

Loving the God of Truth. Preparing the Church for the Twenty-First Century.
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The addresses delivered at the Eighth International Baptist Conference in 1996 evaluate the current state of the western church, of its reason for its existence, and where addresses made a deep impact upon me. They were thoroughly Reformed, faithful to the God of Truth, and did exactly what they intended to do; they provided church leaders with ideas for ministry in our postmodern culture.

In his first address, "The World We Live In", Rev. Paul Appéré, pastor of Église Evangélique Baptiste de Paris-Centre, France, summarized the philosophy of modernism and compared it with postmodernism. In his opinion, our western culture bears the marks of both modernist and post modernity. He showed how anti-authoritarian, relativistic, consumer-driven postmodernism has failed to fulfill the deepest human needs. And in his second address "The Impact on the Church of a Postmodern Culture" he explained how the church's influence has often been outweighed by that of the world on the church.

To prove his point Appéré pointed to the way evangelicals have been influenced by television for their communication strategies, their targeting of emotions, and reliance on the Word of God. Postmodernism has also impacted the life of the church. There is a drift toward individualism and a consequent lack of community. Appéré used the metaphor "McDonaldization" of the Church to demonstrate how consumerism and marketing techniques have shaped church growth thinking. And he pleaded with his fellow evangelicals to Show forth a coherent Christian world view and engage critically with contemporary rivals.

Dr. Michael Haykin, Professor of Church History at Heritage Baptist College and Theological Seminary and frequent Ligonier lecturer, examined "Evangelism and the Enlightenment". He concluded his address by saying that the origin of Evangelicalism cannot be found in the influence of the Enlightenment but in the eighteenth century outpouring of the Spirit of God. He added that eighteenth-century Evangelicalism was not merely a recipient of the attitudes of transatlantic British culture, but was able to transform aspects of that culture to the glory of God.

In his address "On Drawing Lines, When Drawing Lines is Rude", Dr. Donald A. Carson, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, argued that we must insist that some views are in error and that not all views are of equivalent worth and unworth, veracity and falsity. He said that "the plurality of errors and heresies that our generation confronts demands that lines be drawn - thoughtfully, carefully, humbly, corrigibly, but drawn nonetheless." In his address "On Heralding the Gospel in a Pluralistic Culture", Carson pointed out that the early church not so much opposed the

existence of pluralism but defied it, insisting on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the saving power of His Gospel. He also stated that biblical Christianity is more than emotions," it brings with it unavoidable, non-negotiable, knowable intellectual content.

In his two brief addresses, Dr. James Grier, Vice-President and Dean of Grang Rapids Baptist Seminary, said that faith is a living response to the person of God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ. And he added that this faith must be expressed in all of life. Allegiance to God is not limited to special religious activities but is pertinent "to the full orb of life and action." And He said that loving the God of Truth is demonstrated by keeping His commandments.

Rev. John Campbell, senior pastor of the Brisbane City Tabernacle, Australia, challenged his audience to be sensitive to our postmodern culture without surrendering gospel essentials. We must be faithful to the Lord and authentic in our faith and practice. He also gave some ideas on how to approach our Generation X.

Rev. Stephen Fenton, Pastor of Margaree Valley Baptist Church, Cape Breton, spoke on sanctification. He said that Jesus has all the power within himself to sanctify as well as justify us. We need to live in total dependence on His Holy Spirit.

The concluding address was by the well known Rev. Gorgi Vins, founder and director of Russian Gospel Ministries International. He gave a concise and moving account of the history of the evangelical church in the USSR.

This book should be essential reading for pastors and Christian school teachers. It will help them not only to understand our culture and to critique it, but also to develop a Biblical approach to reach our generation with the saving Gospel of Christ.

Johan D. Tangelder