

## *Evangelical Christendom Confusion: Lloyd-Jones, Brencher and Murray, 1966 and All That*

I am referring to D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones' Evangelical Alliance address on 18th October 1966, the chapter 'A Grievous Dividing' in John Brencher's 2002 book on Lloyd-Jones,<sup>1</sup> and the chapter "'The Lost Leader", or "A Prophetic Voice"' in Iain H.Murray's 2008 book on Lloyd-Jones.<sup>2</sup>

Let me say at once that this article is not yet another addition to the pile of books and articles on the whys and wherefores of that fateful October meeting, the events and reasons which led up to it, and the ensuing aftermath – who said (or didn't say) what and why, and what was meant by it, if it was said. Let that be clear right from the start.

My aim is far more basic. To change the figure, I am standing back and taking a wider view, but, sounding contradictory, I am homing in on something which Lloyd-Jones, Brencher and Murray all missed.

Let me explain. There is a fourth character in the cast list of this drama; indeed, the lead character dominating the whole. The character in question, of course, is Christendom; Evangelical Christendom in particular. Hence my title 'Evangelical Christendom Confusion'. Christendom was in the driving seat in 1966. And though there are encouraging signs – flecks of straw in the wind, one might say – that a small but growing number of believers are showing concern about the devastating effects of Christendom, Christendom, alas, shows no sign of giving up its dominant role.

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<sup>1</sup> John Bencher: *Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) and Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism*, Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 2002, pp116-141.

<sup>2</sup> Iain H.Murray: *Lloyd-Jones: Messenger of Grace*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2008, pp165-201.

Let me explain further. I am talking about the confusion – the ruinous confusion – that Christendom has imposed on the issues in hand. It did it in 1966; it continues doing it to this day. And this is more than a pity; it is a disaster. In truth, the entire debate foundered before it began, and it foundered because the three proponents I have selected were not really discussing Scripture – though they fundamentally thought they were; the truth is, they were arguing about concepts invented by Christendom and imposed on Scripture. Failing to deal with the vital – absolutely vital – scriptural issues which were involved, they concentrated instead on Christendom concepts. But the scriptural concepts at stake are vital still, never more so than today.

What were those vital issues? What are they now? The three were, and still are: What is the *euaγγελion* (the gospel)? What is the *ekklēsia* (the church)? What is a *Christianos* (a Christian)?

Let me explain why I put the Greek first. We first meet these three words in the New Testament – in Greek. We do not come across them in some theological manual or confession of faith; we meet them in Scripture. And they have specific, scriptural meanings. All three – gospel, church, Christian – may have become everyday terms in English, but, alas, in coming into English they have picked up – and been ruined by – the fourth character, Christendom. Nearly all believers – let alone the world – tend to think of all three – gospel, church and Christian – not as they should – as defined in the new covenant in Scripture – *but as fatally modified by Christendom*. They may not be aware of the drastic influence Christendom has had upon the new covenant – indeed, most believers, in my view have no concept of it – but such is the case.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> How many professing evangelicals today are fully up to speed on, say, regeneration, and its effect in the transformed life of the convert? In the discussion of Lloyd-Jones' address in the chapters under discussion, see how 'becoming a Christian' becomes confused with 'attending church', 'being baptised (sprinkled as a baby)', 'accepting a creed'.

Consequently the discussion from first to last in 1966 and since was – and continues to be – vitiated by Christendom. The conversation then and now might appear to be about gospel, church and Christian, yes, but, alas, at the time all three were viewed through the lens of Christendom, and all three continue (by most) to be so viewed. The fact is, a proper understanding of, and sticking to – in particular – *ekklēsia* and *Christianos* – would have saved much breath, paper and ink, and great deal of misunderstanding in 1966, and since. But it's far worse than that. Christendom has inevitably led to serious distortion of *euaγγελion*, *ekklēsia* and *Christianos* for many, with calamitous consequences for both believers and unbelievers.

Hence this article.

But I am resolved to be brief. Those who wish to check my allegations about the parts played by Lloyd-Jones, Brencher and Murray must consult the originals.

And it won't take long to see what I mean: all three were concerned with things like visible and invisible church, denominations, associations (and, in at least one case, associations of denominations), tradition, essential and non-essential (primary and secondary) truths. All of which are Christendom-speak, and, therefore, an integral part of the problem. Consequently, the debate which raged then and since has been utterly confounded by this kind of talk. And the losers are, as I have said, the *euaγγελion* (the gospel), the *ekklēsia* (the church), *Christianos* (Christian). And, of course, several other major new-covenant principles and practices have been caught up in the general confusion; such things as: What is scriptural separation? What is scriptural evangelism? Christendom confusion reigns!

In short, the kerfuffle over the events of October 1966, and its aftermath, has served only to make an already utterly confused situation even more confused. The ramifications of the principles of the new covenant – which, alas, many evangelicals are sadly ignorant of – have been even more seriously muffled in the fog of Christendom.

I will not launch into the ramifications of all this now, but I note some of my many works in which I attempt to deal with the issues.<sup>4</sup>

In brief, the discussion should be about the scriptural meaning and practice of the principles of *euaγγελion*, *ekklēsia*, *Christianos*, separation and evangelism. If only we could shake ourselves free from Christendom and get back to the new covenant!

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<sup>4</sup> See my *Christ Is All: No Sanctification by the Law; Relationship Evangelism Exposed: A Blight on the Churches and the Ungodly; The Pastor: Does He Exist?; Infant Baptism Tested; Public Worship: God-Ordained or Man-Invented?; Battle for the Church: 1517-1644; Evangelicals Warned: Isaiah 30 Speaks Today*, and so on.