

# *A frequently held view of Christianity in the Community?*

We live at a time where it seems to the community at large that it is profitable to be critical of anyone who claims both to be a "Christian", and yet holding any beliefs of God being one who might act to eliminate in a "final judgement" those people who have individually chosen to conduct their lives, and pursue their own thoughts contrary to His will, even if they are "good people". This is a time of political correctness, of multiculturalism, and of our required role in being subservient to, and daring not to offend the ideas of anybody outside our own community because of that multiculturalism.

One has to wonder if this means that one should bend over backwards to allow Muslims to push their belief that "There is no God but Allah", or to allow Jewish folk to promote the fact that Hashem exists as their God and that they should continue to expect others to accord to them the deference due to being members of His "chosen race" and their owning every square mile of what has been traditionally called the "promised land". I think I am not the only one, who, having been encouraged by such multiculturalism, finds that no equivalent opportunity is offered to those of us already here, who are prepared to express our viewpoint, as did those who history tells us were thrown to the lions in Roman arenas for their faith, and the amusement of the masses who had been conditioned to think in the way that their government wished them. Perhaps the Roman concept of "Bread and circuses" has been exchanged for Beer and long weekends? Our individual views may very well contradict those of one or more man-made institutions who claim to represent the interests of Almighty God here on earth. Once and for all, it is necessary to say that denominations are man-made. Repentant Christians are God-made.

We have had to approve promiscuity before marriage. We have had to accept adultery during marriage. We are having to discuss the desire of some to allow other people to press a button to end their own lives. We have had to deal with homosexuality, even though we apparently still regard the act of sodomy with a young male as being unacceptable, but a day after his birthday, it's apparently called "an alternative lifestyle". We have had corporate crime run rampant through the nation, encouraged by greed, precipitating the greatest economic disaster of our nation, described by the greatest treasurer of all time as "the recession we had to have". We have had a dilution of family values of monumental proportions. We have had incitements to civil disobedience to the almost unbelievable point where the Premier of an Australian State actually encouraged those who didn't believe in a particular law, to break it. I am not the only one who is worried at this series of trendy attitudes.

The guardians of our national self-righteousness, who I believe occupy many newspaper, talkback radio, and current affairs chairs of leadership, probably wield far more power than even the Prime Minister, or heads of churches, because they are listened to more than either of the last two, according to published statistics.

If you have closely monitored the ease with which talk-back hosts are able to manipulate listeners' thoughts, you may realise it is quite frightening. It is easily done with a small amount of misinformation which then snowballs, often into several hours of chatter, steered brilliantly by the host, and often the topic has totally changed from that brought up in the first place.

Try raising a point about Christianity, and see what happens. It often doesn't get past first base, because you are regarded as someone whose mind is closed, and therefore whose viewpoint is irrelevant. One has to wonder just how much of the foundations for the antichrist's reign have already been sown.

So what should be the viewpoint of a genuine Christian, who has been "born from above", a "new creation" if you like, and how should he or she react?

Let us take the homosexual debate as an example. I listened to an afternoon talkback announcer promote a discussion he was about to have with an official representative of our most liberal church. The person was the chairman of a committee set up to examine "sexuality", and they had produced a sixty-odd page A4 size "interim report" nearly a year before, as a discussion paper for everyone in that church to read, and to respond to. This topic has been kicked around for a large number of years, and nobody in this denomination's leadership has been prepared to make any sort of a definitive biblical statement for fear of offending those who might disagree with their liberal approach. In the radio interview, this churchman was joined by a psychiatrist who seemed to present the point that she could see nothing wrong in this church, its members, and indeed all Christians accepting the alternative lifestyle of homosexuality as appropriate because in Australia we were broadminded enough and with-it enough to have legislated to permit it in the community. There were three phone calls from listeners that were dismissed with brevity because they dared suggest that we shouldn't try to reshape God's thinking to our own. The rest of the callers wandered on and on, totally confusing the plot that had been lost by the churchman and his organisation in the first place, and mis-presented by the announcer.

Perhaps one should look at it this way. Being a Christian is not like belonging to a club. We do not have a constitution (though some churches do), nor do we vote on which bits of whose writing we will accept, and which we will change to suit the way we feel right now, although some declare that the bible only "contains" God's word. Christianity is not being part of a group of people who have open slather to do and say what they want at any given time, regardless of what others might be doing, saying or thinking. Equally it's not asking to join the rest of the people with a list of our own conditions, or "else I'm going to take my ball away and play somewhere else, and with someone else".

If we were foreigners, coming to Australia because we had been dispossessed, our point of view would very likely be acceptable, purely because we were multi-cultural ethnics. Take this example.

Round about the time this radio discussion was going on, two English nurses had been imprisoned in the Middle East, and were awaiting trial on a charge of murdering a colleague, an Australian woman. The Australian family of the murdered girl stated that there was no way that they would petition the Muslim court for mercy, and this deliberate action of theirs would ensure that the two nurses, if convicted, would be executed by their being beheaded in a public square. Several talk-show hosts were heard to observe that this was right, this was good, as that was the way of people with Muslim beliefs, and naturally the subsequent callers to those stations, by and large agreed, because that is true multiculturalism. Where, one wonders, is what's left of the Christianity that this nation is supposed to have been founded upon? Those same people would have a fit if it were suggested that we aren't a Christian nation - and yet they are reminiscent of those who cried "crucify him" and "release Barabbas" just under two thousand years ago.

Back to the homosexuality question. This was really precipitated by a young man who was an admitted practicing homosexual who had been a paid youth worker in a city church. He had declared this fact to the parish council which oversaw his appointment, it seems, and as I understand it, he was cautioned by them to cool it, look at his position in relation to others in the congregation, and to look at the concept of sin, sinners, and repentance. Instead he went to the papers. A year or so later, he worked his way into a 2-days-a-week research assistant job in the church headquarters, paid for from the tithes and offerings of members of this denomination throughout the State. The problem reared its head again when, as I understand it, he was offered the other three days a week by the hierarchy of the denomination on a one year temporary appointment while the 3-days-a-week incumbent went on study leave.

Now the point that sticks out here is the fact that someone who unrepentantly commits a sin of any type should not be in a position of responsibility, trust, or authority. It would have been the same if he persistently knocked over little old ladies in the street and stole their handbags. Or if he were to be downright rude to everyone he met. God says all sin is sin, a very simple doctrine. Those who only know one or two scriptures usually come up with "let he who is without sin cast the first stone". The scenario there was the woman who had been taken in adultery. When all the accusers had left, what did Christ say to her? "Go and sin no more", but of course they don't quote that bit. I believe the key is, if you are unrepentant, as this young man was, you should be excluded from leadership. Some would say "But he was only doing research work". True. But surely all those for whom he was doing research would have their requested work supplied with a possible bias towards his thinking. Isn't this why a Labour politician has a Labour Party member doing his research and press work - he thinks with the same mind as the politician. A Labour politician, I'm sure, would not hire a Conservative press secretary!

So they are probably confusing the issue of the sin with the sinner. If the sinner persistently repeats his same sin, but is genuinely repentant, he or she will welcome counselling and other practical help to overcome the problem they have, even if it takes ages to finally achieve results. In the meantime, while they are wrestling with the problem, they really don't need to have leadership responsibilities added on to their plate, nor indeed the opportunity for more temptation which might also prove hard to overcome. If they turn round and reject the help, then the New Testament makes it quite obvious that he or she should be cast out of the fellowship - one has to wonder just what reasons someone who refuses to repent would have for wishing to continue associating with those who do wish to repent.

Surely it is obvious that if you have a guy hanging around, who continually defrauds people who put money through his travel agency, you aren't likely to contract to him your football team's travel arrangements, are you? Would he be regarded as a suitable candidate as the treasurer or bookkeeper for the club? Both those suggestions are as equally ridiculous as the thought of giving any unrepentant person any sort of authority in a congregation. We are supposed to be stewards of God's kingdom; one has to ask what sort of stewardship we are exhibiting if we allow those who thumb their noses at what God wants for us, to have responsibility among His people?

One of the callers to the radio station discussed earlier further confused the issue by giving an historically incorrect comment about Jimmy Swaggart's disgrace in the middle of the 1980s. The caller said that Swaggart just continued on after being involved with a prostitute, and nobody minded, so what was different? The truth of the matter is that the Assemblies of God called the man to repent, and he refused to stand down from his pulpit for the twelve months they suggested. The AOG then withdrew his accreditation, and he arrogantly said that he would go it alone with his church and television evangelising ministry. Within six months, he wasn't heard of any more. Perhaps Almighty God did something about it. Or perhaps there were decision-makers

in the TV networks who were Christians, and they cut him off in the biblical sense. Either way, he disappeared, except in the minds of people who probably never watched him preach anyway, and who certainly didn't know the facts.

Then there are those who glibly say that the God of the Old Testament, with His hell-fire and damnation prophets has been superseded by the God of the New Testament who is totally love and wants to give everybody whatever their desire is regardless of whether they accept him. Now I find that's a bit odd, because that figure sounds more like Santa Claus to me, than a loving Father God who wants us to learn right from wrong. Anyway, I always thought that God was the "same yesterday, today and tomorrow". How can an unchangeable God change so much?

Perhaps it's because they have also confused the coming of Jesus Christ in the meridian of time, and bringing with Him a gospel of love, and meekly submitting to be murdered by a pack of hoods, with the same Jesus Christ who is coming back to rule with admittedly love, but also with a rod of iron, and who will judge us all, both good and bad. I hope that they realise this before they discover they are being resurrected at the end of His thousand -year reign instead of at the start of it. Their destination will be remarkably different if He says to them "I never knew you".

I believe the problem is that hinted at early on. There are too many people who will accept any doctrine from experts, and not take the trouble, time, and spiritual exercise to prayerfully read what the bible actually says. In Exodus we read of God addressing his chosen people with the words "Hear, O Israel.....". In Revelation we read of Christ saying to the author ".....he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear".

The concept is consistent. Our thinking should also be.