

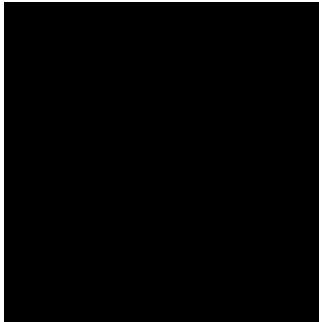
COLD TRUTHS FOR WARM HEARTS; FACTS NOT FICTION

Written by admin

Saturday, 16 June 2012 09:26 - Last Updated Tuesday, 16 October 2012 11:15

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by Dr. Henderson Ward



Double Check Opinions

Everywhere you look you will find counterfeits, hypocrites, shams, scams, pretenders and those dedicated to misguiding and conning you. They are everywhere including the church. Here are some tips for finding them out.

A website I contacted recently as part of my research on a complex issue surprised me with the depth of their lack of knowledge on a subject that is very well researched and the facts are public and indisputable. This website goes under the banner that includes the word "theology" and pretended to offer sound theological explanation of the entire Bible.

Another website I encountered was run by a church (when is a church not a church goes beyond semantics) and as I examined their theology I could not be more horrified for it appeared as if the website was run by an ignoramus who was filled with his own self-righteousness and merely used the Bible to support his own opinions.

Several websites I researched that were attempting to explain one scripture, ended up contradicting other scriptures thereby publicly displaying their inconsistency and slapdash approach to the Bible.

The more I researched the more I became convinced that many of these so-called "Christian websites" - well-meaning though they might be - are doing a lot of damage to the Christian image and are seriously misleading people who sincerely want to know the truth. Perhaps they

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are anti-Christ websites masquerading under the Christian umbrella; I just do not know.

On the sidelines are the mass media that is ever so eager to highlight and blow up out of all proportion what they readily know to be foolishness. A good recent example is like the pastor of a tiny church who says that the world is about to end, gives a date and makes preparation and behold the media runs the story prominently and on that date makes a complete fool of the pastor. When the date came and the world did not end the pastor said that he made an error in his calculations and in fact the world will end a few days later. And again the mass media lapped it all up and when the world did not end at the new revised date as the pastor predicted they relished showing the whole world such folly. Misleading people through such foolishness is standard fare for many who pretend they are doing God's work and in the process leading others astray.

Someone searching for truth must surely be asking; what is the truth? When you search the web and find so many contradictions and anomalies where are you to turn to find gospel truths? Aren't people out there offering their own slant on whatever they are peddling and isn't all truth relative anyway? The answers are yes and no and the diligent seeker of truth should arm himself with sufficient discernment to avoid being fooled.

Here are some things that I look for and keep in the front of my mind as I seek after truth. Remember always that religion is neither philosophy that has its own set of rules nor is it science that lends itself to verification through the five senses and the scientific method. As believers we are filled with the Holy Spirit and thus spiritual discernment but are sometimes persuaded by clever argument and unbelievers in common with some believers are at a loss through lack of knowledge.

First then as we seek after truth let us make sure we separate the facts from opinions. There was a time when facts - and we can add truths - were stated and kept separate from opinions but the modern trend is to combine the two in an unholy alliance. This is a habit that has crossed over from the mass media and particularly the shoddy reporting of the tabloids. There was a time when the mass media/newspapers reported the news on some pages and gave you their opinions on other pages but now the news is a mixture of hype, opinion, hearsay and hard news and each news story has a different flavour depending on the particular media outlet. The tabloids will report the news one way, and often differently among themselves, and the broadsheets will report the same news another way. Sometimes they report the same news but in such contrary fashion that had not some pertinent facts been stated you would be forgiven for thinking that they were different news stories.

In Christianity the separation of facts/truths on one hand and opinions on the other should be extremely clear so that there is no confusion. Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Breaking of Bread (take your pick) is an ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ and should be taken regularly by church members. This is a biblical fact/truth. Taking Holy Communion every meeting-day (as some do) every week (as some prefer) or every month (as many do) is merely the individual practice of each church as regards to frequency as it deems fit. It follows therefore that no one, taking Holy Communion regularly, should be conflicted over the time intervals and

no one has the authority to teach or instruct to the contrary.

Where people give their opinions, whoever they are, the right exists for us to differ without feeling in any way guilty or that we have infringed Holy Writ. Where God wants us to adhere to a principle, a doctrine or take some specific action or acquire an understanding it will always be endorsed by the Bible.

Secondly, when we seek after truth, we should note when the Bible replies with silence. This is perhaps one of the most overlooked aspects of truth-seeking. There are many things, and some of them are very important to knowledge but not to salvation, that the Bible has not dealt with and we do not know the answer definitively and sometimes not at all. For example the Bible tells us that Cain, after he killed Abel, went to a far off country and took a wife. The Bible never told us who that wife was and we can never know for sure no matter how clever the speculation or persuasive the logic might be. We know that his wife was not an animal because such a union could not produce offspring (and Cain had children) and we also know that the only humans in existence were Adam's offspring.

The Bible is also silent on the means whereby Moses and Elijah could meet with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8). Where did they come from? Are souls of the righteous dead able to appear at their own behest? Can these souls appear just once or often? Were Moses and Elijah in their mortal bodies or their immortal ones? On which mountain did all this take place? Many questions like these are not answered in the Bible and although they might be legitimate questions any answers supplied are pure speculation and people's own opinions. Commentators and exegetes need to practice keeping quiet when the Bible is quiet and not to offer opinions, often contradicting each other, except they make it abundantly clear that it is their opinion and you can take it or leave it as you please. It is here that Christianity differs vastly from science. When something is unknown in science then scientists erect hypothesis and conjectures and take a guess and teach it as theory and sometimes that theory is universally taught and last for many years. Then along comes another scientist and disproves that theory and behold that theory is abandoned or modified until it is proven faulty again. The truths of the Bible never change only the opinions of the truths of the Bible.

A lot of confusion arises because we have a brand of preaching that varies from the biblical model and is a mixture of ideology, politics, sociology and philosophy all intermingled with personal opinions. Paul as well as the other apostles are very clear that preaching should always be about the Word of God as Paul instructed Timothy, "Preach the Word". If the Word is preached and proper exegesis follows then opinions are marginalized and seekers of truth enabled to find that for which they are seeking.

Thirdly, when we seek after truth, we should be careful always to seek for verification across the whole Bible and if it can't be verified we must reject it. We should be very careful to interpret scripture in proper context for the same word or phrase can mean different things depending on the context. The reason why verification is important is because the Bible, in essence, determination and inherent unity is not sixty six separate books but one book and each part agrees and supports the other parts. This is something that is uniquely peculiar to the Holy Bible and is foundational to proper exegesis and hermeneutics.

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This fact is very important and needs an example. William Shakespeare, arguably the greatest writer in the English language, has written many works and if you read something in one of his works, e.g. Macbeth and you found it hard to understand you could not go to another of his works, say the Merchant of Venice and extract a proper understanding. In the sixty six books of the Bible that is precisely what you are expected to do. Whenever something is not clear in one part of the Bible, and the lack of clarity may be for a number of reasons, then another part of the Bible can be consulted for a proper explanation. This is the reason why every major doctrine in the Bible is supported by a number of different scriptures. All the essentials for faith and practice in holy living are comprehensively underpinned by verses throughout the Bible. Therefore if someone comes up with a strange doctrine based on one scripture then a check elsewhere can soon lay that heresy to rest. Verification must be the order of the day for seekers of truth.

Fourthly some things are axiomatic but worth repeating; you would not go to a carpenter when you want an appendectomy neither would you go to a seamstress for eye surgery. And yet people do this very thing when it comes to spiritual matters and matters of religion. There are so many sham people out there, so many dubious websites, so many unreliable sources that seekers of truth must be hyper-aware of these charlatans. It pays therefore to understand something about those offering advice and instruction in spiritual matters. A person's Bio is helpful, a quick search to see what the website is all about is time well spent and a statement of faith if available helps you to avoid unnecessary angst. The Bible says that a good tree does not bring forth bad fruit so we must check that our sources are good and reliable and only then can we have confidence in what they say. When I am mulling over a scripture and I want some insights, my doctorate notwithstanding, I consult commentaries by Adam Clarke or Matthew Henry or Burton Coffman or John Wesley, all men of sound knowledge and Christian character and I know they can be trusted.

Fifthly and lastly when we seek after truth we should apply the common sense rule: if you don't live it you can't teach it. Christianity is not a philosophy and it is impossible to teach it fully, including its inspirational aspects, without living it at the same time. The Pharisees and Sadducees tried it with respect to The Law and failed miserably; no one will ever succeed in so doing with respect to Grace. Warm-hearted, loving, caring believers seeking truth to lift and inspire them along the way need to grasp these afore-mentioned cold facts or else the fiction masquerading as fact will make their journey considerably more difficult.

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