

Your Comments and Questions

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

Terry, Thank you for your faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ, His Word, the Holy Bible, and for edifying His Church with the Truth of His Word and keeping the saints safe from false doctrine. 'Diakrisis' newsletter and website are two of the few biblical resources that we can rely on for bold, clear Truth in Love.

Thank you again for all you do.

(L.M)

Thank you to Donors

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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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TA Ministries is a non-denominational faith ministry,
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.

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

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

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Interstate Itinerary

**The August - October
itinerary for Qld., NSW and
Victoria is now updated.**

See P.19 for the latest details.

Editor's Comment

The Word of God throughout history has been accepted as the 66 books of the Bible, the *written* Word of God, the '*scriptures*'. The Greek words for 'scriptures' ('*graphai*') invariably have the definite article with it, designating a particular set of sacred *writings* ('*grápho*').

This 'Word of God' was also historically understood as the one infallible all sufficient Word. Only scattered isolated heretical groups down the centuries (such as the Montanists and Irvingites) added their revelations to this written Word. However, in the late 19th century the Holiness movement and then the 20th century Pentecostal/Charismatic movements significantly added the idea of new revelations with prophesying, unknown tongues and words other than '*the* 'scriptures'.

A more recent and subtle form of this is the new '*rhema*' word. This is supposedly a word spoken by God to ones heart or mind, not found in the '*graphai*' - the scriptures. '*Rhema*' is one of the Greek synonyms for the English '*word*', the 'most common word being '*lógos*'

This new teaching is that the '*lógos*' was the *written* word of Scripture and a '*rhema*' is a subjective *spoken* word, such as in prophesying or God speaking to one privately, separate to the written Word. This distinction had people accepting *new revelations* through this '*rhema*' (spoken) word. The new teaching was first seen mid 20th century, taught by Wagner, Copeland and others, and especially later the Pentecostal leader Yongi Cho who popularised it, (he later fell as a false prophet and was convicted of embezzlement for 12 million dollars).

The first error in this separating a '*rhema*' from the written Word of God is that '*lógos*' and '*rhema*' are *synonyms* and used interchangeably in various contexts, and translated as many different English words. '*Lógos*' is translated as 'word', 'saying', 'communication', 'treatise', 'exhortation', 'utterance', 'preaching', 'speech', 'doctrine', 'reason'...and more. '*Rhema*' is translated as 'word' or 'saying'. Any distinction of one ('*lógos*') being the *written* word, and the other ('*rhema*') being personally *spoken*, quickly breaks down!

Further, sometimes '*logos*' is used for the spoken Word (Jn.4:50; 1Cor.12:8), rather than the written Word of Scripture. *This invalidates the theory of a distinction between 'Logos' and 'Rhema' as taught by some today.* Foremost Greek expert Zodiatis stated: '*Those who are of God hear God's words (rhemata, pl. of rhema [4487], John 3:34; 8:47). The word rhema here is equivalent to lógos. John 3:34 says that Jesus Christ, being sent of God, speaks exactly God's utterances which those who are of God understand and which those who are not of God do not understand because they do not accept them as the utterance of God.*'

Secondly, there are numerous *other synonyms* to '*lógos*' and '*rhema*'. Why then single out one synonym '*rhema*' when '*lógos*' has more than a dozen other synonyms ('*phemi*' - to speak; '*homilia*' - homily, speech; '*lalia*' - speaking; '*aggelia*' - message, announcement...and many more). Likewise '*rhema*' has other synonyms also translated as '*word*', such as '*épos*' (a word or proverb) and '*lalia*' (a saying, speech, talk). Again, to isolate '*rhema*' and turn it into a *personal word*

Itinerary August - October 2023

NSW

Aug 25th (Frid) 7.30pm Evangel church, cnr Neville & Clarke St, Bass Hill (Sydney) Ph.0412670995

Aug 27th (Sun) 10am Fellowship Baptist, 226 Nuwarra Rd, Moorebank (Sydney) Ph.0488555981

Aug 27th (Sun) 2.30pm St. Johns Park Baptist (Sydney), 178 Humphries Rd, Ph.0417179610 [Topic '*Women in Ministry*']

Victoria

Sept 3rd (Sun) 10.30am Heritage Baptist Church, Ballarat, 4 Remembrance Dr. Cardigan Ph.0403161522

Sept 10th (Sun) 10am Kangaroo Flats Baptist, 32 Church St, Ph.0413179268

Sept 15th (Frid) 7pm study, Mt. Cathedral Baptist, 37 Grant St Alexandra, Ph.0409382041

Sept 17th (Sun) 10am & 1.30pm Mt. Cathedral Baptist, (details as above)

Sept 20th (Wed) 7.30pm Numurkah Gospel Fellowship 60 Meiklejohn St. Ph.0407040820

Sept 24th (Sun) 11am Numurkah Gospel Fellowship (details as above)

NSW

Sept 27th (Wed) 5pm Bible study Aboriginal Evangelical church, Eden, Cnr Moorehead & Clare St. Ph.0401340393

Oct 1st (Sun) 11am & 5pm, Aboriginal Evangelical church, Eden (details as above)

Oct 8th (Sun) 10.30am & 6pm St. Johns Park Baptist (Sydney), 178 Humphries Rd, Ph.0417179610

Oct 10th (Tues) 7.30pm Evangel church, cnr Neville & Clarke St, Bass Hill (Sydney) Ph.0412670995

Oct 13th (Frid) 7.30pm Evangel church, (details as above)

Oct 15th (Sun) 9.30am Evangel church, (details as above)

Oct 15th (Sun) 5pm Central Mountains Baptist, Hazelbrook school hall 159 Great Western Highway (Sydney) Ph.0466590132

Qld

Oct 22nd (Sun) 9.30am Hervey Bay Bible Church, Hervey Bay Bible Church (Urangan Community Hall, Elizabeth St. (entrance opposite Miller St) Ph. 0411051118

Oct 22nd (Sun) 6pm Gin Gin Baptist, English St, Ph.0428385852

Your Comments and Questions

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

Terry, is Ellen G White guilty of teaching? The Bible is clear a female is forbidden to teach. Yet White is accepted by the church that claims to keep the commandments. Humans are brilliantly made, but our natures so flawed; we can accept false beliefs and still believe we are genuine. I hate that about our nature...

Editors reply:

A woman cannot publicly teach men but can teach women (1Tim.2:11-15; 1Cor.14:33-35; Tit.2:4 - the issue is *headship*, beginning in Genesis). Ellen G. White was a teacher in Adventist circles and considered a ‘prophet’, and one who made false prophecies. Our website has quotes by her in the SDA section...

Hi Terry...is it scriptural and permitted for women to read the Bible to the congregation of men and women and...to lead a congregation of men and women in prayer? Timothy instructs women to be silent in the Church meeting. I believe...the answers to these questions is ‘no’...No pastor I know locally...can answer me directly...the Church I attend allows women to do these activities...

(T.G. NSW)

Editor’s reply [excerpts only]:

...The scriptures do not specifically mention these activities...The answer has to be derived from principles in scripture...The two principles are *headship/order* and *submission/authority*...Ultimately it comes down to this: Does the activity have *woman teaching men and thus usurping authority over the man?* (1Tim.2:12). (Preaching is an easy one to those who have a high view of scripture, as it is handling God’s Word with *authority and teaching*).

Two scriptures help give a *principal* to guide - 1Tim.2:11-15 and 1Cor.14:34,35. The first, note the ‘*silence*’ (*hesuchia*) is a ‘quietness’ (a *manner* here, as translated in Acts 22:2; 2Thess.3:12), not a strict silence (note other scriptures where women did speak - 1Cor.14:5; Acts 21:9). A different Greek word (*‘sige’*) is a more absolute silence (Acts 21:40; Rev.8:1).

But the guiding principle of *teaching and authority* is in vs.12 ‘*I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man*’. The issue here is also *headship*, even from creation (vs.13,14; see also 1Cor.11:3).

In 1Cor.14:33-35 the issue is again *headship* and confusion vs order (vs.33). (The cultural background was also that women on one side of the church were causing confusion by speaking out of turn).

The issue of what women can do in various activities is again: *Is the women ‘teaching’ or ‘usurping authority over the man’?* (1Tim.2:12). That’s what has to be decided. From a pastoring view, if either caused division, a stumbling block...then why promote such activities? Based on *how you answer the principle* I would remain with what your conscience informs you in prayer and study. Bible teachers will differ on these various activities with women...

from God is grammatically erroneous. These Greek words are *synonyms*, used *interchangeably*.

Thirdly, the ‘*rhema*’ fallacy fails to give support for any new revelations. When ‘*lógos*’ or ‘*rhema*’ are used in scriptures - *both became the final written Word* in the Bible. There is no extra ‘*rhema*’ (or ‘*lógos*’) outside of the Bible to be added.

Finally and most important, such new false ‘*rhema*’ revelations undermine the Scriptures as being *inspired, infallible and all sufficient*. This is no small matter! The teaching of getting a ‘*rhema*’ from God is self styled, mystical and new. It confuses the conscience and one’s own thoughts for the real thing, the scriptures. It is not trusting in the Lord and His Word but ‘*leaning on our own understanding*’ (Pr.3:5).

It is akin to idolatry to place personal revelations on the the same level as the Word from God, the scriptures. It is also a lazy alternative to studying scripture. It has an insufficiency, a fallibility, an errancy, as opposed to the *all sufficiency, infallibility and inerrancy* of the scriptures. It is an *addition* to the scriptures!

The scriptures are *past*, for ‘**God...spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son**’ (Heb.1:1,2). We now have ‘**a more sure word of prophecy...the prophecy of THE SCRIPTURE**’ (2Pet.1:19,20). If ‘*rhemas*’, personal revelations, are accepted as words from God then it *detracts from the all sufficiency of the Bible as THE Word of God*.

Do those who teach and practise the ‘*rhema*’ teaching with new words from God realise how damning and ungodly this is? God’s methods of ministering to the *saints* has not changed - it is still found in Christ and His all sufficient Word. Again, *people who proclaim words directly from God are adding to the Word of God!* They are implying the Bible is not sufficient. They cannot claim *Sola Scriptura* - scripture alone for doctrine and the spiritual life. No ‘*rhema*’ teaching will ‘*rightly divide*’ the Word of Truth (2Tim.2:15).

The Bible alone is sufficient for faith and morals. This doctrine supports the all sufficiency, inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture as our only guide for doctrine and the spiritual life. ‘**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works**’ (2Tim.3:16-17). Where is the ‘*rhema*’ or any personal revelations in this?

Such new methods of gaining revelation are the watering down of the inspiration and the all sufficiency of scripture. At the root of much of the controversies of the modern era (recently same sex, women in ministry, etc) is the weakening on the doctrines of Inspiration and the all sufficiency of the scriptures, with no longer a high view of scripture. Do we just pay lip service to these foundations when we allow for new revelations and in ‘*rhemas*’?

The Spirit’s words in the scriptures warn that ‘**in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron**’ (1Tim.4:1,2).

Terry Arnold

Pope Francis Honours Martyrs?



‘Pope Francis has commissioned a new working group in the Vatican’s department of saint-making...for the Causes of Saints, to identify Christians from all denominations who have been killed for their faith since 2000...The Pontiff said ‘the effort seeks to honour these martyrs at the upcoming Jubilee of 2025...[with] a catalogue of all those who have shed their blood to confess Christ and bear witness to His Gospel’...

The Jubilee ‘is a special year of grace, in which the Catholic Church offers the faithful the possibility of asking for a plenary indulgence...the remission of sins for themselves or for deceased relatives’...Pope Francis noted that martyrs today ‘are more numerous in our time than in the first centuries. They are bishops, priests, consecrated men, women, lay people, families, who in different countries...with the gift of their lives, offered the supreme proof of charity. It is a matter of continuing historical research...to gather testimonies of life, up to the shedding of blood, of these sisters and brothers of ours, so their memory can stand as a treasure cherished by the Christian community...The research will concern not only the Catholic Church but extend to all Christian denominations...Christians continue to show...in great risk, the vitality of Baptism that unites us’.

According to the letter, many modern-day martyrs ‘were killed for various reasons: trying to worship Jesus in places hostile to Christianity or for helping the poor and others...A not insignificant number, indeed, are those who, despite being aware of the dangers they face, manifest their faith, or participate in the Sunday Eucharist. The work of the Commission will make it possible to place side by side with the martyrs, officially recognized by the Church...’

Leonardo Blair, *ChristianPost*, July/2023

Editor’s comment:

What hypocrisy! The Catholic religion martyred *hundreds of thousands* of protestant Christians. Up to 50 million were martyred by Rome in the last 1,500 years. Decrees to eliminate heretics were even reinforced by various Popes (Alexander IV (1254-61), Clement IV (1265-68), Nicholas IV (1288-92), and Boniface VIII (1294-1303). It is estimated that 20 million were killed during the later ‘Inquisitions’ alone. During the last four years of Queen Mary’s reign (1555-1558), no less than 288 persons were burnt at the stake, most of them for refusing to accept the Roman ‘Eucharist’ (‘transubstantiation’). Will any of these martyrs be ‘*honoured*’ or only ‘*bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, lay people...martyrs officially recognised by the church*’ in this ‘*special year of grace*’?

What of ‘*plenary indulgences*’ for the ‘*deceased*’? Is ‘*remission of sins*’ granted by a Pope or by the *blood of Christ* (Acts 8:20-22; 1Pet.1:18,19)? What arrogance to have people ‘*ask*’ the church to grant ‘*remission of sins*’.

What of ‘*Vatican’s department of saint making*’? When God’s Word refers to saints it is to *all true Christians* in this life and the next (Eph.1:1; Phil.1:1).

Your Comments and Questions

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

Terry, for years I have been reading ‘Diakrisis’...When much younger I was in love with Jesus, wanting to know more of Him, a high spirited follower. I believed He died for all my sins and I was justified in God’s sight. As my walk progressed, my knowledge of the Word increased, I realised I was fence sitting, not a true follower, I tried and tried, but was only concerned about my own interest. After two years I said enough is enough, if I can’t do it correctly I will give this up...God is no fool, He can see straight through me. Now I have great disbelief, chained by my sins. Hebrews 6 gives warning to deserters who have tasted God’s goodness, left the faith...My claim as a Christian was false. Do you agree?

(Name withheld)

Editor’s reply

Thanks for your honest sharing. I only have suggestions, not knowing you...On Hebrews ch.6, I will send after later. (Most Christians get that wrong).

...Either you were never really born again or you have simply slipped away from the faith, or lacking security? Only you and God would be sure. But if now you believe the Gospel is true, then you need to call afresh to God for salvation. He will in ‘no way cast you out’ if that is genuinely how you feel.

I have a close friend who says he heard and believed the Gospel at a Billy Graham crusade in the 50’s but the world intruded and it was not till he was 38 that God arrested him from a very sinful lifestyle. He is unsure whether he was saved earlier or later, but he knows *he is saved now, which is what matters.*

Another friend (now a pastor) says he believed at a young age but went into a drug taking sordid lifestyle. God arrested him much later...These testimonies are difficult to understand theologically...But it does seem God’s hand was upon these people?

All you can do is ‘examine yourself’ (2Cor.13:5) whether you truly believe. If so, then come back to Christ immediately. Be aware too that *what you feel or experience does no always match the faith that could be there.* We will all have periods when God seems distant and we are grieved by our sins. I rest upon this fact - the blood of Jesus is enough for my sins; when I trust, even mentally, He promises to credit righteousness...If I were to get to the judgement and be asked why I should enter Heaven I would first plead the redeeming blood and the promise of justification...After that in sanctification I will have highs and lows in feelings...but feelings are often a false representation of what is true.

Further to this I would study the doctrine of Justification and imputation (see website in ‘*Salvation Doctrines*’). Read Bunyan’s testimony (see ‘*Heroes of the faith*’)...you might see a similar struggle. You may be saved but going through a time of experience not matching reality? Otherwise if you want to be saved, call upon the Lord afresh - He will NOT cast you out (Jn.6:37). [The editor sent section on Hebrews 6 - see ‘*Diakrisis*’ 2018 Sept/Oct P.9]

Boston then received a call from Ettrick in Selkirkshire where the people were in dire need, there being a spiritual barrenness and much carnality, with fornication and foul language being common. Boston found it difficult to leave Simprin but was drawn to the great needs of Ettrick.

The first ten years at Ettrick were trying and difficult and Boston came close to giving it all up after eight years. Yet he persisted and soon after changes were to be seen and the church grew in spiritual strength.

In both Simprin and Ettrick he was cautious about who he gave communion to and often engaged in interviewing people before they could partake, as was the practise of many Puritans.

Boston's sermons were eventually noticed and published afar. Many of his sermons and his works were published after his death. Some believe he did more for Scottish preaching than any other minister. Both John Wesley and George Whitefield recommended his book *'Human Nature in its Fourfold State'*. The great revivalist Jonathan Edwards also rated Thomas Boston highly calling him *'a truly great divine'*.

Boston was a strong advocate of the doctrines of Grace.* He taught the total inability/depravity of man in his sinful state; sovereign unconditional election; particular redemption; the effectual calling; and the preservation/perseverance of the saints. However, he disagreed with many who were sometimes called 'high calvinists'. He strongly majored on the free offer of the Gospel and grace to all, and faith alone for salvation.

In 1732 Boston preached his last sermon on 2 Corinthians 13:5, majoring on self examination as was typical of many of his sermons and the Puritans. At this sermon preached from his death bed, the people gathered around the manse to hear their pastor. He died the same year, aged 56.

Boston's autobiography is a valuable record of Scottish life in his time. His other books include *'Human Nature in Its Fourfold State'*, one of the religious classics of Scotland; *'The Crook in the Lot'*, a short book noted for its originality; and his *Body of Divinity*. These works had a major influence over the Scottish people, both rich and poor. Among his works is a learned treatise on Hebrew points. His Memoirs were published in 1776 (ed. George D. Low, 1908). An edition of his works in 12 volumes appeared in 1849.

Such Puritans as Thomas Boston left a lasting legacy, especially in England and Scotland. The devotion and resilience in ministry is hardly surpassed. The suffering, trials and hardships of their lives is almost uniform. Such is often not understood today in theologies that expect God to make the Christians feel good about themselves. The Puritans were not high minded but saw themselves as Paul saw himself, a wretched sinner saved by the Grace of a loving God who mercifully reached down with His Son in a glorious salvation (Rom.7:24; 1Tim.1:15).

Terry Arnold

* Today often dubbed 'Calvinism' but wrongly described or confused with hyper-calvinism

Excerpts in this article from: *'Meet the Puritans'* by Joel Beeke; and *Wikipedia*

Mormon Riches



With an estimated wealth of \$236 billion in 2022, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could potentially cover all of its current expenses 'forever' with returns from current investments without collecting any additional tithes from congregants. It could become a \$1 trillion denomination by 2044, a new report from The Widow's Mite contends.

The report, prepared anonymously by 'current and former Church members whose professional and educational backgrounds include business, finance, law, investment management, economics, journalism and history', was created through an analysis of 'publicly available sources'.

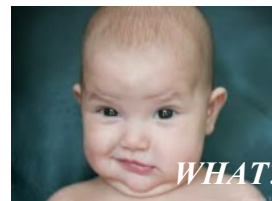
...The church and its affiliated investment manager, Ensign Peak Advisors, was fined a collective \$5 million by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission for using shell companies to hide the size of their investment portfolio, which grew to a reported \$32 billion in 2018. In 2019, a report on a whistle blower complaint to the Internal Revenue Service alleged that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stockpiled \$100 billion of tithes and donations meant for charity...

[In reply the church stated] '...A portion is methodically safeguarded through wise financial management and the building of a prudent reserve for the future. This is a sound doctrinal and financial principle taught by the Savior in the Parable of the Talents and lived by the Church and members. Church funds exist for no other reason than to support the Church's divinely appointed mission...The pathway out of poverty is keeping the commandments of God, including tithing'...

[Screen shots followed of real estate portfolios worth approx. \$102 billion in 2021, universities under various names, and investments growing faster than its giving...]

(Leonardo Blair, Christianpost July 2023)

A Vegan Bible?



'For \$3.99, you can buy a vegan-friendly version of the Word of God!' People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is selling a...rewrite of the Bible that aligns the book of Genesis with the group's animal rights message. Produced as a digital download with a virtual 'vegan leather' cover...According to PETA, 'The message in Genesis is that God created every sentient being, He saw that they were good, and He gave them greens for sustenance'...

Among the changes made by PETA to the Word of God includes referring to animals as 'beings' rather than 'beasts' or 'creatures'. Another deviation is the use of plant fibers like hemp and bamboo as clothing rather than animal skins, a significant change from...Genesis 3 in which God made 'garments of [an unidentified animal] skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them' (Genesis 3:21).

PETA's book...completely transforms...the Old Testament foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary in the account of Abram offering up his only

son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah...In Genesis Ch.22, Abraham...befriends a gentle lamb to show reverence and respect for God's creation, rather than slaughtering a ram to demonstrate faith...Abraham and Sarah...*'adopt a dog named Herbie'* [showing] the importance of adopting dogs from shelters and rescue organizations.

...PETA President Ingrid Newkirk defended taking liberties with Christianity's sacred text...*'a loving God would never endorse exploitation of or cruelty to animals...This chatbot interpretation of the creation story clarifies and highlights God's intended message of kindness, gentleness and love for everyone'*.

[However] Darrell Bock, professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Seminary says...*'You can't rewrite the Bible by making God in our image'*.

(By Ian M. Giatti, Christian Post Reporter; July/2023)

Gender Neutral Bibles?

In recent times some are attempting to produce Bibles that follow the culture of the day in gender reassignment. God is no longer a 'He' because of the so called 'oppressive patriarchy' of the day. God can even be a 'she' or no gender at all?

However, His masculinity is what *God has chosen to reveal* in His Word and of Himself. The God of the Bible is the *bridegroom* to Israel who is described as a woman, His *bride*; and the Church as the *bride* of Christ (Ezek.16:8-21, 27-30,34; Is.54:5-8; Jer.2:2; 3:1,6-8, 10-14; 31:31-34; Hos.1:2; 2:2-7, 14-16, 19-23; Rom.9:25; Eph.5:22-33). God incarnated Himself as a male on earth for 33 years. How does one delete the gender in these? The Father is also consistently portrayed as a male, even Abba Father; not 'Abba mother' or any other countless genders invented in recent times. God clearly made the distinction between male and female (Gen.1:26,27) and with the use of different Hebrew and Greek words.

If one starts changing the identity of God or Jesus in one place, where does it end? What excuse then would we have for not changing other things that offend, such as Hell, justice for sins, the Gospel of a crucified Christ, and doctrines such as predestination and sovereign election which offend the logic of many.

New Bibles now change 'him' to 'them'. But often this means changing a singular to a plural. In Revelation 3:20 are we to change masculine pronouns to second person pronouns? In Proverbs 5 there is a masculine son, a child and a woman mentioned. How will this all be changed to make sense? What do we do with Psalm 34:20 where changes to the masculine would delete it being about the Messiah's bones! Changes to gender create real inconsistencies and contradictions!

Yet in the modern wisdom of man the 1989 New Revised Standard version changes men to 'people'. What is also missed by many is that the Bible has another Greek word translated 'man' ('*anthropos*') which is generic for mankind, male and female, and usually well shown by the context. Will not God judge tampering with His word? *'For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent...has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?'* (Rom.1:19,20)

Terry Arnold

Thomas Boston

Thomas Boston (1676-1732) was a Scottish church leader, theologian and philosopher. He was born in Duns on 17th March 1676, son of John Boston. His father had suffered imprisonment under the earlier laws against Puritans who as non conformists refused to conform to the Church of England. He was educated at the Grammar School of Duns and was later employed by the well known Alexander Cockburn. He then became headmaster of Glencairn school.

At age 11 he was 'spiritually awakened' under the preaching of Ralph Erskine, expounding the scriptures on John 1:29 and Matthew 3:7. Boston would walk several miles each sabbath to hear the Word of God, sometimes in bitterly cold winter frosts and through black adder waters. *'But such things were then easy, for the benefit of the Word, which came with power'* (Memoirs, P.10).

At age 15 his mother died, his father at age 25. He studied at Edinburgh University in 1691 and in 1694 graduated with a Master of Arts.

Many churches would have called him to be their minister, but at the time the power to install ministers often was influenced by the landlords who could intervene and prevent who they did not want. Twice Boston was prevented from taking positions in churches. Finally in 1699 a landlord of Simprin in Berwickshire, agreed. Boston is said to have renewed his covenant with God at this time stating *'confessing he was utterly lost and undone'* in himself, stood *'in absolute need of a saviour'* and in need to renew the covenant with Him.

Simprin was a challenging pastorate. People were ignorant of the scriptures and needing much teaching in even basic doctrines. When he started pastoring, Boston found only one household that observed family worship, and the Lord's supper had not been celebrated for years.

Boston set about establishing two services each Sunday, one in the morning, the other in the afternoon. He taught the people also from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. He rose each morning in hours of prayer and meditation, set days aside for prayer and fasting, and other days for visitation. In time he had mastered several languages as well as New Testament Greek.

While in Simprin He married Katherine Brown in 1700. Katherine suffered depression and insanity bouts and often locked herself in a room. She saw the bouts of depression as attacks from Satan. Boston saw these trials as *'discipline from his heavenly Father'*. He was utterly devoted to his wife and wrote glowingly of her graces and his love for her. She died in 1737.

Boston himself struggled with pain and weakness. Yet often he had to care for His children of which there were eventually ten in total. Boston buried six of them, two in Simprin and eight in his second parish in Ettrick. (It was not uncommon for Puritans to have many children, and for such an infant death rate in those days. Some Puritans lost almost all their children). One of his sons, Thomas, followed him as minister after his death. Another son, John, became an admiral in the British navy. But five of his children lived less than 1 year.

The church at Simprin outgrew its building. Every family established family worship.

Two groups of prophets?

Grudem's differentiating Old Testament prophets from new, and separating 'apostolic' prophecy from 'congregational', is novel and full of difficulties. The rules laid down for evaluating prophecies in the Old Testament (eg. Dt.13 and 18) were not suddenly dismissed in the New Testament. There is no indication that prophets in Corinth were not subject to such guidelines. The scriptures used in church life were mostly Old Testament.

The idea of Corinthian prophecy being 'congregational' and not 'apostolic' is an argument lacking real evidence. In contradiction, in Acts chapter 2 Peter's sermon cites a prophecy from Joel chapter 2. Indeed much of the book of Acts quotes Old Testament prophecies. The New Testament prophet Agabus also models and speaks the same as the old Testament prophets 'thus says the Lord' when he says 'thus says the Holy Spirit' (Acts 21:11).

How would the churches of the today be able to distinguish the two types of prophecy Grudem advocates? Further, how would the two groups of 'prophets' work in a church service? How would 1 Corinthians 14:29 operate - 'Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge'? Who would judge the prophets fallible and the prophets infallible, 'congregational' or 'apostolic'? Where is this separation in scripture ever made?

The idea that New Testament prophecy could be 'inaccurate' as Grudem says, would surely have created situations where the church would not be able to guard itself against utter confusion (as is the case today in many Pentecostal churches?).

Summary

The church fathers and history attests to the gift of prophecy ceasing when the Scriptures were complete. Yet today this gift apparently continues in many churches?

Nowhere is there any record of a true prophet being able to be 'inaccurate'. Yet today false prophecies are prolific in Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. To lessen a prophet and his message to a fallible unauthorised mental 'inaccuracy' is a blight on the status of a true prophet in scripture as well as a high view of the Word of God! Either God said it or He did not.

The use of flawed semantics and arguments from silence will not allow for a secondary group of prophets making mistakes. Yet today that is exactly what occurs in every church that practises prophesying.

Why do we make excuses for so many failed prophecies today? How will these 'prophets' answer to God on the day of judgement? Are we not judged by the Word of God (Jn.12:48)? The issue should frighten many who practise and listen to prophesying? Yet it seems not to for many? Perhaps it is because we do not have a high enough view of the written word of God as final, infallible and all sufficient.

Terry Arnold

Some information extracted from *Masters Seminary Journals*.

(1) Wayne Grudem, 'The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today' P.14,15.

(2) 'The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians' (3) Ibid 40,41

The Pelagian gospel

Today there are so many gospels that it would take a whole book to even briefly describe each. Throughout the centuries the true Gospel has been attacked and added to, either to make it a gospel of man or a gospel of works, the two being in subtle agreement. In recent times new modern gospels have added prosperity, bodily healing, mans potential, his purpose, success, social concerns, politics...the list is exhaustive and often depending on the fleeting fashions of the times.

All these new gospels deviate or add to the true Gospel of the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ who satisfied God's wrath upon the sinner who has broken God's every law. This Gospel is *about Christ and Him crucified* to pay for our sins if we will believe. It's *about Christ, who He is and what He did*. It's not about us or what we can do. It's not even about the Holy Spirit, but *about Christ*.

Old Heresies

Apart from all the new gospels, there is a much more subtle gospel that sounds true, uses scriptures that are true, yet is producing huge amounts of false conversions in modern times. Few realise that the roots of this gospel stem from old heresies.

The Pelagian heresy and its later Arminian stepchild, turned the Gospel on its head and made it more about man's ability and will. (1) Both were judged as heresies by the church of each era, yet have been *resurrected in the last two centuries*. Following the second Great Awakening, from about 1784 the Methodist church in England adopted these old Pelagian and Arminian heresies, which were much about the will and the ability of man in conversion. 'New measures' in presenting the Gospel, first adopted by Charles Finney, infiltrated Gospel preaching and church practices. (2) *The Gospel increasingly became about what man can do in response*, assuming an emphasis on his will and ability.

The Gospel and the Response - the Distinction

However, *the response to the Gospel is not the Gospel* itself, which is *about Christ*. The emphasis of what man can do in response with his ability and his will assumes man has power to receive salvation in and of himself, when the scriptures teach the opposite (Rom.8:7,8; 1Cor.2:14; Jn.1:13). Without the drawing and 'quickening' of the Holy Spirit we remain *blind* in our hearts and minds, as *slaves* to, and 'dead in sins' (Jn.6:44,65; Eph.4:18; 2Cor.4:4; Rom.6:16-18; Eph.2:2-5; Col.2:13). We cannot be Born Again of anything 'of ourselves' (Eph.2:8; Jn.1:13).

The Gospel *is not* an 'offer', an 'invitation', but a *proclamation of Christ!* Again, it is here that we confuse and emphasise the response to the Gospel with the Gospel itself. The Gospel is the good news of *Christ and his offering to God*

Continued next page >

(1) See author's book 'Calvinism & Arminianism - Out of the Maze' for the history of this.

(2) See authors book 'Foundations for Evangelism' and website: www.taministries.net

for our sins. It is about Christ, not us; His work on the cross, not ours; His free gift given, not anything given of us - it is 'not of yourselves' (Eph.2:8,9).

The Gospel is not about us or what we can do in response, except that we are sinners under the judgement of God. The 'Gospel' is about Christ and what He did for us, and no more. We had no part in the Gospel itself, except that we were sinners, it being solely the work of Christ on the cross, His death, burial and resurrection. The Gospel is about God's perfect and finished work in Christ for us helpless sinners.

Again, the Gospel is not about the Holy Spirit, although He is the one who brings the message to the hearts of the people who will believe, who draws them to Christ, who creates new life from the deadness of sin. But that same Holy Spirit never draws attention to himself or to man, but to the heart of the true Gospel - that Christ has been crucified as a substitutionary sacrificial offering to a God who must be appeased and satisfied for sin.

The true Gospel message is not asking the sinner to give anything or to do anything, except believe. When the Gospel is spelt out clearly as being Christ alone and His work alone - only then might we call all to 'believe', to 'call upon the name of the Lord', to 'receive' Christ (Mk.1:15; Acts 2:21; Rom.10:13; Jn.1:12). But sadly many feel they need to help God the Holy Spirit to 'close the deal' that an impotent God is attempting to achieve with man. But it is God and His Spirit alone who calls, draws, quickens (makes alive), justifies and saves (Jn.6:37,44,65; Eph.2:5). The primacy and the urgency is in the Gospel message itself preached, rather than any response.

The Gospel and the Holy Spirit Power

Emphasis on the response to the Gospel and what man can do makes for a gospel devoid of the dependence upon the Holy Spirit. It has reduced the Gospel to a mechanical human effort. Such a gospel God will not honour, and the fruit of that is seen in the 80-90% false and fruitless conversions seen today. The emphasis becomes about a decision instead of the proclamation of an historical event that satisfied the judgement of God upon those who would believe.

Do we really trust the power that is in the Gospel itself to do the work in the heart that is necessary for the Spirit to 'draw', to make alive the will of the person who is 'DEAD in sins' (Eph.2:1,5; Col.2:13)? Why have we invented new methods and new terminologies to do what only God's Spirit can do? Is this not a lack of faith in God's 'power' within the Gospel message. The 'power' is in the Gospel message itself and 'the righteousness therein': 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. The just shall live by faith' (Rom.1:16,17). The word 'power' here is 'dunamis', referring to intrinsic power, power of itself. The Gospel message generates power of itself by the Holy Spirit and needs no outside help. This reasoning is clear in verse 17: 'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed...' The Gospel itself contains the revelation of the

was simply a very human and sometimes partially mistaken report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone's mind'. (1) Grudem's view is that Old Testament prophets are not comparable to New Testament prophets. Prophecies in the New Testament churches 'did not have the authority of the words of the Lord'. 'The prophet could either understand it imperfectly or report it inaccurately, or both'. (2) Only NT apostles spoke inspired words. (3) Grudem also separates prophecy in 1Corinthians 12-14 from prophecy in Eph 2:20 and 3:5, the latter being 'apostolic prophecy' and the former 'congregational prophecy'.

Grudem also goes into great detail with semantics and a Greek rule, not mentioned by Grudem but commonly called 'Sharp's rule'. The rule is when 'and' ('kai') connects two nouns of the same case, if the article 'the' precedes the first and is not repeated before the second noun, then the latter always relates to the same person expressed by the first noun. (The rule is commonly used to show that Christ is the same deity as God, see KJV Tit.2:13; 2Pet.1:1).

Grudem uses this rule for Ephesians 2:20 where two nouns are connected by the Greek word for 'and' ('kai') and governed by only one article ('the apostles and prophets'). He gives a list of similar examples. He says Ephesians 2:20 has an absence of the second article in 'the apostles and prophets', meaning the writer viewed apostles and prophets as a single group, and that we cannot immediately be sure whether that group has one or two components. He states that Paul would have made it clearer if two components were in view. From this reasoning he concludes that Ephesians 2:20 is speaking of apostle-prophets who are distinguished from those who are simply prophets, which he describes in passages such as 1Corinthians 12-14. Grudem says apostle-prophets were limited to the first century church, but the second kind continues to the present day.

Semantics

The semantics of the above breaks down when cases are found where one definite article governs two or more nouns joined by 'kai' ('and'). For example, Ephesians 4:11 'And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers' - the 'pastors and teachers' may be the same people, yet two different functions are clear. It is also obvious that scriptures too numerous to mention refer to either pastors (1Pet.5:1-4 - pastoring elder, overseer, bishop), or teachers, arguably as separate people. In practise Bible teachers are not always pastors.

Further, Grudem misapplies Sharp's rule in that there are lesser known stipulations for Sharp's rule which must be met for the rule to be correctly used and two persons be grammatically joined. Both nouns must be personal or common, not proper names. The rule is not applicable to plural or impersonal nouns.

Whether one joins apostles and prophets or not, again it is still obvious from the New Testament scriptures that speak of each group individually that their functions were very different! Grudem's semantics do not argue well for apostles and prophets as the same and then a separate group of more fallible 'other prophets'.

The New 'Prophecy' Teaching

In recent years a number of high profile Charismatics have expounded a rather novel view of the practise of prophesying, common in Pentecostal/Charismatic circles. The new take splits prophesying into infallible and fallible, authoritative and unauthorised words from God. Although there are few theologians that have consistently endorsed the theologies of, and the practise of, the modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, in recent times some prominent theologians, including Wayne Grudem, have added a new view to the gift of prophecy.

Wayne Grudem has written some excellent material, particularly on women in ministry and regeneration, and is considered a reformed conservative Charismatic. However, his view of 'prophesying' has arguably blurred the understanding of 'prophecy' and allowed a new fallible non authoritative type of 'word from God'.

The History

The historic orthodox view and that of the church fathers on the gift of prophecy taught that the gift of prophecy and new revelatory words ended when the scriptures were completed. Later the Montanist movement in the 3rd century attempted to resurrect the practise of prophesying and fell into disrepute and heresy. Yet, the same practise was resurrected again in the 20th century with the Pentecostal and the later Charismatic movements.

The gift of prophecy was uniquely *words from God*, mostly foretelling in the Old Testament and forthtelling in the new. The gift was held to be as infallible *authoritative words from God*. Those that were written in the manuscripts of scripture were deemed the final words from God, not to be added to (Rev.22:18; Dt.4:2, 12:32; Pr.30:5,6). The church was **'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone'** (Eph.2:20), with the prophets having spoken in the '*past*' and then the final prophet Jesus Christ (Heb.1:1,2).

The Pentecostal/Charismatic movement largely ignores the *past* aspect in this and continues with countless people supposedly giving words from God worldwide each week. More recently some such as Grudem, have further muddied the waters and redefined 'prophetic' words from God as being of *two types*.

The New View

The new view has attempted to make the practise of prophesying more respectable and bring two opposing sides together. Grudem, although reformed in soteriology (salvation theology), crosses over in the sign gifts, particularly in this area of prophecy. He urges Charismatics to stop using the term 'a word from the Lord' so as to separate it from the written prophesy of scripture (2Pet.1:20). He asks cessationists to accept some prophesying as not equal to New Testament authoritative prophecy. He believes in a secondary form of prophecy: *'Prophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority, but*

righteousness of God himself in the flesh through the message of the substitutionary death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Is not also the Holy Spirit all powerful to bring the message to the heart of the hearer and draw, convict and save? Indeed, the *Spirit must do this work before any response can be made by fallen sinful man who is 'dead in sins'*!

The Gospel Preaching in History

It was the Puritans who invented evangelistic literature. Richard Baxter, Hugh Clark, John Cotton and many others were all great evangelists. Baxter's classic '*Call to the Unconverted*' or Alleine's '*Alarm to the Unconverted*' won thousands to Christ and showed the evangelistic heart of the Puritans. Yet modern evangelism has increasingly moved away from what the Puritans established. The great evangelists in previous centuries also maximised the *preparation* of a mind for an understanding of the Gospel - ie. sin and its consequences; the judgement of God; and thus the *reason* for the Gospel and the need to be saved.

Today we too often begin with 'God loves you' and then a 'Plan of Salvation'. This completely contradicts the methods of the great Reformers, evangelists and church leaders of old. They started their Gospel presentation with the opposite idea - 'man is a sinner' to show the very reason why the sinner needs the Saviour!

The many 'plans' of salvation put forth today also emphasise a 'decision' and often give the unsaved something to *do*: '*Pray this prayer...I do now receive and confess Him as my personal Saviour...make your decision to receive Christ...*' Yet, we are not saved by receiving Jesus as a personal Saviour nor by making a decision. Rather we receive Jesus as our Saviour when we understand and believe the Gospel. I am not 'knitpicking' here. This concept of receiving Jesus as a 'personal saviour' by a 'decision' is actually not found anywhere in scripture! We are saved when we understand and truly believe the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and his substitutionary atonement on the cross.

One can examine the numerous Gospel tracts today as well as Gospel messages in many churches and it will be seen that too often *the Gospel is minimised and the response is maximised*. Recently someone gave this author a tract which reaches out to Roman Catholics. The information concerning Catholicism was accurate but the evangelistic gospel message that followed highlighted what we have been exposing in this article. It read: '*Salvation is by personal faith in Christ alone...God's grace - it is a free gift for all who personally receive Christ as their Saviour (Eph.2:8,9)...my salvation is a personal relationship between me and God...if I realise I am a sinner in need of salvation I must come to God and receive the free gift of eternal life that he offers me...you need to take positive steps to know Christ personally as your Saviour and Lord...salvation is a free gift from God but you must receive it by faith...*' (1) However, as a Roman Catholic and later a Charismatic Catholic I did all of this above! I had a 'faith' in Christ alone, I received Him as saviour, I knew I was a sinner, I took many 'steps' to 'know Christ

(1) '*The Catholic Crisis*' (Tract) by Vince Wall of 'Herald of Hope' Ministry

personally'...! I was not short of such *responses*! But I did not understand the wrath of God upon sin and how sinful my nature really was; how such had to be satisfied before God with a once for all sacrifice, a *substitution* of Christ and His death for mine, His death, burial, resurrection on my behalf. Christ's work done and finished on the cross is what I had to believe and to receive Him all by grace and nothing I could do or work to satisfy God. My own responses and 'positive steps' of 'receiving' left me not born again, unregenerate.

There are many examples of great past evangelists who preached the Gospel right side up, with the emphasis on the Gospel rather than any human response, without the 'new measures', means of getting decisions, altar calls, etc. These 'new measures' initially came under much criticism from the evangelists and church leaders of the day. Yet today such practises and emphasis on the response is widely accepted. Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd Jones, Wesley, Whitefield and many of the great evangelists since Finney, were all against such methods to get a response, a decision. Lewis Chafer once used the invitational system but abandoned it because he believed it fostered salvation by works. Wesley wrote a booklet about it and gave eight reasons against 'calling for a decision'. Charles Spurgeon, rather than have an 'altar call' which focused on a 'decision', finished his sermons in this passionate style: '*Before you leave this place breathe an earnest prayer to God, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner. Lord, I need to be saved. Save me. I call upon thy name...Lord, I am guilty, I deserve thy wrath. Lord, I cannot save myself. Lord, I would have a new heart and a right spirit, but what can I do? Lord I can do nothing, Jesus come and work in me to do of thy good pleasure'*'. (1)

These great evangelists and revivalists simply called them to *believe* - as the response to the Gospel. The likes of great Gospel preachers such as Charles Spurgeon and Martyn Lloyd Jones *never gave the listeners anything to do, except to believe and receive Christ*. And this was *after* preaching sin within *the Gospel of the person of Christ and His work for us*.

At the end of Martin Lloyd Jones' life hundreds of letters flooded in to testify of people who were saved in various meetings under various sermons as he consistently preached *Christ and Christ crucified*. There were no altar calls or any of the modern methods used today. And most of the converts stood the test of time, unlike today where we have a huge fall away rate of 80% or more. Neither were these earlier men interested in 'results'. Preaching the Gospel took priority. The results are God's business since it is *his work, not ours*. We are ambassadors to the King who requires His message be delivered with faith in, and without adding to, the truth and power of His Word.

The Gospel and Faith

After the Gospel is preached, why don't we just simply call people to believe in what Christ has *done*, rather than what we can *do*? Why don't we call them to *repent* and to *believe* in a finished work and plead with them to call upon the name

(1) '*Free Grace Promise*', October 11th, 1888 by C. H. Spurgeon

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of the Lord (Rom.10:13)? The rest will be left to the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Do we trust the Holy Spirit to save, or do we have to 'woo' people into a response? The Pelagian gospel downplays human depravity and man as unable to respond unless first called/drawn. Man is exalted above his station and apparently can make the first move...respond, accept, ask, come to? That is a gospel of works. A god is offered who wants to do things, but cannot without our response? It is the gospel of what man can do by his decision, whereby the key is in mans hands to accept a God that seems impotent to save unless man exercises his will, which apparently is not enslaved but free. This is faith in what man can do, not what God will do.

Which gospel?

'*Another gospel*' is closely aligned with '*another jesus*' and '*another spirit*' (2Cor.11:4). If one has another jesus or another spirit then one has '*another gospel*' (2Cor.11:4; Gal.1:6).

We implore the reader to discern what you are hearing today in any Gospel presentation, and ask: *Is it about Jesus Christ and Him crucified? Does it make sure sin and its consequences? How much of it is about Christ crucified and what He has done; and how much of it is about what we can do? What terminology is used in the call to respond - does it use the terms in scripture - to believe, to repent, to receive, to call upon the name of the Lord for salvation...or does it use other man made expressions that appeal to the heart rather than the mind and understanding? Is Christ shown as an all powerful Saviour; or is the will of man appealed to?*

Which Gospel will we set before the people? Will we begin with 'God loves you', or 'man is a sinner'? Will we begin with explaining who God is and why He cannot tolerate sin; or will we speak of 'what a wonderful plan God has for our lives'? Will we be patient in the preparation of a soul and teach the law broken, or will we minimise sin by pandering to human ability? Will we destroy the 'offense' of the cross by not mentioning the wrath of God on the unsaved which was then placed on Jesus Christ? Will we turn the Gospel from what Christ has *done* to what man can *do*? Will we call for repentance and faith, or call for a 'decision'? Will we trust the sovereign Holy Spirit to bring the understanding of 'Christ crucified', or will we tell them their 'decision' has made them a 'Christian'?

Galatians presents this Gospel dilemma as deadly serious! There is '*another gospel*' which '*perverts the gospel of Christ*' (Gal.1:6,7). The judgement on any other gospel is to be '*accursed*' (Gal.1:8,9). Paul says '*For do I now persuade men, or God?...*' (Gal.1:10).

The Gospel is one doctrine we must get right! It cannot be diluted or made appealing to the carnal needs of man. The cross is offensive to man in his sin. But it is the power of God contained in the message and the Spirit that leads man to repentance from sin and shows God's love for his soul. *Bring the Gospel back!*

Terry Arnold

(For more in depth treatment of this article see authors book '*Bring The Gospel Back!*')