

from the faith, and even from those who associate with them. What more can I do to be honest with you? If, after all, men will not have Christ and his gospel and his rule, it is their own concern.²⁸

Extract 12

The church has been captured by the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. In spite of the prophetic voices that are raised here and there among us, present-day believers are drawn to the world with irresistible force...

Not only has the church nothing to say to the world, but the tables have actually been turned, and the ministers of Christ are now going to the world for light. They sit at Adam's feet for instruction, and clear their message with the wise and the prudent, before they dare deliver it. But the certainty that comes from seeing and the assurance that springs from hearing – where are they?

Let us be more specific. About whom am I speaking here? The liberal who denies the authenticity of the Scriptures? I wish it were so. No, I write off the liberal as long dead and expect nothing from him. It is of the evangelical church that I speak, and of their so-called churches.²⁹ I speak of the theology of popular evangelism which quotes the Bible copiously but without one trace of authority, accepts the world at its own estimate, chides sinners like a weak-chinned father of a family who has long ago lost control of his household and doesn't expect to be obeyed, offers Christ as a religious tranquilliser who is without

²⁸ C.H.Spurgeon sermon 2047, entitled 'No Compromise'.

²⁹ Original had 'gospel churches'. If the adjective is used to distinguish churches which hold to the gospel from those who do not, in a very real sense we have a tautology. If a church does not hold to the gospel it is not a church. Again: 'a gospel church' is a phrase used by covenant theologians who sprinkle infants; they think the old and new covenants are different administrations of one covenant, that Israel was the church in the Old Testament and the church is the church in the New, and that infant baptism has replaced circumcision. This is utterly wrong. See my *Christ Is All: No Sanctification by the Law; Infant Baptism Tested; 'A Gospel Church': A Warning* (in a shortened version as an article also), in addition to several other of my works.

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sovereignty and without any semblance of lordship, adopts the world's methods, courts the favour of rich men, politicians and playboys – with the understanding, of course, that the said playboy will stoop to say a nice word about Jesus now and then.

I refer to a religious journalism ostensibly orthodox, but which can scarcely be told in appearance, tone, spirit, language, method or aim from the secular magazine it so sedulously apes...

Pragmatic philosophy... asks no embarrassing questions about the wisdom of what we are doing, or even about the morality of it. It accepts our chosen ends as right and good and casts about for efficient means and ways to get them accomplished. When it discovers something that works, it soon finds a text to justify it, 'consecrates' it to the Lord, and plunges ahead. Next a magazine article is written about it, then a book, and finally the inventor is granted an honorary degree. After that, any question about the scripturalness of things or even the moral validity of them is completely swept away. You cannot argue with success. The method works; *ergo*, it must be good...

A part, a very large part, of the activities carried on today in evangelical circles is not only influenced by pragmatism, but [is] almost completely controlled by it. Religious methodology is geared to it; it appears large in our youth meetings; magazines and books constantly glorify it; conventions are dominated by it; and the whole religious atmosphere is alive with it.

What shall we do to break its power over us? The answer is simple. We must acknowledge the right of Jesus Christ to control the activities of his church. The New Testament contains full instructions, not only about what we are to believe, but what we are to do and how we are to go about doing it. Any deviation from those instructions is a denial of the Lordship of Christ.³⁰

Extract 13

Someone suggested that more girls would be drawn to the meetings if she [that is, Amy Carmichael in India] offered

³⁰ A.W.Tozer: *God Tells The Man Who Cares*, OM Publishing, 1996, pp20-21,36-37,82-83.

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lessons in sewing or embroidery, and administered only a mild dose of the gospel... So far as Amy could see, there was no scriptural warrant for ‘consecrated fancywork and chatter’, for ‘fleshly things rather than spiritual’. ‘I would rather have two who came in earnest than a hundred who came to play’, she said. ‘We have no time to toy with souls like this. It is not by ceremonial tea-making and flower arranging, not by wool chrysanthemum-making and... sewing-learning, but: ‘By my Spirit, says the LORD’...

[Amy herself said]: ‘I could not buy a soul at the cost of sacrificing truth’...

[She deplored] the apparent superficiality of much in India that called itself Christianity. [She said]: ‘The saddest thing one meets is the nominal Christian... The church here is a “field full of wheat and tares”... “given the position of the Untouchables... they were tempted by what Christianity seemed to offer: an identity hitherto denied them, a dignity and an equality not only with other Indians but even, in spiritual terms, with those Christians who represented power – the British of the Raj. These were the “loaves and fishes” that drew the crowds. Who among them actually had “ears to hear” the word of the Master? This was the burning question’...

An idea for drawing the women to hear the gospel [was put to Carmichael]: She would teach them to knit with some pink wool she had been given: ‘and they will love me more and like to listen when I talk about Jesus’. Amy could not say ‘Yes’ to that. She explained that the gospel needed no such frills. It is the power of God for salvation’. When she was told that the Bible did not forbid it, her answer was: ‘Not my might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Hosts’ (Zech. 4:6). There was no need for tricks which might open houses – houses were open. No need for methods for helping to humanise and fill bare and empty lives... To try to help God with pink fancywork was, she felt, plain unbelief.³¹

³¹ Elisabeth Elliot: *A Chance To Die: The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael*, Revell, Grand Rapids, 2005, pp84,92,117-118,126.

Extract 14

Get the children to come by all fair and right means. Do not bribe them; that is a plan to which we strongly object... Oh, that beggarly trick of bribing! I wish there were an end of it; it only shows the weakness, and degradation, and abomination of a sect that cannot succeed without using so mean a system.³²

Extract 15

[Christ's] church... is never to call in the aid of force, or use carnal weapons, but must trust, alone, in the omnipotence which dwells in the sure Word of Testimony! This is our battle-axe and weapon of war! The patronages or the constraints of civil power are not for us! And neither dare we use either bribes or threats to make men Christians – a spiritual kingdom must be set up and supported by spiritual means only.³³

Extract 16

Our Lord bribes none into following him.³⁴

Extract 17

For decades now evangelical churches have been conducting their services for the sake of unbelievers. Both the revivalistic service of a previous generation and the 'seeker service' of today are shaped by the same concern – appeal to the 'unchurched'. Not surprisingly, in neither case does much that might be called worship by Christians occur. As a result, many evangelicals who have been sitting for years in such worship services are finding their souls drying up, and they have begun to long for something else.³⁵

³² *Come Ye Children: A Book for Parents and Teachers on the Christian Training of Children* (spurgeon.org)

³³ C.H.Spurgeon sermon number 1208.

³⁴ C.H.Spurgeon Commentary on Matthew.

³⁵ Robert L.Reymond: *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p873.

Extract 18

Two years after [John] Bunyan's death, the Bedford church met and 'discussed the subject and gravely decided... that public singing of psalms be practiced by the church with a caution that none others perform it but such as can sing with grace in their hearts according to the command of Christ'...³⁶

Extract 19

[Speaking of John Bunyan's time:] The Bedford congregation's conviction was not uncommon among separatist churches, which said a local church should consist only of believers; thus, in public worship, only believers should sing.³⁷

Extract 20

I fear that the number of true Christians in the world is very much less than we suppose. We are encumbered with a host of people who call themselves Christians, but are as much of the world as other people, whose inheritance is in the world, whose pleasure is in the world, whose speech is worldly, and who are altogether of the world; and because they are of the world the world loves its own; and therefore, there is little or no strife between them and the world. Alas, I fear the church is not true to itself, and therefore the world begins to love it. It says: 'You have come to live with us, and do as we do, and you do not bear your awkward protests as you used to do, and so we do not need to burn you as we did your forefathers. You are a hail fellow, well met! with us, and therefore we will treat you kindly'. [But] only let us live as Christ lived, and we shall find the dogs of this world howling at us as they used to do at our forefathers.³⁸

³⁶ Percy A.Scholes: *The Puritans and Music in England and New England*, Russell & Russell Inc., New York, 1962, p268.

³⁷ Joel R.Beeke: 'Psalm Singing in Calvin and the Puritans'.

³⁸ C.H.Spurgeon sermon number 1491.

Extract 21

Growing up as an evangelical, I was terrified of hell. But in recent years, Christian preachers³⁹ have abandoned damnation in favour of a more upbeat vision... I wasn't aware of it at the time, but Willow Creek was on the front lines of a movement some described as a 'second Reformation', with the potential to remake the Christian faith. [Bill] Hybels was one of a handful of pastors who pioneered what would become known as the 'seeker-friendly church', a congregation targeting the vast population of Americans who had little to [that is, or] no experience of Christianity ("unchurched" Harry and Mary', in ministry lingo). The goal was to work out why these people were turned off by the gospel, and then to create a worship service that responded to their perceived needs. Essentially, this is consumer-based management. (Hybels keeps a poster in his office that reads: 'What is our business? Who is our customer? What does the customer consider value?'). During Willow Creek's inception, Hybels – who studied business before entering the ministry – performed preliminary market research, surveying the unreligious in his community to find out why people weren't going to church. Unsurprisingly, the most common responses were 'church is boring': 'I don't like being preached down to', and 'it makes me feel guilty'. Harry and Mary were made uncomfortable by overt religious... and archaic language. The solution was a more positive message: upbeat tunes, an emphasis on love and acceptance. Visitors wouldn't be required to wear name tags or stand up and introduce themselves. Everything was designed for the visitor's comfort and leisure...

Like so many formerly oppositional institutions, the church is now becoming a symptom of the culture rather than an antidote to it, giving us one less place to turn for a sober counter-narrative to the simplistic story of moral progress that stretches from Silicon Valley to Madison Avenue.⁴⁰ Hell may be an elastic concept, as varied as the thousands of malevolencies it has described throughout history, but it

³⁹ Original had 'pastors'.

⁴⁰ Silicon Valley is near San Francisco and Madison Avenue is in New York.

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remains our most resilient metaphor for the evil both around and within us. True compassion is possible not because we are ignorant that life can be hell, but because we know that it can be.⁴¹

Extract 22

[Since] grave errors have been suggested and nurtured by what at first appeared to be trifling departures from scriptural rule, therefore we ought to give earnest heed even to minor precepts. Future ages may have to mourn over the defalcations of today unless we are careful to do the building of the Lord's house with faithfulness.⁴²

Extract 23

I don't think Christian people set out to write books on evangelism based on unbiblical principles. But it happens. It happens because there are wrong ideas about the critical components of evangelism. Usually, these wrong ideas are based on marketing principles or on human understandings about how to argue someone into the kingdom. It has more to do with results and effect, which is the realm of the Holy Spirit, rather than faithfulness in proclaiming the truth, which is our job description. If we don't have biblical evangelism nailed down, we... spend much time doing things we call evangelism, but may not be evangelism at all.⁴³

Extract 24

By nature, man thinks it is what he does that is of chief importance. When that idea is carried into the pulpit, the preacher aims to be popular in order to gain acceptance for his message. The right response, he thinks, will depend on

⁴¹ Meghan O'Gieblyn in an article in *The Guardian*, entitled: 'How do you sell God in the 21st century? More heaven, less hell'.

⁴² C.H.Spurgeon: *Flowers from a Puritan's Garden: Illustrations and Meditations*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2017, p184.

⁴³ J.Mack Stiles: 'How Should We Define Evangelism?' Sadly, Stiles failed to do what it says on the tin!

his hearers not being offended. The Bible presents the truth very differently. It announces what God has done; and describes man without God as ‘fools’: ‘ignorant’, and deservedly under wrath – ‘none righteous, no, not one’ (Rom. 3:10). ‘The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked’ (Jer. 17:9). But it came to be thought that the church would only lose people if they addressed men in such a fashion. The idea came directly from a wrong standpoint; and it was not modern, for the very same thinking was in Simon Peter when he advised Christ that his speaking of the corruption of man was offending hearers (Matt. 15:12). Deliverance from that viewpoint comes from a true vision of God. It is God who is to be feared, not man. Only with this knowledge is the preacher released from being governed by what people think of this message. Speaking of man’s dependence on the grace of God, Martyn Lloyd Jones said: ‘All of us dislike this truth because we feel it is insulting to us. The natural man hates this truth more than any other’. But that did not deter him. He believed that human arrogance has to be challenged: ‘Some of us would be much more popular in the church, as well as in the world, if we did not say certain things. If a preacher wants to be popular he must never offend’... Lloyd-Jones saw the twentieth-century attempt to make the Christian message more acceptable to people as an utter failure. ‘The more the church has accommodated her message [and practice] to suit the palate of the people, the greater has been the decline in attendance at places of worship’.⁴⁴

Extract 25

When the church suits its services to the taste of the world, however well-intentioned the endeavour, the ultimate result will never be biblical Christianity. Merle d’Aubigné,

⁴⁴ Alas, I have mislaid the writer’s name and source. If any reader can supply details, it would be much appreciated. As for Lloyd-Jones’ last observation in that extract, recent innovations are successful at gathering crowds. The long-term success of these schemes in holding the crowds, however, is another matter. And the biggest issue of all – what these methods produce as regards *spiritual* results – is a very different question again.

visiting such ‘progressive’ churches in Germany in the 1840s, noted: ‘In their meetings we see nothing of the holy gravity of the apostles and reformers; but in their [place] we find enlivening music, numerous banquets, and noisy toasts’.⁴⁵

Extract 26

The fundamental answer for the church always lies in Scripture, and what the contemporary church needed to address was a change in her own life: the call had to be for faith, repentance, discipline and revival within. ‘The first question with regard to the problem of evangelisation is not the state of the world outside, it is the condition of the church’...⁴⁶

Extract 27

One of the most popular current errors, and the one out of which springs most of the noisy, blustering religious activity in evangelical circles, is the notion that as times change the church must change with them. That mentality which mistakes Hollywood for the holy city is too gravely astray to be explained otherwise than as a judicial madness visited upon professing Christians for affronts committed against the Spirit of God.⁴⁷

Extract 28

There is a group of people who accept the wrath of God in theory, but they deny it in practice. ‘Oh, yes’, they say: ‘we believe in the wrath of God, but you have to be careful. You don’t put that first’. So, in the interests of evangelism, in the interests of attracting people, they deliberately do not start, as Paul does, with the wrath of God ([Rom. 1:18]) the tragedy is that we do not believe in the power of

⁴⁵ Alas, I have mislaid the writer’s name and source. If any reader can supply details, it would be much appreciated.

⁴⁶ Alas, I have mislaid the writer’s name and source. If any reader can supply details, it would be much appreciated.

⁴⁷ A.W.Tozer: *Renewed Day by Day: A Daily Devotional*, Christian Publications, Camp Hill, 1980, February 7th.

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the Holy Ghost as... Paul did. Paul did not stop to ask: 'Will the Romans like this doctrine?' He knew it all depended on the Holy Ghost.⁴⁸

Extract 29

In the account of the spread of Christianity given in the New Testament, the gospel was only rarely presented [to the ungodly] in the context of a [church] worship service.⁴⁹

Extract 30

In the entertainment world, there is a saying: 'Leave 'em begging for more!' But that was not Paul's way. He held back nothing that was helpful. In other words, Paul's evangelistic method did not require a reductionist approach to the gospel in order to reach the broadest demographic or market.⁵⁰

Extract 31

The world's hatred for Jesus did not end when he ascended to the Father. And for two thousand years that hatred has been focussed upon those who belong to him. This is because with his coming, the kingdom of God invaded the kingdoms of this world. Light entered the darkness, and men love darkness because their deeds are evil (John 3:19-21). By his very presence, and by his word, Jesus testified that the world's deeds were evil – and he continues to do so today in the word and deeds of those who belong to

⁴⁸ Iain H. Murray: *Lloyd-Jones: Messenger of Grace*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2008, pp12-13,16,23,63,218.

⁴⁹ Kenneth Dix: *Strict and Particular: Strict and Particular: English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century*, The Baptist Historical Society for the Strict Baptist Historical Society, Didcot, 2001, p278.

⁵⁰ Rick Peterson: 'Declaring the Whole Counsel of God'. Unpublished as I write. In a sermon, he explained: 'When I say a "reductionist gospel", I mean the longstanding efforts to dumb-down the gospel so as to make it more marketable to potential church-goers'.

him. Now, please note, I am not saying Christians are to go around in a self-righteous manner telling everyone how evil they are. We are not sent into the world to judge the world, but to be ministers of reconciliation. But light exposes darkness, and goodness exposes evil. And, as crazy as it sounds, those in love with darkness will hate you for being light and for doing good. They will hate you for being like Jesus. There is a clash of kingdoms.⁵¹

Extract 32

All notable theological and ecclesiastical positions with which I am familiar in the contemporary world hold that you can be right with God in ways that do not require transformation and in ways that do not routinely support and advance transformation. These may involve (1) professing right doctrine, (2) a specified form of association with a denomination or group, or on the more liberal side (3) a kind of vague – or even intense – sympathy with what one takes Jesus to stand for...

A saying among management experts today is: ‘Your system is perfectly designed to yield the results you are getting’. This is a profound though painful truth that must be respected by all who have an interest in Christian spiritual formation, whether for themselves as individuals, or for groups, or institutions.⁵²

Extract 33

[Revival] never results from the adoption of certain techniques, methods and organisation... There must be no divorce between the message we give and the methods we use. Surely, all must agree that our methods as well as our message are to be controlled by the New Testament and its teaching?... Is it not true to say that some have been guilty of giving a message which is controlled by... Scripture, while at the same time arguing that any method that the world finds to be successful may be employed, whether or not it is in keeping with New Testament principles?... We

⁵¹ Rick Peterson in a sermon.

⁵² Dallas Willard: *The Divine Conspiracy*, Harper Row, New York, 1997, pp47,58.