

Dictionary of Big and Swollen Theological Words

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*“Big words come rolling from their lips
and they court favour to gain their ends.”*
(Jude 1:16 Good News Bible)

August 2004

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Foreword

The title of this booklet is taken from 2 Peter 2:18, and Jude 1:16, where the King James translation describes the preaching of some 1st century teachers as “great swelling words”. In the Good News Bible it is rendered as “big empty words”. It comes from the Greek word *huperogkos*, which means “over swollen”.

It is not my intention here to suggest that all who use the BIG words listed in this dictionary are to be automatically listed amongst those teachers described by Peter and Jude. As with many other things, it is a question of motive.

I have a number of good friends who, with the best of motives, have carefully learned the “swollen language” of the scholars, in the hope of being able to communicate the Gospel to them, in a “dialect” they understand. I commend them for their patience in “*becoming all things to all men*”. (1 Cor 9:22)

I wrote this dictionary of BIG Theological Words for the Sunday School Scholars who attend the “House Church” which meets in our home. Many times when trying to teach a Bible lesson at their level, it was noticeable that some of the BIG words which their elders took for granted, simply did not register. Faced with blank stares it was often necessary to ask whether they understood the meaning of a particular word. It soon became standard practice to send one of them to my office to get a Dictionary and look it up for the rest of us.

Of course it isn’t only Sunday School students who have this problem. I confess that I also have the same need. Quite often when reading theological works by “scholars” I come across words which I have never heard before. Of course the real answer is to research the meaning of unfamiliar words. However many resolve the problem by developing the “skill” of hiding a blank look!

Finding a meaning for many of the BIG words used by theological “Scholars” is not always easy. Many of them are not found in the dictionaries. It seems these “Scholars” have dialect of their own, which you have to attend University or Bible College to learn. For the average “man in the street”, it simply does not communicate. It is unedifying and unfruitful. The Apostle Paul had something to say about this when he wrote about:

SPEAKING IN TONGUES WITHOUT INTERPRETATION

This “scholars swollen language” should be easily recognised as a modern form of what Paul calls an “unknown tongue”. (1 Cor 14:2). His expressive description of

speaking “*ten thousand words in an unknown tongue*” ([1 Cor 14:19](#)) applies. If the words are not “*easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air*”. ([1 Cor 14:9](#))

When “scholars” use BIG words not understood by their audience, they do not edify the Church. Instead they speak “*words of Vanity*”. And they become “*Barbarians*” to the rest of us! ([1 Cor 14:11](#))

PRIDE OF LIFE

“Pride of Life” is another descriptive Biblical term that comes to mind in this context! ([1 John 2:16](#)) It is all about looking important in the eyes of others -- convincing them of your position as “top cat”! Have you ever done that? According to John it is built into human nature! It is “*of the world that passes away*”. To prepare for rulership in the Kingdom of God, we must all learn to recognise it within ourselves, repent of it, and then learn how to take the lowest seat at the feast. ([Luke 14:7-11](#))

Of course you will understand that I am not judging any particular person. You must be your own judge, honestly between you and Jesus, about whether this applies to you. However, if you do feel a little personally aggravated and “got at” about this, don’t defend yourself to me. Take it up with Jesus in the secret place!

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Preface

Have you ever wondered what Peter and Jude meant by their term “**Great Swelling Words**”? Peter adds the word “**vanity**”. (“emptiness” See KJV margin.) They were writing about men in the 1st century Church, who were more concerned with social status, personal advantage, saying whatever was necessary to attract followers, and inevitably, keeping the collection plate as full as possible! ([2 Peter 2:15](#))

The Translators used the English word “vanity” to convey the meaning of the Greek word “*mataiotes*”. You can check it out in a lexicon if you want to dig deeper. However we don’t really need Greek to understand this. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, one of the English meanings of “Vanity” is “*the quality of being worthless or futile*”. It is in this sense that Peter uses the Greek word from which it is translated. He is saying that the words spoken by these men lack substance, and truth. They do not communicate anything useful to the hearer.

But they are BIG words! Great Swelling words! (It rolls off the tongue doesn’t it?) Have you ever seen it in action? It is greatly loved by teachers who never use a simple two or three syllable word if they can think of a pompous ten syllable alternative that you can guarantee most laymen have never heard of. It is one of the techniques used by ambitious and self important churchmen to grab the top seats at the feast for themselves! ([Luke 14:7-11](#))

In the 21st century we can look back on the 2000 year long history of many “famous” theologians and scholars in whose writings these symptoms are readily visible. BIG WORDS and complicated **rhetoric** are all too often a symptom of the strategy adopted by men who maintain their position at the top of the pecking order by trying to appear to be smarter and more educated, and therefore more expert, than the rest of us. (**Hey! I think “rhetoric” might be a big word! Check it out in the Dictionary section!**)

Alas it all ignores the Apostle Paul’s assessment of the **REAL** qualifications for understanding spiritual things:

“Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.” ([1 Cor 1:20, 26-27](#))

As for methods of Scripture study -- The Apostles James does not even mention a

university education as a prerequisite! Nor does he insist on the use of BIG words like “exegesis” and “hermeneutics”. (See dictionary entries for both) Instead he left on record his own guaranteed “method”. It begins with a relationship with God that includes a confident prayer life.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord..” (James 1:5-8 RSV)

Learn the “swollen language” if you must -- but NEVER forget to stay on speaking terms with God!

DICTIONARY OF BIG AND SWOLLEN THEOLOGICAL WORDS

Some of the words listed here are just plain “BIG”.

Others are recognisably “SWOLLEN”!

*And some are included because they are part
of the “religious jargon” which is a foreign
language to this current generation.*

*Many of them have other secular meanings which have
been ignored. The definitions below apply specifically to
the Church scene.*

The definitions given have been compiled from a wide variety of sources. In the interest of “translation” to terms better understood by my grandchildren (and the rest of us laymen), an attempt has been made to simplify and paraphrase the more complicated definitions often found in the Dictionaries and Encyclopedias. Sources include the Concise Oxford Dictionary, Webster’s English Dictionary, The Pocket Macquarie Dictionary, several Encyclopedias, and many articles found on the Web.

If sometimes the definitions given here manage to make it harder by using other BIG words that aren’t in your personal vocabulary -- please be patient with me! If you find the definitions given in this Dictionary are not simple enough don’t remain amongst the “Babylonian Barbarians”!

USE A DICTIONARY TO CHECK IT OUT!

ALCHEMY

An ancient branch of pseudoscience, in which practitioners sought to change base metals, such as lead, into silver or gold. Others tried to discover an “elixir of life” -- a potion to make them immortal. Practical alchemists tried to use chemical methods. The famous Christian scientist, Sir Isaac Newton, was one of these. However in the hands of many others it was often combined with elements of magic, astrology, or similar occult practices.

ALLEGORY

A story which can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning.

ANAGOGICS

This is one of those words which seems to be used by lots of “scholars” who can’t define it in terms understood by “ordinary” people!

It is a so called “mystical” (See “*mysticism*” below) method of interpreting Scripture to reveal deep hidden “spiritual” meanings beyond the understanding of “ordinary” people. It is usually so “profound” that it manages to find hidden meanings where none were ever intended to be found!

ANTHROPOMORPHISM

The belief that God has human form. (such as hands or eyes or ears or arms)

APOCALYPTIC

A type of Jewish writing or religious outlook, which concentrates on prophecy about the end of the world. It often takes the form of visions containing complicated symbols. The books of Daniel and Revelation are examples of this type of writing, which are believed to be inspired by God, and have been included in the Bible. However many more books of this type exist, which are NOT recognised as inspired by God, and were not included in the Bible.

APOLOGETICS

An area of Christian theology which concentrates on defence of the Christian faith.

ARIANISM

A theory of the nature and relationship between God and Jesus, attributed to *Arius* (256-336) a scholar from Alexandria in Egypt. Arius rejected the doctrine of the Trinity taught by his principal adversary *Athanasius*. (See entry below) Instead Arius taught that Jesus was a pre existent being created by God, and less than God. This developed into a huge theological warfare in the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine, in which the contestants on both sides displayed little of the fruit of the Spirit, and regularly used persecution, slander, torture, and murder, as weapons to “defend the faith”.

(You can read more about this in BIBLE DIGEST No 12)

Although correct in his rejection of the completely illogical doctrine of the Trinity, the Jesus of Arian theology could never have been a REAL man. Think about it. Has any other man ever pre existed his birth as a “spirit being” in heaven?

ARMINIANISM

A theological system attributed to Jacobus Arminius. (1560-1609). Arminius was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. He came to reject Calvinist teaching on predestination, which says that men are born unconditionally predestinated for either salvation or condemnation to eternal torment. Arminius taught instead that salvation is conditional on man’s personal free will response to the Gospel.

Arminius was condemned by the Dutch Reformed Church as a heretic in 1619. They were wrong! Calvinist teaching that God creates men totally unable to obey Him, and predestinated unconditionally to everlasting torment for the sins they commit, accuses God of the worst sort of injustice.

ASCETICISM

The practice of harsh and severe self-discipline in an endeavour to attain to a higher degree of spirituality. It often includes deliberate poverty, fasting, ignoring personal hygiene, (refraining from washing body and clothes), celibacy, and rejection of normal creature comforts. (such as sleeping in a bed, or keeping warm) In its worst forms it can include physical abuse, such as self flagellation. (See flagellation entry below)

ATHANASIUS (298-373)

A priest of Alexandria in Egypt whose oversized ambition eventually resulted in appointment to the “throne” of Bishop of Alexandria. He is best known for his violent opposition to Arianism. (See above) He is credited with the doubtful distinction of being the champion of Trinitarianism. (See below) However, although his personal violent anti-Arianism forced the Church to official rejection of the theory as heresy, he was unsuccessful in eradicating it. It survived for hundreds of years as the majority religion in parts of Germany. It can still be found today in the theology of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and in many individual members of mainstream Churches, who usually stay carefully hidden, lest they attract persecution.

Athanasius is often mistakenly credited with producing the Athanasian Creed. However whilst this document incorporates his teaching, it is actually of unknown origin. Some historians think it first appeared in Gaul, possibly in the 5th century.

ATONEMENT

Christian teaching about how the sacrificial death of Jesus can reconcile sinners to God. Over the centuries, “Scholars” have invented many confusing and complicated theories about how it works, using language NOT found in the Scriptures. Beware anything which reduces it to a mere commercial transaction, or portrays God as angry and demanding “satisfaction” for offended dignity. Such theories reflect little of the love of God. Look instead to Jesus’ own words which say it happened because God loved us, and wanted to save us from the death penalty otherwise due for our own personal sins!

CALVINISM

A system of theology attributed to John Calvin. (1509-1564) Calvin was born in France, where he became a Roman Catholic chaplain at the age of 12! Somewhere about 1532-3 he accepted Luther’s teaching about “salvation by faith alone”, and was finally compelled to leave France to escape persecution. He eventually settled in Geneva, where he became the founder of a branch of the protestant religion which today we call “Reformed”. (See below) Although he followed Luther on many points, he taught a doctrine of Predestination which says that men are born unconditionally predestined to either salvation, or condemnation and eternal torment. This denies the place of human “free will” to respond to the Gospel in order to be saved.

Some Calvinists try to draw a distinction between “ordinary” Calvinism and

“Hypercalvinism”. Frankly, the practical differences seem to be so technical in nature that they mean little to any but a Calvinist looking for a theological argument! In its most extreme form it denies the need for Evangelism on the basis that God will save his chosen, without any human help.

It is unfortunate that modern “disciples” of Calvin are unfamiliar or even wilfully ignorant of unsavoury aspects of his history. Much of it casts a huge cloud over the credibility of his personal “christianity”. Calvin initiated a reign of enforced religion in Geneva, with severe penalties for those who did not conform. He became a persecutor of the Anabaptists and condoned the murder of those he called “heretics”. For those familiar with the history, he is especially remembered for his part in the murder of the unitarian Michael Servetus. How could we possibly trust such a man to be led by the Spirit of God in formulating his theology?

CATECHISM

A list of questions and answers designed to teach Christian doctrine. Usually each denomination has its own form of catechism designed to emphasise its own teaching.

CHARISMA, CHARISMATIC

Charisma is a Greek word meaning “gift”. In the NT it usually refers to “Gifts of the Holy Spirit”. *“Charismatic”* has become a term which describes individuals and Churches emphasising “gifts” in Christian worship and daily experience. Used especially to describe Pentecostals with their unbiblical emphasis on the so called “gift” of speaking in tongues.

CHRISTOLOGY

A section of Christian theology which deals with the nature and identity of Jesus.

CONSPECTUS

A summary or overview of a subject.

CONSUBSTANTIAL

Derived from a Latin term meaning "of the same substance". Used by Trinitarians to say that God and Jesus are both equally part of one God.

CREED

A brief summary of what the authors think is ESSENTIAL Christian belief to qualify for salvation. Each denomination has its own creed, but there a few which are almost universally held by mainstream Churches. These include the "Apostles" Creed", the "Nicene Creed" and the “Athanasian Creed”.

DEATH BED REPENTANCE

The theory that it is possible for sinners who are about to die, to “repent” at the last moment, receive forgiveness and be saved, instead of entering eternal torment. It is based on a mistaken understanding of the Gospel story of the “Thief on the Cross”. Properly understood this story does not support this theory. Nor is it taught anywhere else in the Scriptures. (For more information, see Bible Digest No 57)

DOCTRINE

In the Greek text of the Bible, it is a word (didache) which simply means “teaching”, or “what is taught”. Thus “the doctrine of Christ” in 2 John 1:9, means “the things that Jesus taught”.

In the Church scene it has come to mean “*the beliefs taught by a Church*”. However many people fail to draw a careful distinction between “*doctrine*” and the more restrictive word “*dogma*”. This latter word *means “a set of principles laid down by an authority, which may not be denied or disputed”*.

DOXOLOGY

A formal written form of praise to God. Often recited or sung during worship services. Two of the best known are the Catholic and Anglican *greater doxology*, “Gloria In Excelsis” and the *lesser doxology* “Gloria Patri”.

ECCLESIOLOGY

A section of Christian theology dealing with the nature and organisation of the church.

EISEGESIS

A word not found in the popular dictionaries! It seems to be mainly in the exclusive domain of the “Scholars”.

It is defined as “the personal interpretation of a text (especially of the Bible) using your own ideas”. It is what happens when someone interprets Scripture according to impressions that were born outside of Scripture.

Personal hard experience indicates that this would be a more honest name for much that is called "exegesis" And that includes many of the Scripture commentaries I have been confronted with by people trying to drop a BIG NAME to win a debate!

The honest reality is that all too often, what is offered as "exegesis" (bringing out the meaning) should really be called "eisegetics" (reading a preconceived meaning into the text).

ESCHATOLOGY

A section of Christian theology dealing with prophecy about "end things", especially the ideas of resurrection, judgement, hell, and eternal life.

EUCHARIST

The term used by Catholics to refer to the “sacrament” (see below) of “the mass”, “the Lord’s supper” and “holy communion”.

EVANGELICAL

A term used to refer to the stream of Christianity which places major emphasis upon the supreme authority of Scripture and the atoning death of Christ. Used especially of those Protestant Churches which place particular emphasis on “*salvation by faith alone*”, personal conversion experience, and evangelism. The term is often used to

distinguish between the significant differences found in the teachings of Luther (evangelical) and Calvin. (Reformed)

EVANGELISM

The preaching of the Gospel.

EXEGESIS

The so called “science” of interpreting the Bible. In practice, it is often far less than “scientific” and is used to disguise the fact that individuals often speculate without clear Biblical proof. Amongst those who play games with the word, the specific techniques are often referred to as “hermeneutics”. (See below)

EXEGETE

A person who claims to interpret the text of the Bible by “scientific” methods.

FLAGELLATION

The practice of voluntary self scourging to atone for sin. It was common amongst both clergy and laity in the 4th century and onwards. Amongst those who practised it, it was taught as the only way to salvation. It was widely practised in public in the middle ages during outbreaks of the Plague. Today it is outlawed by most denominations. However is reported to be still practised by some orders of monks and nuns.

FUNDAMENTALISM

A form of American Protestant Christianity, which lays especial emphasis upon the literal interpretation and absolute authority of an inerrant Bible. It includes:

- * Opposition to all forms of “Modernism”. (See below)
- * The near physical second coming of Jesus,
- * the virgin birth, and the Atonement.
- * The literal bodily resurrection of Jesus and his Millennial reign.
- * The substitutionary and expiatory atonement.
- * Rejection of the Theory of Evolution.

HERMENEUTICS

The study of the principles of interpretation or “exegesis” . (See definition above) of the Bible.

It comes into our language from a Greek word *hermeneuein*, which means “interpret”.

Those who are prone to use it, often remind the rest of us that certain interpretations of the Bible are not “good hermeneutics”. Alas there is often disagreement about what the principles are and how they should be applied. And sadly for many it is a “science” which is often visibly influenced by the preconceived beliefs of the interpreter. “Good hermeneutics” often turns out to be what agrees with the practitioner of the art!

In practice there are major differences between different theologians about the principles to be used! The four major schools of Hermeneutics are called:

1. Literal.

2. Moral.
3. Allegorical. (See above)
4. Anagogical. (See above)

The **Literal** method is to interpret according to the “plain meaning” of the authors words.

The **Moral** method seeks to draw moral and ethical lessons from the text.

The **Allegorical** method seeks to draw hidden meanings, using complicated “symbols”, “types” and “antitypes”. (An allegory is a form of expression which has a different meaning to what would normally be understood from the words used!)

The **Anagogical** method is a “mystical” form of interpretation, often bordering on the occult, which seeks to extract hidden meanings which transcend normal human understanding.

HERMETICS

The practice of magic! The word comes into English from a Latin word which means “sealed”, implying that practitioners use magical arts hidden from ordinary people. The term owes its origin to *Hermes Trismegistos*, (“Thrice-Great Hermes”) a somewhat obscure magician of ancient times. Information about him is very contradictory. One source says that he was an Egyptian king who lived about 1900BC. Another equates him with the Egyptian God THOTH. (better known as the Greek god Hermes) Yet another puts him at 5000 years ago! Who do we believe?

Although we cannot be certain of his identity, there are several very ancient writings on magic which have survived and are attributed to him. However, even there we have contradictory information. One source says that Alexander the Great copied some of it from engraving on his tomb in Egypt. Another dates it to the 3rd or 4th century AD.

It teaches that humans can access hidden spiritual dimensions through meditation, breathing techniques, ritual, astrology and practice of magic. Much of it is about occult forms of alchemy.

HUMANISM

Humanism takes many different forms. It attaches major importance to human beings and human effort, usually to the exclusion of important Bible teaching about God, and the supernatural events of the Bible.

HYPOSTATIC UNION

The doctrine of the union of divine and human natures in Jesus. In effect it denies the real humanity of Jesus. (No other man has ever had TWO natures, or existed before he was born!)

INCARNATION

The doctrine that a pre-existent Jesus somehow laid aside His divine glory to become a human child in the womb of Mary. According to the Creeds of the Mainstream Church this meant that although outwardly a flesh and blood man, he actually combined both

Divine and human nature into one, without affecting either! Don't ask them how this could happen. All you will get is that it is a "mystery" to be accepted by "faith". (Sounds more like blind credulity and scrambled brains to this writer!)

KABBALAH

A system of largely occult Jewish mysticism, dating back at least to the 12th century, and possibly long before that. The Encyclopedia Britannica traces its origins back to the 1st century AD. It is used by many religious Jews as a form of "Divination", which is claimed to give guidance, tell the future, or open "spiritual doorways" to power. Amongst other things it uses numerology and so called "hidden codes" in the OT.

KENOSIS

The process by which Trinitarians claim that Jesus "laid aside" at least some of His divine attributes to assume human form.

KOINE GREEK

Our English word "koine" comes from a Greek word which means "*common*". Koine Greek was a virtually universal Greek dialect used in the time of Jesus. It enabled people all over the Roman Empire to communicate with each other. The New Testament is written in "Koine Greek". This made it easily understood by both Jews and Gentiles everywhere.

LITURGY

The written forms of "worship" which are spoken in public Church services, especially of the "eucharist". (See definition) Churches which use these written forms of worship are often called "liturgical Churches".

METAPHYSICS

The branch of philosophy concerned with the first principles of things. These "principles" are often about highly pretentious theoretical "abstract concepts" related to "being" and "knowing". This gives rise to such absurd and meaningless terms as "abstract realities"!

MODALISM

An illogical variation of Trinitarianism, which treats all three "persons" of the Trinity as actually only ONE person, appearing in different "modes" to suit the needs of the occasion. This person is Jesus! It results in such absurdities as Jesus praying to Himself and worshipping Himself. Often referred to by its detractors as the "Jesus only" Churches. For practical purposes, it is virtually the same as Sabellianism. (See below)

MODERNISM

A religious philosophy which seeks to reinterpret traditional Bible teaching to accommodate modern cultural values, attitudes, and philosophy.

MONERGISM

The "reformed theology" teaching that God's action **alone** produces salvation and righteousness for those who are sovereignly and unconditionally predestinated for

grace and salvation. According to this teaching, it is God who initiates salvation by making men willing and able to believe. It says that men can do nothing to affect the outcome. It is opposed to synergism (see below) which teaches that God and man work together in salvation.

MONOPHYSITISM

The belief that Jesus had only ONE nature, which was divine, not human. This differs from the mainstream orthodox view that Jesus had TWO natures combined, one divine and one human.

MYSTICISM

The art of deep “spiritual” study of the Scriptures to find vague “hidden” or “symbolic” meanings beyond ordinary human understanding.

ONTOLOGY

A term meaning virtually the same as “Metaphysics”. (You know -- that's the one we described above that uses brain scrambling concepts such as “Abstract Reality”!)

“**The Ontological Argument**” is the name given to a metaphysical concept “proving” the existence of God. It was worked out by a famous English theologian called Anselm of Canterbury, in the 11th century. As might be expected from the title, it is full of “metaphysical” logic and big swollen words! If you really must, you can read it in Anselm’s book *Proslogian*. In summary it says that:

God is “*that than which no greater can be conceived*”. It also says that He is perfect. Since nothing can be perfect without first existing, then for Anselm it is evident that God must exist! QED! (And of course that is Circular Logic of the worst sort.)

(This is the same Anselm who “invented” what is known as the “Commercial Theory” of the Atonement -- the one that says God inflicted an “infinite punishment -- whatever that is! -- on an “infinite” Jesus. Of course this theory is in effect, a denial of the true humanity of Jesus! No other man has ever been “infinite”. How could Anselm’s Jesus possibly have been a real man? Sounds about as unconvincing and useless as most of the other “ontological abstract realities” from the famous “scholars” you will encounter from time to time.)

ORIGINAL SIN

It is very hard to find a concise definition of this term. It takes several forms in different Churches. However, most versions say that:

1. When Adam sinned, something was added to his nature which was transmitted genetically to all his descendants, so that they are born condemned to death on account of Adam’s sin.
2. All are born with a “sin nature” which leaves them without ability to overcome temptation to sin. (some use other words instead of “sin nature”, but it amounts to much the same thing.)

The Catholic version says that it can be removed from infants when they are “christened”. They further say that the Virgin Mary was miraculously born free from “original sin”, so that Jesus could also be born without it. Of course this effectively says that Jesus was NOT of the same nature as other men.

One of the most objectionable variations is called “**sin-in-the-flesh**.” This is taught by a significant number amongst the denomination in which I grew up. (*Thankfully not all of them! Thanks be to God that there were some who taught me the errors of this view*) It says that Jesus was born with exactly the same nature as the rest of the human race, (which of course is true) and that therefore he had the same inherited condemnation as all of Adam’s descendants -- which is NOT true!.

In fact the Bible nowhere says that Adam’s nature was changed as a result of his sin. Nor does it say that anyone receives a corrupt or defiled nature from Adam by genetic descent. It is also clear that God puts no man to death for the sins of his father. All will be judged for their own sins. ([Ezekiel 18](#)) Each man is his own “Adam”. ([Romans 5:12](#))

The worst feature of this teaching is its low concept of the justice of God. To imply that God gives us laws which we are unable to keep because of the nature we are born with, and then punishes us on account of what we are unable to do, accuses God of the worst kind of injustice!

ORTHODOXY

A term used to describe "right belief", as opposed to heresy. Some Churches use the word “Orthodox” in their name as a way of claiming that they are the “correct” Church. i.e. The Greek Orthodox Church. It is most unfortunate that much of what goes under the name of “orthodox” today actually contradicts the Bible and the teaching of Jesus, especially in the Sermon On The Mount.

PAROUSIA

A Greek term, which literally means "coming" or "arrival", used to refer to the second coming of Christ. The “parousia” is an important aspect of how we understand prophecies about the "last things".

PELAGIANISM

Teaching attributed to the British monk Pelagius. (c. 354-418) Pelagius opposed popular teaching about original sin, predestination, and salvation without conformity to moral conditions. He also denied the need for infant baptism. For these beliefs he was eventually excommunicated by his enemies.

Pelagius vigorously rejected the doctrine of Original Sin which says that as a result of Adam’s sin, men are born with an inherent inability which causes them to sin. Instead he taught that men are born essentially good, with a free will and the ability to choose between doing good or evil.

PENANCE

Penance is a task of “self punishment” assigned by Roman Catholic priests following confession of sin, which is undertaken to complete the process of absolution (forgiveness) from God)

In former times the task could be quite severe. It could include fasting, public

humiliation, wearing sackcloth, and even flagellation. In recent times it has come to be much less severe, and is often no more than saying a few prayers.

PROTESTANTISM

A term used to describe religion which "protests" against the practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic church.

QED

An acronym for the Latin phrase "quod erat demonstrandum."

In our first year of secondary school our Geometry teacher started the lesson by telling us that this acronym did NOT mean "Quite Easily Done"! We learned that was an old joke from way back in time! Then he told us that the real meaning is "which was to be proved".

REFORMED THEOLOGY

A system of theology attributed to John Calvin. (See entry) It finds expression in several well known Church Creeds, such as "The Canons of Dort" and "The Westminster Confession of Faith".

Amongst non-Calvinists, its best known features are to do with Calvin's teachings about unconditional predestination of only some men to salvation, and the vast majority to unconditional condemnation and eternal torment.

RHETORIC

The art of persuasive and exaggerated speaking, concerned more with style and effect than with meaningful and sincere content.

SABELLIANISM

An early variation of Trinitarianism, attributed to a scholar named Sabellius. The theory regards all three "persons" of the Trinity as different historical manifestations of the same one God. For practical purposes, it is virtually the same as Modalism. (See above)

SACRAMENT

A church service or rite which is held to have been instituted by Jesus Christ himself. Roman Catholic theology and church practice recognises seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, eucharist, marriage, ordination, penance, and unction), Protestants usually recognise only two. (baptism and the Lord's supper)

SECULAR

About things in the world outside the Church, not connected with religion.

SOTERIOLOGY

The section of Christian theology dealing with the doctrine of salvation (Greek: *soteria*).

SYNERGISM

The teaching that salvation requires interaction between human will and divine grace

and that men must cooperate with God in their efforts to receive salvation. It says that salvation is not by (unconditional) “grace alone”. Instead God’s grace is conditional on belief which results in genuine life changing repentance.

This is opposed to monergism (See above) which is the teaching that God is the sole agent involved in salvation, and that men have no free will to do anything which can change their “unconditional predestination” to salvation or condemnation.

SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

A term used to refer to the first three gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). The term is derived from the Greek word *synopsis*. (“Summary”) It refers to the way in which the three gospels can be seen to contain similar “summaries” of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

THEOLOGY - THEOLOGICAL

In the language of the man in the street, it has the general meaning of “all christian doctrine”. However amongst “scholars” it often has the narrower meaning of “doctrine specifically about God”. (“*Theos*” is the Greek word for God) It is then distinguished from other teaching about subjects such as:

1. **Anthropology** -- the origin and nature of man.
2. **Harmartiology** -- the origin and effects of sin on the human race.
3. **Christology** -- the origin, nature and work of Jesus.
4. **Soteriology** -- the doctrine of salvation and how it is achieved.
5. **Ecclesiology** -- the organisation and working of the Church.
6. **Eschatology** -- the study of Bible prophecy, especially related to “end times”.

THEURGY

The “art” of working alleged miracles by invoking supernatural powers. It comes from the Greek word “*theorgia*” meaning “sorcery”. The term has been applied to a system of “white magic” practised by some 3rd or 4th century Greek philosophers.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

A Catholic term referring to their theory that the communion bread and wine are miraculously turned into the REAL flesh and blood of Jesus by the prayer of the priest. Even though they still retain the APPEARANCE of bread and wine, “faith” is supposed to know that they are really flesh and blood!

TRINITY

The illogical Mainstream Church doctrine that God is actually three divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The traditional Creeds say that each is a separate person, each is eternal, each is infinite in power, and glory, but nevertheless still only ONE God of one common substance!

I won’t attempt to explain it further here, lest I scramble your brains with its illogical complexities. [Hey! those guys can wheel their own barrow!] However I have written a number of articles which reject the Trinity and support “Biblical Unitarianism”. If you want to read some of them, send an E-mail. I can also put you in touch with the author of an excellent book on the subject. Ask for details.

TULIP

An ACRONYM for the “Five Points of Calvinism”. (See entry for Calvinism above)

1. T - Total Depravity.
2. U - Unconditional Election.
3. L - Limited Atonement'
4. I - Irresistible Grace.
5. P - Perseverance of the Saints.

1. Total Depravity

This says that every part of man is affected by the Fall in Eden. By genetic transmission from Adam, men inherit a condition which renders them totally morally depraved, and spiritually dead in sin. Because of this men have no power to resist temptation, and cannot help sinning.

2. Unconditional Election

This says that because of this inherited condition men can do nothing to change their sinful nature. Salvation is therefore only for those predestinated by God for “unconditional election”. Thus this teaching says that God arbitrarily chooses some but not others. And that the vast majority of men are born unconditionally predestinated to eternal torment.

3. Limited Atonement

This says that Christ died ONLY for those God has predestinated to salvation. Other men are unconditionally lost, and helpless to do anything which might change their hopeless condition.

4. Irresistible grace

This says that men who are predestined unconditionally for salvation, are unable to do anything to resist the “grace” that God chooses to impose on them.

5. Perseverance of the saints

This says that once a man has received “irresistible grace” he cannot lose his salvation, no matter what he does! I have actually encountered some who claimed that they could even commit murder, without losing their salvation! (Not surprising when you look at the source from which this teaching originated.)

Beware “Reformed Theology”! This Calvinist teaching that God creates men totally unable to obey Him, and predestinated unconditionally to everlasting torment for the sins they commit, accuses God of the worst kind of injustice.

TWO NATURES, doctrine of

A term generally used to refer to the doctrine of the two natures, human and divine, of Jesus Christ. Related terms include "Chalcedonian definition" and "hypostatic union".

UNCTION

The practice of anointing a person with oil or ointment as a religious rite. Often

associated with the coronation of a new King or Queen.

Extreme Unction is the Catholic ritual of anointing the dying for forgiveness of sin.
Also called “*last rites*”.

VULGATE

A Latin translation of the Bible, largely by Jerome, (340-420) born in Slovenia but educated in Rome. For centuries it was the only “official” Bible translation authorised by the Roman Catholic Church.

The name “Vulgata” comes from the Latin “*editio vulgata*” meaning “common version”.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In a number of places reference is made to further information available from articles in the BIBLE DIGEST and HOUSMAIL series.

BIBLE DIGEST papers are available online at:

<http://home.pacific.net.au/~amaxwell/bdigest/bdigindx.htm>

HOUSMAIL papers are available online at :-

<http://home.pacific.net.au/~amaxwell/housmail/backissu.htm>

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