

# The vital importance of God's word

## And the dangers that seek to undermine it in churches today

### Introduction

#### **Man's privilege**

God's word is the most important tangible thing in the world; there is nothing in the material universe that is more important than God's word. Why?

There are many things in creation that glorify God or point to God in some way. Almost anything at all can be examined in nature and immediately one is full of wonder and that wonder points to the glory of the Creator. Christians can testify to God and proclaim the truth of God and this is very important. Individuals can do good works in the name of God and manifest a testimony that honours God. But none of these things are as important as the actual word of God in the Bible.

The reason is that it is only the Scriptures that authoritatively express the actual mind and thoughts of God. The Bible is God reaching out from heaven into the material universe and telling us what he thinks about a variety of subjects.

Words are the expressions of thoughts and ideas. When man seeks to communicate he does it in words. Someone skilled in using words can express the most delicate and complex ideas and feelings in ways that captivate readers; thus some books have changed the world.

When God decided to express himself to man he did so with words. This is why he says, in his word, that he magnifies his word above all his name (Ps 138:2). His word is the communication of God's desires and will to mankind. It is the choice of God in heaven to communicate with man and tell man what is on his heart.

Thus the Bible shows us not only the commands of God but also the thoughts of God, the feelings of God, the desires of God, the 'pain'<sup>1</sup> of God, the plan and purpose of God, the delight of God; in short, the Bible exposes the heart of God to men.

Man, of all things in the whole universe, is exceptionally privileged in that he has in his possession a summary of the very ideas, feelings and heart of God. It is an encyclopaedia of God's attributes and will. Therefore, there is nothing more important in the cosmos than the word of God.

Anyone who wants to know God must study his word.

Anyone who wants to obey God and do his will must study his word.

Anyone seeking to fulfil his purpose in history and glorify God must study his word.

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<sup>1</sup> God does not suffer pain like mortals do, but his word shows us that there are things that cause God the equivalent of displeasure, anger or sadness.

There is no other way for mortal men, who cannot see into heaven, to know how to please God and do his will. Studying the word of God is the most important task that any mortal can undertake and the only one guaranteed to result in blessing and pleasing God.

### **The warfare**

It is for this reason that the devil seeks, above all other things, to stop human beings studying God's word.

Over the centuries he has used many tactics in order to achieve this, including successfully preventing men from owning a Bible in their language for nearly a thousand years.

However, today his strategies are more subtle and deceitful. The proliferation of Bible translations has not meant that God's word is properly studied and understood because the devil constantly wars against men to stop them from properly understanding it or to just ignore it.

This is the heart of spiritual warfare – a battle for the mind; and key to that battle is the understanding of God's word. Those who know God's word will succeed in glorifying God<sup>2</sup> those who do not will fail.

We need to examine some of the devil's tricks to stop people studying God's word so that we are aware and ready.

## **Mysticism**

This is one of the greatest problems in the modern churches. In all ages there have been some mystics but every period of scholastic dogmatism leads to a contrary period of emotional mysticism; and we are in such a reaction today. Some call this Postmodernism but in the church it is the domination of Charismaticism.

What this has meant is a turning from studying God's word for its own sake, refusing to learn doctrine and theology based on the Bible, and seeking fleshly stimuli instead.

Thus different teachers bring their own emphasises, which are all just variants of mysticism. Here are just a few modern examples of focusing on some mystical technique instead of God's word.

- Submitting to hypnotism, and suggestibility.
- Submitting to an altered state of consciousness after becoming passive.
- Accepting personal prophecy.
- Centring on a 'Rhema word'.
- Submitting to emotionalism and then emotional counsel.
- Accepting the command to 'drink and not think'.
- Accepting that exotic phenomena are acts of God (such as uncontrolled barking, crowing, dancing, screaming, crying, wailing, laughing, falling over etc.).
- Following mystical prayer disciplines (of which there are many, most of them are Roman Catholic in origin).
- Accepting the authority of inner voices.
- Being dominated by feelings and impulses.

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<sup>2</sup> Dan 11:32, 'The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.'

- Accepting the validity of dreams and visions.
- Accepting the validity of interpreted tongues as personal direction.
- Claiming to be enlightened or perfected.
- Claiming knowledge on the basis of some mystical experience.
- Claiming to be absorbed into the divine.
- Contemplative prayer techniques.
- Going through extreme self-denial, asceticism, death to self, or a 'dark night of the soul' which then leads to a state of supposed divine knowledge.
- Making judgments on the basis of claimed metaphysical<sup>3</sup> phenomena; such as auras surrounding a person or out of body experiences.

We could continue in this vein forever, so vast are the expressions of mysticism.

The essence of mysticism is the mistake that something emanating from the depths within you is a divine communication. In technical terms it is seeking divine knowledge not indirectly through Scripture, but immediately inside the personality.

What mystics generally do is perform some discipline to turn the mind away from normal matters to seeking something hidden deep within the soul. Often this discipline is portrayed as a journey or ascending a ladder; sometimes as digging deep within.

What happens is that either something within the person, or something put upon the person from outside, changes the normal state of consciousness into something not rational and not awake, but not sleeping either. The result is delusions.

Since it is deep emotions that are being stimulated, people feel excited and convinced by such experiences, imagining that they are divine communications. In the most extreme cases some mystics believe that they are God himself.

The essence of the Charismatic baptism in the Spirit is of this sort. As a second blessing experience, it is a mystical event that stimulates deep feelings in the soul and often produces tongues and prophecy or other spiritual gifts. The problem is that this is exactly what happens in false religions and the occult as well; identical mystical experiences that produce tongues and prophecy and other paranormal events.

The phenomena that arise at extreme Charismatic meetings are also of this sort. As people submit to being passive after emotional worship, repetitive banal songs and chanting, after being dominated by a leader on the platform, they fall into an altered state of consciousness (a mystical event) and begin to demonstrate weird behaviour, such as uncontrolled physical actions. Often these lead to claims of knowing something, sometimes a so-called word of knowledge. Again this is common in the occult and eastern religious world. In fact many Hindu gurus try to restrain such behaviour and restrict Kundalini yoga. Less wise Charismatics encourage it, notwithstanding the psychological damage it does to people.

Now mysticism is not confined to Charismatics and Pentecostals; it is also present in many Roman Catholic, New Calvinism, Quaker, Holiness, Higher Life, Wesleyan and other churches, and many sects. Some parachurch organisations are based on this such as

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<sup>3</sup> Metaphysical (i.e. beyond physical): something based on abstract (usually excessively abstract) reasoning; transcending physical matter or the laws of nature.

Renovaré (lit. ‘renewal’).<sup>4</sup> Some techniques and methodologies are based on it, such as Inner Healing. Formats may differ but the result is always the same.

What all this sort of nonsense does is to take people’s attention off the word of God and place it on to experiences and deep inner feelings. This is what the devil wants.

Now it does not matter if the resultant knowledge gained from mysticism is good or bad. Though most mystical experiences produce lies, sometimes truth is mixed in with it (as in any devilish temptation). Thus some mystics have written some things that are true, amongst many that are false. The point is that when such mystical knowledge is trusted and followed up, the devil has got you to turn from the word of God as your supreme authority.

Trusting in anything other than the Bible for your source of authority is falling into the snare of the devil.

## False prophecy

Close on the heels of mysticism is another feature common in Charismatic churches – prophecy.

There are two forms of this.

### **Low-level corporate prophecy**

The first are the common prophecies that arise from the congregation. These are usually exhortations of some sort and rarely involve any foretelling. Though wrong, they are mostly harmless in simply being the over-anxious desire of someone to encourage others and falsely claim that it arises from God. Such folk should check the NT where the OT phrase, ‘Thus says the Lord’, never appears at all.

Though there is a true type of prophecy in God’s will (and rarely seen until necessary), it is not of this sort at all. In fact most prophetic words today are found in the inspirational teaching of leaders explaining the oracles of God. We need such spiritually powerful prophetic teaching today. The Puritans believed that spiritually powerful preaching was public prophesying. However, God also occasionally gives gifts of foretelling to the church when it is needed.

### **The office of prophet**

The second form is more dangerous. This is the false claimed office of prophet; something that has been rescinded by God (Matt 11:13, ‘For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John’).

These church leaders claim to be prophets like those in the OT, having great authority and claiming to have the words of God. Thus they often set targets and goals for churches in the false claim of divine knowledge. People read their foolish books in their millions. Some of these supposed prophets have even told people that God’s word is dead and dusty and is not necessary with them around.

Even if people do not know their theology or the Scriptures, they ought to have common sense. These prophets have failed time after time after time. They have foretold the future, only for it to fail. They have committed terrible gross sins, such as alcoholism, fornication, fraud, greed, adultery and sexual abuse. Some have even admitted being homosexuals.

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<sup>4</sup> Richard J Foster’s books are filled with mystical ideas that originated in his Quakerism.

Others have done criminal damage to individuals by punching them or kicking them. Surely folk should see that these men are charlatans? Even the OT warns us to judge a prophet and evaluate him by his actions.

Since the cross and ascension of Jesus has brought us into spiritual union with him, and since this has made us all priests unto God, we do not need prophetic middlemen to bring God's word to us. We have it for ourselves. Thus the OT prophet was cancelled after the resurrection because he was no longer needed. As we are all priests, so we are all prophets in the general ordinary sense.<sup>5</sup>

Now where there is a big focus on the validity of prophets, there is usually a diminution of interest in God's word. Some streams actually demand this by saying that the prophetic 'Rhema word'<sup>6</sup> is more important than Scripture.

Some idiotic and unlearned leaders have even set their strategies and organisation according to the words of prophets. Their websites claim their church has divine authority because they have listened to this or that prophet. Usually the failure of the strategy shows how good that prophet really was; but people never seem to pay attention and just move on.

Modern Charismatic prophecy, particularly the office of prophet, is just another device to turn people away from studying God's word for themselves.

## Claims of new revelation

Now revelation is important in the ordinary sense; that is, believing that God has spoken to you through his word as he applies Biblical teaching to your life. This comes through Bible reading, meditation and prayer and is quite normal. The whole point of the means of grace, especially Bible reading and prayer, is that God applies Scripture to you personally to encourage, exhort, correct, or even to admonish and rebuke. This sort of revelation is the result of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. We can all enter God's presence in the Spirit and hear his voice (not audibly).

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you. Jn 16:13-15

For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Eph 2:18

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Heb 4:15-16

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Heb 10:19-22

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Pt 2:9, 'But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.'

<sup>6</sup> A supposed 'now word' from God that has direct current application to an individual. 'Rhema' is Greek for a spoken word, which appears in the NT (e.g. Matt 12:36; 2 Cor 12:4; Eph 6:17; Heb 12:19).

However, there are some who claim a form of revelation that far exceeds this; indeed they claim a revelation that is equal to, or even supersedes, the Bible. In history this has happened many times.

Supreme examples of this are: the Zwickau Prophets (1530s), the Society of Friends (Quakers, 1652+), the French Prophets (Camisards, Cevenols, 1688+), the New Light Prophets (1742+), the Shakers (1770+), Joanna Southcott (1792), the Mormons (1830+), Edward Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Church (1827+), and the Seventh Day Adventists (especially Ellen Gould White, 1840's).<sup>7</sup> Many sects that emerged out of Pentecostalism claimed to have special revelation; some have taught the abandonment of the Bible. Various Charismatic individuals have also claimed special revelation; again some have denied the importance of the Bible.

So there has been no shortage in history, even recent history, of people claiming to have a special divine revelation that needs to be heeded above the Bible. Some have taught that their revelation supersedes the Bible, or just denounced it as being less important, or even dead. Here are some recent examples:

- *[We] are not interested in ... dusty truth known to every one. ... The difference between the truth of God and revelation is very simple. Truth is where God's been. Revelation is where God is. ... God chasers don't want to just study from the mouldy pages of what God has done [i.e. the Bible]; they're anxious to see what God is doing.* Tommy Tenney. [*The God Chasers*, Introduction.]
- *It is no more the primary purpose of the church to teach the scriptures than it is for British Rail to promote timetables.* Gerald Coates. [*Evangelicals Now*, July 1996, quoted in *Contending Earnestly For the Faith*, 4.2, p8.]
- *The word will do you no good.* Paul Cain. [*The School of Prophecy*, Anaheim, Nov 1989 session 7.]
- *The second mark of a God mocker is a fear of confrontation and change. They are so stuck in religious tradition that they are closed to new revelation.* Stephen Hill (Brownsville Church, Pensacola). [*The God Mockers*, chapter 1, (1997).]

Every age gives examples of claims of a new divine revelation. It is a satanic device to take people's attention away from Scripture. This takes various forms of intensity. It leads to a complete abandonment of the Bible. It leads to a diminution of trust of the authority in the Bible. It lessens the importance of the Bible. It does not deny the Bible but so much attention on the revelation leads to personal neglect of the Bible. Bible verses are twisted in meaning to comply with the new revelation.

Some of the claims of new revelation led to the formation of a new sect with their own new scriptures; the classic example of this is the Mormons. However, other sects based on new revelation just perverted the Bible; such as the Jehovah's Witnesses who produced their own false translation of the Bible edited to cater for their doctrines.

Before evangelicals criticise this vehemently, supposed Christian churches have long produced their own Bible translations that were used in a particular denomination. The Brethren used Darby's translation and his Synopsis commentary. The Roman Catholics produced their Douai-Rheims version and later the Knox version and the Jerusalem Bible. The German Lutherans used Martin Luther's translation. The Anglicans authorised the KJV at a time when their members much preferred the Geneva Bible. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century liberals and academics preferred the Revised Version, and then later the

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<sup>7</sup> For details on all these see my 'Origins of Pentecostalism'.

Revised Standard Version. In this period many Americans preferred to use the American Standard Bible and then the New American Standard Bible. We could continue with many more versions.

So we have the following problems caused by new revelation sects:

- The initial new revelation claiming to be truth from God.
- The elevation of the teaching of the new revelation above Scripture.
- The denial or downplaying of the authority of the Bible.
- The contradiction of Biblical doctrines, even when the Bible's authority is still affirmed.
- The writing of a new scripture instead of, or as well as, the Bible,
- Producing a new translation of the Bible, skewed to comply with the new revelation.
- Neglect of the Bible due to an emphasis on the new revelation.

Thus we can see that claims of a new revelation are serious and undermine the authority of God's word in several ways.

## **Focusing on the words of men**

In any church that has authoritarian leaders, there is usually a diminution of God's word, even if these leaders publicly affirm the authority of God's word. What happens is that the congregation is gulled into accepting the final authority of their leader, especially if he gives himself the title of 'apostle'.

In worse cases, authoritarian leaders actually usurp the place of God. I have heard a famous, modern, so-called 'apostle' state publicly that God spoke to him and then he spoke to the church. In other words, he had usurped the mediatorial ministry of Christ and put a level of human leadership between men and God. This is blasphemy. Typically the structure of this man's church was a pyramid hierarchy.

This is not limited to Charismatic churches. Often we find that intellectually dominated conservative churches give their minister similar levels of authoritarianism even if it is not publicly stated. They live and breathe for every preached word of their favour preacher and go to great lengths to hear him, sometimes driving for an hour every Sunday. They call him by some formal title, such as professor, minister or pastor, and treat him like royalty. This is man-worship.

When such authoritarian men preach deception and false doctrines, the loyalty to the man is so great that his congregation do not check out what he says against the Bible and call him to account. Thus they give preference to a man's word rather than God's. There is no hope for such folk.

This device of getting likeable, winsome, charismatic men into church leadership and then leading the people astray is very common. It is a trick of Satan to take attention away from Scripture.

It is for this reason that God's own word prescribes a college of equal elders to lead the local church and no one else. The idea of one man ruling over the Lord's people is anathema.

## False counsel

The modern evangelical church has rank upon rank of leaders that were never known in history: cell group leaders, house church leaders, office staff, youth workers, worship leaders, administrators and many more. Are churches any better for it? Certainly not, as the numerical decline shows.

One rank that has grown in very recent decades has been the counsellor. No longer was the eldership good enough to bring wisdom into the lives of troubled people; no longer was the practical application of Bible doctrines good enough to solve personal problems; what was now necessary was a secular trained counsellor. Even worse is the fact that many of these counsellors are women when God's word commands that women can have no authority over a man, especially in teaching.<sup>8</sup>

The basis of the secular training that counsellors undergo stems from a foundation of men who were opposed to God's word and brought pagan ideas to the fore. Not just paganism, but ideas of the foulest sort, such as outright occultism, liberalism, and fornication. In fact many of the premises underlying psychotherapy were outright lies, only exposed long afterwards.

What church psychotherapeutic counselling was, in reality, was the abandoning of God's advice for the advice of men. But worse than that, it was relying upon the advice of men dominated by paganism, occultism and liberalism.<sup>9</sup> It was another Trojan Horse for the dissemination of errors into the church.

Supposed Christian counsellors affirm theories propounded by Freud and Jung, such as:

- Depression is an expression of unconscious hostility, repressed anger.
- Anxiety is the cause of most psychiatric problems and that anxiety is based on unconscious conflicts.
- Early life experiences cause repressed ideas.
- Every neurasthenia (depression) is sexual.
- Sexuality is the determinant of personality.
- Anger caused by loss turns to guilt turned inward, pent-up anger is always at the heart of clinical depression.
- Repressed anger must be ventilated (expressed, such as verbally) not controlled; etc.

This is to say nothing of weirder ideas such as Freud's Oedipus Complex (all boys lust after their mother)<sup>10</sup> or Jung's world of metaphysical archetypes and myths based upon his occult experiences.

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<sup>8</sup> 1 Tim 2:12, 'I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.'

<sup>9</sup> Without a long historical analysis, psychotherapy was based first on the ideas of Anton Mesmer (hypnotism) gained from oriental mysticism. Freud then added his many false ideas and sexual foundation for problems. Jung, initially a co-worker with Freud but later left him, was based more of mysticism and the occult. While the highly esteemed and influential Carl Rogers (1902-87) was mixed up in spiritualism, consulted Ouija Boards and was involved in necromancy. Many Christian psychologists model their ministry upon this man.

<sup>10</sup> Or more fully, the Freudian theory that the complex of emotions aroused in a young child, typically around the age of four, consist of an unconscious sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex and a wish to exclude the parent of the same sex. The term was originally applied to boys, the equivalent in girls being called the Electra complex. [Sic. Oxford Encyclopaedia.]



Thus people, for example, that suffer from guilt are molly-coddled and their self-esteem built up when often they have done something wrong and need to confess their sin to be forgiven to remove the guilt. The counselling is the reverse of the Biblical approach.

Apart from the fact that Freud was a fraud and a liar and that both he and Carl Jung led messed up lives, modern science has disproved Freud's psychoanalytical theories.<sup>11</sup>

When it comes to many important aspects of human development that are central to Freud's clinical theories, the extraclinical evidence is already in and has failed to confirm Freud's views.<sup>12</sup>

Freud is no longer taken seriously in academic circles ... factual destruction of his work by experimentalists and clinicians is now pretty complete.<sup>13</sup>

As long ago as 1952, Hans J Eysenck concluded, over decades of empirical study, that a greater percentage of patients who did not have psychoanalytical treatment improved over those who did.<sup>14</sup>

Academic specialists today denounce Freud's work and psychoanalysis in general as 'delusional', 'indefensible', 'non-functional', 'confusing', 'fraudulent', 'a sad landmark'.<sup>15</sup> In the same way that Darwinism is nonsensical and without evidence, so the contemporary rise of Freud's theories are fake, and yet still form the basis of many schools of counselling. Christians have been utterly stupid to take this on board instead of combating it.

We could go on and on. Psychiatrists and psychotherapy had dredged up failure after failure and every new proponent contradicts those who came before. Virtually no principle of psychotherapy has been established without another psychiatrist denouncing it. However, it has made lots of psychiatrists loads of money.

One of the worst effects of this in the church has been the massive build up of the teaching of self-esteem being necessary for success and that personal happiness is a valid goal. It directly leads people away from Biblical teaching that self-denial is the bedrock of following Christ and that tribulation is normal in the kingdom.

It is noteworthy that Paul built up disciples, not by insisting on self-esteem or searching for happiness, but by warning of tribulations to come: 'strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."' (Acts 14:22).

The devil's purpose in all this has been to distract people from Biblical counselling amongst all church people, and the counsel of elders for the most serious problems. Sending troubled people to a trained counsellor is admission of failure; but worst of all it ignores Biblical principles.

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<sup>11</sup> Jung, initially a follower of Freud, later denied psychoanalysis and developed his own system (mainly based on extrovert and introvert personalities); starting a trend that would be followed by many others.

<sup>12</sup> Dr Frank Sulloway; Free Enquiry, 'Grunbaum on Freud: flawed methodologist', vol 5:4, p27 (1985).

<sup>13</sup> Hans Eysenck; Free Enquiry, 'The death knell of psychoanalysis', Fall 1985, p32.

<sup>14</sup> Eysenck, The Effects of Psychotherapy: An Evaluation, Journal of Consulting Psychology, Vol 16, (1952) p322. His conclusions then have been confirmed subsequently.

<sup>15</sup> For details see M and D Bobgan; 'Prophets of Psychoheresy 1', chapter 17 (1989).

## Bad Bible versions

This is a complex subject since there are so many versions available today and we cannot examine each one. At this point I will avoid the complex question of textual criticism and manuscript evidence.

All the best versions tread a difficult furrow; they try to be accurate translations on the one hand and yet easily communicable on the other. What tends to happen today is that modern versions opt for ease of communication (readability) rather than literal accuracy. The problem with this is that you cannot be certain in any verse if that is what God said. Trying to study Bible doctrine with a paraphrase translation is impossible.

Sadly the majority of versions used in churches today are dynamic equivalence translations at best (tending towards paraphrase)<sup>16</sup>, such as the NIV, or, at worst, outright paraphrases of the most appalling kind (such as The Message). Literal translations (such as the KJV, NKJV and NASB) are now out of fashion, except in certain enclaves.

Some translations are actually blasphemous, such as those with gender inclusive or even female names for God.

What these have done is a polluting of the waters so that the pure, simple translation of the word of God is not used by most Christians. Furthermore, the only way for Bible teachers to get to sound doctrine in Bible study is by constantly checking even a good translation against the original Greek, Hebrew and Chaldee (Syriac). Even though this is easier than ever before (with the proliferation of good resources and modern technology) it seems that fewer and fewer people are bothering to do this – hence the multiplication of heretical ideas preached in churches.

If you do not have a sound translation of the Bible, then you can never get to understand the mind of God.

## Traditionalism

The chief criticism made by Jesus of the Pharisees is that they supplanted the word of God (which they claimed to honour) in favour of the traditions of men. It is sad to say that this is the case in many conservative churches today.

Over and over we see churches adopting practices and doctrines that are not based on the Bible but are the traditions started by someone many years before. Different denominations latch on to certain fashions and these become a shibboleth to belong to that group. In the worst cases, practices that are of dubious Biblical warrant are made to separate brethren from fellowship.<sup>17</sup> Thus in preference of a false tradition of human origin, Christians are made to commit a sin against the body of Christ.

In a nutshell this is but another case of preferring the words of a man rather than God.

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<sup>16</sup> Based upon translating the meaning of a verse into English rather than a literal translation of all the words and grammar as it is in the original.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, some Brethren and some Baptist churches have refused to allow a genuine Christian to partake in the Lord's Supper because they were not baptised by immersion. Yet a clear doctrine of immersion is not provable from the Bible; for proof of this see my paper, 'What about water baptism?'. The Bible teaches credobaptism (i.e. denies paedobaptism) but the mode is not spelled out precisely; however, the prevailing method is pouring not immersion.

## **Subverted quiet times**

Now most churches accept that a believer needs to spend time alone with God in prayer and Bible reading every day (though some deny this as legalistic). What this should mean is reading a portion of the Bible; meditating on it for a time and then praying through your daily system of prayer and intercession. The Lord's Prayer forms a basic model of the minimum requirement for prayer subjects.

Unfortunately, what has become fashionable in the last 100 years has been following the devotions of someone else instead of doing your own devotions.

For example, people read a magazine of daily devotions prepared by some favourite minister instead of reading the Bible and considering it for themselves. Or they read a book of daily devotions prepared by a famous author.

Now such devotional works (at least the better sort) are not to be ignored but given their proper place. They should be used in addition to your daily devotions not in place of them. By all means read someone's study at another time of day, but do your own devotions.

By ignoring the Bible and reading some exposition of it instead is robbing you of spending time listening to the mind of God for yourself. How can you expect God to speak to you if you ignore him?

## **Being too busy**

Now I have every sympathy for young people today whose life is very hard. They are working harder and longer than their forbears, often for less money. Due to government stupidity house prices are astronomical and thus many have to take second jobs; council and social housing is at an all-time low. It is now axiomatic that a wife needs to work to help pay the bills. All of this is a social tragedy.

Thus many young folk have very little time, and I feel sorry for them. I have experienced this problem myself when I was younger.

However, even for such, one can still find time to study God's word and helpful resources. Forgive a personal testimony. When I was working up to 12 or even 14 hours a day and then going home to rebuild my dilapidated house from the ground up (while having a family) I still found time to study and even preach and lead meetings. I would make the most of the time, reading in tea breaks for example. Once, when I worked in a factory in the college summer vacation, I would climb a nearby hill and study in the lunch break. If I had to take a train journey I would read my NT. Even in these constrained circumstances I wrote several books. I once preached at Sussex University after work with the only time for preparation being my lunch and tea breaks. I was so tired that I preached sitting down.

However, there are people today that have more free time; in fact technology has meant that most of us have more free time than ever before in history. It is clear that many people have free time because quite a few waste it upon video games, Internet surfing, social network sites, television and such like.

All that is needed for these folk is to stop what they are doing for an hour a day and study God's word instead; even half an hour would help.

Some people spend hours each week watching or being involved in sports. Surely an hour could be found from this somewhere?

Admittedly nursing mothers or mothers with several children are going to find it difficult to make time; but this will change in due course. A moment here and there snatched to read even a little Scripture will help.

However, there are those who are just busy in wasteful pursuits. I won't list any because each person's situation is different. A hobby can be beneficial, therapeutic and under control for one person but a wasteful pursuit for another. Such people need to take stock and reorganise their life to make the most of opportunities. What is most important in your life; what is your priority? Studying God's word needs to be put high on this list.

Seek wisdom about your schedules and don't let the devil fill your life with unnecessary busyness. Redeem the time.

## Conclusion

### **The serious situation of abandoning God's word**

Those who claim to be Christians and yet abandon or ignore the word of God are like ships without a rudder – they will end up on the rocks. The Bible promises that those who wander from God's word will die; they are not elect.

A man who wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead. Prov 21:16

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Jn 3:19

He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. Jn 14:24

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 2 Pt 2:21

He who says, 'I know Him', and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 Jn 2:4

Understand this; one sure fruit of eternal life is loving God's word and relying upon it daily. Anyone who cares nothing for God's word but prefers false teachings, false wisdom and mystical experiences will be lost. Such folk cannot be of God.

But those who love and obey God's word will not only be blessed now but will be assured of eternal life.

Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! Ps 119:2

Blessed *are* those who hear the word of God and keep it! Lk 11:28

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. Jn 14:21

Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him'. Jn 14:23

By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 1 Jn 2:3

Whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 1 Jn 2:5

Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. Rev 22:14

### **The warfare is centred on destroying knowing the word**

Where is the warfare at the end? It is focused on those who know the Bible and obey God's word.

The dragon was enraged with the woman [OT church], and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring [NT church], who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev 12:17

Thus the devil works continually to stop people studying God's word, throwing up every type of device and temptation possible to make people trust in something else.

When church leaders proclaim that they are doing a new thing, or have a new revelation, or teach new light – run a mile. There is nothing new under the sun (Eccles 1:9) and what we need is not some new revelation but a focus upon the old truth. Revelation of Christ through God's word is all we need. Those who study Scripture will get constant fresh revelations of Christ through God's word and what more is necessary than Christ?

God's word is of vital importance. It always has been and always will be. Make it your prime concern in knowing God.

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