

## **HOW TO DEAL WITH THOSE WHO DIFFER FROM US PART 4 OF 4**

**Dr. Roger R. Nicole, Ph.D.**

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### **THE CHRISTIAN'S GOAL**

Perhaps the most important consideration for the Christian is to remain aware at all times of the goal to be achieved. It is the consistent perception of this goal that will give a basic orientation to the whole discussion: Are we attempting to win an argument in order to manifest our own superior knowledge and debating ability? Or are we seeking to win another person whom we perceive as enmeshed in error or inadequacy by exposing him or her to the truth and light that God has given to us?

If the former be true, it is not surprising if our efforts are vain: we should be like physicians who take care of patients simply in order to accredit a pet theory. If the latter be true, we will naturally be winsome. This will increase our patience when the force of our arguments does not seem to have an immediate effect. This will challenge us anew to understand those who differ in order to present the arguments that are most likely to be persuasive to them. God has appointed all of us to be witnesses to the truth (John 1:7; Acts 1:8). God is the one who can and will give efficacy to this witness. We should never underestimate his ability to deal even with those who appear most resistant. Who would have thought that Stephen could actually reach the heart and mind of anyone in the lynch mob that put him to death? But his great discourse was actually sowing goads in the very heart and conscience of Saul (Acts 26:14). Acts 7 showed that his Christ-like spirit in the face of his atrocious murder sealed his argument (Acts 7:59-60). His witness was used by God to win over perhaps the ablest of his adversaries, the man who would become the apostle Paul!

Finally, a Christian who carries on discussions with those who differ should not be subject to the psychology of the boxing ring, where the contestants are bent upon demolishing one another. Rather "The Lord's servant must not quarrel: instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses..." (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Men and women who are committed to the Scriptures will allow God's Word to moderate even the greatest battles concerning its very contents.