

ATTRACTING UNBELIEVERS TO CHURCH

POINTS TO PONDER

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Points to Ponder

A word in season, how good it is!

Proverbs 15:23.

When a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.

Proverbs 21:11.

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.

Proverbs 25:11.

Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprovee to a listening ear.

Proverbs 25:12.

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BRACHUS

BRACHUS 2018
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Scripture quotations come from a variety of versions

All my work may now be found on davidhjay.com

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Introduction

If we make the Bible our authority, then we can have no doubt that the church has no business trying to attract unbelievers into its life in order to evangelise them. If, however, we go by the traditions and institutionalism of Christendom,¹ we shall come to the opposite conclusion. Of course, these alternatives have faced succeeding generations of believers this past 1800 years – ever since the invention of Christendom. But, alas, as I judge the present scene, more and more churches are capitulating to the unscriptural system, even to the extent of developing sophisticated schemes which reach a high pitch of professionalism in the marketing of the gospel. And I deplore it.

Having written at large on this matter,² I will say little more about it here. I have only one purpose in this booklet. I want, yet again, to challenge this departure from Scripture, this time by setting out copious extracts from a variety of writers, past and present. These writers have tackled one of the inevitable consequences of wanting to market the gospel in such a way as to attract unbelievers into the life of the church so that they may be evangelised; namely, how to overcome the natural man's hatred of the gospel. This has two strands; one negative, the other positive. *First*, the advocates of this system must be tempted to water down the unpalatable aspects the gospel (that is, unpalatable to the natural man), if not remove them altogether. *Secondly*, the advocates of this system must be enticed to introduce things

¹ By 'Christendom', I mean the so-called 'Christian world': 'cultural Christianity': 'Churchianity': 'religion in the name of Christ'.

² See my *Relationship Evangelism Exposed: A Blight on the Churches and the Ungodly; Letting Loose A Gadfly: Edward Miall Speaks Today; To Confront or Not to Confront?: Addresses to Unbelievers*.

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which are attractive to the natural man.³ The most up-to-date schemes I have in my sights do, indeed, play down the offence of the gospel, and go out of their way to provide a whole range of attractions for the natural man.

This does not signal the end of it; it is but the beginning. This warping of the New Testament to make the church do a job it was never given by Christ, the Head and King of his church, carries a huge price tag; supremely, the loss of the biblical concept of conversion as a crisis. In saying this, I do not imply that a sinner's conversion has to be dramatic, but it most definitely must have a 'crunch' point. In the unscriptural practice, the biblical concept of conversion is replaced by a process which is nurtured by a cloying inclusivism, leading to some kind of spiritual osmosis or absorption of certain propositions by the unregenerate. Far more often than is realised, such people are encouraged to exercise a Sandemanian 'faith' – saving faith being reduced to mere or bare assent to the truth.⁴

Naturally, this emphasis on 'process' involves time, and a good deal of it! Consequently, the church has to devise schemes, not only to attract unbelievers to itself – to 'churchify' them – but to hold them (entertain them, in fact) until the process has had time to develop and come to fruition. Consequently, the church no longer confronts the unbeliever with Christ and the gospel. Nothing must be done or said which causes offence to the unbeliever: 'Thou Shalt Be Nice' is this system's overriding new commandment.

³ With the passage of time, different 'attractions' appeal; the principle, however, is the same.

⁴ For my reasons, see my *Infant Baptism Tested; Conversion Ruined: The New Perspective and the Conversion of Sinners; The Hinge in Romans 1 – 8: A critique of N.T.Wright's view of Baptism and Conversion; The Secret Stifler: Incipient Sandemanianism and Preaching the Gospel to Sinners; The Seeking Sinner: Fact or Figment?; Saving Faith.*

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The harvest will be grim. I fear that many of the ‘converts’ will, in the end, prove to be nothing more than Christianised pagans. Not only that: the procedure is a devastating blight on the church itself; believers suffer immense damage by this departure from the New Testament pattern. Above all, Christ, working by his sovereign Holy Spirit, is robbed of his glory.⁵

Of course, many other believers, to a greater or lesser extent, have seen this coming, some of whom have been prepared to speak up. In giving these extracts, I want to let their voices be heard by a wider audience.

Let me say a little more about this ‘to a greater or lesser extent’. As I have already observed, the fundamental mistake is the notion that the church has to attract sinners into church attendance to evangelise them. Those who make that mistake are faced with two options.

1. They can do what a growing number of churches are doing and adopt the methods and schemes of the business and entertainment world to market the gospel. This carries the huge price tag I have spoken about.

2. Other churches, however, while still trying to attract unbelievers into church attendance, try to avoid all worldly methods to do it, rejecting any tinkering with the gospel and church life in order to make the gospel palatable to the natural man. Moreover, they try to hold to the biblical concept of conversion, and try to maintain a clear distinction between believers and unbelievers in their church life and in their preaching. However, since the fundamental principle they have adopted is unscriptural, this can only postpone the inevitable. In my view, they are fighting a losing battle.

The extracts which follow come from these two groups, or else come from those who, like me, altogether reject the notion of attracting unbelievers into church life in order to evangelise them.

⁵ For a full explanation of these terms, and for my justification for saying such things, see my aforesaid works.

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While I am not claiming that any of these writers agree with me on every aspect of the issue in question, even so, their comments remain searchingly relevant.⁶

May I sound a final jarring note? Reader, just because you do not fall foul of *some* of the things raised in what follows, let alone *all* of them, do not miss those places where you must be challenged. Although I make this directly personal (to 'you'), I do not exclude myself.

Finally, I want you to meet these extracts without knowing who first issued them. I supply the references, of course, but, in the first instance, I invite you to be an innocent reader.

⁶ I do not agree with everything these writers assume or allege. I quote them for what they say about marketing the gospel.

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Extract 1

We seem to have a real horror of being different. Hence all our attempts and endeavours to popularise the church and make it appeal to people. We seem to be trying to tell people that their joining a church will not make them so very different after all. 'We are no longer Puritans', we say: 'we believe that they over-did things and made Christianity too difficult for people. They frightened people with their strictness and their unnecessarily high standards. We are not so foolish as to do that', we say, and indeed we do not do so. Instead, however, we provide so-called 'sporting parsons', men of whom the world can say that they are 'good sports' – whatever that may mean. And what it does so often mean is that they are men who believe that you can get men to come to chapel and church by playing football and other games with them. 'I'll fraternise with these men', says such a minister. 'I'll get them to like me and to see that I'm not so different from them after all, and then they'll come to listen to my sermons'. And he tries it; but thank God, he almost invariably fails, as he richly deserves. The man who only comes to church or chapel because he likes the minister is a man of no value at all, and the minister who attempts to get men there by means of that subterfuge is for the time being guilty of lowering the standard of the truth which he claims to believe. For this gospel is the gospel of salvation propounded by the Son of God himself. We must not hawk it about the world, or offer special inducements and attractions, as if we were shopkeepers announcing an exceptional bargain sale...

The world expects the Christian to be different and looks to him for something different, and therein it often shows an insight into life that regular church-goers often lack. The churches organise whist drives, fêtes, dramas, bazaars and things of that sort, so as to attract people. We are becoming almost as wily as the devil himself, but we are really very bad at it; all our attempts are hopeless failures and the world laughs at us. Now, when the world

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persecutes the church, she is performing her real mission, but when the world laughs at her she has lost her soul. And the world today is laughing at the church, laughing at her attempts to be nice and to make people feel at home. My friends, if you feel at home in any church without believing in Christ as your personal Saviour, then that church is no church at all, but a place of entertainment or a social club. For the truth of Christianity and the preaching of the gospel [and the very ambience of the church] should make a church intolerable and uncomfortable to all except those who believe, and even they should go away chastened and humble.¹

Extract 2

One might have thought, from what we have seen of late, that orders had come from headquarters that the soldiers were to lay down the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, and take to lighter weapons. Entertainments, amusements, farces and sing-song are now used to do what the gospel has failed to achieve! Is it not sadly so? Well, if any will try these silly toys, I can only say that they have no command from their Lord to warrant them in their proceedings. Take all these things, and see what they will do, but you make the trial at your own risk, and on your own heads the result of failure will fall.²

Extract 3

The only multiplication of the church of God that is to be desired is that which God sends: ‘You have multiplied the nation’ [Isa. 9:3]. If we add to our churches by becoming worldly, by taking in persons who have never been born again; if we add to our churches by accommodating the life of the Christian to the worldling, our increase is worth nothing at all; it is a loss rather than a gain. If we add to our churches by excitement, by making appeals to the passions, rather than by explaining truth to the understanding; if we add to our churches otherwise than by

¹ Iain H.Murray: *D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1982, pp141-142.

² C.H.Spurgeon sermon 2201.

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the power of the Spirit of God making men new creatures in Christ Jesus, the increase is of no worth whatsoever.³

Extract 4

Dr James Montgomery Boice... lamented his concern that the church was being enticed 'to do the Lord's work in the world's way'. We try to transfer principles of success drawn from Madison Avenue⁴ and from other secular institutions and imitate them in the life of the church. Such a process is deadly.⁵

Extract 5

A church is like a great tree in the desert which holds out the promise of fruit, and towards which all the spiritually hungry turn. There can be few sadder things in this world than a church, promising by its very name,... by its open doors, by its songs and services... to give food to the hungry, refreshment to the weary, comfort to the sorrowing, and then failing to keep its [and Christ's DG] promises to the souls that come expecting.⁶

Extract 6

Christians should never substitute the biblical edict of evangelism for [that is, with or by] cultural relevance.⁷ Why? Because Scripture must bind the conscience, and if it does, the Holy Scripture will impact the culture in lieu of the culture impacting Scripture. In a world that is replacing the gospel for [that is, with or by] gimmicks, and theology for [that is, with or by] theatrics, Christians need to avoid accepting methodologies that are not warranted in

³ C.H.Spurgeon sermon 2265.

⁴ Wikipedia: 'The term "Madison Avenue" refers specifically to the agencies, and methodology of advertising. "Madison Avenue techniques" refers, according to William Safire, to the "gimmicky, slick use of the communications media to play on emotions"'.
⁵ R.C.Sproul: 'The Perils Facing the Evangelical Church'.

⁶ J.R.Miller: *Come Ye Apart* entry for October 6th.

⁷ With respect, the author should have said this the other way about: that is what he meant! The same applies twice more.

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Scripture. When believers fail⁸ to follow the biblical paradigm of evangelism, they are not following the trajectory of Holy Scripture; they are following the direction of imaginations and devices of men... Embracing evangelism does not mean to espouse all of the cultural gimmicks that are gross misrepresentations of the gospel... Providing inventive principles in worship so carnal people can experience spiritual euphoria is not evangelism. Preaching palatable and innocuous sermons is not evangelism... Even worse,⁹ there is an unconventional mode of witnessing that imperiously demands that cultivating a relationship is a necessary precondition that must precede biblical evangelism. This is called Friendship Evangelism [or Relationship Evangelism]. Developing a relationship is certainly advantageous for an evangelist. However, there are several problems that exist for people who believe relationships must precede evangelising the unregenerate.¹⁰

Extract 7

When the church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it. It is then that the world is made to listen to her message, though it may hate it at first... When worldly wisdom and carnal methods enter into evangelism you will find that there is no 'strait gate'. Too often the impression is given that to be a Christian is after all only very little different from being a non-Christian, that you must not think of Christianity as a narrow life, but as something most attractive and wonderful and exciting, and that you come in in crowds. It is not so according to our Lord. The gospel of Jesus Christ is too honest to invite anybody in that way. It does not try to persuade us that something is very easy, and that it is only later on we shall begin to discover it is hard. The gospel of Jesus Christ openly and uncompromisingly announces itself as being something which starts with a narrow entrance, a strait

⁸ The original had 'a Christian fails'.

⁹ The original had 'worst'.

¹⁰ Sonny Hernandez: 'Great Commission 101: Evangelism, not Evanjellyfish!'

gate. At the very beginning, it is absolutely essential that we should realise that.¹¹

Extract 8

The business of the gospel is to bring people to God, and to reconcile them to God. Not to fill churches! Not to have good statistics! But to reconcile men to God – to save them from the wrath to come... I suppose really there is nothing about the Christian message that is so hated, so much objected to, as this particular doctrine. And therefore I conceive it to be my duty in expounding this great passage [Romans 1:18ff], not simply to note and to mention the wrath of God, but to show you its integral place, its vital place in biblical preaching, in New Testament evangelism... I cannot understand a jocular evangelist... Go back and read the lives of the men whom God has used in the mightiest manner, and you will invariably find that they were serious men, sober men, men with the fear of the Lord in them; 'knowing the terror of the Lord', they all said with... Paul. They were not afraid of the people or what they might think of the message; they were only afraid of what God might think of it, and so they started with it [that is, God's wrath] and proclaimed it, and God used it... God hates sin. Sin is abhorrent to God. There should be no difficulty about the term 'hate'. If you recognise love in God you must recognise hate also. All that is opposed to God is hateful to God... It is clear that the very character and being of God as holy, makes this doctrine quite inevitable. You cannot mix light and darkness. You cannot conceive of sin as existing in the presence of God. God's holiness insists upon this doctrine of the wrath of God. God must deal with sin. God must show his hatred of it. It is part of his own holiness and his greatness and glory that he should do so... The wrath is as much revealed as is the righteousness of God by faith. Therefore I do not hesitate to say that ultimately you cannot believe [Rom. 1:17] unless you believe [Rom. 1:18] as well – indeed, you will never see the real need for [Rom. 1:17] if you do not believe [Rom. 1:18]. The two

¹¹ D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Inter-Varsity Press, Nottingham, reprinted 2002.

things go together... If you do not see the wrath of God when you look at the cross of Calvary's hill, it is very certain that you do not see the love of God either. It is there that you see the wrath of God revealed... It is only as you have some conception of the depth of his wrath that you will understand the depth of his love.¹²

Extract 9

There are many, many ways to build the... church of the tares... many ways. Behind which Satan is the real power. And it can be done very effectively. The church of the tares can be very effective, it can be big, and it can be enduring. The Gnostics did it, and it's still around. The Roman Catholics have done it, and it's still around. The liberals have done it, and it's still around. The cults have done it, and it's still around. The church of the tares is actually bigger than the church of the wheat. And today [some of] those who call themselves evangelicals are busy doing it.

And there's a long list of locations called churches where tares assemble in increasing numbers with a scattering of weak wheat-stalks among them. The successful assemblies of tares will eagerly market their skill at tare development. It can be very seductive to those who are motivated by numbers or popularity.

So, if you want to take a shot at competing with the rest of the tare pastors to see how many tares you can get in a building, there's ample information, lots of seminars, plenty of books and data on the Internet that you can draw down to work on building your church of the tares with a smattering of wheat... How does Christ build his church and has he revealed [the answer] to us? Or are we in the dark? Is there some wiggle room here that allows for some of the contemporary approaches to this?

Well I'm happy to say to you, the answer is not vague, the answer is not obscure. When you ask how does Christ build his church, the answer is not debatable, it's not complicated, it's not even difficult. It is simple, it is straightforward, it is so clear that it is inescapable. It is so

¹² D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *The Plight of Man and the Power of God*.

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singular as to make every one of us duty-bound and accountable to the Lord of the church for faithfulness to his will and his means so clearly revealed. If you are caught up a little in chasing every passing fad for church growth, if you are buying the bags of church-growth stuff that clever entrepreneurs and marketers are selling, if you're reading every survey that comes out, and doing your best to analyse culture, you're trying every device to increase numbers, I sort of want to throw the gauntlet down today and ask you to make a choice. If you want to build the church of the tares, you're on your own, get all you can. [But if] you want to be a means by which Christ builds his church, that's a different thing all together...

The apostles went out with absolute disdain for – here comes the buzz word – any 'contextualisation' at all. The modern cry for 'contextualisation' is a curse...

The Lord built his church with pure, simple, straightforward gospel truth. The Corinthians, of course, they were very bothered that Paul wasn't contextualised. That ate at them [that is, it annoyed them]. And he couldn't have cared less. He didn't care at all. John the Baptist was a little out of touch with his society. I don't think he found a whole lot of folks wearing camel's hair. So were all the Old Testament prophets [a little out of touch with their culture] for that matter. And so was Jesus. And please, do not appeal to anything in people that is innate to their fallen-ness. Wherever their corruption goes, don't go there... don't go there. The true gospel has to be alien, it has to be alien...

Is it too obvious to say that the church of Jesus Christ is an assembly of true believers? To call an assembly of non-believers a church is preposterous, outrageous. The Lord only adds believers to the church. There's a serious defect in [being] proud of assembling non-believers, and calling them a church. Something deeply wrong there. Modern evangelicalism seems to exhaust every imaginable – and unimaginable – means to attract and collect non-Christians into a building, and then call it a church, and call it church growth. Maybe there's a better way to identify these places; let's just call them non-churches. Maybe it's just an evangelistic event...

In the early church, it was about a regenerate congregation...

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The Lord defines his church as an assembly of regenerate believers, totally devoted to Christ, true worshippers gathered for spiritual purposes, engaged in the spiritual disciplines. I love this, they were continually devoting themselves – ‘continually’ being the operative word – to these spiritual disciplines. This is a far cry from what goes on in the non-church today. An event is designed for unbelievers, and there are a few straggler-believers in the assembly of tares getting nothing to lift them up from their spiritual weakness. But the Lord builds his church from the foundation of true believers...

The church does not, as its primary objective, seek to be popular with the world. Would you agree with that? Obviously! Jesus said that they’re going to kill you because they killed me. They’re going to hate you. Get ready for persecution. In the Olivet discourse that he gave [in] Luke 21, he talks about this persecution that’s going to run between his first coming and his second coming. And it’s going to escalate and escalate and escalate; that’s just the way it’s going to be. He reiterates that in John 15 and 16. And so we understand that all who live godly in this present age will suffer persecution. We understand that.

But there’s a balance with that as well. It’s an interesting thing. The church does not seek to be popular with the world. It knows that in its true expression, it offends sinners – right? The essence of our message offends sinners. But it is also true that the world can have a basic respect for Christians. We find that. [In] Acts 2:46 [we read of the believers] ‘having favour with all the people’. The people could appreciate integrity. They could appreciate honesty. They could appreciate virtue. They could appreciate kindness and the graciousness that goes along with being a Christian...

But alongside that while they respect us for the evident power in our lives or the evident difference in our lives, they resent us for the message. They resent us for the message. The resentment comes at the point of the truth preached and proclaimed.

So, in the modern strategy you go big with the number-one idea that they like us because we’re nice, and if you just pull back the message, they’ll keep liking us. But if you’re honest enough to give the message, the message is a damning and judgmental message. And so it was in the

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book of Acts 2:36: 'Therefore, let all the house of Israel', says Peter: 'know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus, whom you crucified'. When they said: 'What shall we do?', Peter said (in verse 38): 'Repent and let each of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'. And then (in verse 40) he goes on solemnly testifying and exhorting: 'Be saved from this perverse generation'. 'Don't go to hell with everybody else'. And he's talking to religious Jews. He's talking to religious Jews. [In] chapter 3 verse 17, Peter again: 'Now, brethren, I know you acted in ignorance just as your rulers did also, but the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ should suffer, he has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and return that your sins may be wiped away in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and he may send Jesus the Christ appointed for you'. Again the message clearly is repentance. And it's the same again in chapter 4: 'Let it be known to you, and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name this man stands here before you in good health'. Again there is this continual tone of indictment. The same in chapter 5 verses 17 and following. You can read it on your own.

So the picture that emerges here is this: there is necessary a kind of integrity and personal virtue that's manifest in the life of the church in the world. But the message when preached faithfully and honestly and directly is rejected. It is hostile. It is offensive...

We can't back away from the idea of sin, righteousness, judgment, calling for repentance, forgiveness, escape from hell, not perishing with the perverse generation. This is an offensive, narrow, exclusive, condemning message. It puts all those – listen – all those who do not believe the gospel, into the category of being damned forever. And all people who propagate any other kind of religious idea except the true gospel are hypocritical, liars, who are damned themselves. There's no way around it. We are called to alarm the sinner... to alarm the sinner.

And what's that going to do? That's going to create persecution, hostility. Jesus said, you're going to have to

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take up your cross if you want to follow me, you're going to have to hate your father, your mother, your sister, your brother, those of your own household, even your own life. This message is very hostile. And the early church felt it big...

We want to be popular. We want to be accepted with everyone. We want to be accepted not only with the neutral people, we want to be accepted with all the other religious people... We want everybody to like us so that this [hatred of us] doesn't happen because this [hatred] is counterproductive to [our view of] evangelism.

Look: it's tough enough to get them to believe something that is foolish or a stumbling block. It's tough enough to tell them they have to be slaves to Christ in a world filled with slaves where they can see the abuses of that, and what it [has] meant. And then you add to that that if you do believe and become a part of the church, you might be arrested, put in jail, and executed [see Acts 4]. That's not going to work... [that's what we think]...

The big threat to the early church – this will surprise you – it wasn't persecution; we just read that. They arrested them [that is the apostles], and the church grew. They arrested them, and the church multiplied. That wasn't it [that is, persecution wasn't the biggest threat]. The biggest threat to the church was this: there were so many signs and wonders, there were so many miracles attracting people that unbelievers might come to church for the wrong reasons.¹³ That's the deadly danger. There were a lot of sick people, lots of people who were infirm, diseased, disabled. [The danger was when people started saying such things as:] 'Miracles [are] going on in there. Signs and wonders [are] going on in there. Listen, this is beyond a light show [that is, a spectacle of coloured lights that move and change, especially at a pop concert]. This is beyond a rock band. This is beyond a skit or a drama. This is the real deal'... [The real] fear in the church was that unbelievers would come in – and they already knew that the Lord said that the devil would sow tares. The church was in danger of being leavened by the world. So the wonder of it all had to be mitigated with fear. In fact, the fear had to be so powerful and so great that it stopped non-Christians

¹³ Compare John 6:26-59.

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outside the door. This is absolutely upside down from modern church-growth strategy... But [in the New Testament] there had to become such a deadly dread and fear [so great] that unbelievers [just] wouldn't dare go in to the church...

[From Acts 5:13, we learn the reaction of the people:] 'Don't go there, you might die'. That's a far cry from: 'Let's go there, it's fun'...

Church is not about being a jokester, it's not about funny, clever pop jargon...

It's so interesting to me to watch the flow of church growth. It starts out with sort of meeting people at their social level. They need associations, friends, singles need to meet singles, let's have restaurants for them, let's have recreation. That's the first wave that connects with them socially.

The second wave goes a little deeper and says: 'No, they've got all these felt needs; you've got to have 45 Twelve-Step Programs, so let's connect psychologically'. So the new wave of church growth says: 'Let's connect [with them] psychologically'.¹⁴

Extract 10

Another great evil is *the want of decision for the truth among truly good men*; those who are our brethren in the faith of our Lord Jesus, but who do not seem to have made up their minds as to separation from error. Good, easy men, they are all for peace! 'Sitting on the fence' seems to be a popular position among professors just now... Several brethren may have made up their minds; but, [waiting], they will sit uneasily upon the fence... There is a position which I never was able to occupy myself, and therefore I have no very profound sympathy with them. One or two learned divines are trying their utmost to get down on both sides of the fence; but it is a perilous experiment. Some are trying to get down on the winning side, and others would prefer to keep their judicious position world without end. Neutrals, in the end, have the respect of neither party; and, assuredly, they are *the difficulty* in every controversy.

¹⁴ John MacArthur: 'A Biblical Response to the Church-Growth Movement'.

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There will always be trouble in the churches so long as men are afraid to denounce sin and error. A negro preacher, in a certain village, said that among his flock he carefully abstained from preaching against the sin of stealing chickens, because it seemed so much to damp brotherly fellowship!... Is there not a great deal of this suppression of unpalatable truth? Are not many unfaithful as to the sins around them? They are 'all things to all men', but it is not that they may save some. I have heard it whispered that it is in order that they may save *a sum* to the exchequer of the church. Are not important persons too much consulted? Is not position more valued than piety? Is there enough of downright faithfulness to truth and to Christ at all hazards? Brethren, we want grace to say: 'I can be poor; I can be ridiculed; I can be abused; but I cannot be false to my Lord'.

I make no personal reference, but I see the spirit of compromise concerning holiness and sin, truth and error, far too prevalent. The spirit of compromise comes not of the Spirit of God, but of the spirit of the world. It is always wisest and best to exhibit clear decision upon fundamental points; we must draw the line distinctly, and then stand to it firmly. Do not alter your course because of winds and currents. Do not try to make things pleasant all round.

Another great evil of the times is *the insatiable craving for amusements*. That men should have rest from labour, and that they should enjoy such amusements as refresh both body and mind, nobody wishes to deny. Within suitable bounds, recreation is necessary and profitable; but it never was the business of the... church to supply the world with amusements. Did Christ found his church that it might offer to the public *tableaux vivants*,¹⁵ and living waxworks? A Dissenting congregation, to my own knowledge, commenced a series of special services with a social meeting, and the evening was spent in various silly dissipations; and among other things the assembled friends played at 'Musical Chairs'! I do not know whether you understand what that childish game means. Think of ministers of the gospel and officers of a church playing at 'Musical Chairs'! There is a bill extant which states that,

¹⁵ Groups of silent models in costume posing to portray various scenes.

next week, there is to be a ‘Punch and Judy’ show in the same place of worship (so-called)! This is to go on side by side with the preaching of your bleeding sacrifice, O Christ of God! No, brethren, let me correct myself; the preaching of Christ usually ceases when these frivolities come in. These things are so opposed in spirit, that one or the other will have to be dropped; and we know which it will be.

What is to be next done in our chapels? To what length of tomfoolery will ministers of the gospel yet go? Amusements beneath the contempt of idiots have been tolerated in our schoolrooms. It has not come to that yet with us, personally; but, brethren, we ourselves have to battle hard against it, for the people are all agog for these vanities, and there are so many societies and institutions more or less remotely connected with our churches that it is difficult for us to keep them all from wandering. Brethren, we are not here to play away our time, but to win souls for Jesus and eternal bliss. By the solemnities of death, and judgment and eternity, I beseech you, keep yourselves clear of the follies, the inanities of the day. Remark with interest how ‘the wisdom of this world’ and the follies of it seem to be boon companions, and turn from them both with equal loathing.¹⁶

Extract 11

This is the suggestion of the present hour – if the world will not come to Jesus, shall Jesus tone down his teachings to the world? In other words, if the world will not rise to the church, shall not the church go down to the world? Instead of bidding men to be converted and come out from among sinners and be separate from them, [the inevitable call will be:] ‘Let us join with the ungodly world, enter into union with it and so pervade it with our influence by allowing it to influence us. Let us have a Christian world. To this end let us revise our doctrines. Some are old-fashioned, grim, severe, unpopular. Let us drop them. Use the old phrases so as to please the obstinately orthodox, but give them new meanings so as to win philosophical

¹⁶ C.H.Spurgeon: ‘The Evils of the Present Time, and Our Object, Necessities and Encouragements’ in *An All-Round Ministry*, The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1960, pp291-294, emphasis his.

infidels who are prowling around. Pare off the edges of the unpleasant truths of God, moderate the dogmatic tone of infallible revelation... For the times are altered and the spirit of the age suggests the abandonment of everything that is too severely righteous, and too surely of God’.

The deceitful adulteration of doctrine is attended by a falsification of experience. Men are now told that they were born good, or were made so by their infant baptism, and so that great sentence: ‘You must be born again’, is deprived of its force. Repentance is ignored, faith is a drug in the market as compared with ‘honest doubt’, and mourning for sin and communion with God are dispensed with to make way for entertainments... A new creature in Christ Jesus is looked upon as a sour invention of bigoted Puritans... What was good and great two hundred years ago is mere cant today. That is what ‘modern thought’ is telling us. And under its guidance all true spirituality¹⁷ is being toned down. True spirituality¹⁸ is despised and a fashionable morality is set up in its place. Do yourself up tidily on Sunday – behave yourself...

Thus is the church going down to the world. Men seem to say: ‘It is of no use going on in the old way, fetching out one here and another there from the great mass... Let us abolish the separation between the regenerate and unregenerate. Come into the church, all of you, converted or unconverted. You have good wishes and good resolutions. That will do – don’t trouble about more. It is true you do not believe the gospel but... you believe something or other. Come along. If you do not believe anything, no matter. Your “honest doubt” is better by far than faith’.

‘But’, you say: ‘nobody talks so’. Possibly they do not use the same words but this is the real meaning of the present-day religion. This is the drift of the times. I can justify the broadest statement I have made by the action or by the speech of certain ministers who are treacherously betraying the gospel¹⁹ under pretence of adapting it to this progressive age. The new plan is to assimilate the church to the world and so include a larger area within its bounds.

¹⁷ Original had ‘religion’.

¹⁸ Original had ‘Spiritual religion’.

¹⁹ Original had ‘our holy religion’.

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By semi-dramatic performances they make meeting houses²⁰ to approximate to the theatre. They turn their services into musical displays, and their sermons into... philosophical essays – in fact, they exchange the temple for the theatre and turn the ministers of God into actors, whose business it is to amuse men. Is it not so, that the Lord's day is becoming more and more a day of recreation or of idleness, and the meeting house...²¹ a house full of idols...? Ah me, the hedges are broken down, the walls are levelled, and to many there is henceforth no church except as a portion of the world... This, then, is the proposal. In order to win the world, the Lord Jesus must conform himself, his people and his word to the world. I will not dwell any longer on so loathsome a proposal...

The Lord Jesus Christ heads that grand emigration party which has come right out from the world. Addressing his disciples, he says: 'You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world'. We are not of the world by birth, not of the world in life, not of the world in object, not of the world in spirit, not of the world in any respect whatever. Jesus and those who are in him constitute a new race. The proposal to go back to the world is abhorrent to our best instincts – yes, deadly to our noblest life. A voice from heaven cries: 'Bring not my Son there again'. Let not the people whom the Lord brought up out of Egypt return to the house of bondage. But let their children come out and be separate, and the Lord Jehovah will be a Father unto them... The way of God with his church has been to sever a people from the world to be his elect – a people formed for himself who shall show forth his praise. Beloved, God's plan is not altered. He will still go on calling those whom he did predestinate. Do not let us fly in the teeth of that fact and suppose that we can save men on a more wholesale scale by ignoring the distinction between the dead in sin and the living in Zion...

Brethren, there are two seeds – the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent – and the difference will be maintained even to the end – neither must we ignore the distinction to please men...

²⁰ Original had 'houses of prayer'.

²¹ Original had 'the Lord's house'.

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Brethren, we also are heirs of the promise of things not seen as yet. For the sake of this we walk by faith and hence we become separate from those around us. We dwell among men as Abraham dwelt among the Canaanites – but we are of a distinct race – we are born with a new birth, live under different laws and act from different motives. If we go back to the ways of worldlings and are numbered with them, we have renounced the covenant of our God, the promise is no longer ours, and the eternal heritage is in other hands. Do you not know this? The moment the church says: ‘I will be as the world’, she has doomed herself with the world. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair and took them wives of all which they chose, then the flood came and swept them all away. So will it again happen should the world take the church into its arms – then shall come some overwhelming judgment and, it may be, a deluge of devouring fire.²² The covenant promise and the covenant heritage are no longer ours if we go down to the world and quit our sojourning with the Lord. Besides, dear friends, no good can come of trying to conform to the world...

And all the converts that the church will ever make by softening down its doctrine, and by becoming worldly will become worthless.²³ When we get them, the next question will be: ‘How can we get rid of them?’ They would be of no earthly use to us. It swelled the number of Israelites when they came out of Egypt that a great number of the lower order of Egyptians came out with them. Yes, but that mixed multitude became the plague of Israel in the wilderness and we read that ‘the mixed multitude fell a lusting’. The Israelites were bad enough, but it was the mixed multitude that always led the way in murmuring.

Why is there such spiritual death today? Why is false doctrine so rampant in the churches? It is because we have ungodly people in the church and in the ministry! Eagerness for numbers and especially eagerness to include respectable people has adulterated many churches, and made them lax in doctrine and practice and fond of silly amusements. These are the people who despise a prayer

²² Even more pertinent, the same can be said when the church welcomes the world into its arms.

²³ Original had ‘will not be worth one bad farthing a gross’.

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meeting, but rush to see ‘living waxworks’ in their schoolrooms. God save us from converts who are made by lowering the standard and tarnishing the spiritual glory of the church!... True converts are never daunted by truth or holiness – these, in fact, are the things which charm them...²⁴

Are you afraid that preaching the gospel will not win souls? Are you despondent as to success in God’s way? Is this why you pine for clever oratory? Is this why you must have music and...? After all, is it by might and by power and not by the Spirit of God? It is even so in the opinion of many.

Beloved brethren, there are many things which I might allow to other worshippers which I have denied myself in conducting the worship of this congregation. I have long worked out before your very eyes the experiment of the unaided attractiveness of the gospel of Jesus. Our service is severely plain. No man ever comes here to gratify his eyes with art, or his ears with music. I have set before you, these many years, nothing but Christ crucified and the simplicity of the gospel. Yet where will you find such a crowd as this gathered together this morning? Where will you find such a multitude as this meeting, Lord’s day after Lord’s day,²⁵ for five-and thirty years? I have shown you nothing but the cross, the cross without the flowers of oratory; the cross without the blue lights of superstition or excitement; the cross without diamonds of ecclesiastical rank; the cross without the buttresses of a boastful science; the cross is abundantly sufficient to attract men first to itself, and afterwards to eternal life! In this house, we have proved successfully, these many years, this great truth of God – the gospel plainly preached will gain an audience, convert sinners and build up and sustain a church. We beseech the people of God to mark that there is no need to try doubtful expedients and questionable methods. God will save by the gospel, still – only let it be the gospel in its purity. This grand old sword will cleave a man’s spine and split a rock in half. How is it that it does so little of its old conquering work? I will tell you. Do you see this scabbard of artistic

²⁴ I recall a man saying many years ago: ‘There are too many Ishmaels in the church’.

²⁵ Original had ‘sabbath after sabbath’.

work, so wonderfully elaborated? Full many keep the sword in this scabbard, and therefore its edge never gets to its work. Pull off that scabbard. Fling that fine sheath to hades and then see how, in the Lord's hands, that glorious two-handed sword will mow down fields of men as mowers level the grass with their scythes. There is no need to go down to Egypt for help. To invite the devil to help Christ is shameful. Please God, we shall see prosperity yet, when the church of God is resolved never to seek it except in God's own way...

When we lie dying, if we have faithfully preached the gospel, our conscience will not accuse us for having kept closely to it – we shall not mourn that we did not play the fool... in order to increase our congregation. Oh, no! Our Master will give us full absolution, even if few are gathered in so long as we have been true to him... Do not try the dodges which debase the gospel.²⁶ Keep to the simple gospel. And if the people are not converted by it, [even so] you will [still] be clear.

My dear hearers, how much I long to see you saved! But I would not give a false impression of²⁷ my Lord, even to win your souls, if they could be so won. The true servant of God is responsible for diligence and faithfulness. But he is not responsible for success or non-success. Results are in God's hands. If that dear child in your class is not converted, yet if you have set before him the gospel of Jesus Christ with loving, prayerful earnestness, you shall not be without your reward. If I preach from my very soul the grand truth of God that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will save my hearers – and if I persuade and entreat them to believe in Jesus unto eternal life – if they will not do so, their blood will lie upon their own heads. When I go back to my Master, if I have faithfully told his message of free grace and dying love, I shall be clear. I have often prayed that I might be able to say at the last what George Fox could so truly say: 'I am clear, I am clear!' It is my highest ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. I have preached God's truth so far as I know it, and I have not been ashamed of its peculiarities. That I might not stultify my testimony, I have cut myself clear of those who err

²⁶ Original had 'religion'.

²⁷ Original had 'belie'.

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.

must avoid any deliberate use of 'techniques' as aids to the gospel... On scriptural grounds we must not of set purpose... employ techniques... Our 'techniques' and our 'mechanics' actually divert the attention of people from the truth of the message to some lower, particular, immediate and practical action which may have the opposite effect from what is intended.⁵³

Extract 34

Modern church life would be unrecognisable to the Christians of the early church, and in many ways that is inevitable because of the great technological changes that have been made. We have large warm meeting places and many modern comforts, greater freedom to preach the gospel and are generally more socially acceptable than those first Christians ever dreamt of.

While there has been change, there are some things that remain constant, and these include God's insistence that we obey his word completely, the holiness of God and the sinful nature of man's character. These have not changed.

In our modern times God's commands are now regarded in many places as being just examples of best practice, mere suggestions, or so out of date that they can safely be ignored or changed to suit the times and culture. Many churches are run more like a business than as a witness to Christ, with advertising, special events and entertainment to draw people in to swell the numbers which is seen as the main objective.

Our disobedience to his word has put us on the road to disaster just as it did [for Israel] in the Old Testament, and we don't realise it.⁵⁴

Extract 36

Nothing could be clearer than the pronouncements of the Scriptures on the Christian's relation to the world. The confusion which gathers around this matter results from

⁵³ D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *Conversions Psychological and Spiritual*, Inter-Varsity Fellowship, London, 1959, pp31,37-40.

⁵⁴ David John Batty: *The Consequences of Disobedience to God's Specific Commands in His Word...*

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the unwillingness of professing Christians to take the word of the Lord seriously. Christianity is so entangled with the world that millions never guess how radically they have missed the New Testament pattern. Compromise is everywhere. The world is whitewashed just enough to pass inspection by blind men posing as believers, and those same believers are everlastingly seeking to gain acceptance with the world. By mutual concessions, men who call themselves Christians manage to get on with men who have for the things of God nothing but quiet contempt. This whole thing is spiritual in its essence. A Christian is what he is not by ecclesiastical manipulation but by the new birth. He is a Christian because of a Spirit [that is, the Holy Spirit – DG] which dwells in him. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The flesh can never be converted and [made] spirit, no matter how many church dignitaries work on it.⁵⁵

Extract 37

*All power in heaven and earth is mine
Said Jesus to his friends.
So preach the news to all the world;
My death has made amends.*

*The Father is now satisfied,
Your sins have been forgiven,
The way to life is open wide,
Eternal life in heaven.*

*This message for the early church
Is meant for us as well.
If we don't tell of Jesus' love
Then people go to hell.*

*Those early men just went and spoke
From love so strong and true –
But things are different now for us,
So what are we to do?*

*The world has changed from then to now,
And men don't want to hear*

⁵⁵ A.W.Tozer: *The Divine Conquest*, Oliphants, 1964, pp110-111.

The Extracts

*About a Saviour, sin, or hell,
And judgment coming near.*

*They want to hear about a God
Who's loving and forgiving.
They have no need for any God
Who'll change the way they're living.*

*So we must change to fill their needs,
Not leave them in the lurch.
If we can't speak of what we know,
Invite them to the church.*

*We have to tell them words that make
Them happy as can be.
And if they come to church we give them
Coffee, buns and tea.*

*This will put them at their ease
(We can't have confrontation)
And never mention sin or death,
Repentance or salvation.*

*We fill their needs, we make them friends,
And when the time is right,
We may get round to saying
That Jesus is the light.*

*We must not be judgmental now
Nor frighten them away,
But will our God approve our work
On final judgment day?*

*What will we say, when Jesus comes
And asks who gave permission
To change the word of his command
About the great commission?*

*For we tell people 'Come and listen',
[While] he said 'Go and tell'.
Our methods are quite different now,
And don't quite work as well.*

*The Lord himself has told us that
We're light in this dark place,
But sinners seldom see it in
The brightness of our face.*

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*Should we not go to where they are,
To share the faith we're given,
And let our light shine forth to men
And talk to them of heaven?*

*If Christ has made a difference to
Our lives and destination,
By coming to this sinful world
And seeking our salvation,*

*Should we not also leave our world
Of comfort, church and meetings,
To go to sinners in their world,
And give them Jesus' greetings?*

*A light is meant for shining in
The darkness of the night;
Don't hide it in a building where
It's always out of sight.⁵⁶*

Extract 38

Christ draws as a trumpet. Men have been wont to sound a trumpet to attract an audience to the reading of a proclamation. The people come from their houses at the well-known sound, to listen to what they are desired to know. Now, my brethren, part of the attractive power of the gospel lies in the attracting [of] people to hear it. You cannot expect people to be blessed by the preaching of the gospel if they do not hear it. One part of the battle is to get them to listen to its sound. Now, the question is asked in these times: 'How are we to get the working-classes to listen to the word?' The answer is, Christ is his own attraction, Christ is the only trumpet that you want to trumpet Christ. Preach the gospel, and the congregation will come of themselves. The only infallible way of getting a good congregation is to do this...⁵⁷

⁵⁶ David John Batty: *Aspects of Modern Christianity in Poetry and Prose*, pp32-34.

⁵⁷ C.H.Spurgeon sermon 139.

Extract 39

Only by coming after Jesus can we obtain our heart's desire, and be really useful to our fellow men. Oh, how we long to be successful fishers for Jesus! We would sacrifice our lives to win souls. But we are tempted to try methods which Jesus would never have tried. Shall we yield to the suggestion of the enemy? If so, we may splash the water, but we shall never take the fish. We must follow after Jesus if we would succeed. Sensational methods, entertainments, and so forth – are these coming after Jesus? Can we imagine the Lord Jesus drawing a congregation by such means as are now commonly used? What is the result of such expedients? The result is nothing which Jesus will count up at the last great day. We must keep to our preaching as our Master did, for by this means souls are saved. We must preach our Lord's doctrine, and proclaim a full and free gospel; for this is the net in which souls are taken. We must preach with his gentleness, boldness, and love; for this is the secret of success with human hearts. We must work under divine anointing, depending upon the sacred Spirit. Thus, coming after Jesus, and not running before him, we shall be fishers of men.⁵⁸

Extract 40

When we enter a meeting-house for religious worship, each one may ask the question: 'What was this house erected for?' To pray, preach and sing praise in. 'How is God to be worshipped?' In spirit and in truth. 'Can unconverted men, as such, perform any part of religious worship acceptable to God?' None at all. 'If worship is a spiritual exercise, why was this house built?' To accommodate the saints in assembling together in one place. 'Ought none to assemble but the saints?' If any man have ears to hear, let him hear; force none to come, forbid none that would.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ C.H.Spurgeon: *Chequebook of the Bank of Faith* (29th May).

⁵⁹ 'Address at the Dedication of the Baptist Meeting-house in Lanesborough, February 10, 1829', in *The Writings of the Late Elder John Leland*. I am reminded of Spurgeon telling his students

Extract 41

The business of preaching is not to entertain, but to lead people to salvation, to teach them how to find God.⁶⁰

Extract 42

[Modern thought:] Truth is whatever works. If it gets results it is good. There is but one test for the religious leader: success. Everything is forgiven him except failure... For centuries the church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognising it for what it was – a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability. For this she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world. But of late she has become tired of the abuse and has given over the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god Entertainment she may as well join forces with him and make what use she can of his powers. So today we have the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars [or many pounds or euros – DG] being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven. Religious entertainment is in many places rapidly crowding out the serious things of God. Many churches these days have become little more than poor theatres where fifth-rate ‘producers’ peddle their shoddy wares with the full approval of evangelical leaders who can even quote a holy text in defence of their delinquency. And hardly a man dares raise his voice against it.⁶¹

to preach the doctrines of grace in the meeting houses where they ministered, since those buildings were erected as monuments to those doctrines: ‘The doctrines some now preach could not build a mouse-trap’, he thundered.

⁶⁰ D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones in Iain H.Murray: *D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years* p130.

⁶¹ A.W.Tozer: *The Root of the Righteous*, STL Books, Bromley, 1980, pp8-9,32-33.

Extract 43

Dr Martin [*sic*] Lloyd-Jones contended that the way to tackle the problem of evil was not by tackling sins but sin. And the only way for us to tackle sin is to convert the sinner. And the only power that can do that is the gospel. Therefore the sole business of Christian people in reference to the evils about them is to convert sinners, and the sole way to do that is by preaching the gospel. Once we understand that point of view we will understand why... Lloyd-Jones concentrates on preaching the gospel, and condemns all other methods of evangelism as spurious and ineffective... [He] seems to have experienced a severe reaction against the methods of the institutional church. I am not surprised, for often these methods have become ends in themselves. He will give them no quarter, not even, I believe, when limited to a Literary Society and a Women's Sewing Guild. This unqualified attitude, though obviously extreme, ought to serve to make us at least re-examine the methods of our church work; scrap those that are unworthy, and see that those that are worthy are used as a means to the right end.⁶²

Extract 44

Present-day religion far too often soothes the conscience instead of awakening it; and produces a sense of self-satisfaction and eternal safety rather than a sense of our unworthiness and the likelihood of eternal damnation.⁶³

Extract 45

Can many of the evangelistic methods which were introduced some 40 or 50 years ago really be justified out of the word of God? As I read of the work of the great

⁶² A certain G.H.E., reporting a conversation he had with Lloyd-Jones in 1929. G.H.E. had disagreed over the issue at a meeting, and had continued to discuss it with Lloyd-Jones in the train journey afterwards (Iain H.Murray: *D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years* pp197-198).

⁶³ D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones in Iain H.Murray: *D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years* p202.

evangelists in the Bible, I find they were not first and foremost concerned about results; they were concerned about proclaiming the word of truth... I watch... Paul going into the town of Corinth, and I like to listen to him as he soliloquises just outside the city. I imagine he thought he might resort to many expedients in order to win the town of Corinth. He might have consulted the mayor of the town. He might have thought of many other expedients... in order that he might have results. But I hear him say: 'I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified'. The great apostle was afraid of rhetoric, eloquence, oratory. I think he was terrified lest a man might join his church simply because he had been carried away by Paul's own speaking. I am very certain [*sic*] he would be afraid of [I would put it stronger, and say he would be horrified by] many of the evangelistic methods that are being freely employed at this present moment. No, No, my friends, our business, our work, our first call is to declare in a certain and unequivocal manner the sovereignty, the majesty, the holiness of God; the sinfulness and the utter depravity of man, his total inability to save and to rescue himself; and the sacrificial, expiatory, atoning death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the cross on Calvary's hill, and his glorious resurrection, as the only means and the only hope of human salvation.⁶⁴

Extract 46

Our dreadful weakness is religious [that is, spiritual]. We are not declaring the gospel with power to a dispirited and disillusioned age; we are not living in the discipline of gospel fellowship; only in a very imperfect degree are our churches God's resting place and holy habitation. The depressing and alarming thing about our churches is not their tiny congregations, their shabby buildings, their social insignificance, their political impotence. If our churches are in peril it is not because they are less crowded than cinemas, less powerful than the promoters of dog-racing, less correct than the Sunday golf, less fashionable even

⁶⁴ D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones in Iain H.Murray: *D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years* pp302-303.

than Romanism or Christian Science. If our churches are in peril, it is because they have forgotten what they are.⁶⁵

Extract 47

There are some, in these apostate days, who think that the church cannot do better than to come down to the world to learn her ways, follow her maxims, and acquire her 'culture'. In fact, the notion is that the world is to be conquered by our conforming to it. This is as contrary to Scripture as the light is to the darkness. The more distinct the line between him who fears God and him who does not fear him, the better all around. It will be a black day when the sun itself is turned into darkness. When the salt has lost its savour, and no longer opposes putrefaction, the world will rot with a vengeance. That text is still true: 'You are of God, little children, and the whole world lies in the wicked one'. The seed of the woman knows no terms with the serpent brood but continual war. Our Lord says that in this matter he did not come to send peace on the earth, but a sword. 'Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you'. If the church seeks to cultivate the friendship of the world, she has this message from the Holy Spirit by the pen of... James: 'You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God'. He charges all who would please the world with the black and filthy crime of spiritual adultery. The heart which ought to be given to Christ and purity must not wander out deliberately to woo the defiled and polluted things of this present evil world. Separation from the world is Christ's prayer for us.⁶⁶

Extract 48

This is an age which has many hopeful signs in it; but yet, if we judge according to the rule of Scripture, there are

⁶⁵ A 'Fraternal Letter by eight professors and ministers of the Congregational Union, published in 1939 (Iain H.Murray: *D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years* p356).

⁶⁶ C.H.Spurgeon sermon 1890.

some very black marks upon this century. I sometimes fear that the only age to which we can be truly likened is the time before the flood, when the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men, and when there ceased to be a distinction between the righteous⁶⁷ and the world. It is but the part of candour to acknowledge that there is such a mixture now-a-days, such a compromise, such a-giving and a-taking on both sides of religious questions, that we are like a leavened mass, mingled and united together. All this is wrong; for God has always intended there should be a distinction between the righteous and the wicked, as clear and as palpable as the distinction between the day and the night.

My first argument is this: Whenever the church has been thoroughly distinct from the world, she has always prospered. During the first three centuries, the world hated the church. The prison, the stake, the heels of the wild horse, these were thought too good for the followers of Christ. When a man became a Christian, he gave up father and mother, house and lands – indeed, his own life also. When they [that is, the believers] met together, they must meet in the catacombs, burning candles at high noon, because there was darkness in the depths of the earth. They were despised and rejected of men. ‘They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented’. But then was the age of heroes; that was the time of giants. Never did the church so much prosper and so truly thrive as when she was baptised in blood. The ship of the church never sails so gloriously along as when the bloody spray of her martyrs falls upon her deck. We *must* suffer, and we *must* die, if we are ever to conquer this world for Christ.

Was there ever such a surprising miracle as the spread of the gospel during the first two or three centuries? Within fifty years after Christ had ascended to heaven, the gospel was preached in every known part of the world, and there were converts to Christ in the most inhospitable regions. Further than the ships of Tarshish had the gospel flown; the pillars of Hercules had not bounded the industry of the apostles. To wild and uncivilised tribes, to Picts and Scots,

⁶⁷ Original had ‘the church’. This is getting too close to covenant theology. See my “‘A Gospel Church’: A Warning”.

and to fierce Britons, was the gospel proclaimed. Churches were founded...⁶⁸ And all this, I believe, was partly the result of that striking [difference], that marked difference, between the church and the world.

Certainly, during the period after Constantine professed to be a Christian, changing with the times, because he saw it would strengthen his empire – from the time when the church began to be linked with the State – the Lord left her, and gave her up to barrenness, and Ichabod was written on her walls. It was a black day for Christendom⁶⁹ when Constantine said: ‘I am a Christian’. ‘By this sign I conquer’, said he. Yes, it was the true reason of his pretended conversion: if he could conquer by the cross, it was well enough; if he could have conquered by Jupiter, he would have liked it equally as well. From that time the church began to degenerate. And coming down to the Middle Ages, when you could not tell a Christian from a worldling, where were you to find piety at all, or life or grace left in the lands?⁷⁰

Then came Luther, and with a rough grasp he rent away the church from the world – pulled her away at the risk of rending her in pieces. He would not have her linked in affinity with the world, and then ‘the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed’; but he that sits in the heavens did laugh at them; Jehovah had them in derision. The church went forth conquering and to conquer, and her main weapon was her *non-conformity* to the world, her coming out from among men. Put your finger on any prosperous page in the church’s history, and I will find a little marginal note reading thus: ‘In this age men could readily see where the church began and where the world

⁶⁸ I have omitted ‘some of which have lasted in their purity to this day’. I do not know of any.

⁶⁹ I allow this to stand, but it would have been better expressed thus: ‘It was a black day for everybody – sinner and saint – when Constantine...’. Constantine’s so-called conversion actually paved the way to the invention of Christendom.

⁷⁰ This is too sweeping. Think of the likes of the Waldenses and the Albigenses, John Wycliffe and John Huss. See my *Battle for the Church: 1517-1644*; ‘The Long Night’.

ended'. Never were there good times when the church and the world were joined in marriage with one another.

But though this were sufficient argument for keeping the church and the world distinct, there are many others. The more the church is distinct from the world in her acts and in her maxims, the more true is her testimony for Christ, and the more potent is her witness against sin...

But now I have a very sad thing to say – I wish that I could withhold it, but I cannot. Unless, brothers and sisters, you make it your daily business to see that there is a difference between you and the world, you will do more hurt than you can possibly do good...

I would not speak too severely of Christ's church, for I love her; but because I love her I must therefore utter this. Our being so much like the world, our trading as the world trades, our talking as the world talks, our always insisting upon it that we must do as other people do, this is doing more mischief to the world, than all our preachers can hope to effect good. 'Come out from among them, touch not the unclean thing, be you separate, says the Lord, and I will be a father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters'. This surely, a stern, rough argument, might move us to be separate from the world! But once again, how is it possible for us to honour Jesus Christ, while there is no difference between us and the world?... I cannot imagine a man professing to be a Christian, and then acting as the crowd acts, and yet honouring Christ...

'O, blessed Jesus forgive us, forgive us, and give us your grace that we may do so no more, for we *would* follow you whithersoever you go; you know Lord *we would* be yours, we would honour you, and not grieve you. O give us now, then, of your own Spirit, that we may come out from the world and be like yourself – holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners'.⁷¹

Extract 49

I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church... Brethren, the use of the church in the world is that it should

⁷¹ C.H.Spurgeon sermon 305, emphasis his.

be like salt in the midst of putrefaction; but if the salt has lost its savour, what is the good of it? If it were possible for salt itself to putrefy, it could but be an increase and a heightening of the general putridity. The worst day the world ever saw was when the sons of God were joined with the daughters of men. Then came the flood; for the only barrier against a flood of vengeance on this world is the separation of the saint from the sinner. Your duty as a Christian is to stand fast in your own place, and to stand out for God, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh, resolving like one of old that, let others do as they will, as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord.

Come, you children of God, you must stand with your Lord outside the camp. Jesus calls you today, and says: 'Follow me'. Was Jesus found at the theatre? Did he frequent the sports of the race course? Was Jesus seen, do you think, in any of the amusements of the Herodian court? Not he! He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners'. In one sense, no one mixed with sinners so completely as he did when, like a physician, he went among them healing his patients; but, in another sense, there was a gulf fixed between the men of the world and the Saviour, which he never essayed to cross, and which they could not cross to defile him.

The first lesson which the church has to learn is this: Follow Jesus into the separated state, and he will make you fishers of men. Unless you take up your cross, and protest against an ungodly world, you cannot hope that the holy Jesus will make you fishers of men.

A second meaning of our text is very obviously this: abide with Christ, and then you will be made fishers of men.⁷²

Extract 50

In our day [alas] we must be dramatic about everything... Many churches these days have to depend upon truckloads of gadgets to get their religion going... Pastors and churches in our hectic times are harassed by the temptation to seek size at any cost – and to secure by inflation what they cannot gain by legitimate growth. The mixed multitude cries for quantity, and will not forgive a minister

⁷² C.H.Spurgeon: *The Soul Winner*.

who insists upon solid values and permanence. Many a man of God is being subjected to cruel pressure by the ill-taught members of his flock who... demand... a popular following regardless of quality. These children play in the marketplaces, and cannot overlook the affront we do them by our refusal to dance when they whistle, or to weep when they out of caprice pipe a sad tune. They are greedy for thrills, and since they dare no longer seek them in the theatre, they demand to have them brought into the church!...

A church fed on worldly excitement is no New Testament church at all. The desire for surface stimulation is a sure mark of the flesh⁷³ – the very thing Christ died to deliver us from. A curious crowd of baptised worldlings waiting each Sunday for the quasi-religious fillip⁷⁴ to give them a lift bears no relation whatever to a true assembly of Christian believers... Religious shows leave a bad flavour. When they enter the holy place, they come perilously near to offering strange fire to the Lord. At their worst they are sacrilege; always they are unnecessary, and at their best they are a poor substitute for prayer and the Holy Spirit. Church plays are invariably cheap and amateurish, and in addition to grieving the Holy Spirit, those who attend them are cheated by getting wretchedly poor entertainment for their money...

Instead of worship, the churches are now second in entertainment to the theatres... The church is not a religious theatre to provide a place for amateur entertainers to display their talents!... We have simplified [the gospel] until Christianity amounts to this: God is love; Jesus died for you; believe, accept, be jolly, have fun and tell others! And away we go – that is the Christianity of our day. I would not give even something worthless⁷⁵ for the whole business of it...

God calls us to worship, but in many instances we are in[to] entertainment, just running a poor second to the theatres... We are using sound trucks, radio, television,

⁷³ Original had ‘the fallen nature’.

⁷⁴ Original had ‘needle’. I guess the thought was ‘a shot in the arm’.

⁷⁵ Original had ‘a plug nickel’ – a low-value US coin with the centre missing, making it even less valuable.

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streetcar cards, billboards, neon signs, messages in bottles and on balloons. We are using trained horses, trained dogs, trained canaries, ventriloquists, magicians and drama to stir up religious interest. Innumerable professional guilds, industrial clubs, and businessmen's and women's committees have sprung up to provide [so-called] spiritual fellowship for religious-minded persons engaged in the various pursuits of life. Religious songs are in the repertoire of many professional entertainers.⁷⁶ Religion is being plugged by nightclub entertainers, prize-fighters, movie stars, and by at least one incarcerated gangster who has up to this time shown no sorrow for his way of life and no evidence of repentance. Religion, if you please, is now big business... For centuries the church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognising it for what it was – a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability. For this she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world. But of late she has become tired of the abuse and has given up⁷⁷ the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the *great God Entertainment*, she may as well join forces with him, and make whatever use she can of his powers. So today we have the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven. Religious entertainment is in many places rapidly crowding out the serious things of God. Many churches these days have become little more than poor theatres where fifth-rate 'producers' peddle their shoddy wares with the full approval of evangelical leaders who can even quote a holy text in defence of their delinquency. And hardly a man dares raise his voice against it...

The church is not a religious theatre where performers are paid to amuse those who attend. It is an assembly of redeemed sinners – men and women called unto Christ and commissioned to spread his gospel to the ends of the earth... Religious entertainment has so corrupted the church of Christ that millions don't know that it's a heresy.

⁷⁶ Witness the repugnant crooning of John Newton's 'Amazing Grace': 'That saved a wretch like me'!

⁷⁷ Original had 'over'.

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Millions of evangelicals throughout the world have devoted themselves to religious entertainment. They don't know that it's as much heresy as the counting of beads or the splashing of holy water or something else [is]. To expose this, of course, raises a storm of angry protest among the people...

I'm not interested in that church which brings somebody in from the outside and says: 'Will you come and perform for us?' Can you imagine a pastor bringing a clown and saying to the clown: 'Now come, clown into the holy place. Be reverent and do it for Jesus' sake'. I would walk five miles to keep from seeing him or hearing him and I wouldn't walk one inch to see him and I wouldn't give one dime to support him! All of this *extra-scriptural claptrap* that has been dragged into the church in recent times grieves the Holy Spirit... Without biblical authority, or any other right under the sun, carnal religious leaders have introduced a host of attractions that serve no purpose except to provide entertainment for the retarded saints... It is now common practice in most evangelical churches to offer the people – especially the young people – a maximum of entertainment and a minimum of serious instruction. It is scarcely possible in most places to get anyone to attend a meeting where the only attraction is God. One can only conclude that God's professed children are bored with him, for they must be wooed to meeting with a stick of striped candy in the form of religious movies, games and refreshments...

Any objection to the carryings-on of our present gold-calf Christianity is met with the triumphant reply: 'But we are winning them!' And winning them to what? To true discipleship? To cross-carrying? To self-denial? To separation from the world? To crucifixion of the flesh? To holy living? To nobility of character? To a despising of the world's treasures? To hard self-discipline? To love for God? To total committal to Christ? Of course the answer to all these questions is 'No'.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ A.W.Tozer: 'Entertainment and the Church', emphasis his.

Extract 51

Secularism has so permeated Christian thinking in our time that it has foreshortened the gospel picture. Even many Christians are more absorbed in this world than the other.⁷⁹

Extract 52

Sin is still here. It is just that people do not so willingly acknowledge that fact. A spade is no longer called a spade, but some euphemism. The little boy says to his mother: 'Why is it whenever I do anything bad, it's because I'm a bad boy; but whenever you do anything bad, it's because you're nervous?' It is 'nerves' rather than sin. It is 'our glands' rather than sin. It is what we eat, the environment, our bio-rhythm, rather than sin; it is anything but sin. Sin denies that it is sin.⁸⁰

Extract 53

When the Lord returns, will he find faith on the earth? The answer is 'No'. And to the degree the church is in the world, he will not find faith there either.⁸¹

Extract 54

If preachers insist on competing with psychiatrists as counsellors, with physicians as healers, with politicians as statesmen, and with philosophers as speculators, then these specialists have every right to tell them how to preach. If a minister's message is not based on 'Thus says the Lord', then as a sermon it is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of the specialists in the department with which it deals.⁸²

Extract 55

⁷⁹ John H. Gerstner: *Theology for Everyman*, Moody, 1965.

⁸⁰ John H. Gerstner: *The Problem of Pleasure: Why Good Things Happen to Bad People*, Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002.

⁸¹ John H. Gerstner, taken from the audio 'Handout Church History'.

⁸² John H. Gerstner, taken from Grace Quotes website.

North American culture does not offer congenial conditions in which to live vocationally as a pastor. Men and women who are pastors in America today find that they have entered into a way of life that is in ruins. The vocation of pastor has been replaced by the strategies of religious entrepreneurs with business plans. Any kind of continuity with pastors in times past is virtually non-existent. We are a generation that feels as if it is having to start out from scratch to figure out a way to represent and nurture this richly nuanced and all-involving life of Christ in a country that 'knew not Joseph'.

I love being an American. I love this place in which I have been placed – its language, its history, its energy. But I don't love 'the American way', its culture and values. I don't love the rampant consumerism that treats God as a product to be marketed... [the church as] an ecclesiastical business with a mission to market spirituality to consumers and make them happy, [and] a business opportunity that would cater to the consumer's tastes... Entertainment, cheerleading, and manipulation [are] conspicuous in high places... programmes [have] developed into the dominant methodology of 'doing church'.⁸³

Extract 56

Be resistant to the consumer mindset of church. Many of us reject the idea that tricks and novelty can in any way build a church, especially a healthy one. [Eugene] Peterson's life-long rejection of this idea to appeal to the consumer to build a church made him a bit of a renegade in the prime of his ministry... His conviction that Christ's church should not look like the world is an important caution and should be heeded by those who are intensely focussed on one primary generation in the church, or who might be driven by consumerism in a more subtle form than they realise.⁸⁴

⁸³ Eugene H. Peterson: *The Pastor: A Memoir*, HarperOne, New York, 2011 and 2012, pp4,111,254.

⁸⁴ Brian Croft: 'The Pastor: A Memoir', being a review of Eugene H. Peterson's: *The Pastor: A Memoir*, HarperOne, New York, 2011.

Extract 57

[Eugene] Peterson challenges conventional wisdom regarding church marketing, mega pastors, and the church's too-cosy relationship to American glitz and consumerism.⁸⁵

Extract 58

Congregations insist that we [prospective pastors] must do and be... the experts to help them stay ahead of the competition. Congregations want pastors who will lead them in the world of religious competition... They want pastors the way the Israelites wanted a king – to make hash of the Philistines. Congregations get their ideas of what makes a pastor from the culture, not from the Scriptures: they want a winner; they want their needs met; they want to be part of something zesty and glamorous... The understanding and conviction that brings us [that is, the authors] together in this book are that pastoral work originates in and is shaped by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It takes place in the world's culture, but it is not caused by it. It is intimately involved in the world, but it is not defined by it. The gospel is free, not only in the sense that we don't have to pay for it, but also in the more fundamental sense that it is an expression of God's freedom – it is not caused by our needs, but by God's grace. The trinity – not the culture, not the congregation – is the primary context for acquiring training and understanding in the pastoral vocation... I have friends who think that it is virtually impossible to be an honest, God-honouring pastor in our present culture. They are convinced that the role itself, formed as it has been now in a century of buy-it consumerism and fix-it psychologism, has become so powerful that it defeats all individual efforts to work within it. The role of pastor is now so secularised and so politicised [and, I would add, so consumerised – DG] by the culture that, even with the best of intentions, it is no longer available as a venue for a genuinely Christian ministry... When I became a pastor, I found that most of

⁸⁵ Publishers' blurb for Eugene H. Peterson: *The Pastor: A Memoir*, HarperOne, New York, 2011.

the counsel and direction I was given came not from Scripture but from the culture... I didn't follow it; I wanted not only my life but my ministry to be shaped by the Christian gospel revealed in Jesus. None of my learned advisers ever suggested that I give up my Christian faith so that I could be successful at this pastor business; but what they did do by implication was suggest that I give up on Scripture as having anything definitive to do with the pastoral vocation in contemporary North America. Scripture was good for preaching, but when it came to running a church, organising a congregation, managing conflict, training church school teachers... [and so on].⁸⁶

Extract 59

The devil has seldom done a more clever thing than hinting to the church that part of [its] mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them. From speaking out the gospel, the church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of reaching the masses!⁸⁷

Extract 60

Contemporary evangelism is a human system of methodology, and modern methodology will lead to the compromise of biblical doctrine. You cannot package the gospel as you do merchandise. We are not salesmen; we are ambassadors for the Lord Jesus through his word.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Marva J.Dawn and Eugene H.Peterson (edited by Peter Santucci): *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call*, William B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 2000, pp4-7.

⁸⁷ David Stone: 'Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats'. Stone used this quote from Spurgeon: 'A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats'. As will be apparent, there is some overlap with Spurgeon and Archibald Brown.

⁸⁸ O.Talmadge Spence in Keith Malcomson: 'Quotes on Ministry in the Church'.

Extract 61

It is a poor sermon that gives no offence; that neither makes the hearer displeased with himself nor with the preacher.⁸⁹

Extract 62

Luke tells us about another kind of weed; namely 'the pleasures of this life'. I am sure that these thorns [Luke 8:14] play a dreadful part nowadays. I have nothing to say against recreation in its proper place. Certain forms of recreation are needful and useful; but it is a wretched thing when amusement becomes a vocation. Amusement should be used to do us good 'like a medicine'; it must never be used as the food of the individual. From early morning until late at night some spend their time in a round of frivolities, or else their very work is simply carried on to furnish them funds for their pleasures. This is vicious. Many have had all holy thoughts and gracious resolutions stamped out by perpetual trifling. Pleasure, so called, is the murderer of thought. This is the age of excessive amusement. Everybody craves for it, like a babe for its rattle. In the more sober years of our fathers, men and women had something better to live for than silly sports. The thorns are choking the age...

When it comes to defending the gospel, where do you see it in this age? I hoped that many would be found among Baptists who would care for the truth; but now I come to the conclusion that it is with many, as with the showman when asked which was Wellington, and which was Bonaparte: 'Whichever you please, my little dears. Pay your money, and take your choice!'... I am weary of these drivellers! The thorns have choked the seed in the pulpits and in the churches as well as in private individuals. Oh, that God would return! Oh, that his Spirit would raise up among us people who believe indeed, and prove the power of their belief! The fruit of much modern piety is nil.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ George Whitefield in Keith Malcomson: 'Quotes on Ministry in the Church'.

⁹⁰ C.H.Spurgeon sermon 2040.

Extract 63

‘Providing recreation for the people’ will soon be looked upon as a necessary part of Christian work, and as binding upon the church of God, as though it were a divine command – unless some strong voices be raised which will make themselves heard. I do not presume to possess such a voice, but I do entertain the hope that I may awaken some louder echoes. Anyway, the burden of the Lord is upon me in this matter, and I leave it with him to give my testimony ringing tone, or to let it die away in silence. I shall have delivered my soul in either case. Yet the conviction fills my mind that in all parts of the country there are faithful men and women who see the danger, and deplore it, and will endorse my witness and my warning.

It is only during the past few years that ‘amusement’ has become a recognised weapon of our warfare and developed into a mission. There has been a steady ‘down grade’ in this respect. From ‘speaking out’, as the Puritans did, the church has gradually toned down her testimony: then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she has tolerated them in her borders, and now she has adopted them and provided a home for them under the plea of ‘reaching the masses and getting the ear of the people’. The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church of Christ that part of her mission is to provide entertainment for the people with a view to winning them into her ranks. The flesh⁹¹ that lies in every heart has risen to the bait. Here, now, is an opportunity of gratifying the flesh and yet retaining a comfortable conscience. We can now please ourselves in order to do good to others. The rough old cross can be exchanged for a ‘costume’, and the exchange can be made with the benevolent purpose of elevating the people...

My first contention is that providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in Holy Scripture as one of the functions of the church... Now, surely, if our Lord had intended his church to be the caterer of entertainment, and so counteract the god of this world, he would hardly have left so important a branch of service unmentioned. If it is Christian work, why did not Christ at least hint it? ‘Go into

⁹¹ Original had ‘human nature’.

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all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature', is clear enough. So would it have been if he had added: 'and provide amusement for those who do not relish the gospel'. No such addendum, however, is to be found, nor even an equivalent for such, in any one of our Lord's utterances. This style of work did not seem to occur to his mind. Then again, Christ, as an ascended Lord, gives to his church specially qualified men for the carrying on of his work, but no mention of any gift for this branch of service occurs in the list. 'He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers – for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ'. Where do the 'public entertainers' come in? The Holy Ghost is silent concerning them, and his silence is eloquence.

If 'providing recreation' be a part of the church's work, surely we may look for some promise to encourage her in the toilsome task. Where is it? There is a promise for 'my word'; it 'shall not return unto me void'. There is the heart-rejoicing declaration concerning the gospel: 'it is the power of God'. There is the sweet assurance for the preacher of Christ that, whether he be successful or not as the world judges success, he is a 'sweet savour unto God'. There is the glorious benediction for those whose testimony, so far from amusing the world, rouses its wrath: 'Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you'. Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people, or because they refused to? The gospel of amusement has no martyrology. In vain does one look for a promise from God for providing recreation for a godless world. That which has no authority from Christ, no provision made for it by the Spirit, no promise attached to it by God, can only be a lying hypocrite when it lays claim to be 'a branch of the work of the Lord'...

But again, providing amusement for the people is in direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ and all his apostles. What is to be the attitude of the church towards the world according to our Lord's teaching? Strict separation and uncompromising hostility. While no hint

ever passed his lips of winning the world by pleasing it, or accommodating methods to its taste, his demand for unworldliness was constant and emphatic. He sets forth in one short sentence what he would have his disciples to be: 'You are the salt of the earth'. Yes, the salt – not the sugar-candy, nor a 'lump of delight', something the world will be more inclined to spit out than swallow with a smile, something more calculated to bring water to the eye than laughter to the lip.

Short and sharp is the utterance: 'Let the dead bury their dead: but go and preach the kingdom of God'. 'If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you'. 'In the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer; for I have overcome the world'. 'I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world'. 'My kingdom is not of this world'. These passages are hard to reconcile with the modern idea of the church providing recreation for those who have no taste for more serious things – in other words, of conciliating the world. If they teach anything at all, it is that fidelity to Christ will bring down the world's wrath, and that Christ intended his disciples to share with him the world's scorn and rejection. How did Jesus act? What were the methods of the only perfectly 'faithful witness' the Father has ever had?

As none will question that he [that is, Christ] is to be the worker's model, let us gaze upon him. How significant the introductory account given by Mark: 'Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the gospel'. And again, in the same chapter, I find him saying, in answer to the announcement of his disciples that all men were seeking for him: 'Let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth'. Matthew tells us: 'And it came to pass when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and preach in their cities'. In answer to John's question: 'Are you he that should come?' He replies: 'Go and show John those things which you do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame

walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them'. There is no item in the catalogue after this sort: 'And the careless are amazed, and the perishing are provided with innocent recreation'.

We are not left in doubt as to the matter of his preaching, for 'when many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door, he preached the word unto them'. There was no change of method adopted by the Lord during his course of ministry; no learning by experience of a better plan. His first word of command to his evangelists was: 'As you go, preach'. His last: 'Preach the gospel to every creature'. Not one Gospel writer⁹² suggests that at any time during his ministry he [that is Christ] turned aside from preaching to entertain, and so attract the people. He was in awful earnestness, and his ministry was like himself. Had he been less uncompromising, and introduced more of the 'bright and pleasant' element into his mission, he would have been more popular.

Yet, when many of his disciples went back, because of the searching nature of his preaching [in John 6], I do not find there was any attempt to increase a diminished congregation by resorting to something more pleasant to the flesh. I do not hear him saying: 'We must keep up the gatherings anyway: so run after those friends, Peter, and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow. Something very short and attractive, with little, if any, preaching. Today was a service for God, but tomorrow we will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it, and have a happy hour. Be quick, Peter; we must get the public somehow – if not by gospel, then by nonsense'. No, this was not how he argued. Gazing in sorrow on those who would not hear the word, he simply turns to the twelve, and asks: 'Will you also go away?'

Jesus pitied sinners, pleaded with them, sighed over them, warned them and wept over them, but never sought to amuse them. When the evening shadows of his consecrated life were deepening into the night of death, he reviewed his holy ministry, and found comfort and sweet solace in the

⁹² Original had 'Not an evangelist'.

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thought: 'I have given them your word'. As with the Master, so with his apostles: their teaching is the echo of his. In vain will the apostolic letters be searched to discover any trace of a gospel of amusement. The same call for separation from the world rings in every one [of them]: 'But not conformed to this world, but be transformed' is the word of command in the Romans. 'Come out from among them. and be separate and touch not the unclean thing' is the trumpet call in the Corinthians. In other words it is come out – keep out – keep clean out – for 'what communion has light with darkness, and what concord has Christ with Belial?'

'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world'. Here is the true relationship between the church and the world according to the letter to the Galatians. 'Be not, therefore, partakers with them. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them' is the attitude enjoined in Ephesians. 'Sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world: holding forth the word of life' is the word in Philippians. 'Dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world', says the letter to the Colossians: 'Abstain from all appearance of evil' is the demand in Thessalonians.

'If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use' is the word to Timothy. 'Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach' is the heroic summons of the Hebrews. James, with holy severity, declares that 'the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God'. Peter writes: 'Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he who has called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation'. John writes a whole letter, the gist of which is: 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes

away, and the lust thereof, but he that does the will of God abides for ever'.

Here are the teachings of the apostles concerning the relationship of the church and the world. And yet, in the face of them, what do we see and hear? A friendly compromise between the two, and an insane effort to work in partnership for the good of the people. God help us, and dispel the strong delusion. How did the apostles carry on their mission work? Was it in harmony with their teaching?...

The charge brought against the apostles by the members of the Council was: 'You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine'. Not much chance of this charge being brought against modern methods! The description of their work is: 'And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ'... They 'ceased not' from this, they had no time for arranging for entertainments: they gave themselves continually to the ministry of the word. Scattered by persecution, the early disciples 'went everywhere preaching the word'...

When God told Paul that he had much people in Corinth, I read: 'And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them'. Evidently then, he judged that the only way to bring them was by the word. A year and a half, and only one method adopted. Wonderful! We should have had a dozen in that time! But then Paul never reckoned that providing something pleasant for the ungodly was part of his ministry; for, on his way to Jerusalem and martyrdom, he says: 'Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God'. This was all the ministry he knew. The last description we have of the methods of this prince of evangelists is of a piece with all that has gone before: 'He expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning 'til evening, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus'. What a contrast to all the rot and nonsense now being perpetrated in the holy name of Christ! The Lord clear the church of all the rubbish that the devil has imposed upon her, and bring us back again to apostolic methods!...

Lastly. The mission of amusement... is the devil's half-way house to the world. It is because of what I have seen that I feel deeply, and would fain write strongly. This thing is working rottenness in the church of God, and blasting her service for the King. In the guise of Christianity, it is accomplishing the devil's own work. Under the pretence of going out to reach the world, it is carrying our sons and daughters into the world. With the plea of: 'Do not alienate the masses with your strictness', it is seducing the young disciples from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ. Professing to win the world, it is turning the garden of the Lord into a public recreation ground. To fill the temple with those who see no beauty in Christ, a grinning Dragon⁹³ is put over the doorway.

It will be no wonder if the Holy Ghost, grieved and insulted, withdraws his presence; for 'what concord has Christ with Belial, and what agreement has the temple of God with idols?'

'Come out!' is the call for today. Sanctify yourselves. Put away the evil from among you. Cast down the world's altars and cut down her groves. Spurn her offered assistance. Decline her help, as your Master did the testimony of devils, for 'he did not allow them to speak, because they knew him'. Renounce all the policy of the age. Trample upon Saul's armour. Grasp the book of God. Trust the Spirit who wrote its pages. Fight with this weapon only and always. Cease to amuse and seek to arouse. Shun the clap of a delighted audience, and listen for the sobs of a convicted one. Give up trying to 'please' men who have only the thickness of the ribs between their souls and hell; and warn, and plead, and intreat, as those who feel the waters of eternity creeping upon them.

Let the church again confront the world; testify against it; meet it only behind the cross; and, like her Lord, she shall overcome, and with him share the victory.⁹⁴

⁹³ Should this be 'Dagon'? A reader informs me, however, that 'a grinning dragon... is used as a motif for pleasure *etc.* in the world'.

⁹⁴ Archibald Brown: 'The Devil's Mission of Amusement: The Church's Task – Entertainment or Evangelisation?'

Conclusion

Although these extracts need no further comment from me, let me try to gather the threads together.

There are two systems competing for the minds, hearts and lives of men: what this world offers and what God offers. And Scripture is uncompromising in its assessment of the two:

Man does not live by bread alone, but... by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4).

‘Bread’ here stands for material things, the things of this world, possessions, careers, power, reputation, money, stuff. Man needs stuff, of course, but if that is all he has, and all he lives for, he is bankrupt, destitute. It is spiritual bread, and only spiritual bread, that satisfies; that is, it is the word of God – its doctrines, its laws, its commandments, its promises, its gospel – that can satisfy; above all, it is Christ, the incarnate word of whom the written word speaks (John 1:1-18) – and only Christ – that can satisfy. The material can only enable man to exist; to truly live he needs the spiritual sustenance and satisfaction which God alone can supply. Thus Scripture flatly contrasts material things with spiritual; it contrasts this life with eternal life; it contrasts material bread with spiritual bread; it contrasts the desire for stuff with desire for Christ. And the believer, having come to trust Christ, knows by experience the difference between the two. Indeed, so marked is the contrast in his experience, he is more than eager to sing about it, addressing his worship to his Lord and Saviour in such words as these :

*O Christ, in thee my soul hath found,
And found in thee alone,
The peace, the joy I sought so long,
The bliss till now unknown.*

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Refrain:

*Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me:
There's love and life and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in thee!*

*I sighed for rest and happiness,
I yearned for them, not thee;
But while I passed the¹ Saviour by,
His love laid hold on me.*

*I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
But ah! the waters failed!
E'en as I stooped to drink they fled,
And mocked me as I wailed.*

*The pleasures lost I sadly mourned,
But never wept for thee,
Till grace my² sightless eyes received,
Thy loveliness to see.*

And, to repeat the refrain:

*Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me:
There's love and life and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in thee!*

‘Ah, but that’s just a hymn’. No it is not! Well, it is, of course, but it really does catch the spirit of the scripture I quoted: ‘Man does not live by bread alone, but... by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD’.

Do not miss the fact that this assertion was made by God through Moses in the second giving of the old covenant with its law to the people of Israel just before they entered the promised land, and further quoted by Christ in his time of temptation as he opened his new covenant. In other words, this message runs throughout the entire Bible; it stands as a kind of epigraph to both covenants, old and new: ‘Man does

¹ Original had ‘my’.

² Original had ‘the’.

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not live by bread alone, but... by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD’.

The apostles – and, above all, Christ – made the point over and over again:

What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25).

One’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Luke 12:15).

Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal... Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world... I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst... Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever... It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life (John 6:26-27,32-33,35,47-51,53-58,63).

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I came that they [that is, my sheep] may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called (1 Tim. 6:6-12).

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:15-17).

Why do I say all this now? For three reasons.

1. Every *unbeliever* needs to hear and heed it.
2. Every *believer* needs to hear and heed it.
3. Above all, for my purposes in this booklet, every *church* needs to hear and heed it. Alas, many churches – an increasing number of churches – are devoting much time, thought, money and effort into devising methods to attract the ‘unchurched’ into church. They are doing this by offering the ungodly plenty of stuff: food of the highest quality, events to entertain and divert, pleasure trips, (fairly) contemporary music of the highest possible quality, and the like, all with professional polish, glitz and glamour. Don’t they realise that they are acting directly contrary to the principles spelled out in the scriptures I have quoted in this Conclusion? I acknowledge that the ultimate aim of such

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churches is to see the ‘unchurched’ converted – at least, I hope it is – but don’t the advocates of this method of evangelism see that what they are doing is confirming natural men in their love of stuff, the material and unalloyed pleasure and gratification? Can they not see that what they are doing with all their programmes to attract the unbeliever is without scriptural warrant, and destructive of the very gospel they wish to proclaim? Or do we need to re-write the apostle’s conviction for our day and our own use:

I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified – once, that is, I have attracted the ‘unchurched’ into church by offering them quality stuff? and lots of it, and for a long time, always with something new in the pipeline?

Perish the thought!

