



Australia

Diakrisis

A Ministry of Teaching

*But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age...to discern (diakrisis) both good and evil (Heb. 5:14)
Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine?... (Is.28:9)*

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

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The Descending Darkness

'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work', (John 9:4).

In these last of the last days, a darkness is rushing in upon us, quite unnoticed by the Church at large. Australian jurisdictions have moved to enact and implement a range of measures concerning vilification of ethnic and religious groups. A recent action taken in Melbourne proposed that Islam had been 'vilified' by a pastor conducting a seminar - and it brought to light the viciousness of such legislation. But that pales alongside what is being brewed up by the 'church' itself to ensure that Christian Truth will be shackled - and those preaching it brought to book for daring to do so.

A three-year study project jointly undertaken by the **Pontifical Council** for Interreligious Dialogue and the World Council of Church's [WCC] programme on inter-religious dialogue bears the name: '*An interreligious reflection on conversion: From controversy to a shared code of conduct*'. It was launched in May 2006 in Lariano/Velletri, near Rome, and aims to produce a code of conduct on religious conversion commonly agreed upon among so-called Christians. '*We are moving closer to a common code of conduct on how they go about winning converts among themselves and from other religions*', the WCC said on 6 August 2007.

Conversion, sometimes dubbed '*sheep-stealing*' as it is deemed to target another's flock, is a cause of friction and conflict between religions and among different branches of individual faiths. Militant groups are often accused of underhand tactics in winning over new adherents. The Geneva-based WCC, **working with the Vatican on the issue**, said a meeting in Toulouse later in August 2007 should bring the year-long process of agreeing on a **conversion rule-book** nearer to completion by **its target date of 2009**.

'Evangelical and Pentecostal representatives will be taking part in the dialogue for the first time, and we see this as a good sign for the eventual success of this project', said WCC spokesman Juan Michel. Representatives of the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish and Yoruba faiths attended the first meeting - alongside the Christians. They issued a joint statement saying freedom of religion was '*a non-negotiable right of every human being*'. '*Conversion is a controversial issue not only in inter-religious relations, but in intra-Christian relations as well*', said Hans Ucko, a WCC 'official'.

So, Rome is losing people to Protestantism and has found a way to stop this - by getting evangelicals and Pentecostals to agree to a set of rules that, no doubt, will include a clause against evangelising their adherents. The first meeting - held in May 2006 - concluded that the '**obsession of converting others**' needs to be '**cured**'.

The darkness is descending. The Pentecostals, by and large, accept Rome as Christian anyway, and have been a major bridge back to Popery - it will be interesting to see how the 'Evangelicals' cope with this development? Long has it been said that we face our biggest dangers largely from *within* professing Christendom than without? The remnant church is being squeezed from every angle today - just as her Lord said she would.

Mike Claydon

Championing The Cause of Christ's Church?

At the beginning of August this year, a friend sent me the DVD's and CD's produced from the July 2007 *Hillsong* Conference held at the Acer Arena in Sydney, Australia.

At the risk of being viewed as a dog with a bone, it would be remiss of me if I did not share with our readers some of the more shocking things that were said and done there in what the leadership labelled as '*Championing The Cause of Christ's Church*'.

This is a glimpse of just where the Pentecostal Mega-Churches are headed in future days - toward deeper heresies, Rome, and the presentation of a 'christ' foreign to scripture. The presentations feature the teaching of this year's keynote speaker, Unitarian 'Bishop' T.D. Jakes, and that of another American, Jentezen Franklin.

First, just a little background on these gentlemen:

T. D. Jakes denies the essential Christian doctrine of the Trinity. His teaching is of one God playing three different roles or manifestations. This view is called 'Modalism' and it is heresy. The doctrine of the Trinity is essential to our faith, without it there is no faith. If a person denies the Trinity they are in fact non-Christian by this very belief. This is not a trivial matter, but it pales in comparison with statements he made to the gullible audience at this Conference.

Jentezen Franklin: Some statements he made earlier: '*I spoke to the Lord this morning and 3,000 people need to sow \$55 over the next 6 months. Sow a \$55 grace seed, go to the phone now*'. '*David put 5 stones in his bag, we would call it a purse. 5 is the number for grace, he put grace in his pocketbook. Grace was put into his finances*'. '*The Lord told me to tell you those 3,000 people that are watching, a miracle is about to begin again. Go to the phone now and say, 'I'm sowing a \$55 seed'. 'Some may criticise and not believe me. Well, just sit there. Some of you may get a blessing, but you won't get no money*'. (TBN, Share-A-Thon, March 30, 2004). I recently watched this man on the Australian Christian [Cable] Channel and he intimated that God only answered prayer for those that give to ministries such as his.

Bishop T.D. Jakes would put a nightclub performer to shame. Much of the time he speaks over a tinkling piano, challenging platitudes spilling from his mouth. He lowers then raises his voice to fever pitch, working the crowd into a frenzy...screaming '*It's your season, it's your season!*' '*If you don't 'reposition' yourself you'll miss the best part of your life!*' '*It's your season to fly!*' '*Let go of the things that are limiting you!*' '*Anyone feeling 'fat' in Jesus?*' [Jakes is grossly overweight], '*Get rid of 'stinkin' thinkin' - break out of the box - God has a plan for your life*'. It's all so hackneyed and reminiscent of Amway conventions. Amazingly people are taking notes! Just what is required to '*reposition*' yourself is not explained. I felt exhausted just listening to this rant. What it has to do with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is anyone's guess. But the enormous crowd was on the edge of their seats and loving it.

Jentezen Franklin, like most American Pentecostal barnstormers saw no problem with his treatment of Romans 13:11 as he succeeded in tearing it from its moorings in a futile effort to fit it into his theory that the Church is in a '*Transfer Zone*'. And yes, God had told him that this was so.

But not before he had introduced his wife to the assembly and described her as 'hot'. He has two unmarried daughters who are anyone's as long as '*you are rich and available*'.

Apparently, the Church has now lost its last generation of 'generals'...Billy Graham and Oral Roberts were given as examples - and is presently in a '*Transfer Zone*'. God has given this man a message that the baton must now be passed to this generation. If they drop the baton at this '*critical time*' they will be '*disqualified*'. Typically, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob & Esau were recruited as 'types' that were in such a '*transfer zone*' and one dropped the baton - the other did not. Naturally, *Hillsong* was found to be in this 'zone' and doing reasonably well. A warning was given however that critics are out there that must never be listened to. '*If you listen to a 'Negaholic' they will take you away from your miracle*'. ...Those pens and notebooks were getting another workover.

A 'prophecy' was thrown in for good measure with Noah in view: 2006 was storm filled - but 2007 being the '7th day' as when the Ark rested - so will this be a year when '*you are headed for the mountain top and God has told me to tell you that a 'new 'anointing' is coming*'. This banality was greeted with thunderous standing applause. The presentation was completed with the assertion that you can receive '*hand me down genes*' from your parents. You can transfer '*dirty genes*' - '*negative parents raise negative children*'. Several pairs of Levi 'jeans' were used as props for this stunt. You guessed it - dirty jeans, crumpled jeans, and 'hol[ely] jeans! It was at this stage I reached rapidly for the 'pause' mechanism to stifle the urge to vomit.

If this twaddle is '*Championing the Cause of Christ's Church*' then may God have mercy upon us. As I listened I closed my eyes and it was like being back in the 1980's and early 90's when the *Assemblies of God* first invited these sorts of hucksters to Australia. Twenty five years later nothing seems to have been learned from the frightful experiences brought to us by their invitees such as Kenneth & Gloria Copeland, Benny Hinn, Rodney Howard Browne, John Kilpatrick, the Arnott's and the hypnotic deceptions of Brompton, Toronto and Pensacola. Its all the same old material - winding people up with lifestyle improvement gimmicks, personal and uplifting 'prophecies', promises from some 'god' of revival and gargantuan church growth. When, oh when, are people going to see through it all?

This movement is destroying vast numbers of our young people. Enticed in by the music and star status performers, stunning venues and upbeat motivational sermons - they are being sold an Ecumenical mess of pottage that has absolutely nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth or the 'championing' of His Church. Spiritual disaster waits just down the road for those I watched furiously scribbling down the drivel being served up as 'teaching'. When being a Christian becomes less comfortable than at present, and that day is surely coming, what will become of this idolatrous 'faith in faith' they are clinging to? Where will they go to find a firm anchorage? Surely the likes of Jakes, Franklin and Houston will not provide safehaven.

It's a cosmic tragedy in the making.

Mike Claydon

Peter Popoff

In the late 1980's a James Randi exposed the fraud of American Peter Popoff's ministry when he successfully intercepted two way radio communications between Popoff and his staff and wife during a meeting - (Popoff's staff gathered information from people and then transmitted that to Popoff up on stage through a hidden earplug earphone device). Popoff would bring 'words of knowledge' about these people and amaze gullible Christians with his 'pinpoint accuracy'. He also did the common trick of seating people in wheelchairs and have them stand when they were 'healed'.

Before graphically being exposed on National Television he at first denied the charge. Eventually he went bankrupt and closed the ministry - *only to reappear recently!*

Popoff sends packets of 'Miracle Spring Water' to his viewers. He claims the water is a solution to physical and financial problems. In February 2007 *Inside Edition* did an exposé on this and in May 2007 ABC's 20/20 focused on Popoff's 'comeback' and explored the lives of a few people who were cheated. He has also preached a form of prosperity theology under the slogan 'Go into business with God', claiming that God will make 'divine transfers' into a viewer's 'divine account'. Popoff who now claims to be '*prophet Peter Popoff*' is currently sending letters to Christians asking for more and more money. Instead of the promised 'Miracle Water', included is a tiny plastic 'Golden Tablet' and a cardboard bracelet called a 'Miracle Band'. Popoff claims the 'Golden Tablet' was made by God and will create immense wealth for the subscriber. Popoff then insists that the purchaser wear the 'Miracle Band' while posting him a check for \$28.30 (from Exodus 28:30) in order to receive further instructions on how to use the 'Golden Tablet'.

As of 2007, Popoff's program is broadcast on Network Ten in Australia. Many Christians are being deceived by this charlatan. For more information see:

<http://www.bible.ca/tongues-popoff-39-17Mhz.htm>

Darren Beadman

The famous Australian jockey, Darren Beadman, who claimed conversion to Christianity is in the news again. Recently the *Daily Telegraph* (July 13, 2007) reported: '*Champion jockey and wife Kim yesterday vowed to overcome problems in their 18-year marriage...Darren originally gave up horse racing to train as a pastor with Hillsong, only to return to the track two years later. When questioned at the time as to his ability to juggle the two callings, Beadman explained: 'the answer to the conflict of opposites in his life is to blend the two' although it had 'caused a tug of war within himself, between his nature and his faith'. One of their daughters was born deaf but the couple have said in the past that, after the congregation prayed for the family, her hearing dramatically improved.*

Sub-editors comments: We remember the 'conversion' Darren Beadman experienced during the 'Laughing Revival' as it swept the world under the sway of assorted false prophets Rodney Howard Browne, Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland, etc. Beadman got an 'anointing' outside an auditorium in Pensacola Florida - and returned to Australia and Frank Houston's Christian Life Centre. We pray for Darren Beadman and his family that through their brush with pseudo-Christianity, they will come to sound doctrine through the Lord of the Bible.

Has Roman Catholicism Changed?

(Vatican City, July 10, 2007) '*The Second Vatican Council didn't change Roman Catholic doctrine but rather deepened and developed it, says the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In a document released today...titled 'Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church'...(approved by Benedict XVI)...The document states: 'The Church of Christ...subsists in the Catholic Church'.... 'Christ established here on earth' only one Church and instituted it as a 'visible and spiritual community, that from its beginning and throughout the centuries has always existed and will always exist, and in which alone are found all the elements that Christ himself instituted. This Church, constituted and organized in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with him'.*

...Christian communities born out of the 16th-century Reformation are not given the title 'Church'...'these communities do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church. These ecclesial communities, which, specifically because of the absence of the sacramental priesthood, have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called 'Churches' in the proper sense'. (Apostasy Alert, July/2007)

Editors Comment: The Roman Catholic religion has never changed any of its doctrines but rather has added new ones. Here are just a few: AD 300 Prayers for the dead; AD 375 Worship/prayers to saints/angels; AD 394 'Mass'; AD 431 Worship of Mary; AD 593 Purgatory introduced; AD 607 Boniface III - first 'Pope'; AD 786 Worship of images/relics; AD 995 'Canonisation' of dead saints; AD 1090 Prayer Beads ('Rosary'); AD 1190 Sale of 'Indulgences'; AD 1215 Transubstantiation (Bread/wine becomes real body/blood of Christ); AD 1215 Confession of sin at least once per year; AD 1229 Bible forbidden to laymen; AD 1439 Seven sacraments affirmed; AD 1545 Tradition granted equal authority with Bible; AD 1854 Immaculate Conception (Mary sinless); AD 1870 Infallibility of Pope...

Pentecostal 'Idol' To Sing at RC Event

Former 'Australian Idol' star Guy Sebastian's '*Receive the Power*' will be the theme song for the Roman Catholic World Youth Day in Sydney. WYD coordinator, Bishop Anthony Fisher said '*it hits the mark on every level...We are confident 'Receive the Power' will rally young Catholics of all backgrounds to World Youth Day in 2008.*

Guy Sebastian...came to prominence as the winner of the first secular 'Australian Idol' in 2003. Since then, he has released three top five albums and seven top 20 singles, including three number ones.

Editors Comment: I have watched Guy Sebastian in several secular TV interviews. His testimony in all these interviews was far from 'Christian'. It is a shame that he will further the Roman Catholic and Ecumenical cause. We need, without fear of man, to inform and warn the younger generation that 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier', (2Tim.2:4).

Replacement Theology - Is it Biblical?

Considering today's geopolitical events we thought it was high time to take another look at the alarming growth in Replacement Theology today and see if scripture can support the position.

What is 'Replacement Theology'? It's the belief that God finished with national Israel when Jerusalem was sacked, the temple destroyed and the populace dispersed throughout the nations in the year AD 70; Heaven's attention is now solely upon the Church.

It's timely to write of this because in late July 2007 many Evangelical Christians throughout the United States supported a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and sought 'justice' for both sides, by means of an open letter to US President George W. Bush published in the 29 July 2007 edition of the *New York Times*. Additionally and recently, many Christian luminaries in Australia have also called for the same solution.

The letter, signed by several dozen Evangelical clergy and activists, urged the Bush administration not to 'grow weary' in its attempt to negotiate a 'lasting peace' in the region. The letter's authors sought to correct what they called a '*serious misperception*' that all American evangelicals objected to the establishment of a Palestinian state, and said they hoped that the awareness of a large body of Evangelical support for a permanent status agreement between Israel and the PA would 'embolden' Bush.

According to the letter's authors, both Israel and the Palestinians had rights to the land of Israel that stretched back 'millennia'. Both sides, the letter said, had committed acts of violence. *However, these professing Christians are being historically dishonest*. Records prove that at most, Arabs of any kind can lay claim to a few hundred years of family ties to this land. There has never in history been a nation or a country called Palestine. After the revolt of Bar-Kokhba in 135 A.D., the Romans, like the Babylonians before them, sent a large part of the Jewish population into captivity and exile. Even the historic nomenclature of the Jews was to be obliterated. Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina, and a temple to Jupiter built on the site of the destroyed Jewish Temple. The names Judea and Samaria were abolished, and the country renamed Palestine. A true 'Palestinian' is Jewish.

Only a lasting peace agreement, the letter exhorted, would end bloodshed and ensure that each side had a 'viable' state. To this end, the letter's authors expressed their support for the 'Road Map' peace plan, and endorsed former British prime minister Tony Blair's efforts in his new role as the Quartet's Middle East envoy. '*We renew our prayers and support for your leadership...and justice and peace for all the people in the Holy Land*', the letter concluded.

To endorse this approach one must necessarily hold to the view that God has finished with the Jews as His special people, and that the land of Israel has no further place in His plans. To practice 'Replacement Theology' one must believe that God has now transferred all the blessings promised to Israel onto the Church. [Notably, however, not the curses].

The Jews' claim alone goes back nearly 4,000 years; they became a nation and built a country there - not once but three times in history. The letter attempts to equate the victims of Arab violence with the victims of Israel's *response* to that violence, and argues that, in order to achieve peace,

'both sides must give up some of their competing, incompatible claims and accept each other's right to exist'.

What is clear is that these leaders appear unaware that their very alliance with the God-rejecting forces of this world, the fact that they support a 'solution' prescribed by a secular - humanistic 'global village', serves as a clear warning to true Christians that they are in error.

The problem they must overcome is what God has said in His Word - throughout the Old and New Testaments.

It all begins circa 1921BC as Abram is journeying toward Egypt. God promises him that he will make of him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, make him a blessing, that those that bless him would be blessed and those that cursed him would be cursed; that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed - and finally that to his descendents He would give this land as an *everlasting* inheritance. [Gen.12:1-4]

As Abram left Egypt for the Negev [circa 1918 BC] God explicitly tells him that he and his descendents will be given the land FOREVER [Gen.13:15]. To absolutely ensure that there is no mistaking this, God makes a covenant, not with Abram, but with Himself - '*For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, He sware by himself*', [Hebrews 6:13]. He puts Abram to sleep and passes through a divided animal in covenant, promising that he and his seed will possess the land encompassed by the river of Egypt in the south and the great river Euphrates to the north.

Circa 1898 BC when Abram was ninety nine years old, God appears again to him, changing his name to Abraham, and confirming this covenant as an *everlasting* one. '*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God*', [Genesis Gen.17:7,8].

From this point in the Old Testament through to the book of Malachi the torturous journey of Israel toward her final destiny unfolds. Her Babylonian captivity, a partial regathering under Nehemiah, the sacking of Jerusalem in 70AD and being 'set aside' and dispersed amongst the nations. But hidden away in the writings of the prophets was the astounding declaration that she would once again be regathered to the mountains of Israel.

Whether we like it or not - there's no denying that this has occurred. In 1948 Israel again became a nation - and the Hebrew language restored just as scripture said it would be. The Major and Minor prophets speak of Messiah's return to the Mount of Olives, and the books of Acts and Revelation explicitly place His place of return as national Israel. Without Israel Christ cannot fulfil these prophecies. To believe otherwise is to ignore a myriad of texts - most notably Zechariah chapter 14. Space does not allow a full itemisation of the scriptures that confirm this.

These 'Evangelicals' would do well to contemplate the fate of those that have dared to aid and abet the division of God's land - the place from where, soon, if present events are any indication, the Adamic curse will be lifted and the world blessed.

Mike Claydon

Pastors/Elders - As They See It

Travelling around various churches in differing affiliations within Australia I get to objectively observe the issues and the problems occurring within them. I listen to Pastor/Elders who in confidence share their burdens and their disappointments. Often I see the *same* afflictions and tensions occurring in churches *at the same time*. Many pastors and elders are not aware that the *same* trials and testings they are experiencing are being faced across the church scene. *These simultaneous occurrences can only be a working of the sovereign hand of God or the wiles of Satan working systematically under the allowance of God.*

I have written the following from personal experience as an elder, having been involved in pastoral work alongside various church ministers over a period of many years now. (The term 'minister' is often used in this article to summarise the 'pastor/elders').

The problems expressed below are indicative of what is happening in many churches. Although church leaders are facing new challenges, God has provided solutions and the strength to cope with these modern day pressures of church life.

Problem: Expectations - Burn-out: Burn-out of church ministers is occurring on an unprecedented scale. It used to be that 'pastoring' was mostly being *set aside* for prayer and the word of God (Acts 6:4), and that this took the form of studying, preaching/teaching, praying and caring for the sheep. Yet so much more is now expected of the 'pastor', and when the church and minister do not meet the attendees expectations, the steady drip of criticism too often wears down the leader. Some leaderships are treated like football coaches - when the team plays well (perhaps the offerings and numbers are up) they congratulate the minister; but when the team plays badly they want to change the manager.

Under-shepherds may know the difference between Justification and Sanctification; but are now expected to know the difference between various 'depressive illnesses' or be equipped with mediation skills. The minister is no longer a preacher/teacher and pastoral carer, but often an administrator, marriage counsellor and a problem solver.

Marriages are failing at an unheard of rate - more than 50% of Christian marriages are either ending in separation, divorce or are in turmoil. Many ministers are increasingly busy in marriage counselling to their own flock.

Because of such expectations many church leaders are operating behind a mask and struggle to be their true selves.

The modern 'Church Growth' models have not helped. They invariably hold up an image of what a church and its leader should be like. The expectations are more akin to the marketing practices of the world than from Scripture. The football coach performance image is not so strange by comparison.

Solutions: Ministers must be set aside for study and preparation for preaching/teaching, and caring for the sheep. Such priorities must be encouraged and enforced by the leadership team. Any other 'expectations' must be delegated.

Problem: Sheep or goats?: Not withstanding the sheep who genuinely require nurturing and shepherding, there are an increasing number of professing Christians who live such carnal and troublesome lives that they invariably

become 'high maintenance' to the church leadership. Often the leadership spends time with these people to the detriment of the rest of the flock. Many of these professing Christians are arguably not true believers. Scripture itself is explicit that *many* of these will be *professors but not possessors* of eternal life. Biblically, it is possible to 'believe in vain'. The problem is that it is not always easy to tell the difference between the sheep and the goats, in today's apostate modern church. This is so because the modern church is increasingly adopting the methods and the thinking of the world. Thus it is not too difficult today for non believers to be successfully integrated as 'believers' in amongst the shallow programmes and various activities that churches provide. Many of these people can continue through church life unrepentant and even undetected.

It is at this point that even sound churches face difficulty. To question someone's salvation is a difficult thing. But Scripture is clear that although many will be using the Lord's name, yet because they were lawless and unrepentant, our Lord will personally reject them, (Matt.7:23). The parable of the sower also teaches clearly that many will not be originally rooted in Him, (Matt.13) and thus will 'fall away'. Indeed, many of the Jews 'believed' on Jesus because of His miracles yet He did not 'commit' (literally 'believe') in them, (Jn.2:23). Surely many of the current 80% fall away rate from those making 'decisions' for Christ are produced by 'easy believism' programmes, shallow doctrine, various entertainments and other unbiblical additions to the Gospel. It is a fact that many churches are filling with these very people *who drain and distract leaderships from their shepherding of the sheep.*

Solution: Leaders need to *discern* the difference and *not allow the goats to interfere with the care of the sheep.*

Problem: Selfish Independence: Western Christianity is increasingly adopting the selfish consumerist independence of this age. The mentality is 'I have rights' or 'the church must meet my needs'. But the choicest people I have found in church life are those who come to see what they can give rather than take! They are meek, ready to help, respectful of authority, slow to speak, quick to listen and usually busy giving out whatever gift they have for the edification of others. Every single Christian baptised into the body of Christ has at least one gift *which is supposed to be used for the building up of the church!*

Many complain that church leaders are not shepherding in the way they think this should be done. They have not been 'visited' lately; or they reject counselling when it is given (because it did not produce the 'result' intended); or they did not get what they wanted in the church. Many attack Pastor/elders for not 'pastoring' without realising that every time they preach, teach, counsel, they are 'pastoring'!

Part of the problem is that today's Christian too often wants instant results in a 'fast food' church. They exhibit the impatience and fleshly ways of the world. They have adopted a spiritual lifestyle of a tourist and only want the best spots to visit. They feast on milk and reject the strong meat of high doctrine.

The strength of any church is usually seen in the response to prayer meetings. Yet it is indicative of the times that in most churches today people stay away from prayer meetings

in droves. Everybody is 'busy'. The leaders thus meet stony hearts and resistance.

Some of the reasons why people get upset and leave churches today shows the spirit of the age. They leave because they have not been 'visited'; they have a perception of being rejected in some way; they have had a disagreement with someone; they have rejected correction by an elder and taken offence; or just because they don't feel they 'fit in'.

Some of these excuses may be valid and may be indicative of a problem with the leadership or the church as a whole. But the problem I see is not that there may be a valid reason, but *the way or how it is commonly addressed*. Too many people leave without saying anything to the leadership or the person concerned, or they suddenly inform the leadership they are leaving without giving them any opportunity to rectify the problem. This behaviour is selfish and sinful and shows a lack of regard for the leadership and the local body of Christ as a whole. The minister is not a mind reader and often will not be aware of problems unless informed.

Far too many people leave churches over personality clashes and offences rather than doctrine. Yet the Bible gives clear direction (Matthew 18 and other verses) in how to deal with such offences and disagreements.

The Bible exhorts all to ***'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you'***, (Heb.13:17). Many people have never thought what it is like to be a faithful elder/pastor and to have to face the Lord to give account for His sheep, especially when the sheep suddenly exit or are not lovingly communicating. How much more difficult it is for ministers to 'watch over' peoples souls and to 'give an account' when there is no reciprocal accountability or transparency?

To obey elders requires submission. Submission requires humility. Yet these characteristics *of salvation* are increasingly foreign to numbers of professing Christians who live the church life with a selfish independence that does nothing for the edification of the church body.

Of course there are elders who are unGodly and may not be qualified. They can be confronted. This must be done according to scripture where two or three approach the elder in a humble manner, (1Tim.5:19). Usually the problem will be evident by many including those within the leadership.

Ministers too can develop a 'CEO' mentality, lording it over the people (1Pet.5:3), driving the people instead of leading. Some leaderships may be arrogant and controlling. That will invite justifiable criticism. But the criticsers must also, despite these manners, look at what is actually being said - is it truth?

Solutions: Today it is necessary for church leaders to mentally have a large 'delete box' in which they bin the spam of selfish criticisms and fleshly expectations of their flock. Increasingly, one does need to have a hide like a Rhinoceros - but with a continuing sense of humour.

Ministers need to *teach* the flock about what 'church' is as the 'body' of Christ, its purpose and unity, the God ordained authorities within, and how to address 'offences'. Harmony is a blend of love, fellowship, respect and forgiveness for the leadership and for one another - as Christ has forgiven us, (Eph.4:32). *The local church is the training ground for heaven!*

'Well intentioned dragons'/Trouble makers: One of the most debilitating problems in church life for leaders is the discouragement that comes through constant resistance and criticism. A helpful book *'Well Intentioned Dragons'* by Marshal Shelley, details the characteristics of *'well intentioned'* but nevertheless fire breathing *'dragons'*. Most of these *'dragons'* tend to want to control people or circumstances. *A common characteristic is a lack of humility and submission to Biblical local church authority*. Yet anyone of us has the potential to become a *'dragon'*!

Many *'dragons'* remain dormant for long periods, only to suddenly breathe fire, exposing their true natures. *The feature of a 'dragon' is not just what they say but how it is said*. The spirit in which the criticisms are given will often tell the minister the source of the *'fire'*. It is sad that many people who have difficult or troublesome characters are never challenged and thus they remain in their state. Sometimes when leaders are forced to handle *'dragons'*, outreach suffers, change is stifled, and the Pastor is consumed with putting out *'bushfires'*.

However, ministers are committed to care for *all* members of the body, even those who breathe trouble.

Gossipers often fit into the above category and the sin thereof is one of the most destructive, stifling growth and devastating the reputation of members and church leaderships alike. So too, ill informed criticism can divide the church into unGodly factions.

One thing I have noticed is that people who constantly criticise and cause division are often people who are not involved in any ministry within the church. They are *'fringe dwellers'* or uncommitted to any department. They are conspicuous by their silence and absence when there is an appeal for service. One often wonders how they can have so much to say and how they know so much about what is really going on within the church. Those who constantly complain and stress the leadership are often those who are sitting on their gifts and have their eyes not on how they can build up the believers but in what they are not receiving.

Solutions: The root of the problem is a lack of humility and submission to authority and to fellow believers. There are times when these problems need to be faced head on. The priority for me is always: *how will this affect the fellowship as a whole*. If a stand is needed, then face the people concerned and the whole church if necessary. (It is a fact that *'church discipline'* is at an all time low).

The difference between a *'dragon'* and a Godly Christian is this - *the 'dragon' does not operate within scriptural guidelines nor in the spirit of grace*. Matthew 18 tells us how to carefully approach a person in sin or who has offended. 1Timothy 5:19 also tells us exactly how to approach an elder/pastor. If these scriptures are enacted with grace, the person is not necessarily a *'dragon'*.

Any good ministry will invite criticism and opposition. But before discouragement sets in *there must be affirmation as to one's calling and to the purpose of ministry*. The calling sets one apart for *God's mission*. The purpose is *God's work* and vision. Ezekiel was told to speak God's word *whether the people would hear or not*, (Ezek.2:7,11).

'Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not...but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God', (2Cor.4:1,2).

Terry Arnold

Your Comments and Questions

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

The Irwins - 'Christian Buddhists'?

Dear Terry and Mike, last year you wrote some material [2006/11/12] at the time of Steve Irwin's (The Crocodile Man) death to the effect that, although everyone was claiming he had become a Christian, you guys proved this was not the case. I was wondering if you could comment on the recent Readers Digest article in which Terri Irwin wrote about what it is to be a Christian...

Editors comment: Many Christians were duped by false e-mails that circulated about Steve's 'conversion'; and because his wife occasionally goes to church, many assumed they were both Bible believing Christians. The recent *Readers Digest* (August/2007) exclusive interview with Terri and Bindi further validates what we researched and had written about Steve and Terri Irwin. In the many interviews we have seen, Steve and Terri have never showed any evidence of being Bible believing Christians. It is strange that some Christians were almost desperate to have them as their own. At the time of Steve's death, the clamour of Christians claiming Steve and Terri as Christians drowned out those few voices who were urging caution and discernment. The secular media eventually had a field day, exposing the false e-mails and the gullibility of Christians.

Before quoting parts of the *Readers Digest* interview, let it be known - we do not dislike the Irwins in any way - quite the opposite - there are many things people could admire about the Irwin family. Many would applaud them for having the biggest wildlife hospital in Australia and buying large tracts of land for the purpose of saving wildlife. I personally admired Steve's enthusiasm, enjoyed his entertainment and found some of his exploits rivetting. He also deeply loved his wife and family. And Terri no doubt is an intelligent and loving mother who has borne the brunt of a public tragedy.

The interview from the *Readers Digest* featured a

recent photo of the Irwins with the Dalai Lama. (And he was present at young Bindi Irwin's birthday party recently). Here are some quotes by Terri Irwin from the interview: '*Steve always admired Buddhism as a Christian because you can be a Christian Buddhist...Bindi was blessed by the Tibetan monks and Robert was blessed by the Tibetan nuns. It was our christening. They did the chanting and the blessing and the prayer flags in the Crocoseum...*'; '*There are three different churches that I go to from time to time. Steve was a very spiritual person and often the bush was like church...*'; '*I believe he [Steve] is watching over us...*'

The Irwins espoused the theory of evolution, a theory that totally contradicts the first and foundational book of the Bible. But the quotes above also arguably show belief in universalism - ie. 'many roads lead to heaven'.

However, Buddhism is not a Christian religion and is diametrically opposed to Christ at several points. *Time Magazine* (Dec./97) described Buddhism beliefs as '*leading to peace and eventually to an exalted state of full enlightenment called Nirvana; and that the means to do that lies in the eightfold path of proper views, resolve, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration*'. But the Bible flatly rejects any such works, system or other religions that promise salvation: '*For by grace are ye 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)...* Jesus said: '*I am the way, the truth and the life: No man comes unto the father but by me*', (Jn.14:6).

We need to lovingly pray for such people who may have the broad road of religion but do not understand the 'narrow way' - the *only* way which leads to eternal life.

Terry Arnold

Dear Terry & Mike, Please comment on Eph.3:16-19, the importance of this Scripture and perhaps the importance of knowing God intimately rather than knowing about Him. Jesus said to those who claimed to do great things in His name, 'Get away from me, I never knew you'...

(K.W., Mareeba, Qld.)

Editors comment: This is Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers. Paul desires his readers to be '*strengthened*' by the indwelling Spirit (vs.16 - '*his spirit in the inner man*') and thus to be '*rooted and grounded in love*' (vs.17). In this soil it grows; and we might then '*comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height*' of the love of God (vs.18).

One commentator says: '*In reference to human beings, the love of God, in its BREADTH, is a girdle that encompasses the globe; its LENGTH reaches from the eternal purpose of the mission of Christ, to the eternity of blessedness which is to be spent in his ineffable glories; its DEPTH reaches to the lowest fallen of the sons of Adam, and to the deepest depravity of the human heart; and its HEIGHT to the infinite dignities of the throne of Christ*'.

A knowledge of God's love through His word enables us to be 'filled' - '*that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God*' (vs.19). The '*fullness of God*' includes all those graces, gifts and blessings which he has promised to bestow on His beloved in His body - the church.

No unbeliever can 'know' God in the way these verses demand. Believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and therefore we have the scriptures opened to us enabling us to fully understand them. In this way we are able to discern and learn of His ways and to gain an intimate knowledge of Him. To '*know the love of Christ*' is not that we love Him - but that we come to a full appreciation of the depth and height of the love that He has for us.

The scripture '*and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*' (Matt.7:23) is not about us knowing Him intimately but about Jesus '*not knowing*' many - because they were unrepentant and lawless - they were not obedient to His Word. No one can claim to know Him intimately yet refuse to obey His doctrine, the '*faith once delivered to the saints*' - only found in the Word of God.

Your Comments and Questions

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

Editors Thanks

The editors wish to thank all those who have kindly donated to this ministry. Each month this ministry sends out free material to those in need or to those we are ministering to or helping with answers at any time. Your donations go towards this vital part of the ministry.

We would also urge readers to hand the newsletters or individual articles to others. Many continue to be informed and rescued from false teaching in this way. We are happy to send extra copies of newsletters or articles when this need arises.

Again, we thank all those who have given, and we pray for God's blessing to all our readers.

Dear Terry, a day will come, and it is near, when the minority of true and faithful believers will be persecuted by the majority of those who think they are Born Again believers but they are followers of the ecumenical movement.

May the Lord grant us the spirit of discernment and help us to be faithful to the doctrines and teachings of His word, whatever it may cost.

(Pastor A.H., Sydney)

Dear 'Diakrisis', thank you for your newsletters, they are not wasted as I pass them on for others to read. Please continue your good work. I am blessed to receive this newsletter as many others are...

(D.H., Qld)

Thankyou for your most informative newsletter. Please now send by e-mail only. May the Lord richly bless your wonderful ministry...

(B.R., Coffs Harbour, NSW)

Dear Terry and Mike, May you both be greatly encouraged in the Lord to continue to stand for 'the faith once delivered'...

(E.D., Sydney)

Praise/Prayer Points

- Praise the Lord for a most encouraging and fruitful time at Fiji Bible College, teaching and studying.
- Please pray for the outreach from this ministry as we send out information weekly [and daily by e-mail 'Alerts'] to those in need. Pray for the readers and hearers to be led to truth.
- Pray for health and strength for the editors.

Dear Terry, I just want to say I thought that was an excellent article in the 'Diakrisis' by Mike Claydon on global warming, and the cause of same. The point he made that there was also 'Global Warming' on Mars should get some people thinking. Keep up the good work...

(J.H., Bris.)

Dear Terry, We really appreciate your newsletter. My friend also appreciates your monthly sermon CD's which you send out. Please keep the newsletter going and showing the truth. I believe it is of God.

(E.Y., Vict.)

Thanks again for all the hard work, research, dedication, and the many hours you have committed in putting these newsletters together and getting them out to the community.

(K.L., Sydney)

Dear Christian friends...Keep up the good work, you are sure to get those who don't want the truth. Satan only tries to pull those down who are working for our Lord. Do nothing and he will leave one alone.

I am not able to do much these days as I am 92 years old and often don't see anyone. I do try to wake up those who agree to the modern version of the Bible. I ask them first if they believe 2Tim.3:16 that, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God'. Those who have said 'yes, they believe', I ask them what answer have they to give God for agreeing to verses being thrown into the rubbish bin - they have done this in the modern versions. They all have ignored my question so far.

Keep up the good work. With Christian love and prayers...

(E.H., Wondai, Qld)

Terry's Itinerary

Sept.21-25 - Church Camp, Victoria

(November) Victorian/Tasmania Itinerary

(Tentative)

A tentative itinerary is being considered for Victoria and Tasmania in November. Those interested in being included in any itinerary should contact this ministry. The itinerary would be printed in the next newsletter.

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