

Your Comments and Questions

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

Masters Course at Pacific Bible Institute 2013

Several applications have been received for the new Masters degree course planned to begin in August this year. We are hoping for 25 students maximum. This 4 year course involves two weeks lectures in Hervey Bay each August (this year 12th August - 23rd August). Costs are administration costs only and accommodation. A free information pack can be sent on request.

How You Can Help - Prayer and Sponsor a Student

If you are interested in seeing men and women equipped for ministry and service to the Lord, then you may want to support the above mentioned Masters course in the following ways: In prayer and/or by sponsoring a student to come to Hervey Bay for 2 weeks each year (for 4 years) and complete the course. We have a sponsorship fund where donations can be allocated to students in need of help. Or you can sponsor a student of your choice. The cost for one student per year is approximately \$500 which includes accommodation, food, textbooks and administration costs. Any other expenses are paid from the college by faith.

Prayer/Praise Points

- Please pray as Terry continues with the interstate itinerary. Pray for safety, health and fruitful meetings.
- Pray for students to be enrolled in the new Masters course at Pacific Bible Institute in Hervey Bay this year. We need 20 students to commence this new four year training program.

Subscription Form

I am interested in receiving the *free* monthly TA Ministries newsletter 'Diakrisis' by Send this form to:
hardcopy by *e-mail* (tick boxes) **TA Ministries**
PO Box 1499,
Hervey Bay, Qld, 4655, Australia

Name-----Address-----

E-mail-----Phone-----

Signed-----Date-----

I enclose \$----- as a donation for costs and postage.

For transfer deposits: National Bank, Hervey Bay, BSB 084 705 Account No. 02737 1856



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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teaching, informing and equipping the church.

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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.

Articles in this newsletter may be copied or reproduced provided it is in context and proper credit and references are given. We encourage distribution of this newsletter that others might be taught, informed and equipped.

This Newsletter is distributed bi-monthly *free* of charge. The cost to this ministry is approximately \$20.00 per subscriber annually. Any donations to help with these expenses is received with gratitude.

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Masters Course

Pacific Bible Institute has a new Masters program commencing this year. Several applications have already been received. This is a rare opportunity to obtain an accredited Masters degree and training mostly by correspondence and at cost (administration, text books only). Successful applicants attend lectures two weeks each August in Hervey Bay and complete assignments by correspondence. An information sheet can be sent or e-mailed to you.

Editor's Comment

In the western world the statistics show clearly that the Christian church is losing ground. Recent statistics for Australia show that almost all denominations are decreasing in numbers of worshippers. Baptists are down by 2%, Anglicans and Presbyterians by 9%, Salvation Army by 13%, Uniting Church by 15% and the Church of Christ down by 23%. Some decades ago nearly half of Australians attended church. That dropped to about 16% more than a decade ago. Today that figure is decreasing year by year and is now less than 8%. The only churches increasing in numbers are Pentecostal/Charismatics and some smaller ethnic congregations.

Most, if not all denominations no longer teach what they once taught even just a few decades ago. Many church websites no longer show any doctrinal statements of faith. New teachings on such things as homosexuality and woman pastors and elders are less than a few decades old, being almost unheard of in past centuries. The old doctrines of Grace, Christ alone, faith alone, scriptural inspiration, etc, have been watered down or have gone completely.

From time to time we are told by Pentecostal/Charismatic churches that we have 'revival' here or there, or that there is a last days revival to come, despite this clearly contradicting many scriptures (2Thess.2:3; Matt.24:11,24; Lk.18:8; 1Tim.4:1; 2Tim.4:3,4). These churches teach new doctrines on the Holy Spirit invented mostly in the 20th Century. They titillate their audiences with feel good sermons accompanied by music that moves the passions and rocks the soul. Their market driven programs with entertainment and amusements are well acceptable to the world. Hence their numbers increase. But how many 'tares' does this produce?

Put simply, much of the modern church is like the Laodicean church in the book of Revelation (chapter 3). To this church Jesus threatened to '*spew you out of my mouth*' (vs.16). This church thought they were '*rich*' and '*in need of nothing*' (vs.17). They were totally blind to the fact that they were actually '*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*' (vs.17). The Lord counselled them to be clothed in '*white raiment*' and to have their eyes opened by the spirit's anointing that they '*may see*' (vs.18). Jesus was actually '*knocking at the door*' wanting to come into this church (vs.20).

The word Laodicea contains '*laos*' meaning 'people'. The people in this church did what they thought was right in their own eyes. Today often it is the people in the world that guide the church. *The world has come into the church to take the church into the world.* Whatever the world is marketing is what the church will sooner or later follow. I meet many Christians in churches who are really little different to the world in philosophy and belief. The church has capitulated to the pressures of the media and modern thought. Separation and distinctiveness, as required by scripture, is almost a lost doctrine (Jn.17:14-16;

Continued next page >

Terry's Interstate Itinerary

Sydney

March 3rd (Sun) 10am Georges River Congregational, Panania, Ph.0408407184
March 3rd (Sun) 6pm Fellowship Baptist church, Moorebank Ph.(02)98213200
March 7th (Thurs) 7.30pm Yagoona Christian Assembly Ph.(02)88077725
March 9th (Sat) 7pm Church for Everybody (at North Parramatta Gospel Chapel 27 Iron St. North Parramatta) Ph.95534818
March 10th (Sun) 10.30am Ryde Congregational Ph.(02)98691453
March 10th (Sun) 1.30pm Ryde Congregational Ph.(02)98691453
March 14th (Thurs) 7.30pm Yagoona Christian Assembly Ph.(02)88077725
March 17th (Sun) 10am Church for Everybody (at West Marrickville Public School Cnr Livingstone Rd and Beauchamp St.) Ph.95534818
March 21st (Thurs) 7.30pm Yagoona Christian Assembly Ph.(02)88077725

NSW - south

March 24th (Sun)10am Picton Bible Church (02)46810227
March 31st (Sun) 10am Shellharbour Christian Fellowship (at Barrack Heights School Hall) Ph.0419510863
March 31st (Sun) 6pm Shellharbour Christian Fellowship Ph.0419510863
April 5th (Frid) 8pm Cootamundra Bible Fellowship Youth
April 7th (Sun) 10am Cootamundra Bible Fellowship (at Bimberdeen college) Ph.69427768 or 0407 255 180
April 7th (Sun) 6pm Cootamundra B.F. (at Bimberdeen)
April 9th (Tues) 7.30pm Cootamundra Scots Presbyterian Hall Ph.6942 2582

Vict

April 14th (Sun) 11am Numurkah Gospel Fellowship (03)58622341
April 14th (Sun) 7.30pm Numurkah Gospel Fellowship (03)58622341
April 21st (Sun) 9.30am Golden City Baptist (Adult Sunday school) & 11am service Ph.54496018
April 21st (Sun) 6pm Golden City Baptist Ph.54496018
April 24th (Wed) 7pm Open Door Baptist, Melton Ph.0414635983
April 28th (Sun) 10am Open Door Baptist, Melton (Adult Sunday school) & 11am service Ph.0414635983
May 1st (Wed) 7pm Open Door Baptist, Melton
May 5th (Sun) 10am East Keilor Evangelical church Ph.93315821
May 5th (Sun) 6pm East Keilor Evangelical church Ph.93315821

Qld.

June 2nd (Sun) 10.45am Biggenden Gospel Chapel, Qld. Ph. 0408074743

Your Comments and Questions

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

Website comment

Terry, I am loving the audio sermons and articles. This is exactly what I need at this stage...I have been praying about it for a while and then someone suggested your ministry to me which has put me on the right track. I grew up in Pentecostal churches and even as a child (I stopped going at 14) I could see things were often not as they seemed. Still, when I came back to Christ at age 37 I really wanted to go down the Pentecostal path because to my mind, that's what a church should be like...vibrant, experientially based, walking in power & authority, etc...or so I thought. Even though I'm attending a good (enough) church, I still considered it lame weak Christianity until I stepped back into a Pentecostal church...I loathed the flashiness & egos, the rock band that seemed to be trying to play to Maddison Square Garden (not to the less than 100 people in a small building) and I really couldn't stand it. A few more events happened which started to open my eyes and soon someone had me learning correct doctrine, some things from John MacArthur (which I initially rejected and proceeded to verbally put the guy down) and now 'Diakrisis'. So I get it now. I understand Pentecostal churches filled my head with non-scriptural garbage and had I not been set right I may have mistakenly kept heading down that road...It's quite sad how Pentecostals can quote scripture until the cows come home but will then ignore it if they think their having some 'experience' above and beyond what scripture teaches...Thanks & God bless the ministry...

Numbers and Popularity

Joseph Smith started a religion in 1830 now called the Mormon church and today there are more than 13 million adherents. Mohammed started the religion of Islam and now there are billions in the world. Jesus started with 12 and at times had in excess of 50,000 people following him. Yet within a period of a few days barely 12 men were left. *Truth is never determined by the numbers or the popularity.*

Quotable - Who Is Building The Church?

'Several years ago a journalist writing a feature on large churches came to interview me about Grace Community Church. At one point near the end of our conversation he asked, 'Have you always been driven by a desire to build a large church?' It was an unexpected question, but I answered immediately, I have no desire to build the church. None'. He looked at me quizzically and said, 'I don't understand that'. I said, 'Jesus Christ said He would build His church, and I don't want to be in competition with Him'. ('Ashamed of the Gospel' by John MacArthur, P.173)

Rom.12:2; 1Cor.2:12; Eph.2:2; James 1:27). Most modern churches today would think they are strong as the Laodiceans did, yet each decade they are drifting further away from Scripture and **'the faith once delivered'** (Jude 3).

Today there are the few voices crying out 'apostasy!' and warning that the Gospel is in danger of being lost in an increasingly secularised church. Watchman are not popular and usually branded as being 'legalists', 'judgmental' or 'negative'. Meanwhile *the church is regressing in numbers, in power, and its impact on society is rapidly diminishing*. When will the church realise that this demise could be related to its *beliefs and practices*? Could it be that the Lord is 'knocking at the door' requesting that **'any man hear his voice'** (vs.20)? Do we have **'ears to hear what the Spirit is saying unto the churches'** (vs.21)?

That same 'Spirit' speaks in and through the Word of God - the 66 books of revelation given to man by God. It's the **'faith once delivered'** (Jude 3); it's the **'prophecy of the scripture'** (2Pet.1:20); it's the God breathed handbook for beliefs and practices within the church; it's the chain that holds the anchor of the Lord to our souls. It is all sufficient **'for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness'** (2Tim.3:16,17). It is our daily manna from Heaven. We don't need a 'revival' as much as we need a Reformation, a return to sound doctrine, teaching the **'first principles of the oracles of God'** (Heb.5:12). The church needs to get off the market driven, merry go round of feel good fashions that sound good, but lack sound doctrine.

Recently I was having an intense discussion with some denominational leaders concerning the lack of sound doctrine and separation from error. They quoted John 17 **'that we may all be one'** (vs.11) but without any regard for the context of the passage which speaks of *separation* through the 'truth' and by the 'word' (vs.17)! They were intent on challenging me as to *'how many souls are you winning'*, *'why has your church not grown (in numbers)'*, *'where is the fruit of your philosophy'*...Their cry was *'we are not interested in doctrine while there are souls to be reached'*. This philosophy sounds noble but it has a serious flaw. If the doctrine is not kept sound then the Gospel and the discipleship of people will either be made void, will produce shallow Christians, or worse, 'still borns'. The fruit of modern evangelism is showing exactly this! Few of these leaders are questioning why we have an 85% 'fall away' rate in so called 'conversions'. Why are most religious leaders now failing to give anything that resembles the Gospel in their Christmas and Easter messages? Could it be that we have lost the very foundation of the Gospel? Why are so many Christians today so anaemic in Bible knowledge? What exactly are we winning souls to? ...The 'bait' we catch people with is what we will have to feed them with.

The purity of the Gospel that speaks of repentance and faith alone in Christ, His one and only sacrifice that satisfies God's wrath upon sin - this is the Gospel that has been watered down. But it has only been watered down through this attitude *'we are not interested in doctrine...'*.

Terry Arnold

Rob Bell

Emergent Church Postmodern Thought



Brian McLaren



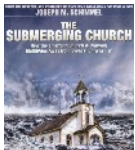
Emergent Church leaders are renowned for re-interpreting century old doctrines and subjectively creating postmodern or liberal theology which lacks any absolutes. American Rob Bell, one of the Emergent leaders, defies the early church and the Reformers doctrine of ‘Sola Scriptura’ with this: *‘This is part of the problem with continually insisting that one of the absolutes of the Christian faith must be a belief that ‘scripture alone’ is our guide. It sounds nice , but it is not true’*. (1) Yet this defies clear scriptures such as 2Tim.3:15 and 2Pet.1:19,20 and it opens the door for revelations from a host of human sources. At the root of the Emergent Church is a low view of scripture or no view at all, as is seen by the following quote by Bell: *‘The Bible is a prophecy of human work, not divine fiat’*. This view inevitably leads to a low view of sin...*‘I can’t find one place in the teachings of Jesus, or the Bible for that matter, where we are to identify ourselves first and foremost as sinners’*. (2)

Because Emergent church leaders are opposed to objective doctrinal truths, they tend to focus on subjective issues of Sanctification instead, and then confuse this with the Gospel. Emergent leader, Brian McLaren’s emphasis is clear: *‘We place less emphasis on whose lineage, rites, doctrines, structures, and terminology are right and more emphasis on whose actions, service, outreach, kindness, and effectiveness are good’*. (3) Rob Bell concurs: *‘Perhaps a better question than who’s right, is who’s living rightly?’* But does this include Buddhists who in some areas of morality might live better lives than many Christians? McLaren somewhat answers this!: *‘I don’t believe making disciples must equal making adherents to the Christian religion. It may be advisable in many circumstances to help people to become followers of Jesus and remain within their Buddhist, Hindu or Jewish contexts’*. (4) But is there no vital connection between what we believe and how we live, between orthodoxy and orthopraxy? If not then ‘His Holiness the Dalai Lama’ will have as much to offer us! Without sound doctrine and what is objectively ‘right’, we don’t get forgiveness of sin, the imputed righteousness of God and eternal life!

The Gospel is weakened by Emergent teaching. Hence Rob Bell can tell a crowd in Grand Prairie, Texas, that *‘repentance is not turning from sin. It is a ‘celebration’ of life in Christ’*. (5)

Terry Arnold

(1) ‘Velvet Elvis’ by Rob Bell, P.68 (2) Ibid, P.139 (3) ‘A Generous Orthodoxy’ by Brian McLaren, P.223,224 (4) Ibid, P.293 (5) *The god’s Aren’t Angry Tour*, Nov. 16, 2007.



We recommend ‘The Submerging Church’ - (2 DVD’s). This is a clear analysis and exposure of the Emergent church movement (history, teachings, connections with ‘Purpose Driven’ movement and New Age). \$25.50 + \$4 postage.

Your Comments and Questions

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

Hi Terry, Once again I thank you for ‘Diakrisis’. I read the article on ‘Roman Catholic Betrayal’ [Jan/Feb/2013]. My cousin was one of the 222 ‘recorded’ abuses in the church in Bundaberg, but this via the Catholic School. He would go to school after pleading to his parents to let him stay at home every Monday. What he did not say and what they did not know was that a brother [teacher] was abusing him every Monday. He was so depressed that he took drugs to numb the pain. This lead to hard drugs and eventually after great trauma to my Aunt and Uncle, death at the age of 33. My Aunt and Uncle are both on anti-depressants and will never get over the trauma they have endured both by knowing of the sexual abuse and the drug habit which wrecked their family and my beautiful cousin.

These figures mentioned are not true. They are only the ‘recorded’ figures. There are so many people who have never spoken out. My husband was abused and several young men I knew in the air force. Fortunately for them, they were able to overcome the pain and move on...thank you and God richly bless you...

(Name withheld at editor’s discretion)

Editor’s comment: The figures we highlighted I agree are the beginning of an avalanche. I was schooled in Catholic schools and colleges most of my youth and I personally knew of abuse cases at schools which were never reported. I believe the coming commission will be overwhelmed with new cases. The problem has its root in the Roman church adding new laws and traditions to scripture which forbid priests and school teaching ‘brothers’ to marry. This violates scripture (1Tim.4:3; 1Cor.7:9,36) as well as the natural desires of man.

Discernment

‘Wherever truth exposes error, error will oppose truth, and truth will be drawn into conflict. The believer must both stand and advance against the enemy. Although controversy is not to be sought, it must be accepted. He cannot ignore strife, though it is not of his making. Love is a notable virtue, but Christian love is love in the truth...Modern history affords ample opportunity for the teacher to ‘regard’ the good in every mixture of good and evil, when as discerning Christians, we should regard the evil. Few would value the scraps of good food in a garbage can. Just as the good food is totally contaminated by its association with the bad, so is whatever of good may seem to be in a spiritual mixture. In fact, the presence of the good makes the evil more subtly dangerous.’ (Edward M. Panosian, Bob Jones University)

Your Comments and Questions

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

Terry, we thank you for your timely article about the correct name for Jesus [Jan/Feb/2-13, P.7]. We were a bit ignorant about this issue and we are glad to learn so much more about it Phil.2:9-11 says it all: 'Wherefore God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'.

(U.G., NSW)

Terry, thank you again for 'Diakrisis' and its important and reliable contents. In connection with the latest article on the name of Jesus: If Don Stanton and others had only read the KJV thoroughly, they would see that the KJV translators had a policy of using transliterations of Hebrew names in the OT and Greek names in the NT. Joshua and Jesus is not the only example. Noah becomes Noe (Matthew 24:37-38), Isaiah becomes Esaias (Matthew 3:3), Elias (Elijah) Matt 11:14, Osee (Hosea) Rom 9:5, Core (Korah) Jude 11, Agar (Hagar) Gal 4:25, Jesus (Moses' anointed follower, Joshua) Acts 7:45; Heb 4:8...

Jesus is clearly from the Greek Iesous rather than Hebrew J'shua...

(G.H., Brisbane)

Dear Terry, the latest 'Diakrisis' appeared in our inbox this morning, and we thank you. We have profited by 'Diakrisis' for many years now...We want to regularly support your work and help in your efforts to restore a foundation of truth to the church, instead of sentiment and entertainment...

(E&V.,B. Vict)

Praise the Lord for giving us TA Ministries and to show us the errors, deceptions, delusions of teachings in the world. Praise to God for giving us the truth of His word and through TA Ministries. I pray for the longevity of your ministry...I want to be put on your mailing list to receive the monthly sermon CD's.

(J. G., Vict.)

'For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2Cor.5:21)

Marriage - History and Definition



'...The first historical mention of same sex marriage was during the reign of Emperor Nero...But even during Roman times, it was not considered a 'real' marriage...Emperor Nero is reported to have engaged in a marriage ceremony with one of his male slaves. ...[but] a marriage between two Roman males (or with a slave) would have no legal standing in Roman

law (apart, presumably, from the arbitrary will of the emperor)...The Roman Emperors Constantius and Constans made same-sex marriage a capital offence...Furthermore, 'matrimonium is an institution involving a mother, mater'...Biblical' marriage is defined by the Bible...The secular world...just because it doesn't like it doesn't mean it can redefine it. Biblical marriage is outlined by Ephesians 5:21-32...Marriage, Biblical or otherwise, has been defined the same way in every culture since the beginning of time. But Biblical marriage is the model for the relationship between Christ and the Church. Jesus is the Bridegroom and the Church is the Bride. And so, Biblical marriage is exemplified by the relationship between Christ and His Church...'

(Apostasy Alert, Jan/2013)

And This is 'Unity'?



Leaders representing the Roman Catholic Church and some American Protestant denominations have signed an agreement in Texas to recognise each other's baptisms. After six years of dialogue, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and the United Church of Christ signed a document recognising each other's liturgical rites of baptism... 'Together we affirm that, by the sacrament of Baptism, a person is truly incorporated into the body of Christ, the church. Baptism establishes the bond of unity existing among all who are part of Christ's body and is therefore the sacramental basis for our efforts to move towards visible unity'... 'We rejoice at the common faith we share...the journey toward full, visible unity depends on openness to the grace of God and humility before the initiatives of God's Spirit among us'. Sister Mary Ann Walsh, [pictured] was the director of media relations... 'This ecumenical effort, this mutual recognition of baptism, is part of our response to Jesus' prayer that 'we may all be one'...

(Apostasy Alert, Feb/2013)

Editors Comment: The World Council of Churches has similar 'agreements' on various baptisms even though each baptism is vastly different in doctrine. How can Protestant denominations find 'unity' with a Catholic Baptism which teaches the baptised are 'incorporated into the body of Christ'? Is this really a 'unity' of a 'common faith' or is it compromise?

Where is the Gospel?

Each year I download the Christmas or Easter messages from Australian church leaders. I expect to find some Gospel preached, considering these are the spiritual leaders of this nation? But sadly I am seeing an increasing trend towards a social or political gospel of works. The following are recent Christmas messages from Australian church leaders with my comments in **bold** which I pray will encourage readers to keep the Gospel in its purity.

Roman Catholic Church in Australia (Archbishop Denis Hart) Dec/2012

'Christmas brings joy because our God has come to us in Jesus. This shows that human nature is gifted and noble. We can rise from the everyday challenges to be there for others because God loves each of us personally. He chose to be one of us. God has chosen us because he loves us. He asks us to share that love. My prayer this Christmas is that we will see beyond our present challenges to the joy and hope that we are called to bring to others because God has come, the Light of the world, leaving behind the darkness of uncertainty and failure. God has come to save us'.

Is this the Gospel? There is no mention of sin and thus why Jesus came, and there is no challenge for listeners to believe in Jesus. And since when is it that 'human nature is gifted and noble'? Do the scriptures not state the opposite?...Men love darkness (Jn.3:19), are in bondage to sin (Gal.4:3; 6:17,20), taken captive by Satan to do his will (2Tim.2:25), 'none seek after God' (Rom.3:11) and are 'by nature children of wrath' (Eph.2:3). What exactly has God come to 'save us' from if unsaved man has a 'nature that is gifted and noble'? What does God 'save us' from and how does He do this?

Anglican Church of Australia (Archbishop Dr. Phillip Aspinall) Dec/2012

'The story of Christ's birth powerfully engages our imaginations. Wise men make a long journey by the leading of a star. Shepherds praise God, angels sing, and the glory of the Lord shines around. In a manger and in great humility lies the Christ child, born of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are reminded that, then as now, God enters into history to bring new life and hope. Even on the margins of the world and in obscurity - as in Bethlehem - God's future is always coming to birth by the power of the Spirit....So often we feel exhausted by endless marketing and material consumption. We are thirsting for a new spirit - new ideas, new generosity and a new gratitude for all we have and are. Christmas is the time for new imagination. Can we imagine that, even now - perhaps in obscurity - God's future is coming to birth by the power of the Spirit? The renewal of our society and our own lives may be nearer than we thought. Let us discern its coming and greet it with great joy and gladness'.

Why do we need 'new life and hope'? Is it really because of a needed 'renewal of our society and our own lives', or is it because our sins will be

Your Comments and Questions

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

Hi Terry,...Thanks for the latest 'Diakrisis'. The article on the issue of Jesus' name was very helpful...In the past having encountered the odd person who has made (it seemed to me) too much of the alleged error in the Anglicized pronunciation of the Name we have come to know so well and love.

On another issue, I was interested to read your reference to the witch of Endor [Jan/Feb/2013, P.16]. I have also encountered this notion that what appeared 'was a demon masquerading as Samuel'...Where is this idea anywhere indicated in the text - or any other part of Scripture? Demons are in the business of deception but we are not given even the slightest hint from the narrative that this was the case. You're well familiar I know with the old adage: 'if the plain sense makes common sense, don't look for any other sense or you'll end up with nonsense'. The passage [1Sam.ch.28] states four times that who appeared was in fact 'Samuel' who meets the criteria of a true prophet because everything he foretold came to pass. Posthumous prophetic miracle is also recorded in the case of Elisha so this shouldn't, alone, be a reason for not reading the text plainly. It is interesting to note that this last event recorded of Samuel mirrors the very first event. In the first, he was woken by God to deliver a message to an anointed leader of Israel concerning both the leader's failure and his consequential death and deaths of his sons. The first differs in that the leader, Eli, was a fallen believer. This is clear from his response to the Word of the Lord. In the second instance however, Saul by his response (like Judas) confirmed his spiritual condition as being alienated from the life of God. This comparison is quite instructive. I'm not sure what your view is on the matter?...Why and where would the 'masquerading demon' interpretation spring from?

(SF, Vict.)

Editor's Reply: I admit I have been unsure about this interpretation of a 'familiar spirit' which I received in my days in Pentecostal circles where it seemed to be the usual explanation. But I agree...nowhere does the text suggest that this was anything other than Samuel being 'brought up'. Saul had banished from the land all those who operated with a 'familiar spirit'. Nevertheless, this woman that he sought out did use a 'familiar spirit' to bring up the dead. Yet, when she did as she was told and used the 'spirit' to bring up Samuel - she appeared to be surprised to find that the man she saw was in fact Samuel. She knew that it must be Saul who asked her to do this. It seems clear that both Saul and the witch knew that it was indeed Samuel. The text reads '*and Samuel said to Saul*' - so there is no doubting it was him? What Samuel told Saul was accurate and it came about within hours. I agree the text objectively shows this view rather than the 'familiar spirit' view...Thanks for the clear argument you have laid.

Your Comments and Questions

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Terry, maybe you would give your thoughts in 'Diakrisis' on the 'age of understanding' regarding salvation...

(R.K., Vict.)

Editor's comments: The *concept* of the 'age of accountability' or 'understanding' suggests that children are not to be held accountable for their sin before God until they reach a certain and undefined age. Therefore, should a child die prior to reaching that age they are deemed to have already received salvation.

The problem here is that there is absolutely no Biblical grounds on which to support such a concept as doctrine.

Please note that I am in no way saying here that I hold to any particular view on the matter of infant salvation. The subject to hand is the 'Age of Accountability' and whether this can be substantiated as *doctrine*.

This view of the 'age of understanding' has spawned many further teachings that also cannot claim any Biblical foundation. That children are born sinless is one of them. Or that they cannot be accounted as sinners until they knowingly break the Law or do 'actually' sin. Humanly this may sound logical, but Romans 5:12-21 opposes this notion. The sin nature is *inherited* from Adam and the resultant death is '*passed upon all men*' (vs.12). David was also adamant that he was 'conceived' in sin: '*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me*' (Ps.51:5); '*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies*' (Ps.58:3-5). The Scriptures are clear that '*all*' have sinned and 'come short of the glory of God' (Rom.3:23). This comes near the end of a passage that is damning of mankind in general and stating that '*all the world*' is '*guilty before God*' (3:19).

The age at which an infant has reached this so-called 'age' would necessarily differ widely from culture to culture. Yet, if we are to hold to 'Sola Scriptura' it must be said that no biblical text could be offered that would satisfy this enquiry. Any attempt to answer this question is fraught with danger. Parents who have lost children may find great comfort in this belief...and who can blame them? The Reformers had varying views on infant salvation, yet the doctrine of the 'age of reason' is a relatively new teaching.

If children are to be saved they will be saved by Grace alone and the imputed righteousness of God, not because they are 'innocent' before they are of any certain '*age of understanding*'.

A true adherence to the scriptural doctrine of 'Sola Scriptura' will not entertain this 'age of accountability' as doctrine.

judged and Hell awaits us? Should we '*discern*' this '*renewal of our society*' and '*greet it with joy*' or should we do what the Gospel demands - '*repent*' of our sin? Since when is mankind '*thirsting for a new spirit*'? And what exactly is meant by a '*new imagination*'?

Contrast this Anglican message with the Sydney Anglicans (Peter Jensen) where there is hope that some Anglican leaders still do want to share the real Gospel.

'Christmas is reconciliation time. The carol says 'God and sinners reconciled'. That's us...But God loved the world and sent his only Son, Jesus Christ...Be reconciled to God through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord...Are you going to follow God's way this Christmas? Then be reconciled to him and be reconciled to your neighbours'.

Hillsong Church Sydney (Brian Houston) Dec/2012

'...Christmas carols...beautiful hymns...SILENT night. HOLY night. All was CALM...A simple birth, in the most common of environments, under a starry sky...PEACEFUL...I don't know about you, but when I think of this holiday season for me and my family I would probably use words more like 'busy', 'hectic', 'tiring'...In the same way, in the midst of recent tragedy overseas, there will be hundreds of families...who will be experiencing everything but calm this Christmas. Dozens of children the world over in politically unstable and war torn countries like Syria and Afghanistan who's night will be anything but silent...people are experiencing pain, not peace, in parts of Samoa and Fiji where violent storms have created chaos and ruin. Christmas is a season of shared reality, when the empathy of God came to us in human form. It was on Christmas Day when God chose not to be separated from us, but to come down - Emmanuel - God WITH us...He ENTERS the middle of our circumstances. Christ chose to identify with us, come right into the middle of the broken things, the real issues of life and bring His sovereign peace, His unconditional love to a world in desperate need...God reached out to us, extends His peace to us and brings rest -His rest -to those searching for answers...Don't let the peace of God be elusive this year...I pray you know the fullness of what happened on that Silent Night and experience again this year, the reality that Christ the Saviour is born.

What have the world's disasters got to do with the Gospel, except they are the result of Adam's sin (and sin is here nowhere mentioned but instead the term '*broken things*')? Why is the world in '*desperate need*'? Did God really '*choose not to be separated from us*'? The Gospel is rather that at the cross God 'forsook' and 'separated' from Jesus so he could bear and suffer for our sin!

And how exactly do I get this '*sovereign peace*'? Does God bring His peace to '*those searching for answers*' or to those who *believe and repent*?

Has Brian told us what actually '*happened on that Silent Night*' and why?

Churches of Christ in Australia (Craig Brown) Dec/2012

'The Church is never more human when its failings are put into the spotlight. This Christmas we remember the Christ-child, and also those children and youth who have been sexually abused...Matthew reminds us that through Christ, God has entered into this world as the 'Immanuel...God with us' (Matthew 1:23). However, this event is accompanied by the powerful seeking to cling to power...the Christ-child becomes a refugee...King Herod, in a desperate attempt to hold on to power, massacres children...the Church has wielded power badly...There is hope for the Church, however, if it renounces powerplays and seeks to be vulnerable through righting the wrongs of the past...'

The Gospel is not about 'the church' and its failings. The phrase 'God has entered into this world as the 'Immanuel...God with us' is the kernal of the Gospel if explained why He did this. Instead, this is then followed by a 'however' and mention of child abuse and the wrongs of the 'church'. But this is not why 'God entered into this world'. It's about our sin and God's provision in the sacrifice of Jesus to those who believe.

Lutheran Church of Australia (Rev. Dr. Mike Semmler) Dec/2012

'We are strange creatures...The famines, the wars, the unrest and substance abuse in our own society may occupy some of our thinking. Then suddenly we are confronted with our own lives hanging in the balance. We realise we have never really faced what comes next. Christmas begins the great news that a child is born into time to give his life and to break open death so it no longer has the final word. The Saviour's name is Jesus Christ...worship him'.

Biblically, are we 'strange creatures' or sinful creatures? What exactly is meant by 'lives hanging in the balance' and by 'what comes next' and Jesus' 'life' 'breaks open death' if one believes? How do I get this 'life' and why do I need it?

Uniting Church in Australia (Alistair Macrae) Dec/2012

'At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus, who came 'that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10.10)...That abundance of Life contrasts with...the kind that leaves us cluttered, bloated and burnt out, at odds with each other and entwined in unjust, unsustainable economic systems. By contrast, abundance of Life is expressed in love and friendship, in generosity to neighbours in need, in hospitality to strangers, in compassion for all who are struggling or hurt - the things that make for reconciliation, justice and peace. I ask that we all take a moment at our Christmas tables to remember those who are alone, or confined in our prisons or detention centres, or trying to maintain dignity and confidence in 'prescribed communities' under the Stronger Futures Legislation...'

'Love and friendship...generosity...hospitality...compassion' do not 'make for reconciliation, justice and peace' with God! This is a classic counterfeit

Tragedy occurs when the disease is serious. There are many documented cases of deaths due to a reliance on 'faith healing', including a study on 158 children who died due to 'religion-motivated medical neglect'. (3) The DVD 'Signs and Wonders-Exposed' documents people who died after 'faith healing'. The infamous 'faith healer', Benny Hinn, has had people die following his meetings when they refused medical treatment, believing they were healed. (4)

Many of these tragedies are connected to the placebo effect. The first major study on this phenomenon was done by H.K. Beecher in 1955 ('The Powerful Placebo'). He reported that an average of 32% of patients responded to a placebo. In further experiments with heart conditions, ulcers and stomach complaints the results were as high as 60%. Scientists understand little as to what happens in the mind for the placebo effect to work. Many believe that a 'conditioning' is evident in which the patient reacts to a 'stimuli' *that they associate with healing*. This is similar to the famous experiment with Pavlov's dogs in which they salivated when they heard a bell ring for food; and people acting in a drunken manner when given drinks which they thought were alcoholic, yet were non alcoholic; and people feeling less pain when given an injection they thought was a powerful pain killer, yet it was a simple saline solution. Experiments have been done which have seen people catch fewer colds when they thought they were receiving Vitamin C pills, yet they were given sugar pills...then when told the truth, the colds *increased* in number. One area of illness that is strangely susceptible to the placebo effect are various skin conditions, including warts. However placebo effects do not work on serious organic diseases such as Aids and Downs Syndrome. No 'healer' has ever healed such diseases.

It must be remembered too that many illnesses will heal on their own without medical help. There are also many cases of supposed 'miraculous healing' where the person never had the illness in the first place. (5)

The current signs and wonders movement is being played out in many religions and is prophesied in the Bible to be *always* a false and 'lying' system *in the end times* (Matt.12:39;24:24; Mk.13:22; 2Thess.2:9; Rev.13:13). How do we know if a miracle or healing is true or 'lying' (the demonic can do the same miracles and healings)? The answer lies in the *purpose* of these signs which were specifically to prove the Messiahship of Jesus Christ as prophesied in Isaiah (Is.61:1; 35:5,6 cp. Lk.7:18-22; Jn.20:30,31; Acts 2:22).

The power of the mind and the placebo effect must not be underestimated in the modern healing movement. It is a phenomenon that many Pentecostal/Charismatics are duped by. The Gospel today is being watered down and even supplanted by emphasis on miraculous healings and signs and wonders. God can heal, but His first desire is that we covet the message of His salvation in Jesus.

Terry Arnold

(1) *Diakrisis*, June/99 P.2 (2) *Diakrisis* Sept/Oct 2001; Sept/Oct P.8 (3) Asser SM, Swan R. '*Child fatalities from religion motivated medical neglect*'; Pediatrics 1998;101:625-629 (4) DVD 'Signs & Wonders-Exposed' No.3 available from TA Ministries. Also evidence in '*A Question of Miracles*' by Antony Thomas (5) See '*Healing Investigations*' *Diakrisis*, July/Aug/2003, P.2

The Placebo Effect and Healing

In today's world of so-called signs and wonders, 'faith healings' are being reported by millions of people around the globe. Roman Catholicism announces healings supposedly from Mary and the 'saints'. Many travel to shrines such as Lourdes and claim to be healed. Not to be outdone, many New Age 'gurus' also advertise their success in this field. The founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, claimed miraculous healings. There are cases of healings within Hinduism, and from Shamans in Africa where their people attribute these events to the idols they pray to. Many 'natural' medications are now believed to cure many maladies - including Cancer. Interestingly many of these claims lose much of their power when science debunks the ingredients or when experiments show no real results. Such experiments use 'placebos' as 'controls' to test whether the mind is involved in any of these 'cures'.

A 'placebo' is a substance that has no direct medical benefit which nevertheless makes people feel better psychologically. Placebos can be sugar pills or some other natural product that has no possibility of curing the disease or illness. There are mental states of hallucination, subliminal and subconscious mental phenomena, which can have remarkable effects on a person's mind. It is proven that some people can achieve results of healing by 'mind over illness'. The power of 'subjective validation' is a key ingredient to some, if not many faith healings. It is a form of 'faith', a psychological condition, which can cause limited regeneration and other unexplained effects on a person's body. Some years ago Pentecostal/Charismatic Christians were claiming that they were seeing 'gold dust' on their hands, supposedly from the Holy Spirit. Yet observers saw nothing. (1) I once met a person who had hands laid upon her and had been 'drunk in the spirit' (a manifestation of falling down and acting as if drunk and said to be caused by the Holy Spirit). She quoted Ephesians 5:18 as '*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be drunk with the Spirit*'. The second word '*drunk*' had replaced the word '*filled*'. When I asked her to re-read the verse in her Bible she still read the word '*drunk*' instead of '*but be filled with the Spirit*'. It took two tries and a word by word reading before the person finally saw that they were actually reading into the text something that was not there! This person had been partially 'hypnotised' at a previous meeting into seeing the word 'drunk' whenever Ephesians 5:18 was misquoted. Other people with mild illnesses (such as colds) I have seen temporarily alleviated of their symptoms after a 'healing' session.

A Charismatic Christian medical doctor I knew who was once used by a prominent faith healer to record 'healings', highlighted the temporary nature of many healings today: '*I remember tracing a woman reported in a Kathryn Kuhlman book as having been healed of multiple sclerosis. I found her address in Tasmania and took a flight from Melbourne to see her. When she answered the door and I started querying her, she said she was back in her wheelchair and did not want to talk to anyone...*' (2)

Continued next page >

'social gospel' with a touch of politics thrown in (e.g. '*Stronger Futures Legislation*'). It's humanistic and all about *us*. The biblical Gospel is about '*Christ and Him crucified*' (1Cor.2:2).

But one of the most baffling gospels from the Uniting church came the year before by the same person (Rev. Alistair Macrae, President) Dec/2011



Gobbledegook

'...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 haves 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.'

I rate some of this as postmodern 'gobbledegook'! (Dictionary meaning: '*incomprehensible or pompous jargon of specialists*'). **What is meant by God's 'act of identification and solidarity...God's great action of solidarity...in loving solidarity...'? Where in this message is Jesus dying for our sin, as the apostle Paul wrote: 'For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2Cor.5:21).**

Australian Baptist Union (Rev. Keith Jobberns) Dec/2012

'...It's Christmas...shopping centres...kids putting up the Christmas tree...Christmas carols in the park...fireworks...It's Christmas. The work Christmas party, the smells and sounds...family holidays and the cricket...But the charm of Christmas is more than the just the sum total of cultural and commerce. The mystery of the power of Christmas celebrations is unexpectedly wrapped up with the swaddling cloth of a helpless baby boy born into an obscure family...It is barely believable that this baby's birth should make such an impact that it has as a marker for world history...this baby boy was God who became human and made his home among us. The real power of Christmas is the reality of God entering our world, walking where we walk, knowing our joys and limitations. It's God's invitation to follow Him and know His forgiveness, transformation and hope.'

This to some measure describes what we might be saved to, but what are we saved from? Why do I need his 'forgiveness, transformation and hope'? Jesus did not come to be '*walking where we walk, knowing our joys and limitations*'. He came to lay His life down in a bloody sacrificial death to satisfy the *judgement of God upon sin!*

National Council of Churches, Australia (Rev. Tara Curlewis) Dec/2012

'...Christmas is a time to rejoice and look at the world with fresh eyes. We see signs all around that remind us how Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Nativity scenes...school plays and in churches. These signs help us discover God with

us...*God in Jesus was there embracing the frailty of humanity. The Christmas message is discovering God with us and in Jesus' life we see God's love and desire for justice and peace...our prayer is for justice and peace to fill the world*'.

Why do we need to 'look at the world'? What exactly is meant by 'God ...embracing the frailty of humanity'? Is the Gospel about 'discovering God with us' or believing in His Son Jesus for who He is and what He did. Is the Gospel about 'justice and peace to fill the world'? The Bible prophesies the opposite! The Gospel is about the justice of God inflicted upon Jesus for our sins!

Other organisations such as the *World Council of Churches* could be cited but their messages are mostly about *peace, politics and economics* with almost no mention of Christ.

What would Jesus say to these religious leaders? (He called the religious leaders of his day: *'brood of snakes, hypocrites, white washed tombs full of dead mans bones...'*)

The Synoptic Gospels are replete with the following Gospel truths: *believe, repentance* (Mk.1:15); and the *death, burial, and resurrection* of Jesus the Messiah. Then the epistles to the Corinthian church contain the most references to the word 'gospel' and in one masterful passage this is synthesised into the following: ***'By which also you are saved...I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures'*** (1Cor.15:2-4).

There are *five vital points* here: *Death, Substitution* ('for our'), *Sins, Burial and Resurrection*. There had to be a *death* as a sacrifice to satisfy God for the sins of man (Rom.3:25; 1Jn.2:2;4:10). There had to be a perfect sinless *substitute* because of the inability of man, him being *'dead in sin'* (Eph.2:5). (The '*sins*' were the very reason for this '*gospel*'). There had to be a *burial* to fulfil prophecies and the sign of Jonah for Jesus to be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights (Matt.12:40). There had to be a *resurrection* to prove Jesus had power over death and sin (Jn.11:25; Acts 2:31; 1Pet.1:3).

What is Missing?

The modern Christmas/Easter messages *omits the mention of sin*. They often give a 'cure' without explaining the 'disease' - sin. People will by nature justify their sinful lives and this must be routed. The problem is the sin nature - that sin and death which was '*passed on*' from Adam (Rom.5:12-21). We are guilty, not 'victims'. The consequences of a gospel with no sin is no small matter when the Bible shows the consequences of sin being Hell - a terrifying demonstration of how much God hates sin and must punish it.

The modern gospel *misses the doctrine of substitution*. The true Gospel is the antidote '*for our sins*' (1Cor.15:3). Why is substitution important? Because

we have to be '*perfect*' to enter Heaven! Heaven is a perfect place with a perfect ruler! ***'Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect'*** (Matt.5:48). Our '*spirits*' are to be those of '*just men made perfect*' (Heb.12:23). God accepts the *perfect* offering of His sinless Son. ***'For he has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'*** (2Cor.5:21). ***'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin'*** (Rom.4:8).

The modern gospel is *missing the person* (deity) and *work* (atonement) of *Christ*. Instead, the modern gospel focus is on what God's Spirit might do for us (Sanctification). But *'the Gospel is not man accepting Jesus as His Saviour but that God accepted the lord Jesus as the perfect and only Saviour 2000 years ago...The Gospel is not man receiving Christ into his heart, but that God received the Lord Jesus into heaven as the mediator of sinners'*. (1)

One author sums up: *'Can you distinguish between the true gospel and all the false gospels in the contemporary church? We worship in a church of many gospels. There is a gospel of material prosperity, which teaches that Jesus is the way of financial gain. There is the gospel of family values, which teaches that Jesus is the way to a happy home. There is the gospel of the self, which teaches that Jesus is the way to personal fulfillment. There is the gospel of religious tradition, which teaches that Jesus is the way to respectability. There is the gospel of morality, which teaches that Jesus is the way to be a good person. What makes these other gospels so dangerous is that the things they offer are all beneficial. It is good to be prosperous, to have a happy home, and to be well behaved. Yet as good as all these things are, they are not the good news. When they become for us a sort of gospel, then we are in danger of turning away from the only gospel there is...Unless we keep the gospel at the centre of the church, we are always in danger of shoving it off to one side and letting something else take its place. Martin Luther rightly warned that 'there is a clear and present danger that the devil may take away from us the pure doctrine of faith and may substitute for it the doctrines of works and of human traditions...The good news of the cross and the resurrection must be preached, believed, and lived. Otherwise, it will be lost. The church's greatest danger is not the anti-gospel outside the church; it is the counterfeit gospel inside the church...They all say that they believe in Jesus. But who is the Jesus they believe in? Is he the Christ who is God as well as man? Is he the Christ whose cross is the only atonement for sin? Is he the Christ who is the Judge as well as Saviour? Is he the Christ whose righteousness alone can make us right with God?...it is the realities of the one true gospel that save - Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection for sinners'*. (2)

Bring the Gospel back!

Terry Arnold

(1) '*Firm Foundations*' by Trevor Mellwain

(2) Philip Ryken, Galatians Commentary