

## National Radio Debate in Canada

By Dr. Ian R.K. Paisley

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**Bible Text:** Romans 3:28

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### **Martyrs Memorial Free Presbyterian**

356 Ravenhill Road  
BT 5 Belfast, Ulster  
Northern Ireland

**Website:** [www.ianpaisley.org/](http://www.ianpaisley.org/)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/martyrs](http://www.sermonaudio.com/martyrs)

Koelsch:

In the late 1950s Dr. Paisley debated John Hardly, 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.

Hardly:

Wouldn't you agree that anything which does divide the body of Christ being the Church is a sin?

Paisley:

First off, we have to establish, of course, what is the Church of Christ. I don't believe that the Roman Catholic Church at 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.

Hardly:

Yes, but do you believe that any Church no matter what it may be can be perfect?

Paisley:

No, I do not, but there are certain principles that the Church of Jesus Christ must adhere to. And, 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 if the Bible is forsaken...now, you know perfectly well that in the Roman Catholic Church there is the addition of tradition except that by the unanimous consent of the fathers when the fathers were unanimous. I mean, I fail 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 and then they have put on all

the other doctrines like the doctrine of the mass which is completely contrary to the finished work of Christ upon the cross. I mean, you would admit that, wouldn't you?

Hardly:

Well, now, let's come back to something here...

Paisley:

Yes.

Hardly:

...which you mentioned earlier and that is this all important question of Scripture...

Paisley:

Yes.

Hardly:

...with which I couldn't agree more. Now don't you think it is 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.

Paisley:

I wouldn't agree that they are 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.

Hardly:

...of the church.

Paisley:

Yes.

Hardly:

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.

Paisley:

Well, I...

Hardly:

Now my understanding of Presbyterianism is...

Paisley:

Well, I could...I wouldn't accept that. I would say that the Word of God...according to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which I am sure that you are aware of, it makes it perfectly clear that the interpreter of Scriptures is the Scripture itself. The clearest understanding of the disputed passage is by the Scripture itself and that is set clearly out in the Westminster Confession of Faith as I am sure you are aware. And I believe that Church is not the interpreter of Scripture and I don't believe that the Scripture get its authority from the Church. I believe that the Church gets its authority from Scripture.

Hardly:

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 training and this was the force of...

Paisley:

Well, 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 and the Scriptures do interpret themselves.

Hardly:

But how do you explain the fact, then, that there is the Holy Spirit at work through the Scripture, through the Church?

Paisley:

Oh, I...I certainly believe that Holy Spirit enlightens the individual as he reads 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 receive the spirit of fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father,"<sup>1</sup>

But the Spirit of God does not lead contrary to the Word of God.

Hardly:

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<sup>1</sup> See Romans 8:15

No. I would certainly suppose that it never could.

Paisley:

Yes. Well, then you take, say, the doctrine of the mass. If you say 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 up on 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?

Hardly:

But to mind the Church is made up of people who are genuinely seeking religious truth through Jesus Christ. I am one with John Wesley in this that I would call any man who is genuinely doing that my spiritual brother.

Paisley:

Yes, but I don't believe that men 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.

Hardly:

Certainly.

Paisley:

And I believe we have found truth when we have found Christ. I mean you are speaking....I mean you take John Wesley, for instance. I could quote his notes on the New Testament in which he really condemns the Roman Catholic Church in very strong language. And his notes on 2 Thessalonians and his notes also on the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of the Revelation. So I would say that I could quote John Wesley and say he was on my side on this particular issue.

Hardly:

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.

Paisley:

Yes.

Hardly:

...through Christ, yes. But that does not absolve man from responding, does it?

Paisley:

Yes, but man has to receive the truth as God has revealed. "The world by wisdom knew not God."<sup>2</sup> The natural mind is at enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.<sup>3</sup> 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 is totally depraved. He is lost. God must do the saving. And man must do the receiving. He receives what God gives.

Hardly:

Yes, but are you cutting man's mind entirely out of this whole religious equation?

Paisley:

No. I am not, but I believe that his mind...

Hardly:

It sounds like it.

Paisley:

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.

Hardly:

Oh, no. You take the carnal mind, for instance of a doctor who is laboring in his laboratory to find a cure for cancer.

Paisley:

Yes.

Hardly:

Is that a carnal mind at enmity against God?

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:21

<sup>3</sup> See Romans 8:7

Paisley:

I would say that now you are coming from the field of spiritual things into the field of natural things.

Hardly:

Well, I don't think you can distinguish.

Paisley:

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 den that whatsoever. But all his dedication will never bring him to Jesus Christ.

Hardly:

Justification by faith.

Paisley:

That's right. Alone.

Hardly:

*Sola Fide.*

Paisley:

That's right.

Hardly:

No other way.

Paisley:

That's right.

Hardly:

All right.

Paisley:

That's right.

Hardly:

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?

Paisley:

I would say that I accept distinctly the words of Christ, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of [heaven]." <sup>4</sup> And if he is 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 have got to accept.

Hardly:

And you don't believe in the experience of Christian faith through any church or any worshipping community or any experience like that?

Paisley:

I only believe that if the experience is based upon the Word of God, if it has 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 is 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 hath he 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 of works, you have been saved." <sup>5</sup>

So I am really taking, sir, the old historic Protestant position.

Hardly:

Let's just look at some thing else for a moment. I think two occasions you took the opportunity to demonstrate publicly by going to Rome.

Paisley:

That's right.

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<sup>4</sup> John 3:3

<sup>5</sup> See Ephesians 2:1-2

Hardly:

Once as a protest against ecumenical observers at the Vatican Council.

Paisley:

Yes.

Hardly:

And once against the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Paisley:

Yes.

Hardly:

Is that right?

Paisley:

That is correct.

Hardly:

Now, can you tell us for just what was the idea there?

Paisley:

Well, I don't believe that the Protestant churches as long as they maintain their historic Creeds... Now the Presbyterian Church maintains the Westminster Confession of Faith, although I understand in the USA—you'd probably know this better than me—there is going to be a change in that. But the 39 Articles of the Church of England is the basis of Episcopalianism. The notes of John Wesley form the creed of the subordinate standards of the Methodist Church.

Well, now, I feel that these standards are definitely anti-Romic. 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 a 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 Consul 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.

Hardly:

But was...this would be as a reaction against your protest...

Paisley:

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 simply stood and distributed the Scriptures.

Hardly:

And what about the second occasion?

Paisley:

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. Now this was...

Hardly:

They were come together in practical terms I take it. Though this again comes back to my point of...

Paisley:

Oh, no because in Italy in January as you must know the Bishop of Ribon, 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 is a faithful Protestant.

Hardly:

I see our time has gone, Mr. Paisley. Thank you very much for this discussion which has been sincere as well as outspoken.

Paisley:

Thank you.