabbaths were also of different lengths. Some were one day long (Ex.16:23-39), some two days (Lev.23:6-8; 15-22), some one year (Lev.25:4), some 70 years (2Chr.36:21), and some eternal (Heb.4:9)! In the week that Jesus died there were two Sabbaths, one a special Sabbath and one the regular weekly one. The problem with obeying such a law regarding the keeping of a ‘Sabbath’ day, is that you will eventually break it somewhere, somehow!

Historically, Christians in the first few centuries kept the ‘*first day of the week*’ (Sunday) as their day of corporate worship. (2) The apostles met together in fellowship, breaking bread and taking offerings on Sunday (Jn.20:19,26; Acts 20:7; 1Cor.16:1,2). There are numerous and irrefutable accounts of the early church Fathers, (from Justin Martyr (100-165AD), Ignatius (110AD) to Cyprian (200-258AD), who spoke of keeping Sunday as their Sabbath and as a day of worship. (‘Sabbath’ does not mean worship but ‘rest’). All the great leaders, (Jerome, Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, etc) all observed Sunday. But *there is no scriptural command to keep a Sabbath or a ‘Lord’s Day’ on any fixed day!*

There is nothing wrong with a tradition or a preference in how we might best keep any day providing it does not contradict the Word of God. Scripturally, *it is up to the individual as to which day he chooses*, (Rom.14:5,6) and how he would keep that day. However, anything that would cause us to ‘**forsake the assembling of ourselves**’ (Heb.10:25) or take priority over our worship could rightly be questioned using scripture.

We are not to judge others concerning food or drink, keeping of days, or the Sabbath, (Rom.14:1-3;1Cor.10:23-33; Col.2:16,17). With this in mind, why exegete and apply texts from Exodus 20 as our correspondent did when writing the following: ‘*observing morning and evening attendances at church...to rest from our labours...[and from] our recreation which is lawful on all other days.*’ And where do we get the law of ‘*no self pleasure or entertainment...*’? The simple answer is that none of these things are required of us in New Testament scripture! But again there is nothing wrong with the individual choosing to spend his ‘Sabbath day’ in this manner. But to teach this as *doctrine* or a command is gross error - it’s the essence of legalism!

We would however suggest that within God’s Word the principle of a seventh day rest is derived from the creation

week narrative. This principle is a worthy one and those who work 7 days a week will soon find out how worthwhile it is. Man was not created to work every day of his short life.

‘Led’ or ‘Driven’?:

‘Legalism’ naturally leads to obsessiveness and ‘straining at gnats’. Legalists are the very ones who will use obscure and selective scriptures to prove a strong view that they wish to transform into a ‘law’. They are often quick to see faults in others yet are blind to their own; and quick to vilify yet slow to apologise when successfully challenged. They often try to impose their view on others and then judge those that do not acquiesce.

Legalists often act like ‘God’s little helpers’ who ‘point’ the elder/pastor to a ‘problem’ in the church. These people subtly attempt to control the pastor with information and suggestions which are, of course ‘from the Lord’. Legalists are often driven by their flesh in attempting to ‘please God’ in some way by their ‘behaviour’. But we are to be ‘Spirit-Led’. Nevertheless, we do inhabit bodies of ‘death’ and it is often tempting to adhere to self imposed ‘laws’ that make us feel more ‘holy’. We all have the possibility of legalism within us!

Are you ‘led’ or are you ‘driven’? In a former *Diakrisis (Australia)* article we wrote: ‘*The driven may think they are ‘in the spirit’ but the force behind this ‘spirit’ is the flesh. The led are too busy mortifying the deeds of the flesh to be concerned if they be not in the spirit.*

The driven say they are saved by grace yet live as though they are saved by works. The led dare not trust in any works lest they forget that this grace which saved them was a gift and must have nothing added to it. They know that by no works of the law will anyone ever be justified, (Gal.2:16).

The driven separate faith and works. The led understand that faith works, (James 2:14,17). The driven look for works to do. The led know that Christ has already before ordained the works to do, (Eph.2:10).

The driven feel the compulsion to be ‘soul winners’. They see soul winning as the work of man. They must witness, be knocking on doors, handing out tracts and getting ‘decisions’. They know they must bear ‘fruit’ to prove they are ‘spirit led’. When this is done the sense of relief and good works fills them with a sense of righteousness and esteem. But the led know to be witnesses is to let their light shine out of earthen vessels, to exhibit the treasure within - the character of Christ himself. They know God is the ‘soul winner’ and that no man can come to Christ, except the Father has first drawn him, (Jn.6:44). They see soul winning as the work of God. Yet they are ready and willing at the first divine appointment to give an answer to every man that asks the reason of the hope seen within them, (1Pet.3:15).

The driven are prone to moral campaigning to change the world. They feel insistent on correcting the evils of the world and see their ‘salt’ as changing the world. But the led know they cannot change the world, for it is evil and corrupting regardless. They see their ‘salt’ as preserving and slowing the necessary corruption. They know that a carnal mind cannot understand the things of the spirit and that the Spirit must illuminate the Gospel to depraved minds.

The driven sometimes recite 1John 3:9 and impose a sinless perfection upon Christians. The led fear the habitual

sin of 1John 3:9, yet know the carnal deception of saying they have no sin, (1Jn.1:8-10).

The driven feel they must impose their doctrine and thinking upon any who are ignorant of truth. They load up someone with 'truth'. They led trust the Holy Spirit to raise the questions that might be answered in meekness. They feed the hungry souls first with milk, lest they choke them with meat.

The driven feel nervous and guilty if they have not read their Bible each day. They led reflect on the freedom and the desire they have to need spiritual food consistently.

The driven pray over and over for the same things that they would change God's mind on a matter. They wrestle with God in the flesh. They do 'spiritual warfare' so that God's hands might be untied. But the led place the request with the Lord and wait for the will of God to be clear, all the while knowing God will have His way anyway. They wrestle the flesh in prayer.

The driven are busy helping God. They nominate for and expect positions in the church. They feel they must do something. But the led are busy serving God. They are already the hand, the eye or the ear in the body. They feel free to do something.

The driven must succeed. The led know that Christ is already succeeding.

The driven emphasise the will of man. The led know and live the sovereignty of God.

The driven weary the saints. The led refresh the troops.

The driven strive in the flesh. The led surrender to the Spirit'.

Not Antinomianism:

While legalism is a following of a law to earn merit, it is not a refusal to go beyond the requirements of the law as found in the Word of God. The 'liberty' we have is not a license to do as we please but a submission to the Lord's will as found in His Word.

Exposing the problem of legalism tends to incur the wrath of every legalist or those who have a strong view on any one subject. This article may anger those people. We may also be accused of being 'liberal' or 'antinomian'. 'Antinomian' means 'against the law'. In common terms it is when a person has a low view of sin and might think: 'I'm saved, sealed and delivered and so it does not matter if I sin'. But Paul answers this thinking with '**God forbid!**', (Rom.6:2,15). We are by no means touting a liberalism of any kind, but rather making a plea for *balance* in our thinking, and a correct (and *contextual*) use of Biblical texts. Simply put, doctrines believed and taught must be based on clear and explicit scripture. Opinions, preferences and strong views must not be taught as doctrine when they cannot be clearly found in God's Word!

Conclusion:

The authors want to make it clear once again, that we do not speak against those who would have strong views on any of these issues. Indeed, the authors themselves individually have definite views on many of the controversial things mentioned in this article. But our desire is to challenge the reader to not only believe in 'Sola Scriptura' but to *practise it* in the interpretation of various doctrines, and in our relationships with others. The philosophy of ministry we have will influence the way we relate to those in the body of

Christ and in our local fellowship. 'God's little helpers' and those who have their 'hobbyhorses' and 'preferences' are not usually edifying people to be around, and can often be quite troublesome to Pastors and elders. Those who allow the Holy Spirit to witness through their lives in character, conduct and speech feel no need to 'help' the Holy Spirit in any way.

As one pastor puts it: '*Legalism is not a Christian allowing God's Word to control their every action. Legalism is not one seeking to call attention to God's pathway and plan for our lives. Legalism is not obedience to God's Word. Legalism is when one seeks to bind others with requirements of the Old Testament that have been done away with in Christ. Legalism is when I seek to bind upon another, something that is not commanded of God. Legalism is when obedience to a set of rules becomes the standard of ones salvation. It is God's Word that gave us life, (1Pet.1:22-25)...It is God's Word that the Spirit of God uses to clean the church, (Eph.5:27). It will be God's Word that will form the basis of our assessment at the judgement seat of Christ, (1Cor.3:10-13; 4:1-5)...'* (3)

Are we 'led' or 'driven'? Are we prepared to let the Holy Spirit convict other people in their own personal consciences? Do we attempt to 'convict' people with guilt on an issue that is simply not explicitly found in the Word of God? This kind of 'conviction' is often just a thin disguise for assumed guilt, condemnation and legalism. If we are using these methods then we cannot claim to be 'Sola Scriptura' in practise.

Can our *doctrine* on any subject be fairly substantiated from Scripture alone; is it in the spirit of 'Sola Scriptura'? We must start with Scripture and *trust the Holy Spirit to do whatever he might (or might not) do*. If we want people to stop doing something that we imagine as 'wrong' (for their own good and growth) we should be able to clearly and explicitly show them where and why it is '*wrong*' from Scripture alone. Otherwise we are simply offering our own, and possibly wrong, personal opinion.

Legalism is a scourge in Christian circles. It brings people into bondage and does not produce happy and contented spirits. There is a freedom in Christ that knows no bounds except that of the God breathed Word. Our plea to our readers is to distinguish between doctrines and 'preferences'. Our doctrines must be based in the grid of scripture alone. The Holy Spirit is well capable of doing the rest!

'*Now, what has our Lord to do with the law? He has everything to do with it, for He is its end for the noblest object, namely, for righteousness. He is the 'end of the law'. What does this mean? I think it signifies three things: first, that Christ is the purpose and object of the law; secondly, that He is the fulfilment of it; and thirdly, that He is the termination of it*'. (Charles Haddon Spurgeon - 'Christ The End of The Law')

Terry Arnold & Mike Claydon

Many thanks to Pastors John Reynolds and Bruce Murray whose material in early years originally helped with the 'Philosophy of Ministry' in this article.

(1) See *Diakrisis (Australia)* article Sept/Oct 1999 '*Fellowship, Separation & Sectarianism*'.

(2) Documentation is available from this ministry to show that the early church kept Sunday long before the Constantine era.

(3) Article by Ps. Graeme Ellingsen.

Televangelists Obstructing Finance Probe?

(Jim Brown OneNewsNow.com January 17, 2008):
'Senator Chuck Grassley, the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, is irritated with the lack of co-operation he's received from several televangelists under investigation for allegedly using their tax-exempt ministries to fund lavish lifestyles. The Iowa Republican says in his five years of investigating non-profits, he's never encountered such stonewalling.

Grassley had asked six televangelist ministries to turn over their financial statements and records to the Senate Finance Committee by December 6, 2007. The six ministries under investigation are led by Paula White, Joyce Meyer, Creflo Dollar, Eddie Long, Kenneth Copeland, and Benny Hinn.

But only Kenneth Copeland and Joyce Meyer have complied with Grassley's request. Creflo Dollar says he will not provide the information voluntarily and has raised the idea of a subpoena. Eddie Long has also said he is unwilling to cooperate, and Paula White has asked for additional time to respond. Grassley's office has not heard from Benny Hinn's attorneys since December 13, 2007.

Senator Grassley (R-Iowa) says in his past probes of non-profits he has always received full co-operation. 'So I wonder, well, what do they have to hide?...And maybe it's not so much illegal as being embarrassing'.

Grassley was alerted [that] the ministries are using their tax-exempt status as churches to purchase such things as expensive cars and homes and corporate jets. The conservative lawmaker argues the ministries are displaying a poor testimony with their lack of transparency, and are 'not fulfilling their responsibility to the tax code and taxpayers' as well as to their own constituency...' (Excerpted From 'Apostasy Alert' (apostasyalert@hotmail.net.au))

Church Hands Out Shot Glasses at Bars

(Associated Press Sunday, January 13, 2008):

Charlotte, N.C. - 'To get people to attend his new church campus, Robbie McLaughlin is sending his message out to where the people are. Next Friday, staffers from Next Level Church of Matthews will go to bars in the Ballantyne area of Charlotte to hand out shot glasses which ask patrons to 'give us a shot' and bear the slogan, 'Real church for real people'. The idea is to draw people to the Ballantyne campus, which opens next month.

McLaughlin is the pastor, and said he is confident that it will be controversial, but he said the goal is not necessarily to impress people who already go to church. He said it's to impress people who don't. Next Level is a non-traditional church that encourages members to dress casually and snack on coffee and doughnuts during services.

McLaughlin said the idea has caught on, and in two years the church has grown from a handful of members to more than 700'.

From *Apostasy Alert*: (apostasyalert@hotmail.net.au)

Editors comment: What next, Condoms? Don't laugh - years ago I laughed when a certain pastor said: 'Within ten years people would be dancing nude in church'. That happened in England within the same decade! This church in the article above of course would 'grow' to large numbers - because they are becoming like, and giving what, the world wants. The error lies too in the definition of 'church'. The 'Church' is not primarily 'to impress people' who don't go to church. The church ('ekklesia') is 'the called out ones' - the saints. It's testimony should be of separation from the philosophies of the world rather than adopting their methods! *Methods can change the message. Just check out the message, the gospel and the doctrine of these 'seeker' type churches - all these things are either watererd down or non existent!*

Menonites Dialogue with Rome?

*'Recently, Mennonites from many different countries spent nearly a week in dialogue with Catholic leaders in Rome (October 18-23, 2007). The event was hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Nancy Heisey, president of the Mennonite World Conference said, 'We were so warmly welcomed that it was almost overwhelming'. ('Mennonite Delegation Visits Catholic leaders in Rome', *The Mennonite*, Nov 5, 2007)*

*The Mennonites had a private audience with Pope Benedict XVI...Heisey told the Pope that they shared a 'great common heritage of faith'...She called the meeting with the Pope 'overwhelming' and 'very intense kind of experience' ('EMU Professor Meets Pope' - *Daily News Record*, Harrisburg, Virginia, Nov 20, 2007)....*

The Mennonites were introduced to worshippers at the Santa Maria Maggiore (St Mary Major) basilica. This

blasphemous church features a large crucifix depicting Mary hanging on the cross with Jesus, a painting of Mary's alleged bodily assumption into heaven, a statue of Mary as the Queen of Peace, and a painting of Jesus crowning Mary Queen of heaven'.

(Excerpted from 'Faith and Freedom', Jan/2008)

Editors Comment: The Mennonites trace their origin to the European Anabaptist movement of the 16th century. They were arguably similar in some respects to the Independent Baptist movement of today. Anyone who has studied the history of the Anabaptist movement will realise the huge apostasy here considering they were once fiercely independent and opposed to the Pope and the doctrines of Rome. The Roman Catholic church *has not changed*; its the 'Protestants' who have lost their sense of 'protest'!

Al Gore - Another Global Warming Hoax

Al Gore used a picture of two polar bears supposedly stranded on melting ice off the coast of Alaska as a visual aide to support his claim that man-made global warming is damaging Mother Earth. It's a hoax. The bears were merely taking a break and watching the boat go by when a lady snapped their picture. Yet Gore said: *'Their habitat is*

melting...beautiful animals, literally being forced off the planet. They're in trouble, got nowhere else to go'. Yet the original photographer admitted the bears were in no danger.

Al Gore was awarded a 2007 Nobel Prize for drawing the world's attention to the dangers of 'global warming'.

(Extracted - Carole Williams, Jan.26/2008 NewsWithViews.com)

'Another Gospel'

I often hear of people defending various 'Christian' organisations within the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, such as the Assembly of God's *Hillsong*, who apply to the Gospel many additional doctrines, such as that which is commonly known as the 'Prosperity/healing gospel'. These are simply not to be found in the 'Faith once delivered'.* Yet so often we hear: 'but they still preach the Gospel!'.*

In scripture, the term '**another gospel**' means that something has been *added* or *subtracted* from the original. Additionally, in 2Corinthians 11:14 '**another spirit**' and '**another Jesus**' is also mentioned alongside '**another gospel**': '**For if he that comes preaching another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit, which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him**'. Today we have succumbed to the '**bear with him**'!

The Pentecostal/Charismatic system by and large teaches another doctrine on the Holy Spirit that was not adopted or accepted by any of the great teachers down the running centuries and is only *new* in the 20th Century! At the turn of the 20th century it was fiercely opposed by the Christian leaders and commentators of the day. Renowned evangelist, G.Campbell Morgan, called it '*the last great vomit of Satan*'.*

Again, in the book of Galatians it speaks of *adding* to the Gospel: '**I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another [of the same kind]; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed**', (Gal.1:6-9).

Are we discerning today that the Pentecostal/Charismatic teaching on prosperity, healing, etc, *adds to* or *takes away from* the true Gospel message? For example, the modern healing gospel *directly affects the doctrine of the atonement* since it teaches that God has provided for a healing of our earthly body through His passion. This is nothing short of contradiction of scripture and *adds to* the very reason for the atonement - *the sin nature of man*. Additionally, new doctrines on the Holy Spirit take the focus away from the Gospel which is *about Christ and not the Holy Spirit!* The Gospel is about *Christ's* substitutionary death; *His* burial and resurrection for us sinners who were under the wrath of a holy and righteous God. Its all about *Christ* and *not about us*, (except to mention we are *sinners*). *The health/Wealth gospels only highlight this shift in focus from Christ to US*. At times this shift is subtle but it is still 'another gospel'!

But today there is an even more subtle shift evident. Recently someone sent me a '*What We Believe*' Statement of Faith by a University *Assembly of God, Hillsong* 'Chaplain', Ms. April Miller.** The Gospel section of it stated: [underlining ours] 'God...is totally loving and completely holy. We believe that sin has separated each of us from God and His purpose for our lives. We believe that in order to receive forgiveness and the 'new birth' we must repent of our sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and submit to His will for our lives. We believe that in order to live the holy and fruitful lives that God intends for us, we need to be baptised in water and be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to use spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues. We believe that God has individually equipped us so that we can successfully achieve His purpose for our lives which is to worship God, fulfil our role in the Church and serve the community in which we live. We believe that God wants to heal and transform us so that we can live healthy and prosperous lives in order to help others more effectively. We believe that our eternal destination of either Heaven or hell is determined by our response to the Lord Jesus Christ...'

The above might sound reasonable but it is in fact 'another gospel'. His '*purpose for our lives*' is not to '*fulfil our role in the Church and serve the community in which we live*' and not '*to live healthy and prosperous lives in order to help others more effectively*'! Nowhere in scripture is this the purpose of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Being '*baptised in water*' does not give us '*holy and fruitful lives*'! And '*our destination*' is not '*determined by our response to the Lord Jesus Christ*' for we are born again '*not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man*', (Jn.1:13).

This above statement of faith is ultimately an Arminian gospel of works! The focus is more about *us* than Christ. It's the very fruit of the Prosperity and Healing gospels that emanate freely out of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movements such as *Hillsong*.

This is not a small matter! The Gospel must be stated clearly and accurately. It must be Christ centred and not humanistic. Nothing can be added to it. The Gospel is about the sacrifice of Jesus to appease the rightful wrath of God upon our sin. Should we dare add to that *our* 'prosperity', *our* 'health' and '*our purpose*'!?

Terry Arnold

* The book '*Tongues and the Baptism With the Spirit*' has appendixes detailing the beginnings of these new movements.

** Assemblies of God Chaplaincy - Multifaith Chaplaincy Centre - The University of Sydney.

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editors)

Dear Terry & Mike, ...I would love both your testimonies. I have asked you this favour before Terry but not of Mike...
(K.W., Mareeba, Qld).

Sub-editors reply: Terry's testimony including his exit from Roman Catholicism and Pentecostalism is on early tapes. As for me, I don't do 'testimonies' except perhaps this: My past life was atrocious and my 25 years as a Christian have often fallen short of God's just requirements. I am an unprofitable servant - and have

nothing to testify to except the gracious and undeserved calling of God to come to Christ for salvation. The first chapter of Ephesians would be my testimony - and nothing else. I am hid in Christ - and my sordid little life is best left unrevealed? God has cast the wretched details of that into the great sea of His forgetfulness and I feel it's not for me to be bringing it's shameful contents to the surface again.

Mike Claydon

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editors)

Correction

An error slipped through our editing process in the print edition of the January/February 2008 *Diakrisis (Australia)*. In the 'Unprofitable Prophets' article on page two (3rd paragraph) we had 'Samuel' anointing 'Daniel' as king over Israel when that should have read 'David'! We apologise for this error and hope this caused no confusion.

Dear Mr. Arnold, thank you for sending the latest 'Diakrisis (Australia)' with the article 'Tongues and Linguistics'. It came at just the right time for me. I had just got a book by Catherine Marshall on the Holy Spirit...I left the AOG 8 years ago...I believe Catherine Marshall was Pentecostal? She had a chapter in this book headed 'other tongues' and she tells of an instance when a very shy woman was suddenly told by 'the inner voice' to stand up and pray in her 'heavenly language'...

As she did, outside the church an elderly Greek miner was walking by the church...he heard a woman's voice speaking perfect Greek. At last, there was someone with whom he could talk.

Impulsively he sped into the church and began talking to the woman in his native tongue before he realised she did not understand a word he was saying. Then the miner himself translated the message: 'God loves you, God has a purpose for your life and for your family. He has the power to forgive sins to bring you joy and hope and loving purpose. He will give you a path to travel that will bring joy and peace to those you love'.

He dropped to his knees and with tears running down his cheeks gave his life to Jesus. He and his family joined the church and several other families were delivered into the church because of this one miracle of the Helpers gift of 'other tongues'.

Years ago I got a book 'Demons - Their Deceit, Their Defeat' from a retired Baptist minister who was brought up in a Pentecostal church and was then totally against the experience. The book gave testimonies of former pastors and workers in the church who had visions and miraculous healings etc, only to find out after much heartache that it was another spirit operating.

...Now I read this Catherine Marshall Book and it would appear that this was of God? I have been quite stressed and confused about this...Then your article (Jan/Feb) comes on tongues and you mention: 'he then cites his wife as one day hearing a person speaking in tongues in 'Italian' who knew no Italian' (P.5). So, how can some be of God as Catherine Marshall suggests, and others not (some documented by missionaries as blasphemy of the Lord Jesus). Are they all from another spirit and not the Holy Spirit and...please give me your thoughts on this. Your article was excellent and explained a few scriptures I had got the wrong meaning of when in the AOG...and also I read where Paul said 'Tongues shall cease'.

God bless you and your workers; thank you for sending me your literature.

(J.S., Qld.)

Editors Comment: ...Thankyou...It is good to hear Christians thinking about these issues that have greatly affected the church over many years. I have enclosed our book 'Tongues and the Baptism With the Spirit' which will clarify things you have raised concerning 'Tongues'.

There have been many undocumented reports and stories that someone has spoken in a real language not understood by the speaker but understood by the hearers, as was probably the case shown in Acts chapter 2. However, these reports have as much credibility as the reports of raisings from the dead - nil. I have several times attempted to track some of them down and they have all ended in either being a fraud, exaggeration, or a dead end. Many are stories similar to the stories of healings and raisings from the dead today...they are often in far away places (isolated Indian villages are a favourite). Most are third and fourth hand reports and the actual original accounts are often vastly different. The documentation does not stand up to research and investigation. I personally do not believe we can place any credence upon these reports?

Also, they add words to scripture, which if they are from God, would need to be added to our Bibles! Yet to do that is to bring a 'curse' upon any who would do so, as the Word of God warns.

The message that the tongues speaker gave in your example did not present the Gospel! It is arguably a false gospel or at best a truncated one. The Gospel is not God bringing 'a purpose' to our lives. This is more like the 'gospel' of the 'Emergent Church' of today. And it is precisely upon this faulty gospel that people are making 'decisions' today without understanding that the judgement and wrath of God, the substitutionary death and sacrifice of Christ, are vital components of the Biblical Gospel. Too much attention is given to these so called reports of real Tongues. It's surely all a ploy to take us away from the *one and only method of saving men and women* - the Gospel itself!

I hope this and the book helps you to think critically about a movement that can be shown historically and scripturally to be a 1901 deception. Every blessing.

[Return letter from above]: *'Thank you so much for the excellent book sent ['Tongues and the Baptism with the Spirit'] and your letter explaining several things. It is good to know someone has investigated these claims. Thanks so much for your kindness and help when I needed it.*

I [also] enclose an article from 'New Idea' about Terri Irwin having a Psychic at the Zoo to give 'readings' to contact dead relatives...she invited cynics to hear him.'

Editors comment: We are aware that Terri, wife of famous 'crocodile man' Steve Irwin, has enlisted a psychic to contact her late husband. From the beginning we have challenged those who claimed she was a 'Christian', especially in light of her love for Buddhism. (See our articles Nov/Dec/2006; Sept/Oct/2007). Of course, such attempted contact with departed souls is clearly forbidden in Scripture. As in previous articles, we need to lovingly pray for this family.

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editors)

[Excerpts from a letter received recently]: *Dear Brother Terry, after completing my studies, I began working for a firm where they were all born again Christians...I made my [Roman Catholic] convictions very clear and despite this, my boss began to challenge me in a very direct way from the Bible...I was being shown teachings that were contrary to what I had been taught. My boss saw that I became unapproachable about the subject and gave me a book called 'To Catholics Whom I Love'. I read it with a closed critical mind and considered the book to be the devils work and heretical. Pride drove me to make it my goal to use my intellect and knowledge of the Catholic faith to prove both my boss and the author of the book wrong.*

As I began to study the book a second time in light of the Bible and compare it to the teachings of the Catholic Church, the Holy Spirit began to open my eyes and show me clearly the errors in the teachings and more so the traditions that I had clung to all my life. My boss then asked me two very direct and confronting questions, knowing that I believed in Jesus' death on the Cross. Firstly: 'If you can save yourself by good works or any other means available to man, such as purgatory, why did Jesus Christ come to die for you?'; and secondly: 'If good works are required along with Jesus' death, does that then mean that His work on the cross was incomplete or insufficient to satisfy the price required for your salvation?'. This is when I realised that I was a sinner in need of a Saviour and nothing I can do could earn me eternal life. I deserved Hell...I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.

I faced my family and told them...they completely shunned me. My father made it clear to me to consider myself not born of him and that I no longer had a family. However, praise be to God who has given me the strength to endure as I am reminded of how privileged I am to suffer for Christ. Philipians 1:29 has been a great encouragement.

My desires in life have changed completely. I no longer want to live for myself nor be in control of my life, but want to live for the Lord Jesus Christ and for Him to have full control. I want to bring glory to God in everything that I do. I can honestly say along with the apostle Paul '...nevertheless I live yet not I, but Christ liveth in me', (Gal.2:20). My desire now is for His will to be carried out

in my life and my will to be moulded into His. The Lord has given me love for the brethren, hatred towards sin and a hunger to see lost sinners saved, particularly my family whom I love dearly...I hold on to two promises: firstly, that He will never leave me nor forsake me; secondly, that no matter what I go through in life, He is there and always in control. 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God...', (Rom.8:28). I pray for your ministry that the Lord will continue to use it to win souls for Christ and strengthen and equip the Church with the knowledge of the Word of God to stand against the attacks of Satan on sound doctrine. May the Lord bless you and your family...

(Name withheld at editors discretion)

Dear Mike, I have just read your article (Jan/Feb/2008 'Unprofitable Prophets') on the false prophet Pastor Danny Nalliah, ['Catch The Fire' Ministries] and the political election. They blame the results on the people because they didn't pray - but so do Kenneth Copeland and other false prophets blame people who are not healed under their ministries because of their 'lack of faith'. How can people be so blind? (J.S., Qld.)

Sub Editor's Comment: The leaders of the current spiritual fads are now freely admitting that they have not fed their vast flock of followers with the meat of God's Word. It is therefore to be expected that those who know nothing of scriptural truths will believe whatever they hear from the mouths of those that profess to be hearing new revelation from heaven?

Terry's Itinerary **(Tasmanian Itinerary)**

April 20th (Sunday) 10.30am Sandy Bay Baptist Ph.(03)62721065

April 20th (Sunday pm) (tentative) Middleton Christian church

April 23rd (Wednesday) 7.30pm Sandy Bay Baptist Ph.(03)62721065

April 27th (Sunday) 10am Midway Point Christian Fellowship Ph.(03)62447796

April 27th (Sunday pm) (tentative) Middleton Christian church

April 30th (Wednesday) 7.30pm Midway Point Christian Fellowship Ph.(03)62447796

May 3rd (Saturday) Mens Breakfast (Tentative) Midway Point Christian Fellowship Ph.(03)62447796.

May 4th (Sunday) 10am Midway Point Christian fellowship Ph.(03)62447796.

Praise/Prayer Points

- Praise the Lord for many encouraging letters lately and the newsletter reaching many spiritually hungry people.
- Please pray for the Tasmanian Itinerary. Pray for careful selection of topics and Holy Spirit power and wisdom for Terry and his hearers.

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