Addressing a deeply dishonest campaign

Because of the nation-wide 'rolling' campaign of publicity for the book *Telling Lies For God* by Professor Ian Plimer—including book reviews in Christian newspapers— there has been a growing concern among Christians for us to give a proper response to the book's allegations against us. This campaign commenced with an ABC TV program which wrongly linked the mainstream creation movement to the same false Ark site we debunked in our magazine despite the producer having all the information from us.

These include repetitive statements that CSF (a ministry involving people from a broad range of evangelical denominations, as does Scripture Union, Bible Union, Bible Society etc.) is a 'cult'. More disturbingly, the book is saturated with direct accusations and heavy innuendo of financial secretiveness, fraud (both financial and scientific), lying etc. allegedly backed up by 'documentation'.

Why Respond?

We are aware of the spiritual dimensions of this attack, and that ultimately God Himself is our vindicator. Nevertheless, as the Larger Westminster Catechism indicates, among the duties implied in the Ninth Commandment is the preserving and promoting of 'truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbour as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth ... (and) love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth'.

Also, because this has already been broadened into an attack on other Bible-believing Christians and Christian schools, as well as public school chaplaincies, a proper response will in a very real sense help to preserve their good name also. Also, the book and the campaign have seriously attacked and distorted the Bible and denigrated all who believe it to be a true and reliable revelation of God. To show the true nature of the allegations against CSF also goes a long way toward reassuring Christians about the Word of God.

(Some have wondered whether CMI has been adequately responding to the media; see later on this). A priority for us has been to avoid being distracted from important ongoing ministry. We have therefore solemnly and prayerfully devoted most of this *Prayer News* to a major and formal, oncefor-all response to this assault on our integrity.

Some Background to the Ethics Involved

While secular media were happy to promote Plimer's 'charges', there was previously no media interest in the fact that a major anti-creationist in the USA had published a carefully documented exposé (available from CSF), of such matters as:

- (a) Plimer having fabricated (in geological and other literature) articles which did not exist, to discredit CSF (in particular, geologist Dr Andrew Snelling).
- (b) Plimer having written, signed and sent a circular-type letter on university letterhead (we have a copy) stating that a visiting creation scientist was travelling in Australia 'with an entourage of young boys who were continually touching him'. This man was a guest of CSF's always travelling with us, and accompanied by his wife.

(c) Plimer having stated on ABC radio that CSF did not put its company returns in for four years. (This was a complete falsehood, for which the ABC later apologised, as well as for other false innuendo by Plimer about our finances.)

And much more. For example, The same Ian Plimer has, on Sydney radio 2JJJ, indicated that bornagain Christians tend to be 'savage' with psychological problems, and that creationists do not help others in times of flood and bushfire.

Not surprisingly, many who have been unaware of all this have, when confronted with the most recent barrage of Plimer accusations, worked on assumptions such as 'surely, if all these strong allegations are being made in public by a prominent academic, they could not all be fabricated, deliberate half-truths, etc., could they? Surely there must at least be some reason for concern, some fire beneath all that smoke ...?' Which is why we decided on this full response, especially that referring to the committee of inquiry, trusting it will be an assurance to many.

Independent inquiry into CSF's integrity.

Statements of innocence by accused parties are of course not as convincing or conclusive as those made by outside parties who have carefully examined the facts.

We therefore asked a SPECIAL COMMITTEE of six people to form, under the chairmanship of renowned corruption fighter and former NSW Chief Magistrate Clarrie Briese. Their brief: to read the Plimer 'charges' and then to put us under their scrutiny in relation to these as much as they wished; to have complete access to every-thing about CSF, interrogate anyone they wished, including auditors; also to see the actual copies of correspondence and publications relating to specific matters Plimer raises, to see whether his accounts and quotes are trustworthy and to make a definitive statement in relation to the charges of lying, fraud, etc. in the incidents he raises.

(Unfortunately for Plimer, we have actual documents in relation to his claims, such as letters from Corporate Affairs and the Queensland Police. For example, the Queensland Police Fraud Squad gave us a written exoneration, which also reveals that it was, in fact, false allegations, by prominent Skeptic friends of Plimer's, which obliged the police to conduct the investigation—i.e. the police had no reason to investigate on their own account. This then enabled the Skeptics to cast aspersion on CSF just by saying we have been 'investigated for fraud'. This tactic is also used by Plimer, who is also a prominent Skeptic member. We also have copies of the publications Plimer claims to be quoting from, showing what we actually wrote.)

Please remember: All six men listed who formed the committee have significant public reputations and/or positions, quite independently of CSF. We trust it is obvious that such a group would in no way endanger their own integrity and reputations by saying that they had carefully investigated CSF and found the charges against our ethics were false unless this were utterly true.

Cult smear 'totally inappropiate'—leading cult authority

Adrian van Leen, director of Concerned Christians Growth Ministries, 80 Harrison St, Nollamara, WA 6061, is an internationally recognised authority on cultic groups of all varieties.

He calls the labelling of the Creation Science Foundation as a cult 'totally inappropriate and misleading. Such labelling of CSF has no theological, psychological or sociological support.'

He further says, 'If the word "cult" is used for dramatic or rhetorical effect, of organisations or institutions that clearly do not meet recognised and generally accepted [cultic] criteria, it could lead to serious misunderstanding and also the trivialising of the serious problems posed by the activities of the many real cults that exist today.'

CSF and the Media

CSF has made numerous personal approaches to individuals caught up in the anti-CSF campaign, both Christian and non-Christian (see other reports in this issue for some of the more prominent individuals approached). However, one phone call illustrated the nature of this issue..

Warwick Armstrong, CSF's Sydney representative, rang the writer of a particularly defamatory article in a church newspaper. Warwick pointed out that the accusations which had been repeated from the Plimer book were demonstrably untrue and asked what the writer would do if Warwick could prove the accusations to be false. He replied that he would do nothing. He said, 'You people are so dangerous I will do anything to get rid of you.' I.e. he would use anything, true or false, to achieve that end. This man is an ordained minister in a Christian church!

An education writer for the Daily Telegraph Mirror (Sydney) was also contacted, as was a radio station host following a program defaming CSF personnel. Neither were interested in hearing CSF's side of the story.

We responded with many letters to various publications, both Christian and secular. Others were phoned or written to and some very positive results have come from meeting with various editors of church papers, etc. [1997 comment: CSF's support increased substantially, and permanently, following the Plimer campaign, as people saw the issue for what it was through his intemperate outbursts].

Radio and TV

[CMI] usually declines invitations to appear on radio/TV shows, if these are pre-recorded. Past experience has shown that such shows are usually edited to make the creationist position look as bad as possible. High impact points made by the creationist are omitted, and unrelated points are woven together to make things appear illogical. A creationist is often sought only for the purpose of 'doing a hatchet job'.

ABC radio did contact us about participating in the live-to-air Sunday Night Talk program of March 12, 1994, which would also feature Professor Plimer. This invitation came with six days notice and the appropriate CSF respondent was overseas. As it turns out, the show host demonstrated great sympathy for Plimer's point of view, so it is unlikely that we would have received a fair go anyway.

Debate?

Since the publication of Plimer's book, the Australian Skeptics have challenged creationists to public debate (*Herald-Sun*, Melbourne, April 6, 1995). CSF personnel have debated various high-profile skeptics/ evolutionists in the past.

However, following the grossly unethical behaviour of Plimer and others (detailed by US anticreationist Jim Lippard) CSF made it clear to the Australian Skeptics (at their 10th Annual Convention in Melbourne, where Dr Wieland successfully debated their chosen protagonist) that we would not be participating in any further debate with any of them, unless they dissociated themselves from these sorts of tactics (which they have never denied as having occurred). They have consistently failed to either dissociate themselves, nor repudiate these gutter tactics.

At the University of Melbourne in 1992, a debate was arranged with an evolutionist not associated with the Skeptics, to be followed by panels of creationists and evolutionists (including Plimer) answering questions from the audience. This fell through when, after verbally accepting, the evolutionist(s) withdrew.

A call to prayer—and to stand behind this ministry

We have been greatly encouraged by the number of people who have said how this nationwide campaign has convinced them of the importance of the spiritual battle which is now raging in our land, that this is not some casual debate about science.

We have certainly been made more aware of this than ever, and are aware that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual powers. We believe that intercession is required across this nation. Pray for Ian Plimer and his allies, for those misled by his seemingly factual statements, for protection for the internationally expanding ministry of CSF, and that all such attempts to block the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this land may ultimately be frustrated.

To those of you who have supported us financially, in prayer, or by encouraging letters in this difficult time—thank you. To those many readers of Prayer News who don't yet support, but have been blessed or encouraged in some way by CSF ministry, think what more could be done with just a little of your help as well. If this ministry had not been effectively penetrating into many areas of society, challenging the core of humanism and liberal theology, we would not be seeing such opposition.

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