

particular context he is sick over questions and word-wars, preoccupied with and, therefore, unbalanced by vain academic, intellectual but futile, mental excursions. For all his arguing and debate he is “destitute of the truth”. Spiritual sickness often has the outward appearance of clever argument, seemingly precise but really confused, preoccupied with questions but unable or unwilling to arrive at an answer. It is a modern trend to encourage discussion instead of listening to a talk, but a discussion often only serves to air individual hobby horses, to put rhetorical questions, and to undermine rather than nourish the spiritual man. There is no value in raising a question unless it takes a step closer to the truth. For that to be so the right question must be asked. Some questions are designed so that no answer will be acceptable.

**Blaberos** (1 Tim. 6:9): “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition”.

**Peripeir; Odune** (1 Tim. 6:10): “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”.

It has been suggested that these last two verses are based upon the betrayal of the Lord by Judas Iscariot, who, for the love of silver, delivered up the Master to be crucified. Judas’s fate was literally to fall into destruction. The fate of those who follow him is described as being “transfixed” with “pain”. Is there here a reflection on the agony of the Lord Jesus as his hands and feet were transfixed by the Roman nails? Judas thought he had gained initially, but he soon realised the worthlessness of silver; his followers will likewise suffer all the pains of Christ’s crucifixion, but receive none of the glory.

**Gaggraina** (2 Tim. 2:16-17): “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker”.

Here, in most graphic language, the destructive power of the false word is described. **Gaggraina** does not imply a cancer as we understand the term. The Greek word is the origin of the English “gangrene” and means

“a sore”. Its root word is “**gaino**”—“to gnaw”. The concept conveyed is dramatic. It can be illustrated by a condition known as rodent ulcer. This is a malignant disease of the skin which appears as a sore. Unless treated the sore spreads inexorably. It takes its name from the character of the spread; the ulcer gnaws away at the body like a beaver gnawing a tree or a rat gnawing at food. The ulcer will erode through the skin into underlying muscle and bone, resulting in a grotesque, mutilating, destruction of the body.

We think that the particular condition Paul had in mind was the spreading sore of leprosy (Lev. 13). Following up this thought we find that the words of Paul carry a powerful pun. **Nome**, translated “eat” in Timothy has, as its root idea, a pasturage. Thus: “their word will pasture or feed” upon the body. The root word is **nemo** from which **nomos** (law) is also derived. In this one sentence, then, Paul crystallises his theme. For all that Paul was arguing was based upon the principles expounded in the Law, which, as God’s Word, gave health in mind and body. So he contrasts the Word of God with the words of false teachers by saying, “Study to show thyself approved unto God... rightly dividing the **Word of truth**. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And **their word** will eat as doth a canker”. “Their word”, instead of giving health, fed upon the body, devouring instead of nourishing, eating into the body like a leprous sore. The result was grotesque spiritual mutilation and defilement.

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Thus, Paul illustrates the relationship between teaching and spiritual life. His argument revolves around the contrast between the Word of God and the words of man. The young in understanding and the spiritually sluggish may easily be beguiled by the intellectual respectability of the false word. Disastrous results will follow for it will lead to more ungodliness. Should that word take hold on the body of Christ it will eat into it causing suffering and mutilation. There is only one way to combat this disease—to continue in the sound wholesome Words of the Lord Jesus and to shun as a leper all that is profane and empty.

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The further we progress in knowledge, the more clearly can we discern the vastness of our ignorance.

Karl Popper, *The Rationality of Scientific Knowledge*.

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## “ABOVE THE HEIGHTS OF THE CLOUDS”

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STEPHEN PALMER

### **Man's Cosmic Context**

LAST YEAR, in a BBC television preview of the American attempt to soft land a spacecraft on Mars several interesting issues were raised which give a penetrating insight into the philosophy which underlies man's space exploration. The programme entitled, "Is Anybody There?" interviewed prominent American space scientists on the possibilities and consequences of finding life on Mars.

One of the main themes developed was that the existence of some sort of life on Mars would force men to consider seriously the possibilities of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. In this way a "cosmic context" would be introduced into human thinking which would radically alter man's assessment of his existence and give a new direction to his life. It was argued that the size of the Universe alone must mean that there are other stars with planets which have the necessary environment for life support, and on some of these planets intelligent life will have evolved to a degree sufficient to communicate with earth by radio-telescope.

One major difficulty for these scientists is deciding how to estimate the many variables in order to calculate the probability of intelligent life on other planets. How many planets have all the factors essential to life? and how many planets have intelligent life? How many planets have an improbability of evolution becomes a possibility? In this respect the programme was based upon so much speculation as to be futile.

### **Space-Age Gods**

The quest for extra-terrestrial life has dark and sinister motives other than the search for knowledge. The television programme seriously considered the possibility that if life was found on other planets the country that first established communication would have a major tactical weapon to make it the superior world

power. Should that life be more intelligent than human life the communicating country would be able to learn secrets which would consolidate its world dominance. Besides this danger, one biologist considered that there would result a reliance on that intelligence to solve world problems.

Most of the discussion was in the realms of science fiction, yet the attitudes betrayed suggest that this fiction is the modern extension of a more ancient endeavour. The desire to throw off the earth-bound shackles, the desire to find a supraterrrestrial "human" intelligence, and the desire to look to that force for direction and guidance are desires which in past ages were covered by idol worship. Man's idols have always been ascribed human qualities, yet immortal and supernatural. They are imaginary representations of the human will to elevate man above the Creator. From the time of Babel, when men said "Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name" (Gen. 11:4), mankind has aimed for the stars. It was the boast of Babylon, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14). Today, technological advance has enabled these dreams to be fulfilled in part, and the name of science has obscured the real human motivation; that is, to establish a cosmic context for man in a completely human frame.

### **The King of Heaven**

As man gazes starward he has turned his eyes away from the real context of his life. There is a cosmic dimension to man's existence, but it is to be found by looking on earth, for it is on earth that the activity of the Creator can be most clearly seen. It is on this planet that "The invisible things of Him from the