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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

Another 'Christmas' has come and gone. It is a time when millions of earthlings might in some way think upon Jesus Christ. But note the difference between the thoughts of believers and unbelievers. The unbelievers love the peaceful non threatening babe in the manger. To them he is harmless and placid. The babe places little demands on their minds as they are all wanting 'peace'. To them he is *passive* and the world accepts such with open arms. But what they do *not* want to hear is that *the babe was born to die* in the place of sinners, as a sacrificial offering to appease God's wrath on sin!

The babe was born to die... What if we extend this thought just a few steps further? What if we were to preach that this harmless babe was on a mission to bring a 'sword' of truth to households; and die the most agonising and treacherous death ever seen on this planet to a just man? What if we were to challenge the unbelievers that it was their sin that held the saviour to the cross and that this is no longer just about a 'babe in a manger'? Perish the thought! The world will not accept this, '***Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be***', (Rom.8:7); '***the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned***', (1Cor.2:14).

The Babe was born to die. The 'offense' of this message has been evident to me when I have had opportunity over the years to deliver closing messages at several open air 'Christmas carols'. I have seen people immediately get up and walk away. Their 'peace' of singing about a 'silent night' and seeing the baby in the manger, was threatened. *The baby places no demands in such a peaceful and placid environment.* The world will accept that. But they will not accept that the babe pre-existed (Jn.1; Col.1) and was prophesied to be the slaughtered sacrifice for the depraved sinfulness of mankind.

The Babe was born to die. What if we were to go beyond the babe in the manger and preach that the prophet Micah foretold He was to be born in Bethlehem to one day rule the nations and judge every individual?

The Babe was born to die. The world hates this message and that is why they will party, celebrate, marvel at the peace of Mary and the animals in the manger and wonder at the mystical presence of the wise men with the child. But there is no *offense* in these scenes! And the Gospel is not the Gospel and cannot be true unless there is the *offense* of the cross and sin, (Gal.5:11; Rom.5:15-20). Jesus is supposed to be a 'rock of offense' to many (1Pet.2:8). The world's 'Christmas' never gets beyond the babe and to the cross. Yet if any man will be saved the '*offense*' of the cross must be revealed for its '*shame*', (Heb.6:6; 12:2).

The world is now being shaken with financial disaster, wars, signs in the heavens and earth and an increasing and blatant apostasy within the church. There will be no lasting peace in just a baby in a manger, unless it is in the hearts of those who have received Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Peace is only found in Him *and through the offense of the cross*. It is an inner peace, not a peace that will be found in the world which is ruled by Satan, the prince of this world. We will one day see face to face the Prince of this inner peace, the one who bore our sin and was *shamed* for us - the Lord Jesus Christ. **Terry Arnold**

The Incomparable Christ

‘But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed’ – Isaiah 53:5

He came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of man. He put on humility that we might put on divinity. He became the Son of Man that we might become sons of God. He came from heaven, where the rivers never freeze, winds never blow, frosts never chill the air, flowers never fade, and no one is ever sick. No undertakers and no graveyards are there, for no one ever dies, no one is ever buried.

He was born contrary to natural laws, lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity. Only once did He cross the boundary of the land, in childhood. He had no wealth or influence, and no college education, yet the profoundest wisdom of men has never equalled His last discourses in John 13 to 17 and the sermon on the Mount. “Never man spake like this man.”

His relatives were inconspicuous and unimportant. In infancy He startled a King. In boyhood he puzzled the doctors, even at twelve years of age, proving He was far in advance of the theologians, for He was taught of God. In manhood He ruled the elements so that He quieted the raging sea and defied the laws of gravitation by walking on the water. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme of more songs than all songwriters combined.

He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never practised medicine, and yet He healed more broken hearts than the doctors did broken bodies.

He never marshalled an army, drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun, yet no leader ever made more volunteers, who have under His orders made rebels stack arms or surrender without a shot being fired.

He is the Star of Astronomy the Rock of Geology, the Lion and the Lamb of Zoology, the Harmoniser of all discords and the Healer of all diseases. Great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, death could not destroy Him, the grave could not hold Him, and even demons obeyed Him. He fed the hungry multitudes with a boy’s little lunch, broke up funerals and gave back to life those that were dead. He laid aside His purple robe for a peasant’s gown. He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor. As to how poor, ask Mary, ask the wise men. He slept in another’s manger; He cruised the lake in another man’s boat; He rode on a borrowed beast; He was buried in a rich man’s tomb.

All failed but He never.

He conquered death, rose on the third day as He said He would, ascended into Heaven, is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God, and one day will come in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory for His Born Again, blood bought ones, who will be forever with Him according to promise. After, He will judge the world in righteousness, when every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue shall confess Him as Lord, His friends gladly, but His enemies in great fear, seeking for a place to hide from His face, (Rev.6:15).

The ever Perfect One, He is the Chief among ten thousand, the only one who can satisfy the soul and give everlasting life to those who have it not.

He is altogether lovely and He is my Saviour.

(Author unknown)

How Precious Is Your Bible?

‘Nothing this world has to offer is more precious than God’s Word. I have a friend who collects rare Bibles. He owns a wonderful collection, with one Bible dating back to the fourth century. But my favourite is a Bible from the sixteenth century England, one of the earliest printed copies of God’s Word. The top third of the Bible is covered with the blood of its original owner. My friend let me hold it in my hands, and tears came to my eyes as I leafed through it.

How did blood get on the pages of that Bible? When ‘Bloody Mary’ ruled England, she terrorised Protestants, murdering as many as she could. Her soldiers would spill the person’s blood, then take his Bible and dip it deep into the blood. A few of those Bibles have been preserved and are known as Mary’s’ Bibles. Scientists have tested the paper and confirmed that the dark stains on every page of my friend’s Bible are human blood.

I examined that Bible carefully, page by page. I could see where it was well worn from being studied. There are water stains, as if from tears, and places where a thumb had

frayed favourite pages. This was someone’s most valuable possession, and his or her blood is there to prove it.

In sad contrast, however, contemporary Christians tend to take their Bibles for granted, forgetting that many have given their lives just to own one copy. If the church today placed as high a value on God’s Word as those martyrs did, perhaps there would not be so many people running off to experts in human theory and seeking counsel other than the perfect wisdom God gives in His Word’.

(‘Our Sufficiency in Christ’ by John MacArthur)

Editors note: Our book ‘Why Were Our Reformers Burned?’ details some of the history of the reign of the Roman Catholic ‘Bloody Mary’ during the English Reformation in the 16th Century. During the last 4 years of her reign (1555-1558) no less than 288 people were burned at the stake for their Protestant faith.

These martyrs died horrifying deaths, some in sight of their families. Before death many were locked away for months and beaten in appalling conditions. But the word of God was of great comfort to them!

Christian Modesty

I am about to tackle a subject that will no doubt raise the ire of many because it is *personal*. There will be people on one side who will think I have not gone far enough; and there will be others who will say I have gone too far and am 'legalistic'. This article is not written to tell you how to dress in some form of outdated Elizabethan design of clothes. But this article is an endeavour to lay down *principles of modesty* with some *suggested applications*. Increasingly, pastors/elders who are teaching scripture and not wanting to be conformed to the world, are grappling with and grieving over immodesty in their own churches.

There are simply no definite guidelines laid down in scripture as to what exactly we should wear for any particular occasion. However, this article could challenge any false notions we might have of 'Christian liberty'.

The world is rapidly coming into the church to take the church into the world and no area is more noticeable in this onslaught than with the effect of the fashion industry and immodesty.

What Is 'Modesty'?

Most secular dictionaries describe modesty as: *decency of behaviour and dress*. Biblically there are at least two scriptures that give us clear teaching on 'modesty':

Firstly, 1Timothy 2:8-10 ***'I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array. But (which becomes women professing godliness) with good works'***.

Paul in this epistle to Timothy begins in verse 8 with the subject of personal holiness, (vs.8 *'holy hands'*). The issue of modesty is essentially about *holiness*. The phrase ***'in like manner'*** links the inner holiness (*'holy hands'*) to personal or outer holiness, in what women would wear.

A study of the words in this passage will tell much about 'modesty'. The verb ***'adorn'*** is *'kosméo'*, a Greek word from the noun *'kosmos'* which is literally 'order; arrangement; system'. What is *within* should show in the same 'order' or 'system' as on the *outside*. This outside adorning should show what is *within* ***'in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety'***.

The ***'modest apparel'*** is a phrase for what used to be called 'deportment', which is the conduct or behavioural attributes we show towards other people. It signifies that which is clean, neat, and decent. 'Modest' is the Greek *'kosmios'* meaning 'order, arrangement, seemly'. The same word is used for the *character* qualifications of an elder in 1Timothy 3:2. *Modesty is closely associated with character*.

The word ***'apparel'*** (*'katastéllo'*) originally signified a long robe which reached down to the feet.

'Shamefacedness' (*'aidoús'*) is a blend of modesty and humility. It is having an honourable shame; a moral shame to anything dishonourable in fashion. It is elsewhere also translated 'reverence', (Heb.12:28).

The word ***'sobriety'*** is a key word in this passage which refers to a sanity, temperance, a moderation of desires, passions and conduct. The word shows the well-balanced state of mind arising from habitual *self-restraint*. 'Sobriety'

is crucial to interpreting this passage! It is a voluntary limitation of one's freedom of thought and behaviour; one who recognizes their abilities and limitations. This is really what 'modesty' is about - *character* and *unselfish restraint!*

The phrase ***'braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array'*** arguably need not be forced out of its context. The sense is that these things could be opposed to 'modest apparel'. The point of the whole passage is the ***'manner'*** of *dress outward needs to match what is the holiness within*.

Secondly, 1Peter 3:2-4 ***'While they behold your chaste conversation [conduct] coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting [braiding] the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel [garments]; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price'***.

Likewise in this epistle by Peter, *holiness* is the subject, 'chaste' being a cognate of the word for 'holy'. The word *'conversation'* is an old word for mode of life, conduct or behaviour.

Again, the *outward* adorning is compared to the *inward*. Both need to match up in holiness and character. The ***'outward adorning'*** needs to show a character of a ***'meek and quiet spirit'***. This 'spirit' is one that reflects the indwelling Holy Spirit - a gentleness, not agitated, but one of *restraint* and *self control*.

The scripture here is not saying that the woman neglect her personal appearance, but rather that her heart be not *set* on the ***'outward adorning'*** with such things as hairstyles and expensive jewellery. Her outward display *should reflect the holiness of character within*. This concept of modesty is close to 'humility' and is the opposite of boldness, arrogance or 'showiness'. Such is the underlining principle of 'modesty'. *Modesty is first an issue of the heart!*

Both Paul and Peter are teaching that when such *character* is *inside*, the result *outside* should be ***'modest apparel'***.

The Fashion Industry:

The root of immodesty goes back to Adam and Eve. When they sinned with 'the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life' (1Jn.2:16), they *rebelled* against God. Yet God gave them a gracious *covering* of 'coats' (Gen.3:21) to cover the now naked shame of the effects of sin. Nakedness is a reminder of when sin first entered the world. It is this inherent sense of shame that the fashion industry would do away with. Included in the word 'modesty' is an understanding of a sense of shame, hence the word ***'shamefacedness'*** in 1Timothy 2:9. Although the Christian today has been 'regenerated', there still exists a sense of honourable shame - a modest reserve which has a *restraining* effect. Today the modern fashion industry is relentlessly attempting to erode that inherent sense of shame which naturally exists with nakedness, (Rev.3:18).

Down through many centuries there was little change in thought on modesty in dress until in one single generation in the 20th century! Even the slightest research into the history of the modern fashion industry will demonstrate that *it has shaped and moulded public opinion*. Many historical articles could be cited that show the history of

swimwear in particular is connected to our changing perceptions of modesty. Many authors cite the swimsuit fashions as being the force in the ‘undressing’ of America. If one looks at the designs year by year one can see it is less and less fabric and more and more show of body. It began with womens arms and shoulders being exposed. In the 1920’s legs and backs were progressively displayed. In the 1930’s ‘cleavage’ appeared, which included the separation between a woman’s breast. The ‘overskirt’ then disappeared. A two piece swimsuit appeared in 1935 with a small amount of flesh bared between the two parts. At first there was resistance to this, but by 1940 it was common. In the 60’s and 70’s the navel was exposed and ‘high cuts’ revealed hips. Later in the 70’s thighs were exposed.

Mens fashions showed a similar progression, but the fashion industry in its ‘undressing’ has made much more money in womens fashions than mens. It is sure that modesty applies to men as well as women but a state of undress does not affect women as it does men. Women are not aroused in the same way by the *sight* of a man’s body, in comparison to a man seeing a women in a state of undress. Most women will admit this freely, since they are not affected visually in the same way as a man. Some authors believe the seduction principle in womens fashions is the ‘lust of the eyes’, but in mens fashions it has been more the ‘pride of life’, (1Jn.2:16).

When the fashion industry pushed the boundaries of undressing in the 20th century, there was a constant battle that went on between what people were not wearing and the laws of the times. The result was that the laws were forced to change with the relentlessness of the new fashions.

The reader might well ask why it did not go all the way to full nudity. The reason is partly because, (as men well know), partial nudity is usually more erotic and sensuous than full nudity. It tends to play more on the effect of tantalising the imagination.

Over decades the fashion industry made the statement that clothing (or lack of) says ‘sex’, ‘pride’, ‘boldness’, ‘rebellion’. The fashion statements were meant to first reveal and then arouse and even shock.

Centuries ago the Puritan leaders such as John Owen warned Christians of the corrupting influences of the European fashion industry. John Bunyan wrote: *‘Why are they going for their...naked shoulders, and paps hanging out like a cow’s bag? Why are they painting their faces, for stretching out their neck and for putting of themselves unto all the formalities which proud fancy leads them to? Is it because they would honour God? Because they would adorn the Gospel? Because they would beautify religion and make sinners to fall in love with their own salvation? No, it is rather to please their lusts...I also believe that Satan has drawn more into the sin of uncleanness by the spangling show of fine clothes, than he would have possibly have drawn unto it without them. I wonder what it was that of old was called the attire of a harlot; certainly it could not be more bewitching and tempting than are the garments of many professors this day’.*

The fashion industry at its root is *rebellious* against the law of the lands and against God. Anyone who would disagree with this would only need to sit and watch the award winning advertisements in the fashion industry. But this should not surprise us, as the fashion industry is the mood swinger of the world’s desires. As a result, the worldview of ‘modesty’ has changed dramatically!

Romans 12:2 teaches clearly that Christians *‘be not conformed to this world’*. The word *‘conformed’* (*‘suschematizo’*) literally means ‘fashioned’ in an outward sense. The passage can be translated: *‘Don’t be moulded by the external and passing fashions of this age’*. Christians are not to copy those of the world in their overly attention to fashion.

Applications...and a Word to Women:

The scriptures we have already looked at are written to women although the principle of modesty apply to both men and women. But because the Bible clearly mentions women in this area, this article will focus on that area of immodesty.

Scripture passages teach that the exposure of one’s private parts is shameful. The Hebrew culture saw it as indiscreet for people to cast off garments and expose parts of the body. Today, *any apparel designed to draw the eye to the erotic zones of the body cannot fill the requirements for Biblical modesty*. Many Christian women will say they dress ‘modestly’. But if they are following the fashions of this age, are they really dressing modestly? Can it honestly be said that bare backs, bare stomachs, bare legs and thighs, etc, are modest in church life? Shorts, swimming suits and any ‘apparel’ which intentionally leave one partially nude, surely have no place in the dress of a woman professing godliness and aspiring to ‘modesty’. It should not matter what the world is doing...and why should we ‘conform’ to it when scripture forbids this? (Rom.12:2). And neither should it matter what the rest of the modern church is doing in this matter; why should we ‘conform’ to the apostasy of the church in these days?

Do we conform to the **short skirts** of the world? How long should a dress be? Most men will agree that somewhere above the knee can be attractive or sensuous. Then why is it that so many Christian women would wear short skirts above the knee? And why is it that many women seem not to take into account what happens to their skirts when they bend over or sit?

And what of **skirts split** well up the sides? Whether women like it or not, such glimpses of nude legs and thighs are a provocation to lust in the eyes of men. Why is it that so many Christian women today cannot see that the *design* of such a fashion is to expose thighs *to view*? And who would be ‘looking’ - mostly men!

The same is true of **revealing tops**. Several buttons undone on a blouse can be provocative and even seductive to a man. There are few areas of a woman that are more alluring to men than a woman’s breast.

One of the most difficult areas I have found in church life in regards to womens dress is **tight clothing**. Many Christian women are blind to the effects of such. Tight clothing reveals a women’s form and shape. It can and does tantalise the imagination of men. Tops, dresses, slacks, jeans, etc. are all items which can be worn tight to show a woman’s shape and figure. Here it would be easy to be involved in a debate about whether women should wear ‘slacks’ or not. But the point of modesty is often bypassed in this debate. The question is, is the type of clothes worn *revealing* and therefore immodest?

The Effect on Men:

My experience in church life is that most Christian women today are simply unaware of the effect immodesty

has on men in regards to tight clothing or the revealing of the body! Sadly, it is quite rare to find a woman who actually understands the effect her clothing, or lack of, has on others. It's simple - women's dress can incite lust and passions in men! And *this is serious* - the Bible says that when a man even looks upon a woman with lust he has already committed adultery! (Matt.5:28).

Although it will often be the 'weaker' men who will fall into sin, the example of David should make us all want to steer well clear of immodesty. In 1Samuel chapter 11 David was tempted when he saw Bathsheba in a state of undress as she washed herself. He fell into sin with disastrous consequences. Many readers might blame David alone for his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. But what of the woman? Why would Bathsheba expose herself in an open place in view of the Kings palace? Was the undressing flaunting? Is there not a lesson here for women? Yes, men should not yield to looking at women with lustful eyes; but women should also be careful to not give them too much to look at! Sadly, I find many Christian women's attitude to this is: 'but men should not be 'perverts'; 'they should get their thoughts out of the gutter!' But my answer is a rebuke to such women!: 'Women, don't unnecessarily give them anything in the 'gutter' to look at!' Yes, be it known that men are 'perverted' - all men! Our perfect purity was lost in the fall of Adam and Eve, and our hearts are naturally inclined to sin, including the sin of lust! Sin easily besets us, (Heb.12:1). To women I say: 'Real love for your brethren would remove this selfish attitude to dress as one pleases!' ***'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification'***, (Rom.15:1,2). The very essence of 'modesty' is to *restrain* oneself! Again, don't let the 'outward adorning' (fashions) override the 'inner man of the heart', (1Pet.3:4).

No doubt some men will look at a woman despite how she dresses, but why make this worse and further the possibility of temptation by showing skin in sensuous places or with tight clothing? Will God excuse the woman because the man was feeding his lust? It was a strong man of God who was overcome by the allurements of Bathsheba! We are told clearly not to put a 'stumbling block' in anyone's way, (Rom. 15:1; 14:13). Surely, the church environment should be a place where one, even a man, can find a safehouse from the evil and immodesty that is already rife in the world?

The consequences when women put a 'stumbling block' before men can be enormous. Over many years in church life I have seen some men fall into sexual sin and I have counselled many others who have privately struggled with their lusts. I can say with all assurance that it is not made any better with the way some Christian women dress! The consequences are serious and many women will surely answer to the Lord in the judgement! David committed adultery, then to cover it up he murdered. In punishment, his child died and he lost the kingdom to a rebellious son. And his wives were later 'defiled' in the sight of all Israel - huge consequences!

The world is well aware that certain kinds of feminine dress are provocative and tempting to the eyes and minds of men. Yet, why are so many *Christian* women so naive and stubbornly ignorant of this?

This author has had some women say 'but I am not attractive anyway, so there should not be a problem with

how I dress'. My answer is this: 'who are you to judge such? And how do you know in particular what might be attractive to every man? And what about your example to the young Christians and youth who might copy you?'

A woman's beauty and sexuality is designed to be kept for her husband or future husband; it is not for *any* man!

Legalism?:

Is it legalism to call people to modesty when the Word of God does just that? Is it legalism to ask why Christians follow the fashions of this age when scripture forbids just that, (Rom.12:2)? Is it legalism to plead to women to stop showing flesh to the eyegates of men who could fall in sin when scripture *commands* us not to cause a 'stumblingblock'? (Rom.14:13; 1Cor.8:9).

The author is not asking for Christians to dress like monks or like Elizabethan women laden down with heavy cumbersome attire. Such might not relate to the lost world around us. But we can still modestly cover up and dress so as not to raise any issue of immodesty with the saints, and yet still 'relate' well to earthlings!

The 'Thin Edge':

Too often I find Christians want to dress as close to the worldly 'line' of what they think is 'immodest'. This attitude is rampant amongst Christians and is surely a stench in the nostril of God! *This is not what true holiness is about*. Holiness is *moving away from* the world, rather than hanging as close as we can get to it's immodest 'line'!

Then there is the pathetic argument that everyone is wearing this or that and 'others are more immodest than I'. It will do no good to point fingers or compare with others. We are accountable to God not for what others are doing but for what we are doing.

Conclusion:

In scripture, 'modesty' *is closely associated with character*. It involves a voluntary limitation of one's freedom of thought and behaviour. The ***'manner' of dress needs to match what is the holiness within***. The word of God says that we are not to love the world nor the things of the world. (1John 2:15) and we are not to follow after the fashions of this age, (Rom.12:2).

The fashion industry does not cater to purity in holiness but caters to pride, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. Bare shoulders, short skirts, split skirts, revealing tops, tight clothing - all can silently allure men's lustful appetites. They can cause a stumblingblock with terrible consequences. We are not advocating a legalistic laying down of rules here but a *concern* for our brothers and sisters in Christ! In particular, this is a plea for women to consider the *weaknesses* in men!

One should rather serve Christ with their apparel by expressing humility, self denial and sobriety, to draw others to imitate them. ***'Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's'***, (1Cor.6:19-20).

Immodesty gives ground to Satan, the prince of this world; but our modesty glorifies the temple of the Holy Spirit, in which dwells the Spirit of our saviour!

Terry Arnold

Your Comments and Questions

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

Angels

Dear Terry, can you help me with the topic of angels. Lately I have been to meetings where a lot is said about angels, more than the Holy Spirit...

Editors reply: ...The Greek word for angel ('*áγγελος*') literally means *a messenger*; one sent to announce or proclaim. Angels are heavenly supernatural spirit beings. They possess intelligence (Matt.8:29; 2Cor.11:3; 1Pet.1:12), show emotions (Lk.2:13; James 2:19; Rev.12:17), and have wills (Lk.8:28-31; 2Tim.2:26; Jude 6). God is surrounded by a host of them that do His work as messengers and agents. God sends His angels to care for believers upon death, (Lk.16:22). Two higher angels are mentioned as Michael and Gabriel. One third of the angels created by God fell into evil and their head is Satan, (Matt.25:41; 2Cor.12:7; Rev.12:9).

Because angels are created beings they cannot be in two places at once. They are not omnipresent as God is. Angels appear as men (never as women) and in almost every case the person who sees them is struck with fear. They are not described as having 'wings' unless you include the Seraphims as angels, (Is.6).

Because of their supernatural element, angels fascinate humans and thus there is much false teaching surrounding them. Even self professed Christians can be deceived by angels. False teaching on angels probably played a part in the recent fall of Todd Bentley (see *Diakrisis* Nov/Dec/

2008). The problem is that Scripture tells us very little about angels, except that they are sent to do God's bidding. To form a cult or to overplay a doctrine around them, is dangerous.

We must never attempt to contact or speak to an angel. This is expressly forbidden in scripture as 'necromancy'. There is only one mediator between man and God - the Lord Jesus Christ. Any contact with 'angels' is spiritism and part of the occult.

There are probably angels amongst us today, but if so there are evil angels also. Angels that belong to God would always point to Jesus Christ or God. Fallen angels would naturally love occultic impressions.

The Bible speaks very clearly of deceiving and lying signs and wonders in the times of the end which no doubt would include the angel worship of today, (Matt.24:24; 2Thess.2:9-12). The Bible also warns that there will be ministers who will appear as 'angels of light' but will be evil, (2Cor.11:13). We are simply not to listen to angels who would add anything to scripture, (Gal.1:8).

The problem with any emphasis on angels is that it tends to be like a Pandora's box. Open it too wide and it's full of mischief. Too much teaching on angels allows for unsound minds to wander off into 'every wind of doctrine'. The Bible has all that is needed to be said about angels and that frankly is not anywhere near what is being taught today in many places.

The Vatican and Galileo

(CN CathNews; Nov/2008)

'The Pontifical Council for Culture is considering publishing the full record of the heresy trial of Galileo Galilei as part of the process of rehabilitation of the astronomer. Monsignor Gianfranco Ravasi, head of the Pontifical Council for Culture, said that only parts of the 1633 trial proceedings had been published, and this had given a false impression...He said it was not widely known for example that the then pontiff, Pope Urban VIII, had never signed the Inquisition's condemnation of Galileo...

...The Vatican is to erect a statue of the astronomer in the Vatican gardens, close the apartment in which he was incarcerated while awaiting trial in 1633 for advocating heliocentrism, the Copernican doctrine that the Earth revolves around the Sun...2009 events include a Vatican conference on Galileo...and a re-examination of his trial at an institute in Florence run by the Jesuits, who were among Galileo's fiercest opponents. The Catholic Church long ago abandoned its opposition to Galileo's theories, and in 1979 John Paul II apologised for the Inquisition's treatment of him.'

Editors comment: The scientist Galileo was sent to a dungeon and publicly flogged because he believed the earth moved around the sun. On the 22nd of June, 1633, Galileo was obliged to fall on his knees to escape the cruel death ordered by the Pope. He signed with his own hand the following retraction: '*I abjure, curse, and detest, the error and heresy of the motion of the earth...*' The infallible decree of the infallible Pope, Urban the VIII, against the motion of the earth, is signed by the Cardinals Felia, Guido, Desiderio, Antonio, Bellinggero, and Fabreicio. It says: '*In the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the plenitude of which resides in His vicar, the Pope, that the propositions that the earth is not the centre of the world, and that it moves with a diurnal motion is absurd, philosophically false, and erroneous in faith*'. But Galileo's science was eventually to prove how the Pope and his infallible church were in error.

Also the great scientist Pascal and writer Voltaire came under the attack of the Roman Catholic religion, Pascal living and dying excommunicated, (i.e. cut off from the Church).

Quotable

'...It is estimated that the collective persecution of Christians around the world produces a staggering 450-500 martyrs each and every day'. (Voice of the Martyrs, 1/2001)

Your Comments and Questions

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

Ruth and Boaz

Dear Terry, I've been reading the book of Ruth. Chapter 3 talks about Ruth laying down at the feet of Boaz. Is there anything culturally significant about this? I don't understand why she did this. I have been told of a commentary that says Naomi was not a godly woman and was not giving Ruth good or godly advice; and even that Ruth could have been at the foot of Boaz's bed doing a striptease and that Boaz may have been drunk. The passage is rather strange but I seriously think that whoever wrote such a commentary has totally lost the plot? How do you explain this passage? I truly value your input as I know you are diligent in your faith and love of the truth. My husband and I continue to pray for you and your ministry. With many thanks.

(Name withheld at editors discretion)

Editors comment: According to Dt.25:5, if a woman's husband died and she was left without children, her husband's brother was required to marry her so that there could be an heir to carry on the name of the husband. But Naomi's deceased husband, Mahlon, had no other living brothers. In this case, the nearest kinsman ('Kinsman Redeemer') could buy the land owned, but would be expected to marry Ruth.

The 'uncovering of the feet' was a ritualistic ceremonious act. The passage refers to a threshing floor which was usually in a covered but open space. It was customary for the owner (Boaz) to sleep at one end of the grain pile. (Other servants were usually nearby).

To put ones skirt over a woman is synonymous with saying that he marries her. It may seem strange to us today, but it was normal at that time.

I have never heard of any commentary that says such ridiculous nonsense as you have heard. If there is such a commentary it should be burned immediately as it does not take much research to uncover such rituals and customs as are faithfully reported in the book of Ruth.

Naomi was a Godly woman. The text itself shows where she speaks favourably of the Lord God Jehovah and Ruth is also said to be a 'virtuous woman'. That Ruth 'could have been at the foot of Boaz's bed doing a striptease' is too foolish to comment on and is certainly not in the text! And drunkenness was a serious sin. Although it was normal for men to drink wine in the evening before bedtime, if Boaz was drunk at the time this would contradict his articulate speech (3:10-13). Boaz was a righteous man - consider the testimony - that God sovereignly chose him as the Kinsman Redeemer to bring in the Messiah through the line of Boaz and David! (Ruth 4:17-22cp.Matt.1:5)

Quotable

'I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially the extent to which it has been applied, will be one of the great jokes in the history books of the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious a hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity that it has'.

(Malcom Muggeridge, Journalist and philosopher)

Dear Terry...one of the biggest issues that confronts the Church today is **Women in Ministry**. After over 30 years of being a church member, I was summoned to a Churches of Christ Elders meeting for disrupting the Church, causing disunity and teaching my own interpretation of scripture...I tried to explain 1Cor.14:34-35; 1Tim.2:9-15; 1Tim.3:1-7, (etc), but they didn't want to listen. I was told to leave the Church if I cannot accept that women can now have authority to teach, lead, preach and be Elders in Church, as they are sick and tired of Women being suppressed in the Church...I and many others would appreciate your thoughts...

(Name withheld at editors discretion)

Editors Comment: The underlining issue is: *Is the women 'usurping authority over the man'?* (1Tim.2:12) This prevents women from preaching, teaching and other things in church because those activities involve *authority*. The Biblical qualifications for an elder/pastor is 'husband of one wife' not the 'wife of one husband'! (1Tim.3; Tit.1). It is a mans role whether we like it or not.

The office of a Christian minister is a male 'elder' ('presbyteros'); his function is an 'overseer' (same as 'bishop' - 'episkopos' - 1Pet.5:1-4). If teaching, preaching, pastoring is not having 'authority' over others, than what is? The very word 'bishop' means 'overseer!'

An 'Antinomy'

Dear Terry, J. I. Packer wrote of an 'antinomy' as 'an appearance of contradiction. The whole point of an antinomy - in Theology - is that it is not a real contradiction, though it looks like one. It is an apparent incompatibility between two apparent truths. An antinomy exists when a pair of principles stand side by side, seemingly irreconcilable, yet both undeniable. Each rests on clear and solid evidence; but it is a mystery how they can be squared with each other. You see that each must be true on its own, but you do not see how they can be true together'.

I suggest examples as: The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Father. The Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, yet each is God. This is an 'antinomy'.

The Lord Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh. The Human Nature of Christ was indissolubly linked to His Divine Nature in one person. The two natures are inseparable. This is an 'antinomy'.

The sovereignty of God in election and the responsibility of man seems a contradiction. It is an 'antinomy'. I clearly remember in 1964/65 I was for the first time introduced to the Sovereignty of God and Election. I remember I had a negative reaction because in my looking at the subject only from the human vantage perspective I felt that 'God would not do such a thing as to choose to save some and leave others'. Within a month or less I was balanced out by a friend and I have continued preaching the Gospel without reservation since and accept the fact that God is sovereign.

I am absolutely convinced that if God had not chosen me in Christ 'before the foundation of the world' I would never have chosen Him!

God bless you in your ministry as He leads and guides you in the various subjects you discuss in your magazine...

Gordon Johnson, Hervey Bay, Qld.

Your Comments and Questions

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

New 'Membership' Booklet

This ministry has prepared a booklet '*Keys To Fruitful Church 'Membership'*'. It gives six key points to being happy and fruitful in church life. It speaks of being spirit filled; understanding the importance of the local church and the imperfections of; how not to 'leave' a church; discernment and legalism; understanding submission to authority; how to minister in grace...and more. It should be helpful to those thinking of becoming committed to a church and a teaching tool for Pastors and elders to give to people thinking of becoming 'members' (as in being committed in some way to the local church). It could be used across a wide range of churches and church groups. The six points might also help towards suitable topics for those teaching or preaching. Cost: \$1.90

Dear Terry and team...There is so much happening in the world at present it is no wonder individuals are struggling to make sense of it all. The god of this world is active in many people's lives. I too am aware of his cunning ways & only when God chastises me, do I repent & get back on track with the one who holds my eternal salvation in his hands.

In an Anglican publication, 'focus', I noticed a photo of Anglican, Roman Catholic, Assembly of God [AOG] & Lutheran persons joining together in a small community to show unity of spirit over a project to benefit the town. Having come out of Pentecostalism about 6 years ago, I wondered then would they ever join hands with Rome & the ecumenical movement, and to my horror, they [AOG] have.

The church now is an inclusive body of homosexuals, pagans, greenies, heretics, ordained women, carnal unregenerated Christians, etc, etc. The ungodly in the world will never find solace there, if God is drawing them to Him.

...Your newsletter has been going out now for 12 years...thank you and to your team of helpers... 'Diakrisis' has been a lighthouse & compass to our personal walk with God. To those who are discerning the times, the WORD of God, guided by the Holy Spirit, will ensure we are firmly fixed to receive heavenly rewards. In the meantime, I 'work out my salvation with fear and trembling'...

(J.R., Qld.)

Hello brethren, Greetings. I want to congratulate and thank you for the good work you are doing...We have found 'Diakrisis' helpful...

(Pastor D.M., Africa)

New 'Bible College'!

For many years this ministry has been praying for, and working towards, establishing a 'Bible college'. Our desire is to equip Christians. The editor and another Bible teacher have been completing Masters degrees in preparation for teaching qualifications and any accreditation.

We have now been able to secure suitable course material to begin an independent college in Hervey Bay, Queensland, in 2009. We will be offering the first accredited course as a '*Certificate in Theology*' which will begin with Thursday night classes once per week. Courses will be accredited with the US and in SE Asia. We are hoping to also offer a Diploma course as soon as possible. There will be at least two qualified lecturers ready to commence in 2009 and we are hoping eventually to have students from outside of Hervey Bay come and train and be equipped in this Institute.

The college will be run by faith. We are praying for support from churches and individuals.

More details will be given in the next newsletter. Any enquiries or further information can be obtained by contacting this ministry.

Hi Terry, Thankyou for your prompt attention to my requests for materials on Seventh Day Adventism (SDA). I am now out of the SDA clasp. I told them that barking dogs cannot stop this train. I'm heading home on the rails that Jesus Christ prepared for me! Bless you Terry for your backing and above all your forever friendship. Affectionately,

(Y.R., Vict.)

Dear Brother Terry, thankyou for the book on 'Tongues' and the newsletters. I am from Malta and am an ex-Roman Catholic. I thank God for saving my soul. When I was converted I went to the Assembly of God church but have left that...please send me your CD on 'music'...thankyou again, In the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ..

(Name withheld at editors discretion)

Warm Christian greetings. Thankyou for the latest copy of 'Diakrisis'. This is just a word of encouragement for all the good work you put into this ministry. It is well researched, balanced and scriptural. May God continue to bless and use you for His glory...

(K.S., Wye, NSW)

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