

Your Comments and Questions

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

Terry, is procrastination a sin?
(J.V., Qld)

Editor's reply:

This might depend on how 'procrastination' is defined. Some define it as 'delaying doing something'. Others say 'delaying something that should be done'. The word itself is not found in the Bible.

If procrastination is a result of laziness then it would be sin (Pr.15:19; 18:19). If we delay forgiveness, allow the 'sun to go down on our anger' or allow the devil to 'get a foothold' because of inaction, then it would be sin. Delaying our spiritual walk could be procrastination (the 'foolish virgin' parable comes to mind). In the area of sanctification I do think many Christians 'procrastinate' and may well be 'ashamed' at the judgement seat.

However, if we delay something so as to seek the will of God further, then it is not sin but wisdom and prayer? There are numerous other examples that could be cited, depending on the definition of 'procrastination'?

Terry's Itinerary

July 21 (Sunday) 9.30am Logan Presbyterian Church, Brisbane
Ph.0426877296

Ministry trips are being planned for the rest of the year and early next year for Queensland, NSW and further. If any churches are interested please contact Terry on taministries@bigpond.com or 0411489472

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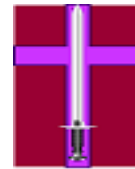
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'But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern [diakrisis] both good and evil', (Heb.5:14)

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teaching, informing and equipping the church.
Editor: Terry Arnold (Dr.Th; MABS; Dip.Bib.&Min.)

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

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Questions

Terry Arnold Speaking in Brisbane

Terry will be preaching at the
Logan Presbyterian Church on
Sunday July 21 at the 9.30am service.

The address is: 3 Barry Street,
Slacks Creek (about 1 km up the road
from Ikea). Ph.0426877296

Editor's Comment



There is a landmark, (and most likely a 'watershed') case currently being played out in Rugby football boardrooms, and now the courts of Australia which may finally determine how 'free' speech is protected in religious matters and could well define finally just where pastors and church leaders will stand legally when speaking publicly on societal matters using Biblical texts.

This comes about after Israel Falou, a devoted Pentecostal Christian and arguably the most talented Rugby player today, 'tweeted' the following: *'Warning: Drunks, Homosexuals, Adulterers, Liars, Fornicators Thieves, Atheists, Idolatrerers. Hell awaits you. Repent! Only Jesus saves. Those that are living in Sin will end up in Hell unless you repent. Jesus Christ loves you and is giving you time to turn away from your sin and come to him'.* "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God' (Galatians 5:19-21 KJV)".

The above was gleefully reported or quoted *selectively* by the left leaning media *omitting* in most cases to mention any reference to Christ.

One Criticism...

It is our view that this is not the best way to approach the unbelieving with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? This is to be done gently and with respect. This posting does neither.

Arguably, there is probably little or no Gospel presented at all in his quote and comments. It lacks content that would show why these particular sins would certainly send people to Hell. The Gospel must surely be prefaced with an explanation why salvation is actually necessary and to reveal the state of mankind before a holy God. It is about the fall of man and the resultant spiritual death more than the individual sins we commit. Without Christ it matters little how we conduct our lives because we are doomed before we begin.

The term 'Repentance' is not one easily understood by the unbelieving and requires explanation. Whether Israel intended to preach the Gospel here or not we are unsure. Simply targeting specific sins misses the mark when revealing the redemption available through Christ - just living our lives as we wish will finally find ourselves deserving of Hell no matter our perverse activities or perceived goodness. That is the Gospel - our graphic need of a Saviour - and the presenting of Christ as the only door through which we must pass.

The Issues At Stake....

Religious Freedom: There are several important issues at stake here. Should any person, whether a 'sports person' or not, be entirely free to express religious

'love the sinner and hate the sin'? But even Gandhi was speaking of US loving the sinner, not *God* loving the sinner.

You say I *'talk about semantics and straw man arguments'*. Yes I do, because apologetics, defending the faith and the true Gospel, is very much about these things! In all false or cultic teaching and false gospels there ARE 'semantics' and 'strawmen' which have to be addressed and pulled down. This is the ministry which I engage in, whether it is to anyone's liking or not. Words are important. That's how we communicate the Gospel!

You say *'What hope is there for any lost soul if God doesn't love the sinner? Stop messing with words and like you said preach the gospel'*. Yet within the article the Gospel was preached in several places. In the last paragraph we wrote *'What God wants all men to hear is that God commands all to repent and believe in His Christ. When we are saved, the image and perception we have of God and what He is like must be shaped by scripture alone. God is a God of love but he is also a God of judgement and justice. He deems it fit to punish sin one way or the other - either upon His Son Jesus on the cross, or in an eternal Hell'...* Is this not enough Gospel?

As for John 3:15,16 - the verse does NOT say *'whosoever will may come'*. What Bible translation states this? The KJV says *'...whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'*. It does NOT say *'whosoever will may come'*. This changes the words and the tense! (this IS 'semantics'). Who is *'twisting words'* here? Any interlinear will read 'all the believing ones' or similar. Interlinears have 'whosoever' translated as 'all' or 'everyone' (Greek 'pas'). God forbid I *'twist these words to suit my doctrinal stand'*... Show me where 'whosoever' here means anything other than what the KJV interlinears state: 'all' or 'everyone'. Using your words - this is what *'Jesus emphatically says'* here rather than *'whosoever will may come'*!

Yes, the Bible does not have the word 'Trinity' but it *clearly* teaches three persons in one God in numerous places. This is a cardinal, orthodox, historical doctrine of the faith. That cannot be said for *'God loves the sinner...'* which is a modern saying popularised by Gandhi!

Is the Gospel we preach weak or inaccurate? I urge you to consider that *'God loves the sinner and hates the sin'* is a way of presenting the gospel today which I claim is a wrong way of beginning any Gospel presentation. Many in fact do believe the statement is a false gospel in and of itself.

A further reply from the subscriber:

Terry, I am not going to be drawn into continuous dialogue on the subject. If you don't believe God loves sinners then you have no gospel to tell. Kind regards.

Editor:

This is not an uncommon response we receive in this ministry when people are challenged scripturally to prove us? Our Gospel doctrine should stand correction and being contended for integrity.

Your Comments and Questions

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Twisting Scripture?

Dear Terry, I read your article on 'God loves the sinner and hates the sin' ['Diakrisis' May/June, 2019 P.8-11]. Scripture from Genesis to Revelation declares over and over God's love for sinful man. You say 'The Bible doesn't state the words God loves the sinner'. The Bible doesn't use the word Trinity but you hold to the belief in a Triune God. You often talk about semantics and 'straw man' arguments. I put your article into that category. What hope is there for any lost soul if God doesn't love the sinner? Stop messing with words and preach the Gospel as you say. As for John 3:16 'Whosoever will may come'. I would rather believe what Lord Jesus emphatically said than twist the verse to suit my doctrinal stand. Kind regards.

(Name withheld at editor's discretion)

Editor's reply:

Hi brother...You say 'Scripture from Genesis to Revelation declares over and over Gods love for sinful man'. But you give not one scripture? My Bible does not say ('over and over') that 'God loves sinful man'. I read he is 'angry' with the unsaved sinner, his sin, and his 'wrath' is upon them. Please give scriptures to show 'over and over' 'from Genesis to Revelation' and we will print this! I once believed as you do and 'searched the scriptures to see if this was so' (Acts 17:11). I discovered otherwise...I can understand people saying we are to love the sinner. Apart from a general love for his creation, where does it teach God loves the unsaved sinner?

You also missed the main point of the article. It was to show that these phrases are being used to start a Gospel presentation. It plays into the modern 'God loves you' gospel. Our article suggested cliches such as 'God loves the sinner and hates the sin' might minimise the sin factor in the Gospel. We argued 'has he become a God of 'love' and not of wrath; a God of love and not of justice?' This kind of gospel is NOT what the evangelists of old preached!

It can be argued God has a general love for His creation. But some scriptures people use for God loving the unsaved sinner are actually out of context. eg. Rom.5:6-8: 'Christ died for the ungodly...God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' - This is to the elect, the foreknown, the ones who will believe. (Other scriptures Ezek.33:11 and Lk.19:41 are to Israel). If a case can be built for God loving all (eg.Matt.5:44,45?), elect or non elect, is it the same kind of 'love' for his elect, his church? Again, the main point of my argument was *how* and *why* we present the Gospel with such cliches as 'God loves the sinner and hates the sin', when scripture states God is 'angry' with the wicked every day?

Are you aware it was Mahatma Gandhi in 1929 who popularised the saying

Continued next page >

views and truths through their own personal media devices? These messages are targeted to people who have subscribed to these messages and any argument or offence taken in this instance are directed at the wrong person. Surely these were the Words of God and not a personal opinion? Presently the Bible is freely available to all in Australia and the growing number of people viewing it as 'hate speech' doesn't change that fact?

Apparently Folau had signed a contract forbidding him from commenting on his firmly held Christian views - which were seen as 'damaging' to the game of football. That premise is highly debatable considering it has now come to light that Rugby Australia were attempting to have a clause added for specific views such as those tweeted. However, it is questionable that this would be lawfully possible. It is impossible in our view to bring into disrepute a sport by publicly expressing private views on any religion. One cannot legally sign away one's right of freedom of speech even if one wanted to?

The Hypocrisies...

Clearly the actions of Rugby Australia are financially motivated. The openly homosexual CEO of Qantas Airlines has intimated that if Folau was not disciplined or dismissed from the team the airline's hefty financial support would be withdrawn. 'These comments are really disappointing and clearly don't reflect the spirit of inclusion and diversity that we support', a Qantas statement read. But why is it that 'inclusiveness' does not also include an opposing view? And why is Qantas in partnership with Emirates airlines of Dubai where the government does not tolerate homosexuality - such behaviour there is a crime punishable with imprisonment or execution at worst (foreigners are deported).

A question for the atheists and non christians who railed on about the 'homophobic' comments by Falou - why is homosexuality being singled out here when the 'tweet' mentioned more than 20 other sinful activities?! It's almost exclusively the LGBTQ+ community who seems to be upset? The 'drunks, adulterers, liars, fornicators, idolaters...' are not getting so riled or voicing accusations of 'phobias' and 'bigotry'.

Quoting the Bible is now 'intolerant' and 'hate speech'? Then what of the author of that book? If Falou is quoting God then it's also God who is 'homophobic' and a 'bigot'? How far will this go before the Bible is banned and true Christianity is silenced? How long before one is no longer able to quote from scripture without reprisal?

Why are atheists and agnostics so upset when they don't believe in God, Hell, or the Bible anyway? Who are they angry with and why? Why should what 'God' says so anger them when they don't believe He even exists?

What of the Islamists who also strongly condemn the evils outlined in the 'tweet'? In many Islamic countries homosexuals are thrown off buildings, thrashed with whips, dismembered, tortured and murdered. Do the media and other sections of society react with such outrage when Islamists preach the same 'hatred'? Their 'holy' books are also filled with the same so-called 'hate' speech. There does not seem to be the reaction to this as there is to the teachings of the

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Yet Israel Falou has suffered more contempt and hatred than any Christian for a long time in Australia. So much for tolerance which his critics seem to espouse? It's hypocrisy which will one day be condemned by the judge of all.

The Religious Leaders Reaction...

The reaction of the various religious leaders and denominations has been, with few exceptions, a deafening silence. Most of the mainline denominations have either rejected the comments by Falou or remained indifferent.

It is understandable that non christians will reject and misunderstand as 'hatred' these Biblical edicts. Yet when Christian leaders pronounce judgement on a person who dares to publish and distribute them it is indicative of the deep apostasy into which Christendom has stumbled.

Megachurch Hillsong founder Brian Houston was arguably critical of the Wallabies star. '*So sad about the (Israel Folau) situation. His way is not the right way*', he wrote in a quickly deleted tweet, according to news.com.au. '*It does not reflect the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament is clear, but grace does not point fingers. It recognises our own sinfulness. 'But by the grace of God*'. Comments like these are typical of the fence sitting of many leaders. In contrast, '*grace*' is not given by God to those who are willingly sinning against his laws and rejecting him and not '*recognising their own sinfulness*'. If '*Grace does not point fingers*' then why is God condemning them to Hell? Houston's 'gospel' leaves people hanging in space - unrepentant, unsaved, and abandoned.

Are there no religious leaders who would be prepared to explain the scripture quoted and bring in the Gospel that *all will perish unless they repent?* (Lk.13:3). The religious leaders of our nation are spineless and seemingly unable to perceive the opportunity given by this current affair to stand up as men with their brother Israel Folau and defend him and his freedom to openly publish the very words of God Himself?

The Future?...

The future does not look promising and the 'slippery slope' downward of religious freedom is already coming into view with social media giants suspending 'dangerous individuals' for 'hate speech'. Freedoms of individual thought and moral thinking will be less likely, or acceptable. Truth and facts will be considered 'hate'. Challenging sermons will be soon investigated. (For a recent example of this see our article P.5). The rising tide of secularisation, immorality and church apostasy is the beginning of the end.

These events should not surprise us. The scriptures are clear as to the apostasy of the last days and the increasing depravity of the human heart. We are living in exciting and fast changing times. But we have the truth of the Gospel at our disposal to be overcomers in this world.

Although we are to have a defence against this tide, we must not lose sight of the need to present and preach the true Gospel at every opportunity.

Terry Arnold & Mike Claydon

Your Comments and Questions

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

Blessings Terry, I hope this finds you both well and increasing in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...What do you know about The New Apostolic Reformation movement? ...Thanks for your faithfulness to The Lord Jesus in dark and evil days. I pray for Hervey Bay Bible Church and its leaders. Love in Christ.

(R.B., NSW)

Editor's reply:

The New Apostolic Reformation movement (NAR) teaches that the church now has new apostles that will lead the church militant ('dominionism') to take over the world for Christ. They teach the church is making the world ready for the return of Christ. There is a lot of information on the Internet concerning this movement.

The movement was started by false prophet C. Peter Wagner who developed a signs and wonders theology. It was supported by Rick Joyner and others. As early as 1996 we were warning of Joyner and his 'prophecies' which were full of bizarre dreams and visions (see '*Diakrisis*' Oct/96).

Many of the people in this movement are hyper-Pentecostal. The NAR teaches direct revelations of Christ to believers...It has also been called the 'third wave' of the Spirit.

It is NOT 'Reformational' in any historic sense. Contrary to scripture they believe in apostles today and churches run by apostles. The movement came out of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movements. Leaders involved in this movement are: Bill Johnson, Rick Joyner, Joseph Prince, Mike Bickle, Todd White, Copeland, etc. Most of these have already shown themselves to be false prophets. The movement is also quite 'militant' in their 'spiritual warfare' teaching. This is indeed an extreme and cultic movement.

Hi Terry,

You quoted: ['Diakrisis' March/April 2019, P.6] 'The Pentecostal Dilemma' ACC Pastor Danny Guglielmucci, head pastor of ACC Edge Church in Adelaide, Australia...diagnosed with lymphoma (blood) cancer...His son Pastor Michael Guglielmucci faked cancer, faked a healing, went all over Australia testifying about the healing...then confessed to being a fake and confessed to porn addiction...Another son, Pastor Kris Guglielmucci, was struck by lightning and died...ACC pastor Ian Woods died from a long-time cancer a couple of years ago'.

For your further information, you can add to that list pastor David Cartledge died of a brain tumour; Pastor Steve Penny and wife both suffering cancer...some of these people were exposed in case study 18 of the Royal Commission as protecting the paedophile Frank Houston...

(An AOG pastor; name withheld at editor's discretion)

Church 'Signs'

This has nothing to do with the 'signs and wonders' movement or signs of the end times you might have been anticipating, but the pun-laden signs you see outside churches. Such have often intrigued me - examples are: 'Seven days without prayer makes one weak'; 'Forbidden fruit creates many jams'; 'We have a prophet-sharing plan'; 'You cannot help everyone but everyone can help someone'; 'You have enough; you do enough; you are enough. Relax!'...Many signs appear to be advocating a works based salvation and are anti the true Gospel.

Do people think they are being funny? It's often hard to tell whether they're intended primarily to amuse regular congregants or to attract soul-searching passers-by? What is the purpose?

Should not these signs be more of a ministry than just amusing announcements? Even for people who might never go to church, could not using these signs be an opportunity to declare the Gospel? Yet it is rare to see a sign outside a church with Scripture on it. Only once have I read a doctrinally sound statement outside a church (and I don't mean 'God loves you')

I have also seen some signs that read rather blasphemous and one can only assume that is where their theology lies. For example, 'God is nice and (s)he likes you' or quotes from God haters and atheists, such as the late John Lennon: 'All we are saying is give peace a chance'. Others are political in content. Some sound like they are more from Confucious than anything Christian. Many are actually taken from ungodly philosophers.

Our church signs arguably show who we are and what our beliefs are. Our theology outside can well be what is inside as well?

Whether we realise it or not, we are walking billboards for our church. What the people of your community see in our life, they will tend to identify with the pastor and his flock. Eyes and ears are always open to the things you say and do. As Paul said, 'Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example' (Phil.3:17).

I often ask myself, 'What then should we put on a church sign'...What better than Bible verses! I would advise Bible verses that make sense on their own and do not require a theology degree and three chapters of context to understand it. Information such as service times are also handy. But such signs are an outlet for the church to glorify Christ and make Him known. Should not that be our mission? Why cannot such signs be another tool for reaching the lost and building a strong body of Christians?

Be encouraged and be sure your sign delivers the right message!

Chris Klemm (Pastoring elder, Hervey Bay Bible Church)

Religious Freedom - The Purge To Come?



Social media giant Facebook announced the permanent suspension of 'dangerous individuals' for violating the company's policies on hate speech and promoting violence...They're now banning people for wrong think. Facebook...purged political and social commentators Paul Joseph Watson, Laura Loomer, Milo Yiannopoulos among others. Now they're coming for Christians.

...Sure, the banning of...extremist sites calling for racial violence is a good thing. But outside of those types of accounts, the only other people being banned are Conservatives preaching freedom and Christians preaching Jesus Christ.

So just for fun, I thought I would do a quick Facebook search to see if Liberal hate groups were still active. Sure enough, I searched and found the Liberal hate groups like ANTIFA, the Muslim Brotherhood, the racial hate promoting Black Lives Matter, New World Liberation Front, a self-explanatory group called the Communists, Anarchists and Socialists United Front, the Jew-hating Nation of Islam, and believe it not, a group with 19,000 members and created by the Islamic terror group Hamas, the list went on ad infinitum. Seems like Facebook is getting really, really, really selective with who they consider to be the 'hate speech' people. And they all seem to be Conservatives or Christians.

Facebook...said that if anyone dared to post articles from InfoWars, that the offending person would be banned as well...Facebook has become the marketplace of the world. The Bible tells us that in the last days darkness will rise as the Antichrist takes the stage...Everything will be part of the One World global system from which there will be no dissent or debate...Dissent and individual thought will not be tolerated in the social society...but are we so intellectually anaemic that we need a social media giant to tell us what opinions we should and should not listen to? Facebook doesn't like the truth.

...George Washington...said... 'If the freedom of speech is taken away then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter'. Branding criticisms and critiques of particular ideologies or certain policies as 'hate speech' provides a way of silencing your political opponent while claiming the moral high ground in doing so.

...Christian sermons are now 'hate speech'. Facebook has removed a link to a sermon and temporarily suspended the individual who shared it because, apparently, some Christian doctrines violate the platform's community standards on 'hate speech'. The 9-minute clip was taken from a message delivered by missionary and evangelist Paul Washer in which he detailed the biblical doctrine known as Total Depravity...the state of humanity after sin entered the world (Gen.3), and how every part of man - his mind, will, emotions and flesh have been corrupted by sin...

'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' (Titus 2:13).

(Geoffrey Grider May, 2019)

Chinese Police Beat 60 Christians, Close Church, Bury Bibles



More than 100 Chinese police officers and SWAT team members closed a newly constructed church and beat dozens of Christians who were guarding it, and then buried Bibles and hymnbooks before leaving.

The incident in Henan - China's third largest province - took place in January and was reported by BitterWinter.org April 10. Chinese officials also seized the church's cash and other possessions.

'As soon as they entered the church, they smashed the donation box and pocketed the money, which totalled thousands of [yuan – likely hundreds in U.S.] Dollars. They also questioned us about where all of our church's money was kept', a church member told Bitter Winter, which monitors religious persecution in China.

The congregation, True Jesus Church in Anping, had opened a new building in July 2018 that cost around \$300,000 U.S. But the Chinese accused the congregation of being in contact with foreign governments. The Chinese plan on converting the building to a nursing home, Bitter Winter reported.

Officials arrived January 4 in dozens of vehicles to take over the building. When 60 or so church members barricaded the entrance with benches, more officers were called to the scene and stormed into the church. They beat the believers, leaving about 15 Christians on the floor moaning in pain. One woman who is in her 70's also was beaten...

(Apostasy Alert, 16 April 2019)

Editor's Comment:

This is now a regular occurrence in China. In other countries it's worse and with slaughters which are largely going unreported by the media. Religious persecution is now 80% to do with Christian groups. Current Christian persecution is eclipsing anything in history.

However, what is not well known by many is the more subtle type of 'persecution' of remnant groups even within mainline denominations in our own western countries. When the Chinese government behaves this way it is portrayed in the West as 'Persecution' - yet the mainline denominations sometimes behave in a similar manner. There are church assemblies who have been forced out of their own denominations for not agreeing with their policies or their direction and the congregations have been robbed of monies, buildings sold and leaders evicted.

We would remind readers of the article titled 'The Day Our Church Was Evicted' in a past newsletter and on our website - found in the 'Articles' section and then 'Churches of Christ' on our TA Ministries website (taministries.net). The above mentioned article is a reminder of just what possibly can occur if churches refuse to cooperate with the denomination's slide into apostasy.

The phrase '*anoint your eyes with eye salve*' - the '*eye salve*' ('*kolloúrion*') was a coarse bread or cake, a topical remedy applied to the eyes. Here the message is to the church at Laodicea to *see* and *repent*.

3:20 '*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*'.

The '*door*' and the '*knock*' here are obviously figurative of Christ being outside this church and calling for repentance.

3:21 '*To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*'. The '*throne*' is the same throne that John has seen in previous verses as a place where God is enthroned and spirit beings and angels abide with him. It is a place that John '*saw*' and was shown much detail throughout this book.

Conclusion

The Old Testament has Israel largely rejecting God. The New Testament has every man rejecting God (Romans ch.1-3). All are '*without excuse*'. The Jews had a new covenant promised to them (Jer.31) and yet they rejected their own Messiah who would bring in that covenant. In this book he comes in judgement and then finally in the second coming to the Mount of Olives (further detailed in Zechariah chapters 12-14).

The above commentary (Part 1) is by no means exhaustive. The intent is to show that this book *is to be understood* at least as far as *what John saw and described*.

The Gospel of faith and repentance and God's mercy and judgement is clearly shown in these early chapters which are working towards the ending of God's redemptive story!

The timing and the order of events in the first three chapters are clearly presented as immediate events in John's day with a divide in time and order at chapter 4 (see 1:19).

Jesus Christ has come once for salvation. Now '*soon*' and '*quickly*' he is coming again to set up a kingdom with his saints. In these three chapters Christ is described as in no other book. The purpose is to '*unveil*' Christ, his plans, his judgements. His deity is clearly shown in being a '*lamb*' on the throne but also a mighty and fearsome judge.

The symbols, signs and sights can be interpreted and understood by referencing other scriptures where the same figures are mentioned. Many of the figures and signs in this book are not found alone but displayed in other books. What is figurative and what is more literal can be determined with study.

I urge readers to set apart the time to study prayerfully and methodically each verse from the beginning to the end of this book. It may take days, weeks and months but it is guaranteed to produce a '*blessing*' (1:3) and may well engender a heightened sense of how precious the true redeeming Gospel is and thus of our Lord's return for his beloved saints!

Terry Arnold

A Fresh Look at Revelation

(Part 1 - Chapters 1-4)

verses and so render this to being just figurative language. Messianic Psalms speak of a reign on the earth *'I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'* (Ps.2:8,9). Isaiah 24:23 says *'the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously'*. Zechariah chapters 12-14 has the Messiah in His second coming to Jerusalem and *'the Lord shall be king over all the earth...'* (14:9); Micah speaks of *'the last days...the mountain of the house of the Lord...and people shall flow unto it...many nations shall come...the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people...nation shall not lift up a sword against nation...'* (Mic.4:1-3). Revelation simply continues this thread *'And have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth'* (Rev.5:10).

2:28 *'...and I will give him the morning star'*. Again, we are told elsewhere that this is Christ Himself: *'I Jesus...am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star'* (22:16).

Chapter 3

3:1 *'...the church in Sardis write; These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars...'* The *'seven spirits'* are already mentioned in chapter 1 and are repeated in 4:5; 5:6. (See above for interpretation). As previously mentioned the literal interpretation of the figure of the *'seven stars'* is in chapter 1: *'The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches'* (vs.20).

3:7 The *'key of David'* is used as a figure of power or authority (Is.22:22; 3:7; Matt.16:19; 18:18). (See 1:18).

3:10 *'Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth'*. The *'hour of temptation'* here is a reference to a short time. The Greek *'hora'* is elsewhere translated *'time'* or *'season'* and denotes a short period as in 1Thessalonians 2:17 where it is translated *'a short time'*. This *'temptation'* is said to be for *'all the world'* and *'them that dwell upon the earth'*. (Some commentators do believe this *'all the world'* is the known world at that time and restricted to the Middle East).

3:12 *'Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name'*.

The *'New Jerusalem'* is described in great detail in later chapters.

3:18 *'...buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see'*

The *'gold tried in fire'* is elsewhere mentioned in scripture as worship and worthiness and something precious to the Lord, as well as the testing of our faith and judgement (2Tim.2:20; 1Pet.1:7; Lk.3:17; 1Cor.3:15).

For years I have been studying and then preaching or teaching expositively through the Old Testament and most of the New Testament. I had even tackled the book of Daniel which I have never found to be an easy book to exegete. I avoided the book of Revelation preferring to have others with more expertise preach through this book. I have at times grown weary and almost confused at the differing views of the *'rapture'*, *'tribulation'* and *'millennium'*. Some of the polemics on this subject have arguably been to the detriment of the Gospel and to the danger of one being consumed with the second coming more than the first coming.

But recently I was greatly convicted to take a few days sabbatical, find a lonely retreat and prayerfully read through the book of Revelation verse by verse with no commentaries or references, but with attention to the hermeneutics of the symbols and signs. Prayerfully I wanted to explore *what should be 'literal' or 'figurative' and why*; as well as the *timing and order of events*. Much of this was done using standard methods such as finding the same *symbols, signs and wording* elsewhere (scripture interprets scripture). It is also necessary to have at least studied the book of Daniel first, as much of Revelation is referenced in that book.

The experience was one I will never forget and the hours vanished away as the scenes in revelation became so real. Indeed the book begins with promising a *'blessing'*: *'Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand'* (1:3).

In these articles (part 1 here) I am not primarily interested in the various views (*'Premil'*, *'A-mil'*, *'Post-mil'*, etc) but rather the *interpretation* (hermeneutics) of the images and symbols, as well as the *time* element and *order* of each scene. It is too easy to read this book with a preconceived *'grid'* of any one view - of which there are many - The *'Preterist'* view sees the majority of the book as having occurred by AD 70; the *'historist'* view see the events as having occurred in historical periods through history (usually all but chapters 20-22); the *'futurist'* view sees most of the book as future. Then there are the further views on the timing of the *'Rapture'*, the *'Great Tribulation'* and the *'Millennium'*, etc.

The Timing and Order

Chapters 1-4 are written about things which are past, present and future. In particular *chapter 1 verse 19 is a defining verse* in that it separates the *time* and *order* of the visions given to John: *'Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter'*.

The believers and the *'church'* are initially spoken of frequently as being on earth. But neither is mentioned as being on earth after chapter 4, but rather only described as in Heaven or about the throne.

The book has a strong sense of imminency in the timing and order of things. The word ‘quickly’ (*tachú*) is used often and shows the promptness and swiftness by which many of the events will take place.

All the events appear to be leading toward judgement upon the earth and Christ finally appearing and ruling the nations as king. The judgements are graphic. It is clear that this will be the culmination of the wrath of God finally overflowing to a world that refuses to repent.

The book also has a strong and undeniable Jewishness with constant references to Jerusalem, Israel and the Jews. The ‘New Jerusalem’ is also later described in great detail.

Hermeneutics, Symbols, Signs and Sights...

I confess in the past to having been influenced by some who half convinced me that this book could not be easily or mostly understood because of its many symbols, signs and prophetic supernatural sights. But by applying *common sense* and *Biblical rules*, one can ascertain what the original author meant to say (called ‘exegesis’). Too many confuse the descriptions by John by stating they are too mystical or symbolic to understand. The problem too is applying allegorical interpretations to signs and symbols and descriptions that appear too ‘incredible’ to take literally. Interestingly, some of the descriptions that would have seemed ‘impossible’ to take ‘literally’ even decades or a century ago are now quite credible to be taken so because of technology and machinery which now make them ‘possible’! The ‘every eye shall see’, the two hundred million horsemen in Revelation 9, the peoples and nations viewing the dead bodies of two witnesses in Revelation 11:9, the ‘mark of the beast’ and more, have now become literally ‘possible’ with technology and modern media. Arguably it begs the question as to how much that has been allegorised is really a lack of faith in what the inspired word in this book says that John ‘saw’.

Allegorising is the practise of finding meanings for the text. The problem with this is there is no definitive way of checking the accuracy of the interpretation as *the interpreter becomes the final authority*.

What is often missed in the book of Revelation are the statements showing that John the apostle is told to write ‘*what you see*’. Phrases ‘*like*’ and ‘*like as*’ are also commonly used throughout this book (also in many other books in the New Testament that would be taken ‘literally’) to indicate John is writing of *what he sees* or at least comparing what he sees to the closest known object he is familiar with or understands. John, if he uses such comparative language, is describing a literal event, not one which is symbolic, figurative or allegorical.

If we cannot understand one symbol then that does not give us license to treat the whole book in a symbolic way. Each symbol or figure must be treated on its own and *searched out elsewhere* to derive the meaning. In this book there are also hundreds of references to Old Testament passages and other New Testament books.

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diet to prove God (Dan.1:12.14,15). The New Testament also has ‘*ten days*’ as clearly literal in Acts 25:6 where there is a ‘*ten days*’ period before a judgement upon Paul by Festus. Not once in all the ten times is the phrase ‘10 days’ even hinting of any symbolic meaning. There is no reason why the eleventh use of ‘*ten days*’ of tribulation for the church at Smyrna would not be literal. Yet many ascribe all sorts of periods (such as ‘ten periods of persecution by Rome’), *which arguably hand the interpretation over to the reader rather than the scriptures*. Thus many succumb to the invention of changing the literal meaning because it is a book or genre of ‘prophecy’. But again, there are also *prophetic passages* in many other New Testament books usually taken literally. Nevertheless, this is not a matter of any heresy to be wrangled over.

Verse 10 also has the phrase ‘*be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life*’. The ‘*crown of life*’ here can be translated ‘*the crown which is the life*’. Elsewhere it refers to eternal life (James 1:12; 1Pet.5:4; 1Cor.9:25; 2Tim.4:8).

2:13 states the ‘*church in Pergamos*’ ‘*dwells...where Satan’s seat is*’. The figure of ‘*Satan’s seat*’ could well refer to Pergamos at this time being immersed in an area where there was much worship of many false gods.

2:14 mentions a rebuke for those who held to the ‘*doctrine of Balaam who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication*’. This is a literal reference to real doctrines derived from real characters who did exist (Nu.22-25).

2:16 When Christ says He will ‘*fight against them with the sword of my mouth*’, this is obviously figurative as elsewhere we are told the ‘*sword of the spirit*’ and the ‘*two edged sword*’ is the ‘*Word of God*’ (Heb.4:12; Eph.6:17 Matt.10:34; Rev.19:15).

2:17 ‘*...To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it*’. The ‘*manna*’ is found elsewhere in John 6:31-58 where it is clearly shown to be Jesus himself and his Word giving eternal life. The ‘*manna*’ here is probably a similar reference to the life of Christ.

2:20-24 speaks of a ‘*woman Jezebel*’ who claimed to be a ‘*prophetess*’ and who ‘*seduced my servants to commit fornication, and eat things sacrificed to idols*’. Christ threatens to put her into ‘*great tribulation*’ and ‘*kill her children*’. Many believe this to be a symbol from the Jezebel of the Old Testament. Others believe it to be a certain woman given the title of old. We are not told, but it clearly was *a situation of fornication and a false ‘prophetess’ within the ‘church in Thyatira’ at the time*.

2:26,27 ‘*And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father*’.

These verses are often allegorised and not taken as being literal. However, the number of passages in the Old and New Testaments which speak of a reign ‘*on earth*’ are very numerous. It is hard to see how some can allegorize all of these

1:15,16 ‘And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength’.

The figure of the ‘seven stars’ are then explained in verse 20: ‘The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches’.

1:17 has the reaction to this vision of the person of Christ: ‘And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead’. The expression here in other places denotes a fear and a dread of death. (Note the difference to those false teachers today who cite armchair like conversations and prophetic discussions with God and Christ).

1:18 has John being told not to fear from the one who is ‘the first and the last: I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death’. How are we to interpret ‘the keys of hell and death’? The person of Christ states He has the ‘keys’ to Hades and death as well as the ‘key of David’ (3:7). John does not see these ‘keys’ but is told by Christ of them. Elsewhere ‘keys’ are used as a figure of power or authority (Is.22:22; 3:7; Matt.16:19; 18:18).

1:20 is as previously mentioned - the literal interpretation of the figures of the ‘seven stars’ and the ‘seven golden candlesticks’: ‘The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches’.

Chapter 2

2:1-7 has the ‘He’ as Christ himself from chapter 1 speaking to the ‘church at Ephesus’. Verse 7 introduces a ‘tree of life’: ‘To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God’. The ‘tree of life’ is mentioned 10 times in scripture. The three times in Genesis is taken literally by many. Proverbs has 4 mentions which are obviously figurative to do with character. Revelation has three mentions and all to do with the ‘paradise of God’ or the ‘New Jerusalem’, the latter with great detail in later chapters. If the ‘tree of life’ is not literal then it at least carries a meaning of *eternal life*.

2:10 Christ speaks to the ‘church in Smyrna’ and prophesies a period of ‘tribulation ten days’. The phrase ‘ten days’ is mentioned *eleven times* in scripture. Throughout the book of Revelation there are instances of ‘days’ (11:3,9,11; 12:6) and ‘years’ (20:2-7) and ‘times’ (12:14) for certain events to take place. If the ‘ten days’ in verse 10 are not literal then what do we do with the mention of several instances of 3.5 years which matches Daniel and other books and clearly speak of a set period of a great tribulation? Days and years are usually taken literally in the Gospels and Epistles and so why is it that we would not take them literally in this prophetic book? The Old Testament uses are clearly literal references. The uses in Daniel are also hardly to be taken anything but literally - Daniel challenges the Babylonians to give him ‘10 days’ with a certain

One of the first ways to ascertain if a text is to be taken literally or figuratively is to ask the question - ‘Is the language *obviously* figurative?’ For example, Jesus used the bread and wine as obvious *symbols* or *figures* when He said that they were His ‘body’ and ‘blood’. Jesus also said ‘I am the door’ (Jn.10:7-9); ‘I am the way’; ‘I am the light of the world’. An example of an obvious figurative expression is ‘the cattle on a thousand hills’ (Ps.50:10). It is Hebraic poetic language. (The word ‘*eleph*’ here for ‘*thousand*’ is elsewhere used to denote a large quantity). Again, allegory is usually *obvious* in scripture. The parables of Jesus are examples of the use of allegory. The symbols in the Parable of the Sower (Matt.13:3-9) are all explained by Jesus in verses following.

If the word or phrase does not harmonise with the subject being discussed, this also is a possible use of figurative language. But in many passages the *text actually tells the reader* it is to be taken figuratively or allegorically. The classic case is Galatians 7:21-31 where a ‘bondwoman’ and a ‘freewoman’ are used as figures in a discussion about an old covenant and the new covenant - but we are told ‘*which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which engenders to bondage, which is Hagar*’ (vs.24). Another example is in John chapter 6 - ‘eat my flesh and drink my blood’ is shown to be figurative language in vs.63 where Jesus states that ‘*The words I speak to you are spirit and life*’ and John concludes ‘*you have the Words of eternal life*’. Similar obvious figurative language is ‘*your words were found and I ate them*’ (Jer.15:16); ‘*How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth*’ (Ps.119:103).

Why is it that in our own English language we seem to know what is figurative language, yet in this last book of Revelation the range of views from literal to allegorical are so numerous as to be confusing to many? When we say ‘*it’s raining outside*’ we know it is literal; when we say ‘*it’s raining cats and dogs*’ we know it is figurative, *but that it has a literal meaning*. When we have a figurative expression, we have a literal meaning. *It is this aspect I feel has been lost in interpreting the book of Revelation*.

The book of Revelation does have examples of *obvious* figurative language. In Revelation 12 there is a ‘woman’ giving birth to a ‘manchild’. The ‘woman’ is a ‘wonder’ (‘*semeion*’ - a ‘sign’). This ‘sign’ obviously is a metaphor for something else. The Old Testament consistently describes Israel as a ‘woman’ (Mic.4:9,10; Is.54:5; Jer.31:32, etc). Christ is born of the nation Israel (Heb.7:14). The passage is *obvious* allegory.

Learning to identify which aspects of a passage are figurative and which are literal in the book of Revelation is paramount to correct interpretation. The expectation to be ‘*blessed*’ (1:3) is surely dependant on understanding the text by sound interpretation.

From the outset in chapter 1 verse 1 the writer (John) states clearly that the revelation in this book is ‘*signified*’. The Greek word ‘*semaino*’ refers to a mark or sign to ‘show’ something. The New Testament use of the same word is to *make something known*. In John 12:32,33 (also in 18:32; 21:19) Jesus states ‘*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying*

(‘*semaíno*’) *what death he should die*. Here Jesus clearly shows what he meant by a previous figure.

Thus *from the outset the book of Revelation is to be understood by the events to come to pass!* It is the unveiling (‘*apokálupsis*’) of truth (1:1-3; 22:10). It is not expected we will understand exactly how, what date, or arguably what every symbol or figure represents without some searching and study. But we are expected to be ‘shown’ *‘things which must shortly come to pass’* (vs.1) and then further *‘things which must be hereafter’* (4:1).

What we are to understand in this book is *what John sees*. He was told to write down what he ‘saw’ (vs.2). *‘What you see write in a book’* (1:11). Over and over we read *‘I saw’* (1:12,17; 4:4; 5:1,2; 6:1,2,9; 7:1,2; 8:2; 9:1,17; 10:1,5; 13:2; 14:6; 15:1,2; 16:13; 17:3,6; 18:1; 19:11,17,19; 20:1,4,11,12; 21:1,22). *What he sees is what we must see also*, no matter how wild the figures or symbols may seem! Most of the identities are found in Heaven or about the throne. The descriptions are exactly what John literally ‘saw’ and what we are expected to literally see exactly as described.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1-3 literally reads of events in John’s day and their immediate future. In contrast chapters 4-22 argue strongly for future events. To fit all events after chapter 4 into a restricted past view or to periods of past history is fraught with inconsistencies as well as *denying elements of the Lord’s return* in later chapters.

The first three chapters present much *detail of seven churches*. There is evidence within the detailed texts to show that they were real churches existing in that day. Characters within these churches are also described (‘*Antipas*’ 2:13). There are commentators who have amassed evidence to show that these churches existed in real places. If we accept the place Patmos (vs.9) as being literal, where John was given the visions, then why not also take the ‘churches’ as literal?

By application the seven churches arguably could represent and be copied by churches of our present day. No doubt we can learn by that. But the amount of detail concerning the entire seven churches as a whole makes it difficult for those who would attempt to fit them into churches in history or as churches historically.

The expression in **verse 3** *‘the time is at hand’* (repeated in 22:10) is a common phrase throughout scripture to denote *imminency*. This is a most important aspect of this book and is a timeless expression for the reader to be ready for the coming of the Lord.

In **1:4** we come across the first mention of a ‘figure’ unknown on earth - the ‘*seven spirits*’. Many strange and allegorical interpretations have been pronounced for these ‘seven spirits’. But the same ‘seven spirits’ is mentioned in 3:1; 4:5; 5:6. By collecting data we are told they are *‘before the throne’*; they are *‘of God’*; are *‘seven lamps of fire burning before the throne’* and the person who has these spirits is the ‘*lamb*’ (Jesus Christ) *‘having seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God’*. These seven spirits are also mentioned in Zechariah 4:10 where the ‘*Lord of Hosts*’ is mentioned with *‘those seven; they are the eyes of the*

Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth’. Isaiah 11:1,2 states: *‘And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord’*.

The ‘*seven spirits*’ are that which emanate from Christ, the ‘*lamb*’. At best we can say they are a searching ministry to the world. Again, it is what John ‘saw’ that is literal here. In the revelations within this book John saw many supernatural creatures in Heaven and about the throne within a supernatural environment.

There is also an emphasis on the number ‘seven’ through John’s various revelations which does indicate an expression of completeness throughout the Bible (Ex.25:30-40). In this book there are ‘*seven churches*’, ‘*seven spirits*’, ‘*seven golden candlesticks*’, ‘*seven stars*’, ‘*seven lamps of fire*’, ‘*seven seals*’, ‘*seven horns*’, ‘*seven eyes*’, ‘*seven angels*’, ‘*seven trumpets*’, ‘*seven thunders*’, ‘*seven thousand*’, ‘*seven heads*’, ‘*seven crowns*’, ‘*seven plagues*’, ‘*seven vials*’, ‘*seven mountains*’, and ‘*seven kings*’.

In **1:7** *‘he comes with the clouds and every eye shall see him’*. Are the ‘*clouds*’ here to be interpreted literally or allegorically? Clouds are generally taken to be literal in many passages throughout the Bible. The same expression is found in Matthew 24:30 and Daniel 7:13. If the coming of the Lord is visible and literal then why not the ‘*clouds*’ also? (Zechariah 12:10 also has Israel visibly seeing the Saviour and mourning).

Are we to take ‘*every eye*’ here to be literal? At the time the book was written this may have seemed impossible; but today, is this not now conceivable and cannot the Lord make this possible?

In **1:10** we have the mention of the ‘*Lord’s day*’ as being the day John received the visions and revelations. The ‘*Lord’s day*’ was a common expression in early centuries for Sunday, synonymous with the ‘*first day of the week*’.

The expression *‘I...heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet’* is an expression which is common throughout the Bible where heavenly voices or speaking seem unique to the heavenly places and with sounds like ‘*thunder*’ or ‘*many waters*’. Note the words ‘*as of*’. The voice sounded ‘*as of*’ a trumpet sound. This is *how* John literally heard the voice.

In **1:11** the ‘*lamb*’ identifies himself as the divine ‘*Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*’. It is here that the figure of ‘*seven golden candlesticks*’ is revealed. How should we interpret this expression? Vs.20 tells us exactly what this ‘*mystery*’ is - they are *literally* the ‘*seven churches*’.

1:13,14 describes a person who John literally ‘saw’. The person is *‘in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man’* (vs.13). Note the expression ‘*like unto*’ - again such phrases indicate John under inspiration is writing *what he literally sees* and then who he understands the person to be - ‘*the son of man*’. This person is *‘clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire’* (vs.13,14). Daniel 7:9 has a similar description.