

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.