



Diakrisis (Australia)

PO Box 1499, Hervey Bay, Qld. Australia, 4655.
E-mail: taminist@bigpond.net.au Ph. 0411489472 Fax: (07) 41240915

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

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PO Box 1499, Hervey Bay, Qld, 4655 Australia
Ph. 0411489472 (Mob.)
E-mail: taminist@bigpond.net.au

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

Editor: Terry Arnold (Dip. Bib.&Min., Dip. Teaching, Author.)

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Contents

- P.1** - Editors Comments
- P.2** - Polemics and Contending For the Faith
- P.3** - Book Review: *'Church's In Trouble'* By Paul E. Brown.
- P.4** - Quotables
- P.5** - God's 'Love'
- P.6** - Your Comments and Questions
- P.7** - Your Comments and Questions
- P.8** - Bible College News; Your comments & Questions

Editors Comment

I have always had a sympathetic heart for pastor/elders. The pastor who will stay for many years in one local church, (the current 'burnout' rate is high!), must be prepared for battles - because the church is in perilous times being attacked from *within* and *without*.

The battles from within are often with professors of Christianity who want the worlds thinking in the church. It has increasingly become a difficult task to pastor in an age when so many churches are now filling with professing Christians who are more like tares than wheat and who expect the pastor/elder to give them a feast of 'Mcchurch' - McDonalds fast soul food, rather than healthy correction and challenges to their faith. And if some do not have their felt needs met, they are quick to blame the pastor. Some even seek control to domineer, when the 'rule' is not given to them to have. When confronted or challenged their pride is offended and they will often explode or leave, sometimes taking people with them. Such people rarely work through a confrontation with an openness and humility and a respect for authority. No doubt there are times to leave a church when it is apostasising in doctrine or morals. But many Godly pastor/elders today are battling with professors of Christ who do not display His Spirit but rather the spirit of the age.

The battles from without are often in the form of false teaching. ***'But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies...many shall follow their pernicious ways...through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you...'***, (2Pet.2:1-3).

Today it is an increasingly unpopular task for ministers to address false teaching. Yet most of the New Testament epistles are geared towards exposing and correcting erroneous teaching and unholy living. Ministers are supposed to be ***'Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers'***, (Tit.1:9). This is one of the most forgotten *requirements for an elder* - to protect God's sheep by *holding fast* to sound doctrine, and also in *contending* for it!

The Postmodern spirit of the age sees truth as a subjective set of negotiables. Christians are being 'zapped' by extra-biblical information via 'Christian' TV, new books and the internet, of which the content lacks sound scriptural truth. People are no longer satisfied with objective theological arguments to the mind but rather they hunger for experiences. Christianity is also being secularised. Increasingly Christians are comfortable in a secular culture. These are what Godly pastors/elders are contending against.

The Biblical pastor will not be 'popular', as he will not pander to the spirit of the age and give just 'positive' material and ignore such Biblical themes such as sin and judgement. He will not surf the waves of the latest fads and programmes to 'grow' his church. The battles within and without must be fought by sound doctrine within the Word of God.

One scripture I have clung to in times of these battles is: ***'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord'***, (1Cor.15:58).

Terry Arnold

Polemics and Contending For the Faith

The Need:

Increasingly in this postmodern age we don't like polemics - the refutation of errors often involving controversy. We want 'positives', not negatives, even if the negatives are truth. 'Everyone is right'. We tolerate everyone's beliefs. There are no absolutes.

Increasingly, when I address an audience with a topic that is 'controversial' I run the risk of being judged for being 'hard' and 'unloving'. It is not popular to publicly discern spiritual matters, even if they are backed by scripture or facts. Yet the biblical word '*discernment*' ('*diakrisis*') literally means to 'judge through'.

So much of the epistles are 'polemic' by nature - Paul constantly warns against false teachers and their teaching, even naming names, (Acts 20:31; 1Cor.4:14; 1Thess.5:14; 1Tim.1:20; 2Tim.4:14). The Bible exhorts us to contend for the faith and the purity of the Gospel, (Jude 1:3; Pr.28:4). We are told to 'reprove' and rebuke false teaching and those that disseminate it, (2Tim.4:2; Eph.5:11).

The Reformers spilled blood and were burned alive for *our* faith and for *our* freedom to have Bibles in our *own* languages. Had they not engaged in polemics, where would we be? They would certainly be dismayed at the attitude today to polemics. Yet, Jesus said that the sword of the word of God would even divide households, (Matt.10:34-36).

Not everyone is gifted to publicly 'contend' for the faith, but should we not be tolerant and appreciative of those who do so, where it is done in love and sound doctrine?

The Practice:

Polemics can be practised in writing or in person. When I was saved out of the Roman Catholic system my heart immediately went out to those who were still ensnared in it. To convince them of error and truth was a non-negotiable necessity. Over many years this has broadened to a fight for the purity of the Gospel itself, for sound doctrine and the interpretation thereof. Although most of this ministry has been with a preference to literature, there are times when it becomes person to person and even face to face.

'Debating' is a negative word today but it simply means to state a proposition for or against and then attempt to convince the other side. Practise in 'debating' can be useful in witnessing and contending for the faith. Polemics is about *convincing* people and winning them over to a 'premise' or 'argument'. Paul's writings are full of 'debate'.

The following are some 'skills' learned in hundreds of encounters and 'debates' over the years:

An 'argument' involves a statement: '*This [the topic] is true*' (or false, depending on which side you are on). In public debates, this is the first step - to state the argument. But in Christian witnessing and contending for the faith, it often shortcircuits the avenues to discuss and *convince*. An example of this is when we would speak to cultists who do not believe in the deity of Christ. We could initially state the 'argument' that 'Jesus is God'. Although this is a true statement, if used initially this can cut avenues to convince them and may even harden them further. A better method of debate would be *a question*: 'Why does Jesus say '*I am*' in John 8:24 and Jehovah says the same thing in Exodus 3:14?' The next step would be to discuss the two scriptures and prove that Jehovah and Jesus are indeed saying the same

thing about themselves being deity. We do not necessarily need to state the 'premise'. Ultimately, we must trust the Holy Spirit to put the pieces of the puzzle together and show the person that Jesus is saying He is deity.

The proof for the premise must also be confined tightly to the argument. We do not convince people by compiling the biggest pile of 'facts'. Facts for the 'argument' are often like pieces in a Jigsaw puzzle - if you don't link them together properly, they fail to give a picture. One also cannot convince someone of an argument solely by knocking down their argument. It may help to destroy some of the 'mindset' they have built, but to win people to an argument we must build again another bridge of truth. Sometimes this new 'mindset' is built painstakingly piece by piece.

As there is a premise and content in an argument, so there is also a 'style'. By style I mean the *manner* that we convince someone, including the way we speak or write. Polemics should never involve anger or rudeness. It is important to present the argument in a *coherent* fashion and as *simple* as possible. *Repetition* is helpful on important points and even to bringing those points into other parts of the argument. Agree where you can agree and keep bridges and lines of communication open but *never negotiate on absolute truth*. Don't use big words or intellectual ideas that we ourselves may understand well but others may not. Pick only the important points and do not get sidetracked by things that don't really matter to the argument. Never criticise the person themselves; never get 'personal'. Scripture summarises many of these things: '***And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth***', (2Tim.2:24,25).

We must consciously 'separate the person from the error', no matter how evil the error is. I once had a face to face debate with two young women who claimed to be Christians but who were indoctrinated by a bizarre cult group called 'The Children of God'. Their group encouraged fornication and even giving sexual favours to 'win people to Jesus' (called 'flirty fishing'). I was disgusted by their evil arguments and misuse of scripture. It would have been easy to accuse them of being wicked persons. But the need was to point them *to* the truth of scripture in context and pray that the Holy Spirit would guide them *into* truth, (Jn.16:13).

Today most modern 'tracts' challenge people with the 'love of God' but avoid any of the polemics of secular and religious errors that often prevent people from understanding the Gospel. The modern church has today taken the polemics out of witnessing! For example, such evils as evolution and shades of universalism often warp peoples understanding of who God really is and therefore Jesus substitutionary work. It is this *preparation of the heart* that the parable of the sower speaks about, (Matt.13). And *in that preparation we must be prepared for debate and polemics*. The apostle Paul rarely presented the Gospel without polemics and debate! He was not stoned and beaten for a 'God loves you' Gospel!

Be prepared for Polemics in teaching and preaching the Gospel. It also sharpens one to have answers for any man, (1Pet.3:15). It is part of '***earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints***', (Jude 3).

Terry Arnold

Book Review: 'Church's In Trouble' By Paul E. Brown.

As I travel across a variety of churches or correspond with pastor/elders, it appears that Churches today are facing increasing 'discord' amongst the brethren. *Today most people now rarely leave churches over doctrine, but rather over disagreements or upsets.*

Having been through one or two church 'turmoils' I have over the years become interested in the dynamics and practical aspects of 'church life'. Harmony in the local church should be a sought after blessing. With this in mind I have been interested in books on this topic. Recently I read a book 'Church's In Trouble' by Paul Brown. It well describes the variety of troubles that can exist in the local church, but also the reasons for, and how to handle such.

There are churches that handle disputes well enough to avoid complete church 'splits'. They often have strong leaderships that settle disputes decisively and practise church discipline. However, this can be done either harshly or it can be done in grace. This book describes well the troubles that can occur, the troublemakers, and the need to minister to both in grace.

The book reminds us that 'churches in trouble' is nothing new. The New Testament pages detail such troubles and turmoil within real local churches of the first century. There is no escaping such problems in churches, just as it is impossible to escape problems in our own earthly families. If we left our earthly families the way people today so easily leave churches, there would be few families left intact! There just is no perfect church.

The devil loves to see unity threatened or destroyed (P.6). The book also has a warning that unbiblical or unqualified leaders can inflict harm upon a church and its members. Many church attendees have been wounded by leaders who are not qualified to care for the sheep (P.7). The book is a wake up call to ministers in how they handle the sheep, no matter how difficult they might be. But at the same time another element that goes to make up a harmonious church is recognition of Godly leadership. Harmony must include respect and submission on the part of members for those appointed to leadership (P.9). Increasingly churches are experiencing turmoil because of selfish attitudes of church members who 'are always awkward and difficult and query practically everything their leaders suggest' (P.115).

The book speaks much about 'the greatest gift of all' - God's love. It is this that can overcome so many obstacles that spoil harmony in the local church (P.7). 'Love expresses itself in fellowship, which has sharing in its heart' (P.9). 'Harmony is a blend of all these ingredients; love, fellowship, working together, respect for leadership and mutual forgiveness' (P.10). Jesus said, 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another', (Jn.13:35).

In a day when people are failing to see the importance of the local church, old fashioned 'commitment' is falling away. This book reminds readers that 'the local church is the place where we are being prepared for the harmony and unity of heaven, it is God's training ground for the community in glory' (P.18). The local church gatherings were not something that first century Christians opted out of (P.18). Fellowship in the church is also good training ground to relate to others (P.20). Those with wrong attitudes

and unsuspected tendencies to selfishness, may never have these challenged unless they are in fellowship with other Christians in a local church. This is part of the work of the Holy Spirit to sanctify believers.

There are some truths in this book that will be obvious to those in ministry who are dealing with them day by day, yet they remind us of the importance of the 'body' of Christ: 'One great tragedy is that when people have sinned they often move off to some other church. Instead of repenting and putting things right within their own church, amongst those who knew the sin and perhaps felt the shame brought to the church and had to cope with the damage, they start again somewhere else' (P.24). 'Many of us are far too prone to think simply in terms of our own personal growth as Christians to the neglect of a concern for the growth of the whole body of the local church' (P.29).

'If people have really been born again then they will respond to loving correction and guidance and this is something that should be continually going on in a fellowship of God's people' (P.49). 'There are some people who seem to feel that they are always right. They seem to believe that if their points of view are not respected and adopted then they are being rejected as persons and as Christians' (P.130). 'Christians justify their character or temperamental weaknesses, never allowing these to be challenged or brought to the Lord for change, and as a result there is no alteration or progress in that area of their life at all. This can be just as true of leaders as of the rest of the membership' (P.173).

The book covers a variety of characteristics of various 'trouble makers' in a church. Leaders will recognise many characters, but all readers might well see the danger of ourselves becoming those characters! For example: 'Some people seem to develop a 'threatening to resign' syndrome. As a result the rest of the church, and the leadership, are constantly on tenterhooks. Everyone knows that it is important not to upset Mr. A. or Mrs B. Subsequently as a result they are allowed too much influence in the church and the opinions and convictions of other, quieter - more gracious? - members are not taken into account as they ought to be. This is not true fellowship. This is not how the church should act as a body, however caring for all the members and taking into account the views of all' (P.177).

The book goes on to give practical steps to promote harmony in church life. Everything that takes place within a church must be related to the glory of God: 'When we all feel we are but sinners saved by grace and indebted to God's love, divisions and unnecessary disputes seem very out of place' (P.193).

I found the book challenging in that there are many ways by which we can enhance the harmony of church life and handle situations better. One of the many challenging statements in this book that spoke to me was: 'to be able to say in any given situation, 'This has come to me in the providence of God; what good does God intend to come of it?' (P.23).

I highly recommend this book as a reference book to those in ministry but also to those who might want to be more involved in church life. When there are 'troubles', this book could help to put things in a sound perspective.

Terry Arnold

Quotables

Salvation

'Satan has effectively blinded the minds of the ungodly, so that, speak we as wisely as we may, and as persuasively as we can, nothing but a miracle can convince men dead in sin of the truth of God. Nothing less than a miracle of grace can lead a man to receive what is so altogether opposite to his nature'.

(Charles Spurgeon)

Antinomianism

'Like James, Luther opposed antinomianism. Saving faith is not dead. It is a vital or living faith (fides viva). Live faith produces real works. If no works follow from our profession of faith, this proves that our faith is not alive...'; if no fruit follows, then no faith is present. If no faith is present, then there is no Justification...Antinomianism teaches Justification by faith minus works. ...'

(RC Sproul 'Grace Unknown', P.71)

The Sovereignty of God

'No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes the suggestion that God works everything, controls everything, rules over everything. The carnal mind, beginning with enmity against God, abhors the Biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to his eternal decrees. Most of all, the flesh hates the notion that salvation is entirely God's work. If God chose those who would be saved, and if his choice would be settled before the foundation of the world, then believers deserve no credit for any respect of their salvation'.

(John Macarthur, 'Ashamed of the Gospel', P.154)

The Charismatic Movement

'...From personal knowledge of the church scene across the denominations I would estimate that the incidence of adultery and marriage breakdown among leaders and church members in the charismatic churches is considerably greater than in non-charismatic churches. This is further evidence of the influence of the world and especially the pop culture'.

(*'Blessing the Church?' by Charismatic leader, Clifford Hill, P.33*)

'The Charismatic movement which, I say this with compassion in my heart, has been without question, the most disruptive disastrous thing that has happened to the church in the last 50 years. It has devastated the church in America in a number of ways...'

(John Macarthur, IFCA meeting 26/6/89)

Evolution

'And in man is a three-pound brain which, as far as we know, is the most complex and orderly arrangement of matter in the universe'.

(Isaac Asimov, biochemist Smithsonian Institute Journal, 6/70)

'Sanctified Thinkers'

'A religious mentality, characterised by timidity and lack of moral courage has given us today a flabby Christianity, intellectually impoverished, dull, repetitious, and to a great many persons, just plain boring. This is peddled as the very faith of our fathers in direct lineal descent from Christ and the apostles. We spoon-feed this insipid pabulum to our inquiring youth, and to make it palatable spice it up with carnal amusements snatched from the unbelieving world. It is easier to entertain than to instruct. It is easier to follow degenerate public taste than to think for oneself. So too many of our evangelical leaders let their minds atrophy while they keep their fingers nimble operating religious gimmicks to bring in the curious crowd'.

(A.W.Tozer, 'We Need Sanctified Thinkers', Alliance Weekly, Nov.9th, 1955)

Church Life

'I hear of one, who wishes to join church, saying "I came to see the elders, and one of them was rather rough with me. I shall never come again." What a stupid man you must be! Is it not their duty to be a little rough with some of you, lest you should deceive yourselves, and be mistaken about your true state? We desire lovingly to bring you to Christ, and if we are afraid that you really have not yet come back to God, with penitence and faith, should we not tell you so, like honest men? But suppose that you have really come, and your brother is mistaken; go and get a kiss from your Father, and never mind your brother. He may remind you how you have squandered your living, painting the picture even blacker than it ought to be; but your Father's kisses will make you forget your brother's frowns. If you think that in a household of faith you will find everybody amiable, and everyone willing to help you, you will be greatly mistaken...'

(Spurgeon, 'The Prodigal Son' Lk.15)

The Term 'Bigot'

'Where did the term 'bigot' come from? In the days of the Reformation both on the European continent and in England later, men and women would be burned to death by the Roman Catholic church for refusing to accept the authority of the Catholic church. Before the men would put the torch to the faggots they would ask 'Will you recant? Most would say: 'By God no'. This last phrase became contracted into 'bigot'. A bigot therefore originally was a man who would die rather than sacrifice the truth'.

(William Moodie, 'Tools for Teachers')

'Another gospel'

The Pope, Vatican City, Nov.23, 2008: *'God will accept into his eternal kingdom those who have made the effort every day to put his word into practice. This is why the Virgin Mary, the most humble of his creatures, is the greatest in his eyes and sits as Queen at the right hand of Christ the King'.*

The Bible: *'For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast', (Eph.2:8,9)*

God's 'Love'

Does God love everyone the same? Is it true that God loves everyone and 'has a wonderful plan for their lives' as is written in so many evangelistic 'tracts'?

Logically and emotionally we might want to believe this. It appeals to *our need* to be loved and for everyone to love everyone else. It is sentimental at best but at worst it is not at all in harmony with a full orb view of scripture. If God loves everyone the same then what do we do with scriptures that teach God 'hates' sinners and the wicked (Ps.5:5;11:5; Hos.9:15); that he loved Jacob but 'hated' Esau (Rom.9:13); and that He will Himself condemn many to torment in Hell (Matt.25:41;7:23)? Does God have the same love for those in Hell or those who He knows will end up in eternal fire?

The modern church has increasingly filtered God's love through our own understanding of love. Arguably this is more human than divine.

In scripture there are different Greek words for the *one* English word 'love'. 'Agape' is God's love and wilful direction towards man; 'phileo' is used for mans love, friendship or affection; and there is also 'philadelphia', a brotherly love (Rom.12:10; 1Thess.4:9; Heb.13:1; 1 Pet.1:22; 2 Pet.1:7). In John 21:15-17 where Jesus and Peter speak of 'love', both 'agape' and 'phileo' are used, yet the English has just *one* word translated 'love' for both.

There are different degrees and kinds of 'love'. But there are also different shades of God's 'agape' love...

General love:

God has a general love or benevolence towards humanity as a whole: '**...He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust**', (Matt.5:45). But is this love the same as the special kind of love He has for His elect in His church? Obviously His love varies somewhat depending on the object of His love.

Special love:

There is no doubt that God 'loves' His own selected people, the elect; and that this love is '*special*'. God loved Israel and showed special favour on them, *not shown on others*. '**For you are a holy people unto the lord your God, the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all the people that are on the face of the earth. The Lord has not set his love upon you or choose you because you were more in number than any people, for You were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you**', (Deut.7:6-8); '**Only the Lord had a delight in your fathers to love them, he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day**', (Deut.10:15). *Clearly this love was not the same love as to other nations.*

The Bible clearly teaches God '**hates all workers of iniquity**' (Ps.5:5; Hos.9:15) and He is '**angry with the wicked every day**', (Ps.7:11). God says '**Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated**', (Rom.9:13). This last verse is quoted from Malachi ch.1 which uses a classic word for hate often used in the Old Testament to show a strong hatred and detest. The Greek word used in Romans 9 for 'hate' ('*miseo*') is indeed the opposite of 'love'. Strong's Lexicon describes the meaning as '*to hate, pursue with hatred, to detest*'.

On the Day of Judgement, Christ will say to a multitude of people who were self deceived or deceived by others: '**Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire**

prepared for the devil and his angels', (Matt.25:41; 7:15-23). Is God showing the same 'love' here as to His elect?

There is no escaping the fact that God's love is special to His elect. The fact that He '**chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**' (Eph.1:4) should tell us that His love to a select group of people was decreed even *before they were born*! This is obviously not a universal love here and no amount of semantic gymnastics can change '**before the foundation of the world**' (Eph.1:4) and the fact that to only these people does He give '**every spiritual blessing**', (vs.3). The Bible clearly says that God has *predestined* the saved *before* the creation of the world (Eph.1:5,11; Rom.8:29,30; Acts 13:48); and that these He has already *beforehand* determined to glorify, (Rom.8:30). In contrast, the unsaved will die in their sins and be in Hell completely cut off from any possibility of being loved by God, (Matt.25:41; 7:23; 2 Thess.1:9). It is obvious in scripture that *some* (the believers), are showered with a *distinctive* love and are '**not appointed to wrath**' (1Thess.5:9) while *most* of the human race will suffer the wrath (anger) of God, (Matt.7:13).

We are not expected to understand this distinction in love. It is arguably beyond any human reasoning. Yet most modern evangelism today rejects this distinction. Evangelism today has become so man centred in attempting to fill the self needs of man that the 'God loves everyone' doctrine permeates most 'tracts' and messages. But this denies the judgement and the wrath of God upon sin and sinners! Jesus warned many to flee from the wrath to come, (Matt.3:7; Lk.3:7); that unsaved people have the wrath of God *now* abiding on them, (Jn.3:36); and are in fact '**children of wrath**', (Eph.2:3). God's wrath is His anger and it will be revealed against all unrighteousness and those that hold to it, (Rom.1:182:5,8).

Some readers are probably already uncomfortable with this presentation. But it is a response to the 'love gospels' that are being preached today which do not present sin and the consequences thereof! *The Gospel is 'good news' but only if one understands what it rescues them FROM.* When we are saved we are specifically saved *from* the consequences of sin - '*the wrath to come*', (Rom.5:9; 1Thess.1:10).

Does God love everyone the same? Is His love to the elect unfair? If so, then the following verses would need to be considered: '**Therefore has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens. You will say then unto me, Why does he yet find fault? For who has resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory**', (Rom.9:18-23).

God's love in salvation is selective, at least in view of the fact that many in Hell will not have His love. Although it might contradict our human understanding, *there are distinctions in His love.* He is the Potter, we are the clay. He is omnipotent; He is sovereign. He is love.

Terry Arnold

Your Comments and Questions

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

[Editors Comments in bold and brackets]

[Re: 'Christian Modesty' Jan-Feb/2009]: *Dear Terry, I could very well be accused of being a legalist. I hold to strong views, but have learnt that I can't impose my views on others to follow. It seems society has deceived women into believing that to be accepted, they must look and dress a certain way. I don't think it unreasonable for the family of God to be modestly attired. If the issue is handled graciously by the oversight, the mature should comply...*

...I looked up that verse you quoted [Rev.3:18] and the word 'nakedness' is not referring to the physical state but a metaphorical/spiritual state...It's unfortunate we can always find a verse to justify our arguments and how passionate we are at defending it...[The context of Rev.3:18 is 'spiritual' but it perfectly shows literally that there is indeed a 'shame' in nakedness! ('the shame of thy nakedness'). My point is the fashion industry would do away with this natural 'shame'] God looks at the heart of a Christian, not the outward appearance of fashion. So I don't believe our outward dress code in regards to modesty, is a true reflection of a pure heart...expressing what's inside a person, doesn't always equate (Matt.23:27-28). [What is inside a person does not always show on the outside but that is the very problem the scriptures on modesty point out - that it should be the same on the outside as on the inside. Also, Matt.23 is referring to the unsaved pharisees, not to Christians indwelt by the Spirit] It would be a bold and unwise move to try to enforce a dress code on the church members. Such a move may be seen that the church has started to become a cult ruled by control. [Agreed, but the principles of modesty can still be taught?]

I was once rebuked for bringing to another practising Christians attention that his smoking habit was at odds with caring for his body, being the temple of the Holy Spirit. I was told it was not my place to convict him, but leave it to the Holy Spirit to convict...Some Christian smoke, some are fat and some live on social welfare, so shouldn't the pastors and elders of God's church deal with these issues as well or would it just be too hot to handle? [If there are problems here they will be highlighted by the Holy Spirit as we teach through scripture and disciple people in truth].

...Being out of fellowship for so long one has to be on guard all the more to withstand Satan's devices...In these last days, our faith is going to be tested...We are seeing a moral decay in society...Terry I would love to get your latest 'Membership' booklet advertised in Jan/2009 'Diakrisis'...it has been said to me that the reason I can't settle down in a church environment is because I'd find it difficult to submit to the oversight...[I appreciate that there are in some places few or no sound churches left, but God has in most places left a remnant with elders who are God's undershepherds. God commands us to submit to them as they are His gifts to the church, (Eph.4:11)]

Thanks Terry for, at least being with me in spirit, as we see the last days unfolding, and the sifting of the wheat and chaff, (true verses false Christians)...thanks for being a partner in my walk with the Lord, may He be your strength and shield, giving you wisdom and guidance as you press forward to your new venture - the Bible College.

(J.R., SE.Qld.)

[Editors comments in bold and brackets]

Hi Terry, I read the last 'Diakrisis' on the women issue and also was listening to your CD on 'Women in ministry'. In essence I have to agree with you. However there are questions I would have...You stated that preaching or teaching and usurping authority are the same thing. Why then does the Bible say 'I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man...' [1Tim.2:12], which would indicate they were separate things [I cannot find where I said they were the 'same thing'. However, 'teaching' is usurping authority because teaching the Word of God involves authority in itself. In this respect they are the 'same thing'. Yet, the two are separate in that one can 'usurp authority' over a man in ways other than teaching. However, the two should not be rigidly separated - the 'nor' is the Greek conjunction 'oude' which connects two clauses in continuation of the thought.

...Also how do you define preaching? [The preaching I was referring to on the CD was public preaching. The Greek word for 'preach' ('kerusso') refers to public proclamation and this is how it is consistently used throughout the NT.] Mk.16:15 - to whom was He speaking? [The previous vs.14 tells us it was spoken 'unto the eleven' and vs.15 'to them']. Were women included in the Great Commission or was it just his male followers? [Initially the 'Great Commission' was spoken to his disciples. But many other scriptures, too numerous to mention, surely give us incentive to continue the commission which involves discipleship and telling others the truth of Jesus Christ?]

Whether you like it or not 'sharing' the gospel is in fact teaching somebody about the gospel. And if it is a woman 'sharing' the gospel with any man she is teaching him or preaching to him, or how do you define 'teach' and 'preach'? Is it allowed for women to preach the gospel to the lost in the street or on the mission field, and to teach...I cant find anywhere that women are told to go and preach the gospel to 'all' people. [The question is: 'Is the women 'teaching' or 'usurping authority'? If you believe 'sharing' the gospel one on one is teaching or usurping authority then you will have answered the question for yourself. I personally think some of these other areas circumvent the obvious issues of preaching, teaching and usurping authority in public. To 'usurp authority', it has to be seen by the people, so its more a public issue]

In the Assembly of God Churches they used to say that if a woman speaks she is not usurping authority if the pastor invites her, but the Bible is clear about a woman preaching in the church anyway. [Agreed. Preaching involves at least some 'teaching' and 'authority'] The Baptist church now has woman 'Pastors' (and in Hervey Bay?). [Are they the 'husband of one wife' as in 1Tim.3 and Tit.1?]

There is an instance in Acts where women took men aside and taught (expounded) the gospel to them more clearly... (J.H., Brisbane)

[In Acts 18:6 'Aquila and Priscilla' took Apollos aside and 'expounded' a better way. It was not public preaching/teaching by Priscilla and there is no evidence that Priscilla was 'usurping authority over' Aquilla or Apollos]

Your Comments and Questions

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

[Editors Comments in bold and brackets] (From E.D., Sydney): *Dear Terry Arnold...The modesty article (Jan/Feb/2009) is 100% appropriate; but will any listen?...Concerning 'angels' [P.6] your references to 'intelligence' - two referred to evil angels or the devil. For 'emotions' two are also for the devils...The list seems a mixture. What is of Satan (fallen) could not be a right representation. As for angels having a 'will', anything with a will of their own (eg. Adam as fallen) is opposed to God. [The scriptures were referring to angels in general and this a 'mixture' since all angels whether evil or good were endowed with the same intelligence, emotion and will. Just because some are 'fallen' does not make the attributes of angels in general a wrong 'representation']*

In Rev.4:11 God as creator receives 'glory, honour and power' as creator of all things, 'for His will' (New King James is correct).

[In the KJV Rev.4:11 has: '*...for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created*'. Many other versions have '*will*'. The Greek word '*thélma*' has the suffix '*ma*' indicating that it is the result of the will. '*thélma*' is that which results from the process of determination. (Another Greek word for 'will' is '*boulomai*' but it does not show the result or the execution of the 'will'). Arguably '*pleasure*' is the result or the execution of God's will in creation and thus an acceptable translation? (This KJV reading of '*pleasure*' instead of '*will*' is perhaps one of the many exceptions to 'formal equivalency'. The KJV is in fact not everywhere 'formal equivalent' as some assume). I personally do not see a problem with either 'pleasure' or 'will' being used. It hardly changes the doctrine or the sense of the text?]

And is not Luke 16:22 a parable suitable to a Jewish mind. [I personally do not see Luke 16 as 'a parable' only 'suitable to a Jewish mind'. Luke 16 begins with 'there was a CERTAIN rich man'. But even if a parable, it is meant to teach literal truth. Why would Jesus teach something concerning angels here, if it were not true?]

The example in the article 'Antinomy' [P.7] is human wording...The Bible does not speak of 'two natures' [of Christ]

[*'Antinomy' is a human word to describe something that is obvious in scripture. The word 'Trinity' is also not in the Bible but it explains something that the Christian faith is founded on! The word 'theology' is not in the Bible either, yet it comes from two Greek words, 'theos' meaning 'God' and 'ology' meaning science or knowledge. 'Theology' is simply the study of God! Similarly, our phrase 'two natures' describes a Bible doctrine ratified in early church councils which fought against heretics who denied Jesus had two natures! (The council of Chalcedon (451) declared Jesus was one person with two natures, fully human and fully divine).*

Also to think that God would 'choose to save some and leave others' flies in the face of God's desire and will (1Tim.2:3).

[The fact that God would 'choose to save some and leave others' does not at all 'fly in the face of God's desire and will', but rather flies in the face of the pride of man! The sovereign Election and Predestination by God both

attack the very pride of man who would want to think he has a part to play in either!

1Tim.2:3 is referring to classes or groups of people as verse 2 tells us: '*For kings, and for all that are in authority...*' It also goes on to speak of '*Gentiles*'. The '*all men*' in verse 3 cannot be isolated from vs.1 which qualifies what the '*all*' is referring to.

There is no escape from these scriptural facts: God must draw before He saves anyone: '*No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day*', (Jn.6:44,65); the choosing by God's will is done '*before the foundation of the world*', (Eph.1:4; 2Tim.1:9; Rev.13:8; 17:8); we do not naturally will to be saved in our unsaved state (Rom.8:7); and it is not by our wills that we are saved, (Jn.1:12,13; Rom.9:16). The pride of man will juggle these scriptures to make them say something else; but read them objectively and there is no escape that God does the electing, choosing, the justifying, the predestinating and the glorifying, (Rom.8:29,30)! And some of these *before we were born!*]

...It would be good for Mr. Johnson to revert to his original thinking...[If Mr. Johnson needs to 'revert to his original thinking' then all the greats were also in error! (Spurgeon, Newton, Wycliffe, Luther, Knox, Owen, John Bunyan, William Carey, Tyndale, Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield, Strong, Matthew Henry, JC Ryle, DL Moody, Martyn Lloyd Jones...and the martyrs who all held to the doctrines of Grace: Huss, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, Foxe (wrote Foxe's Book of Martyrs)...Was Spurgeon in error? (He is widely believed to be one of the greatest evangelists in history). It is the modern church that has apostasised from what it used to believe!]

You also wrote about a new Bible college [P.8]. What will be offered?; and accredited by whom? The article 'The incomparable Christ' [P.2] said Christ 'never founded a college'...nor the apostles (Acts 20:32; 2Pet 1:12-15). Are we right in adding to God's word in any way whatsoever? [Does this mean we are forbidden to have Bible Colleges? Did not Jesus train men, disciple them, teach them, mentor them for three years? We would want to do nothing more than to facilitate this same work! The Old Testament has accounts of schools of prophets to train and equip people. I admit that Bible Colleges in Australia are mostly a stench in the nostril of God for what they teach and don't teach. And if churches were not in great apostasy we might not need to begin any 'Institute' (although there are still some colleges that are equipping Christians with truth and sound doctrine). We want nothing more than this in our 'Pacific Bible Institute': to teach, disciple and equip Christians for ministry! This is the great commission - a command! If this is in error then we had better stop all teaching and equipping! As for 'accreditation', I admit 'accreditation' for courses is 'human' but it simply gives people recognition that they have achieved certain courses of study with us. (It may also be necessary to some extent by the laws of the land). But the true accreditation will be in what the Holy Spirit will do in the hearts of the students as they are challenged by the word of God and apply sound doctrine! So, how in God's name can this be 'adding to the word of God'?]

Your Comments and Questions

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

Bible College News

The Pacific Bible Institute Inc. in Hervey Bay, Queensland, has successfully commenced February 5th with 13 students enrolled in the Certificate of Theology course. The subjects include: Bible Study Methods; Bible Introduction; OT Survey; NT Survey; Intro to Bible Doctrine; Church History; Spiritual Life; Evangelism... It is hoped more courses will be added in 2010 including Diploma and correspondence courses.

We have received some kind donations for the college. Because it is a faith ministry independent of the Diakrisis ministry, please earmark any donations clearly to the college and we will forward them on; or send direct to: Pacific Bible Institute, Box 1992 Hervey Bay, Qld, 4655.

Dear Terry, Thankyou for your ministry, your reward is in Heaven with our Lord and Saviour...the article on Modesty (Jan/Feb/2009) was very appropriate...

(J.&K. P., Victoria)

Dear Terry, Thank you again for 'Diakrisis' - it continues to encourage, teach, and correct. With reference to your article on Christmas (Jan/Feb 2009), and particularly the aspect of avoidance of the real mission of Jesus, I was extremely surprised and pleased at the Lord Mayor's Carols in Brisbane recently (2008). The songs ALL made reference to Jesus, there were NO references to Santa Clause, or cartoon/TV characters diverting attention from the central message, while several introductions and comments by the MCs and singers openly referred to Christ in His correct role. There was even a segment by a prominent pastor clearly proclaiming the Gospel...We were amazed, and hope large crowds continue to come this every year in clear competition with the majority of such commercial events.

With regard to the article on modesty (Nov/Dec 2008), with which I heartily agree, I am glad you did not try to lay down any particular 'standards'...It is also interesting to note the Moslem approach to this question, which is very legalistic, and extreme, requiring even the covering of the eyes. This is so different to the Christian approach which is based on a personal response of love and honour to our God (and our brothers and sisters in Christ), rather than fear and the necessity for good works (read 'legalistic obedience') for salvation. The occasional use of rape as a punishment for immodesty, and suicide bombings for Western 'decadence' also show the different motivation as well as different concepts of the judgment and mercy of God.

(G.H., Brisbane)

Terry, Greetings in Jesus name. Do you think it is a good idea to quote Malcolm Muggeridge (a strong recognised Catholic) in Diakrisis (Jan/Feb/2009, P.7) and give them and their ideas any credibility? Praying for you Terry.

(Letter with no name or address given)

Editors comment: The quote referred to by Muggeridge was against Evolution. I was not fully aware of his Roman Catholic views. Arguably he is popular more as a journalist and philosopher rather than a religious person (as the reference at the bottom of the quote stated). But the point of the quote was to show that even a former atheist and now philosopher can see the foolishness of the theory of evolution. '...the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light', (Lk.16:8). I take note of your thinking, but I cannot see how the quote gave any 'credibility' to Catholicism when that has not been mentioned at all? Thanks for the comment and continue to pray for me.

Dear Sir, Please send me the 'Keys to Fruitful Church Membership' [see P.8, Jan/Feb/2009]. I am interested in this subject. It seems to be a real problem here on the Gold Coast, with people easily leaving churches. The churches in the N.T. had problems but problems were dealt with, not run away from. Today church membership is undertaken easily and just as easily let go. The body of Christ is easily offended and fickle. Submission to authority needs to be biblically understood and leadership need to grasp correct use of God-given authority.

Also the topic on Christian modesty was good...Thanks.
(D.S. Gold Coast)

Dear Terry, Thanks again for your newsletter which we always look forward to receiving. The latest edition was exceptional! May the Lord continue to bless and encourage you as you do His precious work.

(W&J.I., Adelaide)

Dear Terry, it was good to receive the last newsletter. I enjoy the readers letters. I wish you well in the opening of the Bible college and pray God's blessing every step of the way. I look forward to hearing more about it and that the Lord will send you teachers and students...

...Will you be coming to Victoria this year?

(P.Q., Vict.)

Editor: A Tasmania trip is hopeful this year. (Melbourne could be added to that trip?)

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