

289 *Teaching or indoctrination?*

I have found it helpful last time^[288] to lay out some of the strands of teaching that I've received (and tried to faithfully pass on) over my 55 years as a Christian. As a 20-year-old new convert in Cambridge I often had teaching from the likes of John Stott, so I had a really good grounding in Bible-based doctrines – and I'm genuinely grateful.

Coming from a dysfunctional family, I was drawn by the love I found, but it was soon supported by a well-argued, understanding of what the Bible teaches, and I was ready to 'prove' my faith to anyone ... but I never really questioned it.

So was that 'teaching' or 'indoctrination'? And what's the difference?

I was taught a series of doctrines, good and right doctrines, biblical doctrines, so was that **indoctrination**. (I'm guessing that 'indoctrination' started as a positive word.)

Let me give you an example that I've mentioned before.^[183,215] In 1968, we were still using the 1662 Prayer Book, so every time I took communion I recited the 'prayer of humble access', including about my ' manifold sins and wickedness ... provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us'. In retrospect, I'm horrified by this negative image of God. No wonder the vast majority of I-used-to-go-to-church people that I meet feel negatively towards the Christian religion – that and a number of other reasons.

I'd say that I was well-meaningly indoctrinated.

It took a total loss of faith to enable me to step back, change my perspective, and look at the Bible's teaching afresh – especially Jesus' teaching. Thankfully, it has transformed my view of what God is like.

And today I've extended my list of strands of teaching (indoctrination?):

God is holy, we're sinful, we're rejected/separated unless we believe in Jesus.

We're off to heaven when we die, where we'll escape the bad stuff of now.

It's all about the individual (me, my sin, my salvation, my relationship with God).

Services are guilt-centric (wrath and indignation etc).

Substitution: God's wrath falls on Jesus instead of us.

Unbelieving spouses/friends/family are doomed to hell.

Other religions are simply wrong and doomed to hell.

Catholics are heretical and we should not fellowship with them.

Liberal theologians are trying to sweep away the truth of the Bible.

Leadership is God's calling on men, *not* women.

People who advocate speaking in tongues are heretical – that was for NT church only.

Couples who are unmarried, 'living in sin', are constantly sinning by doing so.

Divorced people who remarry are sinning by doing so.

With sincere apologies: gay sex is an abomination, AIDS is God's judgement on them.

How do you feel about those doctrines? Have you shared any of them? Questioned, rethought and changed your mind on any? It has taken me a lot of time and effort.