

## A CONTROVERSY IN TASMANIA

Although it is presumption for an American to write an opinion of events in Tasmania, when all he knows about the place is that it is an island off the southern coast of Australia and has as an inhabitant a fine Christian gentleman by the name of Mr. Rodman, one cannot refuse the request of a friend. It should be added that the American had the privilege of reading one pastoral sermon by Mr. Rodman and found it thoroughly biblical.

The controversy which occasioned the request for this opinion concerns what may be called hyper-calvinism. In the United States there is no such issue because only a very tiny minority of Baptists accept it. The main principle seems to be that a minister should not preach the gospel to the unsaved. Apparently in Tasmania certain elders rebuked their pastor for visiting some hospitalized persons who were not members of their congregation and were probably not Christians.

In addition, representations were made that Lecture No. 7, by the Rev. A. I. Morgan, favored this theological position; but if so, the intricate language is not sufficient evidence. What is clear, however, is that the lecture is some places definitely contradicts the Scripture. On page 75 the lecture reads, "As the Nestorians of old taught ... many modern evangelicals err, when they say, that Christ dwells in the hearts of believers after a similar manner. ... prayer is made that Christ should be formed in the heart and the people 'should see Jesus in me!'" Though the present writer has noted many peculiarities among the numerous types who call themselves evangelicals, he has never met a Nestorian. Unless cases are common in Tasmania where people say that Christ is in their heart after the manner of the Nestorians, the assertion should have been fully documented. Furthermore, the lecture rather clearly opposes Ephesians 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts," and I John 4:13, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us." One should not contradict Scripture simply because some cultists are queer, and especially on points where they are strictly Biblical.

On page 7 of the Lecture, in arguing against traducianism, the author says, "If the Lord ... derived his human soul from his mother Mary, the soul of Christ could not be said to be sinless." This is either poor logic or at best incomplete statement. The author was under obligation to show that imputation of guilt and conveyance of depravity come through both parents. If they come only through the male line, for Adam, not Eve, is our federal head, one can understand why there had to be a Virgin Birth.

The immediate question, however, is whether the Scriptures command or prohibit the preaching of the gospel to the non-elect. The answer to this question is that such a prohibition is denied in Scripture and would be impossible in practice. It would be impossible to follow because no one knows who is and who is not elect. At a certain early date Saul of Tarsus was breathing out threatenings against believers; but nonetheless he was elect from all eternity. Many congregations must have certain persons who are elect, but not as yet believers. Reversely there are probably some communicant members of good reputation who are not elect. Hence the hyper-calvinistic principle cannot be applied.

Moreover, the principle is denied in Scripture. Aside from the historical fact that Paul in Ephesus and Corinth preached to everyone who would listen, he also wrote in Romans 10:14-17, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher ... So then faith comes by hearing ..."

Perhaps more emphatic is the great commission: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations."

In Iconium Paul preached both to the Jews and Greeks (Acts 14:1). A great multitude believed, but not all, for some sought to stone Paul and Barnabas; from which one must conclude that the two missionaries had preached to the non-elect. Indeed there were probably no Christians there at all before Paul began to preach. If some were elect, they were all at least unbelievers. On the theory here opposed, Paul would never have preached to anyone in Iconium.

But quoting these verse is a work of supererogation. It is perfectly clear that the Good News was proclaimed to all classes of people. Since Paul exhorts us of the twentieth century to “Be followers of me even as I also am of Christ.” (I Cor. 11:1), we should preach to everybody we possibly, or at least conveniently, can.

Therefore the conclusion is that hyper-calvinism is neither Calvinistic nor Christian.

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