

Social Engineering and the Living Christ.

We are living in times of rapid cultural change. Whilst the strategies of social activists infiltrate and target the Church as agents of social/political change, others see the historic Church needing to recover its unique spiritual identity and message in order to be God's vehicle of personal and corporate, change.

Australia used to be the land of the fair go, but today this virtue of equality and justice is being tested with an increasingly intolerant anti-Christian attitude that could now threaten religious freedom. When once we believed in God and we agreed upon an objective common good, now we have moved into a divided world where what governs us is 'social trending' and simply more of what the masses want. Worse than this, where Christian views are shut down rather than debated, then Christian difference has become the enemy of progress. Increasingly what is required is conformity to popular social ideology and dogma. This is the new world of today where change in 'corporate thinking' has intensified during our life time on a scale that nobody could have anticipated.

Social Realignment.

French philosopher Chantal Delsol once warned that a declared belief that evil can be eradicated from the face of the earth raises the question of how to accomplish the task of secular redemption. He pointed out that the only possible solution consists of isolating evil in certain recognisable groups—which can then be eliminated. When this approach becomes acceptable then dissent or expressing a Christian view becomes a vice. This is similar to Nazi Germany or Communism where their horrors have been mixed with a belief in a sort of secular salvation.

Cultural Marxism.

In his commentary on understanding Cultural Marxism Bill Muchlenberg points out that Marxism in its various forms seeks to radically transform society on the promise of social justice and equality. To Marx, the hierarchical society affirmed by Scripture, the church and family present obstacles to this Utopia and what, in the past, could not be achieved by force is today being achieved by a long-march through institutions. Muchlenberg says, majority groups are seen as privileged and oppressive while under-privileged are labelled as oppressed. In more recent years (1960s) Marxist Critical Theory has refocused on oppressed minority groups. Rather than seizing political or economic control as the way to change the West, it is now through the transformation of culture. Society is ideally altered to benefit supposedly oppressed groups

Today a range of aggressive '*cultural wars*' seek to change family, freedom, human sexual morality, gender, personal identity, and to generally change and undermine basic Christian belief. It has been said that if older Marxists could not achieve this with bullets and tanks, *Cultural* Marxists are now doing this easily through their long- march and infiltration of universities, schools, media, churches and institutions of our culture. This quiet revolution from within based on ***cultural Marxism*** is in essence a war against basic Christian values and personal human rights. Put bluntly, this is an attempt to build the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth without God.

.Political Policy and Civil Society

Secular humanist ideology increasingly seems to have the upper hand in shaping government policy and in a number of public sector jobs Christians now face the possibility of being forced to choose between acting against their Christian beliefs or losing their jobs.

There is also an imposition of a highly regulated ideology on the voluntary sector and civil society including churches and businesses. Well beyond the important issue of child protection the government now seeks to regulate and enforce aspects of what appears to be an ideological agenda on civil society and organisations. The Barnabas Fund in their statement, *“Turn the Tide”* clearly document the increasing pressure against Christianity and Biblical foundations based on cultural Marxism and human rights. (1)

When Scott Morrison was Federal Treasurer in 2017 he made the statement that, *‘Separation of Church and State was set up to protect the church from the State, not the other way around.’*

Charles Newington from ‘Family Voice Australia’ also makes no apology when he claims that ‘radical leftist ideologies’ dominate so many of the directions of our schools, universities, media, and political parties.’ (2)

Christians and Politics.

Some Christians are just not interested in all of this. Some refuse to be distracted by the political wrangling of this age and they feel justified in their approach by concluding that their hope is not in earthly rulers. However from the tower of Babel in Genesis to the Kingdom of God in Revelation the Bible has plenty to say about politics. Genuine Christianity is public and to ignore politics is to produce a version of the Christian faith that makes it simply a private, personal matter. Defending our way of life in Canberra may not be everyone’s calling but as long as we live in this world Christians are not free to ignore politics even if they want to.

In Ephesians 5 we are called to put on the armour of God. We are engaged in warfare and a basic rule is to know your enemy. If we value faith, freedom and family we need to come to terms with both the spiritual and political opposition.

Sure, all of this is tricky and we have our own prejudices but we need to move from the Scriptures to contemporary application. Western democracy will never be an ideal system but it is Satan who seeks to destroy sound Christian values.

This means the current, ongoing ‘culture wars’ have not happened by accident. Many have the deliberate backing of Cultural Marxists. Melanie Phillips also points out that, the core doctrine is equality. *“This is not the Biblical doctrine that every human being is owed equal respect because they are formed in the image of God: equality has been redefined as identity, the insistence that there can be no hierarchy of values, of lifestyles or culture. There can no longer be different outcomes. To differentiate at all is to be bigoted.---So the married family is not primary, sexual restraint is abolished. Education no longer transmits culture down but teaches that Western nations are racist and exploitive. There is no absolute truth; we discover our own truth. Bigotry and prejudice is to be extracted from the human heart. All of this is to be done in the name of freedom and reason, in opposition to religion, irrationality and stubborn oppression. This sort of thinking is based on political ideology, not theology. Where Christian theology embraces reason and leads to exercising faith, ideology on the other hand destroys reason. Factual evidence or logic are seen as impediments to reshaping the governing ideal.”* (3)

Phillips and Muehlenberg may sound extreme or alarmist, after all there will always be legitimate, sound reasons for creative social change. However their analysis provides a helpful alert and description. Muehlenberg concludes, *“If heterosexuals are oppressors, the solution is to encourage other forms of sexuality. If Christians are oppressors, the solution is to propagate Islam. If all this is ringing bells, it should. We see this being played out every day in the West. This is intentional revolution, not accidental chaos. The militants are hard at work, while most of the West is sleeping at the wheel.”* (4)

The Reversal Needed.

The fire of the Christian faith in the West is burning dim. The historian Luke records Mary’s song the Magnificat which points to the Lord bringing down the powerful and lifting up the lowly. **Today both society and the church need that reversal.** Reversing the current trend instead of trying to be contemporary and politically correct the Church needs to re-focus on discovering Christ and the Living Word. While the church cannot ignore the political world neither can it be defined or consumed by it. The devotional writer Selwyn Hughes suggests that just as the walls of Jerusalem that God had instructed his people to build were destroyed, so the walls that buttressed Western society including the institution of marriage are now in a state of disrepair. While we are still free to argue for the political system of our choice what ought to be remembered is that for Christians no political system of itself will ever be complete.

The Living Christ and his Church.

Similar to Marxism, history confirms that the institutional church is not the perfect vehicle of the Kingdom of God. The Church struggles with schisms and heresies but as the hymn says never-the-less she *‘towers over the wrecks of time’* through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It was the vital out-pouring at Pentecost that today still makes the People of God different. The Spirit of Jesus came to live within people and that indwelling united believers with a Living Christ. Jesus has been described as *“a representative beginning of a new order of righteousness and love.”* (The Uniting Church Basis of Union, Para 3.) (5) The Church is the creation of the Holy Spirit. It begins with a personal new birth and is a community of believers sustained by the Holy Spirit.

This clearly means the church is not a political ideology, a theology, a religious institution, or just a platform for political change. **Beyond visible organisation the church is nothing less than a corporate ‘living organism,’ the extension of Christ in his people.**

Saul of Tarsus was persecuting Christians when he was confronted by Christ on the Damascus road and he asked, “Who are you Lord?” The reply came, *“I am Jesus who you are persecuting”* (Acts 9:5) The gathered church is the place where this corporate life of Christ becomes actual. This is the mystery of the corporate church being the living body of Christ. (Ephesians 5:32) (6) We cannot be part of the head (one with Christ) without being part of his body the church. Creeds and statements of core belief are important but belief goes hand in hand with an authentic *koinonia, communion, fellowship, participation, an authentic new life.*

Theologian Jurgen Moltmann asks, *“Which God governs Christian existence---the one who was crucified or the idols of religion, class, race, society? Without a new clarity in Christian faith itself there will be no credibility in Christian life.”* This new clarity is not

a doctrine or ideology but the authentic gift and practical way Christians love one another. **This is the gift and mark that distinguishes the Christian from the non-Christian and the Church from Marxism.** (John 15:14, 1 John 2:4)

Just as God is holy, set apart from the world, so too is the Christian. “*The people of God through faith and the gift and power of the Holy Spirit have communion with their Saviour---and rejoice in the foretaste of the Kingdom which he will bring to consummation*” (Basis of Union. Para 8.) This basic gift of Christian identity is spelt out in the description of Acts 2: 42-47 that instead of describing a political ideology or doctrine it portrays a model of Christian community. Some of the features of this living community are noted.:-

- (a) The primary function is worship and bonding together with God.
- (b) Devotion to the teaching of the Christian faith,--to knowing what they believe.
- (c) Relationships have priority, identified by the mark of love. (John 13:33-35)
- (d) The breaking of bread. Practising the symbols and traditions that feed faith.
- (e) Their new identity is demonstrated by our actions.
- (f) Being of one accord. Working at no divisions. (Acts2:44)
- (g) The community ministers to the needs of its members. (Gal 6:10)
- (h) Meeting together in a regular discipline and way of life. (Heb 10:23-25)
- (i) Expressing an attractive, godly community to a lonely world.
- (j) Community with an evangelistic pulse. A welcome without exclusion.
- (k) A ready submission. Commandments tell us how to live well.
- (l) A transforming Holy Spirit renewal of hearts, minds and actions.

Patrick Sookhdeo helps to paint this picture of the living community(church) by concluding, “*If the church is to be a witness in the world she can no longer fail to address the issue of sin in society and indeed within the church herself, but she must do this in a loving and gentle yet resolute and firm manner.*

Given reflection, repentance and reformation, the wayward Church can rediscover its identity and once again reclaim its place as the shaper of morality and godly living in the West. The flickering flame can once again burst into a blazing fire. It is our joy, duty and responsibility to be part of this call to new reformation.” (7)

It has always been true to say that the darker it becomes outside, the brighter the light of Christ and Christian community shines on the inside. Again the Uniting Church claims, “Christ calls people into the fellowship of his sufferings to be disciples of a crucified Lord; in his own strange way he constitutes, rules and renews them as his church.” (8)

References:

- (1) ‘*Turn the Tide*’, Issac Pub. Barnabas Fund 2018
- (2) *Family Voice*, Newington, 28 Feb 2020.
- (3) ‘*West’s Moral Codes*,’ Melanie Phillips March 15, 2018.
- (4) ‘*Understanding Cultural Marxism*,’ Culture Watch, Muehlenberg, May 30, 2017.
- (5) ‘*Every Day with Jesus*’ Selwyn Hughes, Devotional, 24 Aug,1995)
- (6) ‘*The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*’, Francis A. Shaeffer, The Norfolk Press 1972.
- (7) ‘*The Death of Western Christianity*’, Patrick Sookhdeo, Isaac Pub, p158-59.
- (8) Uniting Church Basis of Union Para 4
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