

1950's National Radio Debate in Canada

by Ian Paisley

Dr. Ian Paisley argues for the authority of Scripture and the necessity of being born again in a debate against modernism and ecumenism.

Duration: 12:08

Scripture: John 14:6, John 16:13, Romans 3:23, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 1 John 4:1

Topics: "Faith Alone", "Protestant Reformation"

Description

In this video, Dr. Paisley discusses the importance of being saved by God's grace and having a personal experience of faith. He emphasizes the Protestant belief that salvation is through faith alone, not through works. Dr. Paisley also talks about his protests against ecumenical observers at the Vatican Council and the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury, as these events were seen as steps towards unity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. He argues that the Protestant churches should maintain their historic creeds, which are anti-Roman, and opposes dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church.

Transcript

In the late 1950s, Dr. Paisley debated John Hardley, a modernist professor from the United Church of Canada. The debate was hosted by Perry F. Rockwood in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and aired on coast-to-coast radio over the Canadian Broadcasting Network. Here is a portion of that debate dealing with the authority of Scripture.

Wouldn't you agree that anything which does divide the body of Christ being a church is a sin? First of all, we have to establish, of course, what is the Church of Christ. I don't believe that the Roman Catholic Church passed the Reformation. I don't believe that the Reformers left the Church of Christ.

I believe that they left the system of Romanism in order to be the Church of Christ. Yes, but do you believe that any church, no matter what it may be, can be perfect? No, I do not, but there are certain principles that the Church of Jesus Christ must adhere to. First of all, I believe that the Church of Jesus Christ must adhere to the Word of God as the sole rule of faith and practice, and that the Bible is for Satan.

Now, you know perfectly well that in the Roman Catholic Church there is the addition of tradition accepted by the unanimous consent of the fathers. When the fathers were unanimous, I mean, I feel to understand, because we know there was a great conflict between various opinions set by the fathers. So they have

added to the Word of God.

Now then, they have put on all the other doctrines, like the doctrine of the Mass, which was completely contrary to the finished work of Christ upon the cross. I mean, you would admit that would... Well, no. Let's come back to something here, which you mentioned earlier, and that is this all-important question of Scripture, with which I couldn't agree more.

Now, don't you think it's true that today the Roman Catholic Church is making notable advances not only in producing its new version of Scripture, like the Jerusalem Bible, but also in reestablishing the authority, the primary authority of Scripture? I wouldn't agree that they're reestablishing the primary authority, because Pope Paul recently made a statement clarifying this, and he said, of course, the Bible can only be accepted as it is interpreted by the authority of himself and of the Church. The Church, yes. But, of course, to some extent, at least, this is always true.

Every Church claims the right to interpret the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. My understanding of Presbyterianism is... Well, I would accept that. I would say that the Word of God, according to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which I'm sure that you are aware of, it makes it perfectly clear that the interpreter of the Scriptures is the Scripture itself.

The clearest understanding of a disputed passage is by the Scripture itself, and that's set clearly out in the Westminster Confession of Faith, as I'm sure you're aware. And I believe that Church is not the interpreter of Scripture, and I don't believe that the Scripture gets its authority from the Church. I believe that the Church gets its authority from Scripture.

Yes, all right, but no Church would say that it gives the authority to Scripture. It would say that it is the vehicle of the Holy Spirit to interpret Scripture. Now, this was my phrasing, and this was the... Well, I, of course, have agreed that I would have to differ entirely from that.

I believe that the Word of God is the sole rule of faith and practice, and I believe, in regard to the things of salvation, that it is perfectly clear that the Scriptures do interpret themselves. But how do you explain the fact, then, that there is the Holy Spirit at work through the Scripture? Why? Oh, through the Church. I certainly believe that the Holy Spirit enlightens the individual as he leads the Word of God.

I believe in the personality of God, the Holy Ghost, and I believe that every believer, every person who has repented and exercised faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, possesses the Holy Spirit. And it says, we have not received the spirit of fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. But the Spirit of God does not lead contrary to the Word of God.

No, I would certainly suppose that it never could, yes. Well, then, you take, say, the doctrine of the Mass. Now, if you say that the Holy Spirit is residing in the Roman Catholic Church, I think the Scriptures teach clearly what you would admit, that Christ's work was sufficient and finished, that when he died upon the cross, he finished the work of atonement.

Well, would the Holy Spirit then guide the Roman Catholic Church to substitute in the place of the finished final work of Christ the doctrine of the Mass? To my mind, the Church is made up of people who are genuinely seeking religious truth through Jesus Christ. I'm at one with John Wesley in this, that I would call any man who is genuinely doing that my spiritual brother. Yes, but I don't believe that man have to seek for truth.

I believe that Christ came seeking sinners. This is where I would differ. I don't believe the Gospel is man seeking God.

I believe the Gospel is God seeking man. And I believe that Christ did the seeking. Certainly.

And I believe we find truth when we find Christ. I mean, you're speaking. I mean, you take John Wesley, for instance.

I could quote his notes in the New Testament, in which he really condemns the Roman Catholic Church in very strong language. His notes in 2 Thessalonians and his notes also on the 17th chapter of the book of Revelation. So I would say that I could quote John Wesley and say he was on my side on this particular issue.

Yes, this is all very fine. And I would agree with you so far that there must always be the divine initiative. The whole essence of the Gospel is God seeking man.

Yes. Through Christ, yes. But that does not absolve man from responding, does it? Yes, but man has to receive the truth as God has revealed.

The world by wisdom knew not God. The natural mind is at enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. And the light that man receives.

You see, I don't know whether you believe that man has light. I don't believe he has light. I believe he's totally depraved.

He's lost. God must do the same. And man must do the receiving.

Man receives. He receives what God gives. Yes, but are you cutting man's mind entirely out of this whole religious equation? No, I am not.

But I believe that his mind... Well, let me just say this. I accept entirely what the Scripture says that the mind of man, the carnal mind, is enmity against God. And if the carnal mind is enmity against God, then there must be spiritual regeneration before the mind can bow before deity.

You take the carnal mind, for instance, of a doctor who is laboring in his laboratory to find a cure for cancer. Yes. Is that a carnal mind, that enmity against God? I would say that now you are coming from the field of spiritual things into the field of natural things.

Oh, I don't think you can distinguish. Oh, I think so. I think that that doctor is applying the talents that he has been given and using them for a good purpose.

I don't deny that whatsoever. But all his dedication will never bring him to Jesus Christ. Justification by faith.

That's right. Alone. So in a few days.

Yes. And no other way. That's right.

All right. At least your theological point is very clearly stated. Now, would you, therefore, go on to claim that only those who have known this regenerative process, which I would take it you would apply your own criterion to, only those are true Christians? I would say that I accept distinctly the words of Christ.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. And if he's not born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. I accept what Christ has said.

I mean, I believe the Bible is a revelation which I've got to accept. And you don't believe in the experience of Christian faith through any church or any worshipping community or any experience like that? I only believe if the experience is based upon the word of God, if it is scriptural warrant and foundation, certainly. It must be scriptural faith.

But I don't believe because a man is a good Presbyterian or a good Baptist or a good free Presbyterian that he's going to get to heaven. He must be born again. He must be saved by God's grace.

And he must have the experience that Paul spoke of when he said, You have be quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. In the past you walked according to the course of this world. But now through faith alone, not at works, you have been saved.

So I am really taking, sir, the old historic Protestant position. Let's just look at something else for a moment. I think two occasions you took the opportunity to demonstrate publicly by going to Rome.

That's right. Once as a protest against ecumenical observers at the Vatican Council and once against the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Yes.

Is that right? Let us know. Can you tell us just what was the idea there? Well, I don't believe that the Protestant churches, as long as they maintain their historic creed, the Presbyterian Church maintains a Westminster Confession of Faith. Although I understand in the USA, you probably know this better than me, there is going to be a change in that.

But the 39 Articles of the Church of England as a basis of Episcopalianism, the notes of John Wesley form the creed of the subordinate standards of the Manifest Church. Well, now, I feel that these standards are definitely anti-Romey. I went to the second Vatican Council to oppose, to protest against representatives of churches whose standards are definitely at the moment anti-Romish, having dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church.

Now, all we did was simply to distribute the Word of God. And we were arrested in the Vatican Square. We were told we would have to go into Italian territory.

The next morning, afterwards, we were arrested again, taken to the police station, and it was only by the intervention of the British Council that we got our liberty. And we were put under a rule that we weren't to give out any more copies of the Scriptures. But this would be as a reaction against your protest? Well, that was the only protest we made.

We protested by giving out the Word of God. I mean, we didn't carry placards, or we didn't make any statements to the press. We just simply stood and distributed the Scriptures.

And what about the second occasion? Well, the second occasion, of course, was a different occasion. It was the first time that the Archbishop of Canterbury was going to have a full-scale public meeting with the Pope of Rome, and also to, as they said, to investigate ways whereby the Church of England and the Church of Rome could come together. Come together in practical terms, I take it, though.

This again comes back to my point of cooperation. Oh, no, because in Italy, in January, as you must know, the Bishop of Ribbon, Dr. Moorman, led an Anglican delegation to consult with the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, and they took their first step. They declared themselves towards organic unity.

So this was the preparation for definite unity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. And so we protested because the Church of England articles are very strong. I mean, one of them says the Pope of Rome has no jurisdiction in this realm.

And as you know, the British Queen is technically the head of the Church, and she has to take an oath at coronation that she's a faithful Protestant. I see our time has gone, Mr. Paisley. Thank you very much for this discussion, which has been sincere as well as outspoken.

Thank you.

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