



Diakrisis (Australia)

'But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern [diakrisis] both good and evil', (Heb.5:14)

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The editor may not necessarily agree with all the views expressed by subscribers in this newsletter.

We welcome comments and items contributed by readers. Unless otherwise requested, these may be included in following newsletters at the discretion of the editor.

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Recent Sermon Available

Recently Terry Arnold preached a sermon 'Bring the Gospel back!' which was an exposure of the Christmas messages by Australian denominational leaders. The sermon also includes vital teaching on what is the Gospel and how it should be presented. We feel this passionate sermon (with notes) is important enough to specially advertise and distribute. Cost: Free or donation for postage.

Editor's Comment

Increasingly over the years of this ministry and especially in the last few months, I have been gripped by the need for the church to preach and *teach the Gospel*. Many churches are increasingly involved in programmes and sermons that attempt to meet the felt needs of their people. The Gospel has often taken a back seat. Yet the Gospel is the very foundation for why we do what we do in 'church'!

Many church leaders cry 'legalism' if we get too much into 'doctrine'. Yet many of the same churches simply do not preach the Gospel. I have met church leaders and pastors who I am convinced do not themselves know what the Gospel is. Certainly the denominational leaders of our nation *do not preach the Gospel* in their Christmas and Easter messages. At many funerals today, led by Christian ministers, there is no Gospel preached, but rather a gospel of 'he/she is in heaven with angels and at peace...God loves us all'. At these funerals if I were a non Christian I would get the distinct feeling that everything is OK, that I will be in peace when I die and that I can just go on living now as I am. Why would I need to 'repent'?

If there is one area we cannot afford to be anything but 'doctrinal', it is in the Gospel. We need to study the doctrine of the Gospel and thus present it clearly. The Gospel is non negotiable.

We must *challenge* people with the Gospel. It does not matter if our church is full of saved people, we still need to preach the Gospel to them! Those who are *possessors* of the Holy Spirit will be exhorted and will remind themselves where they have come from because of grace. Those who are *professors* or *religious* only, lacking the Holy Spirit, will be challenged to examine themselves (2Cor.13:5; 2Pet.1:10). Any non professors will also hear the Gospel and be held accountable to believe. The Gospel is designed to put people on one side of the fence of salvation or the other. It's not an option of two good things but an option of '*repent or perish*' (Lk.13:3,5; Jn.3:15,16).

The Gospel is that Jesus died in a bloody sacrifice to satisfy God for our sin nature. He paid the payment that was due, to satisfy the wrath and judgement of a perfect, holy and righteous God in Heaven. Jesus was killed, buried and rose again proving that He has conquered sin, death and Hell. The God of the universe was pleased with His Son's sacrifice and will accept those who believe in Jesus, because the sinless Jesus became the great substitute and perfect offering for sin. The challenge of the Gospel is to believe this and thus be Born Again. If we call people to anything else but this Gospel we call them to a lie. Religion is full of lies - the lies of 'God is love and accepts all into Heaven'; the lie that there is no Hell; the lie that our good might outweigh the bad; the lie that sacraments and works will pay the penalty of sin and satisfy God; the lie that the Gospel is something we can *do* apart from 'believe' and 'repent'.

My plea is to *bring the true unadulterated Gospel back!*

Terry Arnold

A Comment on ‘Church’

[The following is excerpted from a missionary’s blog sent to the editor]:

As we near the end of the work in many countries of the world and having worked with many dozens of churches, it has caused me to reflect on what I have seen. I have considered the opportunity to work with the church of Jesus Christ to be a great privilege. The church is the fullness of the body of Christ (Eph.1:22-23). In the book of Revelation, it is depicted as the bride of Christ.

When we work with the church, we must realize that we are working with the beloved of Christ. If we should criticize the church, we must do so only with the highest motivations, so that our criticism brings healing instead of further division. When I make the following criticism, please know I am doing so because I am concerned that we as a church have lost our direction. Instead of trying to pattern our churches based upon what we see in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, we have looked to the success patterns of corporate America to try and build what will be perceived as ‘successful’ churches in our society.

Success in our culture usually has to do with size and wealth. A successful company is one that has a large market share of their product, is a leader in innovation, and turns in a healthy return for their investors. Companies hire CEO’s that have proven that they are ‘company builders’ and are able to turn a mediocre company into a market leader. This is often what we in our churches expect when we look to our pastors. We want a pastor who can take our church, which we see as struggling, and by using the world’s definition of success, transform it into a successful church. We are looking not so much for a pastor, but for a proven CEO. We have forgotten that the term pastor is really a shepherding term. The pastor is a shepherd. Of all of the images that Jesus used to depict His ministry, the most endearing is that of a shepherd. This is the shepherd who knows His sheep (Jn.10:4); this is the shepherd who would risk his life to find the one sheep who is lost and in danger (Lk.15:4-7). This is what Jesus was trying to impress upon Peter when He asked him three times if Peter loved Him; and that Peter was to tend and shepherd the sheep...

Many pastors in our churches today are expected to be great orators, great expositors of the Bible, great entertainers. We must allow our pastors to tend the sheep, care for those of His flock. The truth of this has largely been lost.

Through these years of working with many churches in many countries, this has become one of my concerns. We must regain the role of the pastor in our churches. Most pastors have felt called into the ministry because they have a genuine concern for people, but the pressures of expectations have caused many to focus on running a company called the local church, instead of being a shepherd of His flock. The word that Peter used to describe their task was to ‘*Feed* [shepherd] *the flock of God*’ (1Pet.5:2). His concern was not that the church should meet the world’s standards of success, but that the people of the church should be nurtured.

Donald Rhody

Christmas Message By Uniting Church in Australia

'...God came alongside us in a supreme act of identification and solidarity...That's my hope for Australia and Australians this Christmas. That inspired by God's great action of solidarity we can be alongside each other - the have with the have nots, the lucky with the not so lucky, the 'boat person' and the citizen, the weak and alone brought into the family. At Christmas the Word became flesh and dwelt among us in loving solidarity.'

(Reverend Alistair Macrae, President Uniting Church in Australia)

Editors comment: I rate this as postmodern 'gobbledegook'! (meaning 'incomprehensible or pompous jargon of specialists'). Where is the Gospel in this? To the religious leaders of our nation I say: Bring the Gospel back!

Adultery, Divorce, Alcoholism, Deception - No Barrier?



'Adulterer, divorcee, alcoholic, false prophet Todd Bentley was to perform here in the Australian cities of Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra during February/March this year...

From early on, his Lakeland [Florida] Outpouring was fraught with controversy. When praying for healing, the heavily tattooed evangelist was known to hit the sick in the stomach with his knee in a move more common among wrestlers than preachers. Bentley even recounted kicking a woman in the face in an act of 'obedience to the Lord'.

During the course of the 'revival' Bentley conducted an extra-marital affair with a staff member...now married to her he says he and his new wife admit that their relationship was 'premature', but say it did not begin until Bentley was convinced his first marriage could not be saved...His Fresh Fire Ministries board at the time, announced that Bentley had confessed to an inappropriate relationship with a female staff member - and a senior board member said Bentley's alcohol consumption had 'crossed the line'. He claims to have been 'restored' through the oversight of fellow heretics Rick Joyner, Bill Johnson, John Arnott [of 'Toronto Blessing' fame] and Ché Ahn...

How could the pastors of these Australian churches have invited him into their pulpits and not see what dangers they are exposing their people to? What could Rhys Fitzsimmons of 'Breakfree Glory Ministries' in Croydon, Graham Harris of 'I Am House of Worship' in Melbourne, Mark Whitby of 'Jubilee Church' in Frankston, John Hemans of 'Open Heaven Church' in Sydney, Paul DeWildt of 'Gracefire Ministries and Release' in Sydney and Glenn Maloney of 'The New Connection Church' in Canberra have been thinking?

Editor's Update: The Australian government denied Todd Bentley access to Australia. But amazingly now on the Fresh Fire website they state: 'Our last minute delay in our planned tour to Australia was a...huge financial set back...Our immediate expenses just in airfare and travel was over \$10,000... The need is still \$20,000...consider sowing a seed into our ministry today!'. According to their website Bentley is attempting another entry into Australia in June!

(Excerpted from *Apostasy Alert* (Australia) Jan. and Feb. 2012)

Ecumenical Deception!

(CNA, London, Jan. 25; *Apostasy Alert* 27th Jan.) *‘Roman Catholic and Coptic*



Orthodox leaders in the U.K. are encouraging unity between the two churches as society grows increasingly hostile to religion. ‘We’re facing serious threats of increased secularism and marginalisation of religion in general and Christianity in particular’, said Coptic Orthodox Bishop Angaelos. ‘As members of first-century churches we really need to both live and introduce people to the wealth, meaning and value of what it means to witness and live our Christianity today’, he stressed...Bishop Angaelos observed that these ‘differences will be resolved because Christ makes one promise about one flock and one shepherd and we will be unified one day’.

He noted upcoming global events in the U.K...as times when the churches should speak with ‘a very clear Christian voice’. If ‘our faithful don’t see us working together, it’s pointless to preach about love, forgiveness and acceptance from the pulpits’, Bishop Angaelos said.

Editor’s Comment: These churches are NOT ‘1st century churches’! Any student of early church history will see that the modern hierarchial structures of these churches never existed in the early church, much less many of their doctrines! These churches are not speaking with ‘a clear Christian voice’ today. They preach ‘another gospel’ and doctrines nowhere found in early centuries. Their ecumenical argument: *‘If our faithful don’t see us working together, it’s pointless to preach about love, forgiveness and acceptance from the pulpits’* - this is a sentimental strawman. God will not ‘forgive and accept’ a gospel which is ‘another gospel’.

This is the classic excuse given for ecumenism today - that to be a ‘witness’ we must ‘join together as one’. I am all for unity. I reject sectarianism and any unbiblical separation. But if being a ‘witness’ means I join with those who present another gospel, or those who do not believe the Bible is inspired, inerrant and all sufficient for doctrine, then I would betray the foundation of Christianity. If ‘unity’ is at the expense of truth in the Gospel and the Word of God, then it is not unity in ‘truth’! The Bible clearly teaches unity through ‘**truth**’ which is found *only* in the Word of God. ***‘Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth’*** (Jn.17:17).

You will hardly ever hear these churches present the following scriptures: Rom.16:7; 2Thess.3:6; 2Cor.6:14-17 - because these verses mention ‘**avoiding**’, ‘**withdrawing**’, being ‘**separate**’, having no ‘**fellowship**’ or ‘**communion**’ and not being ‘**unequally yoked**’ with those of different faiths. These scriptures do not give them the ‘unity’ of ‘**love, acceptance and forgiveness**’ they desire.

God does not present a ‘union’ of *different* faiths or doctrines! Any unity based on minimising doctrine is a bastardised unity, a counterfeit. Paul exhorted the Philippians to ‘***...stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel***’ (Phil.1:27).

The Samoan Sabbath Dilemma

A subscriber recently alerted this ministry to an interesting dilemma in Samoa: ‘*The Samoan’s decided to move the International Date Line so that they share the same day with New Zealand. To make the alignment, they skipped Friday 30th December and went straight to Saturday...[but] for the Seventh Day Adventist [SDA] Church, the change is a real problem doctrinally. The SDA’s don’t follow the Christian Sabbath, they follow the Jewish Sabbath which begins at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday. Some want to count off seven days from the previous Saturday, which means they would be having their morning service on the same day as Christians who honour the Lord by having their Sabbath on the day He rose from the dead - Sunday. Others want to stay with the Jewish Sabbath which begins at sunset Friday, even though there is the legalistic cost of failing to worship on the seventh day from the previous Saturday. Which is the ‘correct day’ is problematic near the International Dateline! With the sun over the Pacific Ocean, some SDA’s worship on a Saturday, while others wait until the next day for Saturday because their community is east of the Dateline.*’ (1)

The dilemma here would be easily solved if the scriptures were rightly divided, particularly Paul’s words ‘*One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*’ (Rom.14:5). The Bible teaches to *judge no man concerning the Sabbath days* and that they were only a ‘*shadow*’ of the real ‘*rest*’ in Christ (Col.2:14-17; Heb.4:9).

The SDA church teaches that the Sabbath was ‘changed’ from Saturday to Sunday by Constantine nearly 300 years after the church began. It is true that Constantine decreed Sunday to be the day of rest for the Roman Empire. However, the SDA church hides the fact that the *early church kept Sunday from the beginning!* Both secular and Christian history is replete with quotes for *every one of the first three centuries* that prove this fact. (2) But scripture also proves that Sunday was the day that was kept for preaching, the ‘breaking of bread’ and collection of offerings (Acts 20:7; 1Cor.16:1,2; Jn.20:19,26).

The dilemma would also be solved if it were realised *who* the ‘Sabbath’ was originally given to. God Himself says it was given ‘*unto the children of Israel*’ as a ‘*sign between me and the children of Israel*’ (Ex.31:13-18; Ezek.20:12). The Mosaic Law also had a definite *beginning* and an *end* (Gal.3:17-19). All the 10 commandments are repeated in the New Testament *except the fourth* concerning the Sabbath. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any command to keep the Jewish Sabbath. If one insists on a Jewish Sabbath then they would need to keep it *exactly* from sunset to sunset (Lev.23:32); carry no burdens (Jer.17:21); and not cook or light stoves or fires (Ex.16:23;35:3). And the penalty is *death by stoning!*

The apostle Paul writes: ‘*...how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you...*’ (Gal.4:9-11).

The Samoan dilemma highlights the tragedy of legalism and wrongly dividing the word of truth. **Terry Arnold**

(1) David Holden (www.defenceofthefait.org)

(2) <http://taminstries.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Saturday-or-Sunday-v2.0.pdf>

Things I Have Learned About ‘Church’

Over a period of more than 20 years I have been involved in church leadership. That time included roles as deacon, elder, in pastoring work, in home churches, home group studies and itinerant preacher/teacher. The experiences were not without hard lessons learned. There have been times of church growth, church division and highs and lows. The following are practical things I have learned about life in the local church as well as from travelling amongst a variety of fellowships in Australia and overseas. (Parts of this article are to ministers themselves. The terms ‘minister’ or ‘leaders’ are sometimes used to summarise the ‘pastor/elders’).

Church life is like our families - it is never always smooth sailing!

Most Christians would never dream of abandoning their families in times of difficulty or disagreements. Yet today commitment to *brothers* and *sisters* in the *family* of a local church is at an all time low. I am not here saying that one should not leave a church that is seriously unbiblical or where the leadership is immoral or ungodly. But *most people who leave a church today do not leave because of doctrinal reasons*. Today there is a migration of Christian ‘tourists’ moving from church to church. If their felt needs are not satisfied or their is a disagreement with someone, they *easily* leave.

But life in the church was never meant to be smooth sailing. (Just look at the Corinthian church!). This is so because Sanctification was never meant to be easy. Because of the flesh and the presence of sin, there will be suffering, trials and tribulations in this world and some of that may be evident within the local church itself. Like any *family*, there will be times of peace and times of difficulties, even division. However, we are to do our utmost to ‘*live peaceably with all men*’ (Rom.12:18), to ‘*follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another*’ (Rom.14:19) and ‘*with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*’ (Eph.4:2,3).

Ministers must teach their people what ‘church’ really is!

Church is the saints, the elect who have been called out of sin and the world. They gather together on a regular basis *to give glory to God* in their *worship* and *fellowship*. Today 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!*

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Part of the problem is that today's Christian too often wants instant results in a 'fast food' church. 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. Ministers need to *teach* the flock about what 'church' is as the 'body' of Christ. *The local church is the training ground for Heaven! The church is the called out saints gathered together to be sanctified and equipped for glory.*

Church is not primarily for the unsaved, or to evangelise the unsaved

The very word 'church' ('*ekklesia*') refers to the 'called out ones' - the saints. So, who should 'church' primarily cater for? The philosophy of catering primarily for the lost in church services is contrary to Scripture. Church services are for the '*assembling of ourselves together*' (Heb.10:25). It is primarily the gathering of the saints in worship, fellowship and teaching. To primarily cater for the unsaved is to ignore much scripture as well as the early history of the church. The earliest church meetings clearly show that the activities carried out presupposed that the participants were *believers*: '*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*' (Acts 2:42). The 'target' was not primarily the unsaved, but the believers! However, as the believers worship and glorify God in song, in doctrine, in prayer and in teaching, the unsaved will be drawn as the Holy Spirit wills! The proof of this is seen in the verses following: '*...Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*' (vs.47). This does not ignore the fact that the believers would witness and be testimonies in their unsaved communities; but the early church simply did not cater primarily for the unsaved at their meetings.

The church must be biblical

Everything that is done in church should be from the foundation of the Word of God and the Gospel. Whatever methods, programmes or ministry is done, it should reflect the Gospel and the word of God rather than the world. It should not be what the saints *want* first, but what they *need*. By all means we need to be relevant; *but if we try to compete with the world's entertainment or other churches, we will eventually lose.* We cannot compete with Hollywood or the world's professionals! People who are 'baited' with amusements will eventually move on to other fashions that are being done 'better' somewhere else. If we persist in entertainment, we will create a host of 'tares', and some 'high maintenance' ones at that! Most people are already being jammed full of entertainment and stimulation from the media and the world in which we must live. People in church need the *contrast* of the sureness of the Word of God.

The leadership must be qualified

The qualifications for pastors, elders and deacons are clearly set out in Titus ch.1 and 1Timothy 3. *They are not about talents or abilities but primarily about*

character. These scriptures demand a high standard of morals, integrity and gifting. Leaders must have a high sense of *servanthood* and *responsibility* for God's sheep.

Far too many in leadership today do not have the '*desire*' (1Tim.3:1) and the steadfastness necessary to endure tough times within church life. Many elders give in to the whims of those who want their needs met above what is good for the church body as a whole. Leaders must be in it for the long haul and ride the waves of adversity while remembering the good times and the privilege of serving in God's sheep pen. One author sums up: '*I confess that pastoring a church sometimes feels like difficult work. There have been times when my tears have not been tears of joy, but of frustration, or sadness, or even worse. The people who are least happy and who leave have often been those who have required the most time, and who have talked the most to others as they have gone. And sometimes their talk has been neither edifying nor encouraging. They have little thought of how their actions affect others - the pastor, the pastor's family, those who have loved them and worked with them, young Christians who are confused, others to whom they talk wrongly. There are things I work for that don't work out, and things I care about that nobody else does. Some hopes go unfulfilled and occasionally even tragedies intrude. It is in the nature of sheep to stray and wolves to eat. I guess if I can't deal with that, I should just get out of under-shepherding. But most of my work is, to be honest, exhilarating!*' (1)

Any good ministry will invite criticism and opposition. But before discouragement sets in *there must be a sureness as to one's calling and to the purpose of the ministry.* This calling sets one apart for *God's mission.* '***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).

Ministers must know what their 'job description' is

Ministers are to tend the sheep for God as under-shepherds. It is God who is the '***chief shepherd***' (1Pet.5:4). Ministers, as 'under-shepherds', have been given giftings and qualifications that in themselves contain tools which God uses in His process of separating His people. Ministers are to preach, teach, correct, visit and generally *care* and *watch* over God's flock. They are not CEO's, managers, peacekeepers or administrators.

It used to be that 'pastoring' was mostly about 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 much more is now expected of the 'pastor', and when the church and minister do not meet the attendees expectations, 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. The minister is no longer a preacher/teacher and pastoral

(1) '*Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*' by Mark Dever, P.11

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carer, but often an administrator, marriage counsellor and a problem solver. Ministers must be set aside for study, 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.

Many complain that church leaders are not shepherding in the way they think this should be done. They have not been 'visited' lately; 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. No doubt the minister must have a system of pastoral care or have others ready to respond when a church member is in need of help. But many attack pastor/elders for not 'pastoring' without realising that every time they at least preach, teach or counsel, they are also 'pastoring'!

The people need to 'connect' to the mission of the church

The church leadership must have a philosophy of ministry as well as comprehensive statement of faith. *People need to know where the church stands and where it is going.* A 'vision' or 'mission statement' with clearly defined purposes and strategies will give the people *a sense of purpose*. The leadership must remind themselves of it and act on it as well as remind the people of it. *Sheep need to follow. Leaders need to lead.*

The leaders need to be creating an environment where people can use their gifts and talents. When people are busy serving within the church they will be less likely to engage in gossip, murmuring or other divisive activities. Ministers also need to *encourage* and *praise* their people whenever the opportunity arises.

Encourage and inform of evangelism and missions

Every church has people who are personally gifted as 'evangelists' (the percentage is arguably about 5%). But all should be involved in some form of evangelism. The local church can well provide the means and the opportunity for this. When people come forward with ideas for evangelism, I am always more than ready to provide them with any resources and encouragement possible. Then we inform the church as a whole and encourage such activities.

One of the reasons why evangelism is important is not just because it is a command in scripture - to go and tell the Gospel, but because *it causes the people to look outwards instead of inwards*. For years I have been involved in a local church that has had many gifted teachers and a wealth of doctrinal teaching. As wonderful as that is in growing people deep in the Word, it needs to be balanced with an *outward* focus and practical testimony to a lost world. And the church is also *encouraged* when the people are informed of evangelism and mission activity by the saints.

Prayer is the powerhouse for action

The strength of any church is usually seen in the response to prayer meetings.

Few churches today have many of their people come to prayer meetings. Yet prayer is to God's will as rails are to a train. God is sovereign but He uses prayer to prepare the way for His will. The Greek words used in references to prayer are wide ranging from the meaning of to *ask*, through to *thanking* God. Some aspects of prayer are *Adoration* (Ps.100:1-5) - thanking God and praising Him for His attributes; *Confession* of sin and God's forgiveness (1Jn.1:9; Mk.11:25; James 5:16); *Thanksgiving* - being grateful for deliverance from sin and for provision of food, clothing and shelter (Lk.17:11-19); and *Supplication* - specific requests to God (Phil.4:6-7).

Expositional preaching is the mainstay of preaching that equips

Expositional preaching requires working through Scripture verse by verse and allowing the text to speak for itself. This is different to 'topical' preaching which has one selecting a topic and then applying relevant texts systematically to that subject. Over the course of time in a local church I am convinced expositional preaching will far outweigh topical preaching in its benefits for those wanting to know what the Holy Spirit is actually saying to them personally.

The preaching needs to be challenging and with ability, passion and skill

Passionate preaching with conviction will attract an audience. However, many pastors today have little or no training in exposition or exegesis of scripture. Thus most preaching today is topical and shallow. But the messages need to be deep enough to grow the people in the Word. Preaching what the people want to hear will not grow them deep but it may increase the numbers. But over some years those numbers will be a mixture of milk fed shallow Christians mixed with tares who are incapable of being fruitful for the Lord.

If the pastor stays at a shallow level then many people will remain at that level. This does not mean that preachers should ignore application in messages. Where possible the doctrine and content should be applied to everyday living. But the people need also to be challenged to go deeper, to meditate and to *study for themselves* (2Tim.2:15; Ps.119:9-12).

Ministers must be discerning with church conflicts

Leaders must confront open sin or heresy within the church. Unity must be strived for and usually this involves the loss of people. Elders must be prepared to lose even 'good' people in these times. The elders must be seen as strong men of courage and action who will steer the church through rough waters with a motive of love for the Brethren as a whole. Today there are simply too many unqualified wimpish elders who are more political than men of boldness who will fight for the purity of the body. This is not to say that such men should be '*lords over God's heritage*' (1Pet.5:3) as dictators. But the Holy Spirit's work may well be thwarted if sin and false doctrine are left to reign or spread. Although it hurts

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if people leave, sometimes it is for the health and unity of the church as a whole.

Ministers must also know which ‘fires’ of conflict to leave and which need to be put out quickly. Open gossip and conflict will often drive some of the more timid sheep away (James 3:5-6). Ill informed criticism can divide the church into ungodly factions. I have seen firsthand how gossip can nearly destroy the life within a church. A chronic gossip simply does not exhibit the traits of a Born Again person. But worse, it can partly destroy the character of others within the fellowship. Strong elders will deal with this evil quickly for the sake of the sheep. 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. Those who constantly complain 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. The root of the problem is a lack of humility and submission to authority and to fellow believers. The priority for the leaders in church conflicts must be: ‘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.

The minister must also have a unity in the leadership of elders. A divided eldership is a drain on the health of ministers and then the church as a whole. It is beneficial to have leadership training weekends and develop unity and that bond of ministry and purpose. A motivated and united leadership will better care for the sheep.

Ministers must teach their people how to handle conflict

Multitudes of people today *quickly* leave churches because they have been offended by someone or the leadership, and *they do so without working through the issue biblically*. 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. *No church member should leave a church without having first applied these biblical commands.* (2)

There are many lessons to be learned in church life that are not listed above and more will probably be learned in the years ahead. But the foundation must be *He who was crucified*. It’s His church and His Gospel. For that reason ***‘let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching’*** (Heb.10:24,25).

Terry Arnold

(2) For teaching in resolving conflicts see our CD sermons ‘*Peacemaking Within God’s Family*’ and also ‘*Keys to a Fruitful & Happy Church Life*’. See also our booklet ‘*Keys To Fruitful Church Membership: Six vital keys to being happy and fruitful in church life*’.

Your Comments and Questions

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

'The Jesus I Never Knew' by Philip Yancey (Book Review)

(The following are excerpts sent to us by a subscriber, Pastor Allan Rosser. The full review can be sent by e-mail. We would also recommend readers read our review of Yancey's 'What's So Amazing About Grace' in *Diakrisis* Jan/Feb/2002).

There is much interesting material in this book, and some helpful. As a Pastor I found some of what he had to say about temptation quite interesting...but unfortunately he only tells what suits his agenda. That is the nature of the book...At the end of one favourable book review about 'The Jesus I Never Knew', the reviewer has one section with negative comments... 'Something must be said finally about Yancey's tendency to insert completely irrelevant asides about social issues into this book. He seems absolutely determined to make himself and his writings acceptable to the social establishment in America'...

As he did in 'What's So Amazing About Grace' again and again Yancey refers to his upbringing in a church he never appreciated and a Bible College that did him no good. He left it wary, confused, questioning, and still is. Jesus grew remote from him there (P.14). Throughout the book he continues to knock fundamentalism and to quote liberal modernistic, mystic, New Age or Roman Catholic writers. He clearly has little place for Israel or the Second Coming teaching. He fits well with 2Tim 3:7 - 'Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth'.

His childhood church: *He grew up in a 'fundamentalist' church and in the Bible college (P.13,14,148). He had doubts, skepticism and an aversion to the church (P.25). He was the victim of emotional pressures, manipulative techniques for soul winning, doctrine dished out in a 'believe and don't ask questions' style and frenzied legalism (P.109,148,165,180-181,187)...*

The return of the Lord: *Yancey says 'For many years I avoided thinking about the Second Coming of Jesus, partly I'm sure as a reaction to the prophecy mania of my childhood church' (P.252)...His apparent Restoration Theology can be seen by noting P.233 concerning the poor, the hungry, the prisoners, the sick...Jesus turns it over to the ones who will ultimately usher in the liberation of the cosmos. We take His place. God's kingdom will grow and spread throughout the world, bringing shade to the sick, the poor, the imprisoned, the unloved (P.243). The kingdom of God will grow on earth as the church creates an alternative society demonstrating what the world...one day will be (P.253,254)...*

The miraculous: *He does not believe the plain sense and writing of Scripture (P.30,70,192).*

On salvation: *Yancey seems to delete 'believing' from the equation: God decided to extend to us love that comes free of charge, no strings attached, 'on the house' (P.95).*

Continued next page >

On Jesus: Yancey saw a film 'The Gospel of Matthew' by an Italian film maker, an outspoken homosexual and Marxist. The film was dedicated to the Pope. For Yancey it 'forced a disturbing re-evaluation of my image of Jesus' (P.15). His homosexual film maker friend, Mel White, lent Yancey a collection of 15 movies on the life of Jesus. They ranged from King of Kings...Godspell...Cotton Patch Gospel...Jesus of Montreal. 'For the next two years I taught a class on the life of Jesus using the movies as a springboard for discussion...I would screen...clips that seemed the most profound or evocative. It helped strip away the patina of predictability that had built up through years of Sunday School and Bible reading...The films helped restore Jesus's humanity (P.21). Yancey favourably quotes Scott Peck saying Jesus was almost continually frustrated, frequently sad, sometimes depressed, frequently anxious and scared, terribly terribly lonely and one who did not have much peace of mind (P.257).

On Homosexuals: He lists names...mothers of homosexuals...all of them have received a reward, and in the life to come...(P.259). Yancey raises a strawman argument: Many of the same Christians who hotly condemn homosexuality, which Jesus does not even mention, disregard His straightforward commands against divorce. (But neither does Jesus mention gambling, pornography or incest) (P.125).

The Bible takes a back seat, is hardly used as an authority and there is an almost total lack of Scripture used in his whole book...'

Editor's final comment: The complete review can be obtained from this ministry. Apart from our review comments of Yancey's book 'What's So Amazing About Grace' (Jan/Feb/2002), the only further comment I have is in agreement with this review and what another reviewer aptly stated of Yancey's book: 'The end result is a Jesus the Bible never knew'!

Your Comments and Questions

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

Dear Terry...about 'marking' people who cause division (Rom.16:17,18). No doubt you are probably 'marked' by many people! I saw this verse abused in the Charismatic movement when anyone who tried to correct false doctrine on tongues, baptism in the spirit, false prophecy, false healings, etc. - were often earmarked as those causing division...what is the meaning of this verse?

(G.C., NSW)

Editor's reply: 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple' (Rom.16:17,18).

The passage is mainly about separation ('avoid them'). The context is also the local church.

Continued next page >

Your Comments and Questions

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The word *'beseech'* (*'parakaleo'*) here is stronger than the word *'ask'* (*'aiteo'*). Its meaning is more one of a pleading. Technically it was a word used of someone in court who would come beside (*'para'*) someone and plead for them and their case (*'kaleo'* - to call). (*'Paracletos'* for the Holy Spirit is in the same family of words). So the writer, with this word *'beseech'*, is *strongly* urging separation. But first he says *'mark them'* or *'consider carefully and take heed'*. In *'separation'* we should not be in a church that we believe is not following *'the apostles doctrine'* (Acts 2:42). The command is to *'avoid them'*. But it is not our job to go into any church and spread doctrine that contradicts the pastor's teaching. The scripture is about separation, not exposing. The whole passage is about noting, marking false teachers/teaching and then acting on that and separating - *'avoiding'*.

'The doctrine which you have learned' is obviously the *'apostles doctrine'* as expressed elsewhere. It's the *'faith once delivered'* (Jude 3).

Woman Deacons?

Dear Terry, the article 'Apostasy in the End' [Jan/Feb/2012] confirms what I have been seeing...for example where they now have women preachers, pastors, leaders...and what of women deacons?...I want to attend church but what do I do when I see these things in so many churches?...

(J.B., Qld)

Editor's Reply: It is difficult to find truly biblical churches now. On the subject you mention, see our *'Women in Ministry'* (a refutation of a Qld. Church of Christ position). As for women deacons, some quote Rom.16:1 *'Phebe...a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea'*. They often select Bible versions that change the word *'servant'* to *'deaconess'*. But there is nothing here about Phebe teaching or holding any *office* of a deaconess. Phoebe was a *'servant'* in the church no more than what we all should be *'servants'*!

The Greek word *'diákonos'* (29 times in NT) has a *wide* usage including the idea of *servicing* or *ministering* for *both* men and women, even in such things as serving meals (Martha: Lk.10:40). A review of this word in the New Testament will show that it cannot be used for the *office* of a deacon excepting in the passage where the qualifications for that office are obviously mentioned (1Tim.3). Everyone is supposed to be doing the work of *'deaconing'* but not everyone has the *office* of a *'deacon'*. Paul *never* refers to women deacons as an office. Interestingly, he does refer to deacon's *'wives'*, yet does not qualify that with the word *'deaconesses'* for them! Women are *never* found to be holding ordained offices of pastor/elder or deacon.

Your Comments and Questions

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



What of Infants?

Dear Terry, one section of an article I read says 'The destiny of infants is plainly included in the apostles argument, which is involved in mystery and doubt if we lose sight of the two headships; but in them it becomes quite plain and clear, for says he, death reigned from Adam to Moses, more than 2,000 years before the giving of the law, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adams transgressions - that is, not capable of actual sin - yet in Adam they died, and death reigned over their little bodies; but being in Christ their covenant head by eternal union, as all are who die without actual sin, their justification was secure in him and life eternal is their portion. The sacrifice of Christ atoned for Adam's one offence, or else neither he nor any of his posterity can be saved; and if that one offence be atoned for, then infants who have committed no other offence, must be saved; and such will constitute the great bulk of Christ's kingdom...'

Editor's Reply: The book of Romans clearly teaches sin was imputed to Adam's progeny. Although infants might not sin as Adam did, Adam's sin was still imputed to the human race. If '*in Adam they die*' - then why do they die and thus have the sentence passed from Adam? If '*their justification was secure in him, and life eternal is their portion*' - then where is the scripture for this statement?

If infants have '*committed no other offense*' then what offense have they committed that causes *death*? If Christ's kingdom is made up '*in bulk*' by dead children then why did He bother to die such an incredibly awful death? We are conceived in iniquity: '***Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me***' (Ps.51:5). Ephesians 2:3 also says we were '***by nature the children of wrath***'. If infants are innocent then why the '*wrath*'? God does not direct His '*wrath*' towards those who are not guilty! There are also other Scriptures that state clearly that from birth we are far from innocent!: '***Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child...***' (Pr.22:15); '***...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth***' (Gen.8:21).

Jonathan Edwards, in his classic work '*The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended*', remarks on this verse: '*The word translated youth, signifies the whole of the former part of the age of man, which commences from the beginning of life. The word in its derivation, has reference to the birth or beginning of existence...so that the word here translated youth, comprehends not only what we in English most commonly call the time of youth, but also childhood and infancy*'.

If we allow for such a doctrine with infants as in the article, then we dilute the foundational doctrine of 'original sin'. We would also logically need to

Your Comments and Questions

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

allow for unreached groups such as the Amazon Indians who never heard of Christ. How far could we take this logic?: if the unborn dead are *automatically* saved from Hell then is the local abortionist an ‘evangelist’? The Pelagian heresy of the 4th century stated that mankind cannot be held accountable for something Adam did. They refuted the idea of original sin and said man has the moral ability from birth to do good...But this was all refuted as *heresy*.

The whole human race is condemned, not just any individual or infant! We are *all* ‘conceived in iniquity’! ‘*In Adam all die*’ (1Cor.15:22).

One final thought - who has seen infants who do not have *selfish* behaviour? Jonathan Edwards loved his children but said his little children were inherently ‘wicked’. We must be careful of emotion clouding original sin.

Re-marriage

Dear Terry, [re: article on re-marriage Nov/Dec/2010]...*Many Christians do not see their re-marriage as sin and therefore do not believe they need to repent...I was married 56 years ago...it lasted 7 years when my wife left and divorced me to live with a man who had two previous wives or partners...The main reason I have never re-married is because of the vow I made, which was NOT ‘until adultery do us part’, but rather ‘until death do us part’! My firm conviction for 49 years has been that while the person I married is still alive I am not free to re-marry. It wouldn’t be reasonable for me to tell myself that, although I know it would be sinning against God, that I could simply repent, receive forgiveness and continue living for the Lord!...I believe the words and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ are important in Matt.19:6 ‘Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder’. As one commentator puts it: ‘what therefore God hath joined together; or, by the first institution of marriage, has declared to be so closely united together, as to be, as it were, one flesh, and one body, as husband and wife are; let no man put asunder; break the bond of union, dissolve the relation, and separate them from each other, for every trivial thing, upon any slight occasion, or for anything; but what is hereafter mentioned. The sense is, that the bond of marriage being made by God himself, is so sacred and inviolable, as that it ought not to be dissolved by any man; not by the husband himself, or any other for him; nor by any state or government, by any prince or potentate, by any legislator whatever; no, not by Moses himself, who is, at least, included, if not chiefly designed here, though not named, to avoid offence: and God and man being opposed in this passage, shows, that marriage is an institution and appointment of God, and therefore not to be changed and altered by man at his pleasure; this is not merely a civil, but a sacred affair, in which God is concerned’ (John Gill)*

(Name withheld at editors discretion)

Your Comments and Questions

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

2Corinthians 7:1

Terry, could you comment on 2Cor.7:1 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God'.

Editor's Comment: There should be no chapter division here. This verse (7:1) should be together with chapter 6:14-18 - *'Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty'.*

2Cor.7:1 then has the word *'therefore'* and is part of the doctrine of *separation* that Paul has been referring to previously in chapter 6. Chapter 7 is the positive part of the negative in chapter 6. The two sections cannot be separated in context. Again, there should be no division in chapters here. *The purification in chapter 7 goes with the separation of chapter 6.* It's a separation from anything which defiles the body or the spirit. This *'holiness'* is part of the sanctification process of the Holy Spirit.

The *'flesh'* here may well be referring to the *'fornication'* of previous verses and in the Corinth church. But it is basically the appetites, lusts and passions (in thoughts and actions) that are not holy. If the *'flesh'* is unclean then the *'spirit'* is compromised and there is idolatry of some kind. The *'spirit'* (small 's') here probably refers to the human mind as the two are often synonymous. The point is that sin affects both spirit and flesh.

The 'separation' of the previous verses is the necessary groundwork for the 'cleansing' in verse 1 of ch.7. Then the word *'perfecting'* means to bring things to maturity. The Greek is *'imperative'* - its a command. Its all done *'in the fear of God'*. If we lack holy Christians and holy churches today, it is because they do not fear God and therefore don't see the need to *'perfect holiness'* and *'cleanse'* themselves in obedience. The *'fear of God'* is no doubt a great aid in avoiding sin.

Dear Terry, thankyou for continuing to send me the monthly sermon CD's and for 'Diakrisis'. I thank God there are people like you to keep us informed!...
(N.D., NSW)

Terry's Itinerary

March 4th (Sun) 10.45am **Biggenden** Gospel Chapel, Qld. Ph.41271959
0408074743

April 18th, 25th (two Sunday nights) 6.30pm Hervey Bay Church of Christ,
Qld. **Evangelism to the cults**. Ph.0411489472

Perth Trip

April 6th-8th Easter weekend: *Easter myths & The truth of the Resurrection*
(Friday - 3 sessions: 11am (Lunch provided); 1:00pm; 2:30pm; **Saturday** - 2
sessions 11am (BBQ); 2:15pm; **Sunday** morning service 10am. Venue: Faith
Presbyterian Church, 18 Kerry Street, Dianella, Perth Ph.0412555677

Your Comments and Questions

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

Website Comments (www.taministries.net)

Terry, regarding 2Thess.2:3. I was reading a book by Peter Jackson (Herald of Hope). I had concerns! I have read Dr. J. R. Rice on the subject. I found your website article 'Apostasia is not the Rapture' and I totally agree with this article...It's not strange that the verse says 'Let no man deceive you', yet they use that very verse to deceive people. Thanks for your very effective ministry.

(J.H., Brisbane)

Editor's Comment: We did of course write to *Herald of Hope* more than once on this. I acknowledge that they have good teaching in many areas, but in this verse their teaching that the 'falling away' is the 'rapture' and not a religious apostasy is relatively *new* in history. Their use of Greek is highly selective and contains classic errors as shown clearly in our article. These errors have never been acknowledged, let alone corrected.

Hello Terry, a special 'thankyou' for your last 'Diakrisis'. [Re: 'Retraction' Jan/Feb/2012] They say confession is good for the soul, so I must confess that I have made the same error regarding the idea that there are more references to Hell than there are to Heaven. My false view came from my days at College in the 1970s. A visiting speaker made the claim with some emphasis that there are more references to Hell than there are to Heaven. I was impressed with what he said and never bothered to check his claim. The error was added to my article on Hell and uploaded to my web site (www.defenceofthefaith.org). After reading your article I performed a quick check and found there are over 300 references to the word Heaven in the NT and not anywhere near as many to Hell. I have deleted my article on Hell from the website for the moment, and plan to upload a revised edition...

(D.H., Brisbane)

Your Comments and Questions

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

Dear Terry, I am reading through your excellent book 'Foundations For Evangelism'. On P.105-108 you write about 'tracts' and mention your 'Eternal Questions'. Is this tract available and suitable for putting in post boxes, without personally calling? Is the tract available on line?...

Editor's reply: This A5 booklet has been distributed in a variety of ways, including in post boxes. It is not available on line. Soon there will be a new edition at a cheaper price of \$1.50.

Dear Terry, I like the new format and increased font size in 'Diakrisis' - it is so much easier to read..Thankyou for keeping us up to date on the apostasy in the church at large. I too am surprised that people who have studied the scriptures all their lives are so deceived by such things as the 'Purpose Driven' lies and the many backflips on sound doctrine that you have exposed. Please continue to expose the lies. There are many people discouraged by the current denominations and they do not know where to go.

(B.W. Old)

Prayer/Praise Points

- Praise the Lord that our new book '*Foundations For Evangelism*' has been accepted into two Bible colleges as a text book or 'recommended reading'!
- Family health problems are currently preventing Terry and Beth planning their yearly bus ministry trip. Please pray for health and to know God's timing.

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