

Church Sin-National Folly (I)

By Andrew McColl, 6/11/2012

The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against His command... (Lam.1:18).

When nations have had poor governments, it's very easy to blame the politicians. They do have a responsibility for what transpires in every nation, especially if they provide a legislative framework for a disaster.

It shows utter irresponsibility when a defeated government hands over a deficit to an incoming government. The defeated government is essentially saying, "We messed up. You fix the problems." And this is what socialist governments tend to do. This is what the Labor government of Queensland did in March this year, and this is probably what the Gillard government will also do. It is irresponsible, negligent, a form of callousness and even hatred towards the electorate that put them there.

But voters choose their political leaders in democratic nations. If we get poor political leaders, we have to ask ourselves, "Who voted for them?" People get the government they deserve.

Ludwig von Mises was right. He said that

Whoever wants lastingly to establish good government must start by trying to persuade his fellow citizens and offering them sound ideologies. . . .There is no hope left for a civilization when the masses favour harmful policies.¹

I have a great distaste for the policies and practices of the Australian government of Julia Gillard today. But whatever we may think of her, she still reflects the values of a substantial proportion of the electorate, who essentially concur with her. The minority Labor government today, holds 72 seats out of 150 in the Parliament: just short of a majority.

But let's get a bit more personal. How many ministers of the gospel advocated voting for her last election? How many advocated to their congregations that they vote the other way? How many ministers didn't advocate anything? I believe ministers' advocacy (or lack of it) may very well be reflected in the numbers we now see in the Parliament.

Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish visions; and they have not exposed your iniquity so as to restore you from captivity... (Lam.2:14).

Yes, socialism is an economic, political and social disaster for any nation, but not too many ministers seem to believe that. 20%? But what's evident from history is that nations in decline (such as the nations of France and Russia before their respective revolutions, in 1789 and 1917) have something in common: a church in decline.

The US writer, Gary Demar, recently wrote:

¹ Ludwig von Mises, "Omnipotent Government," p.120.

While President Obama is a bad political leader, there are tens of millions of people who want to give him four more years. The United States of America is in bad shape, not so much because of Obama, but because of the people.²

Realistically, we don't really have a political problem in our nations at all. Parliaments are at work around the world. We have deep spiritual problems of sin, rooted first of all in the church, and in what it believes. This spiritual problem manifests all over the place in the nation, including politics.

What's the point of treating a patient with constant headaches with pain-killers, when he actually has a brain tumour?

After the disaster in the Garden, Adam and Eve avoided responsibility. Adam blame-shifted, and had the hide to blame the woman, and God for his mistakes: "the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Gen.3:12).

But God wants His people to show humility, responsibility and accountability for the state of the nations. It's time to stop blaming the devil, the Anti-Christ, politicians, or anyone else. What Adam refused to do, we must do. Any complaints that "It's all those wicked politicians!" won't cut the mustard with Him.

Conclusion:

When the church changes its attitudes, and is prepared to start picking up the pieces of the mess we have contributed to, the nations of the world will follow suit. That's what we're here for. But till then there will be God-inflicted pain, and that should bring us to repentance, for it's been our fault.

² Gary Demar, 'Can America Survive if President Obama is Re-Elected?' "Political Outcast," 26/10/2012.

Church Sin-National Folly (II)

By Andrew McColl, 13/11/2012

If the Church languishes, the State cannot be in health. And if the State rebels against its lord and King, the Church cannot enjoy His favour.³

From top to bottom, the nation of Australia is going to the dogs. Why? Because the church has gone to the dogs.

When did this happen? Over a century, when the church quietly accommodated a whole lot of things that were evil and detrimental to it, and to society.

The church must re-enter the fray. But this would be counter-productive, until such time as the church engages in a deep and fundamental re-evaluation of what it understands as its purpose in the community. This will take time-probably years. This will require lots of prayer and serious heart –searching amongst individuals. It will also require serious debate and consideration of major theological and contemporary issues, something we’ve swept aside for decades-perhaps generations, in the church’s desire for modernity.

“The path of least resistance makes men and rivers crooked,” and believe me, things have got crooked.

True national reformation has to begin at the house of God. What do we believe, and why do we believe it? These are important things to consider and debate. In fact, they need to be thrashed out thoroughly.

I think we will need to go on a crash diet to get fit for the action that God always intended the Church to embark on. We need to drop off a whole truckload of false ideas that we’ve been carting around, as part of the church’s furniture. That means “destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.” It means “taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor.10:5).

In another place, Paul warned us, saying “see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Col.2:8).

You don’t know what some of these ideas might be? Let me give you just one.

80% of Christian ministers are Marxist philosophically. Glenn Martin

Socialism is a very cheap imitation of Christianity, invented by atheists and popularised world-wide in the twentieth century. It is based on the monstrous lie, that “the government can look after you.” It requires the monumental confiscation of monies in taxation, followed by the government’s redistribution of that wealth throughout the community on its pet projects.

³ A. A. Hodge, “Evangelical Theology,” p.246-248, circa 1880.

Public education (presently costing the Australian taxpayer \$13,500 per child per year) is but one manifestation of socialism. It is tragic indeed that we have socialism in Australia. It is even more tragic that 95% of the church accepts its legitimacy, and has done so for generations.

The Bible says a lot about education. It teaches that it's a parental responsibility, not a government one. The Bible says a lot about welfare, that it is firstly an individual, then a family, and lastly a church responsibility, to be financed partially by the tithe. It is not a government one. Similarly with health.

But the church's unwillingness to deal properly and scripturally with these fundamental social issues, has led to tax rates being as high in Australia as 47%, as governments try to extract such huge amounts from the community to pay for all their promises.

Do tax rates matter to God? Of course. God warned Israel that the king of their choice (Saul, see I Samuel 8), would take a tenth in taxation, and this would be an indication that Israel was apostate, and under God's judgment. Could we be apostate too?

...In those seasons of history, like our own, when the people refuse to tithe, and the Church is not faithfully proclaiming and educating in the Word of God, then the State will grow to massive size, and will exact a terrible tribute. The reformation of the state, then, begins with the reformation of the Church and the proper use of the tithe.⁴

We don't need cheap imitations of Christianity; no society does. When Eve believed the tempter's lie in the Garden, it led to all manner of drama and pain for her and her foolish husband.

And it's no different for us. Without that fundamental re-evaluation in the church of what we are doing and why, we will keep playing the same old records, with the same old results: continued government theft and waste in the name of the poor, the abuse of people, injustice and social tyranny, that inevitably follows when people don't follow the scriptures.

It's time for change, before we re-enter the fray. Not in politics primarily, but in the church, the institution God has called to be the most influential in society, "...the pillar and support of the truth" (I Tim.3:15). And if the church can get back on the path of truth, society will benefit immeasurably.

⁴ James Jordan, 'The Mosaic Head Tax and State Financing,' "Biblical Economics Today," Vol. IV, No. 3, 1981.

Church Sin-National Folly (III)

By Andrew McColl, 20/11/2012

The Church desperately needs to change, but I doubt this will happen, until there is a major social crisis, which will show how weak and ineffectual we are. The majority of the Church leaders I have observed over 38 years of being a believer are either asleep, or powerless to lead people to effect change, or worse: they couldn't run a chook raffle. Some are more interested in their superannuation package than the leadership and care of God's people. We're like the Titanic, half an hour before its fateful collision, and the captain knows... nothing.

Where are the visionaries in the Church today, who are looking beyond next Sunday? Maybe there are some, but I haven't seen them. You would think that Christian leaders of today (with some exceptions) have all been to a school determined to produce wimps and inoffensive people. Could that be true?

We're pathetic. Our leaders don't have the theological and moral muscle to pull the skin off a rice-pudding. Watching the football together will be no substitute for providing the leadership the country needs from Christians, today.

Where are the Moses, the Elijahs, the John the Baptists? Where are the John Knox's of today, fearlessly confronting evil rulers in the present age? Doesn't God produce this kind of man of God anymore?

I could think of a number of matters that the church needs to address and debate urgently. Let's start with Same-Sex Marriage, then Environmentalism, then perhaps the role of women in the church.

Then we could move onto Pelagianism (an ancient heresy that suggests that man has a part to play in his salvation, and is prevalent today), the doctrine of "God's Unconditional Love," along with the role of God's law in the New Testament era, (that's today).

Then there is Eschatology. No doubt there are many more issues, like our nation's involvement in foreign wars against nations that haven't attacked us.

When Jeremiah spoke in God's name to Judah he was ignored, and the nation finished up in Babylonian bondage. When there was a relatively easy opportunity for change, it was passed up. It had to get a lot worse, before it ever improved, and that's where we are now.

Periodically, the church (both in the Old Testament and New Testament times) has grasped opportunities to sort out important theological controversies and root out heresies that could have destroyed it, had they been left to fester. These have been called Councils or Synods historically, and they have been essential. The Bible speaks of one of these very important conferences, the conference at Jerusalem (see Acts 15:1-32), when the church dealt with some critical issues.

In the Old Testament era, the temple had to be repeatedly cleansed of corruption by reforming kings like Asa (II Chron.14:1-5; 15:8-19), Hezekiah (II Chron.29:5-19) and Josiah (II Kings 23:4-25).

When Jesus came, though He referred in Mat.16:18 to “My church,” in speaking to the Pharisees He referred to the temple as “your house” (Mat.23:38). Why would He call it that?

Because it had become a citadel of humanism.

In the history of Israel, the Temple had to be cleansed by priests, prophets, and kings on many occasions before Christ brought desolation to it. The church also needs constant cleansing. It is a sign of serious danger when the church sees no need for cleansing and sees as enemies all who proclaim the need for continuing cleansing and purification.⁵

There is a frightening parallel between Israel in Jesus’ day, and the church today. Self-sufficient, self-confident, and unaware of its own utter vulnerability.

We should not expect any long-term change in society without a radical change in the belief patterns of the citizenry.⁶

Are you ready for change in the church—even massive shake-ups? God is certainly going to bring them, one way or the other. Be on the right side of the changes, or else flattened by a coming tsunami.

⁵ Rousas Rushdoony, “The Gospel of John,” 2000, p.26.

⁶ Gary Demar, “God and Government,” 2001, Vol.1, p.16.

Church Sin-National Folly (IV)

By Andrew McColl, 27/11/2012

Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth (Deut.28:1).

Christians know that God expects us to change as individuals, and that the nation we are part of should be changed and influenced by our presence and testimony. But how much do we really want to change? Change can be painful, even expensive. It will mean at the least, the change of attitudes and behaviours that we have held for a long time- even generations.

So, when we are called upon to change, we tend to say, *“Yes, but not too much. Let’s not get too radical. We wouldn’t want to surprise our friends, let alone the neighbours. They might think we are rather strange or way out, or religious.”*

In one way, this is what Israel did. After they had been defeated in battle, and lost four thousand men to the Philistines,

the elders said, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies.” So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts who sits above the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God (I Sam. 4:3-4).

What had happened? They knew they had been defeated in battle-that God had not helped them against the Philistines. So, they acknowledged that something had to change. (In this, they were certainly correct).

But what did they do? They chose the superficial route. They pushed the responsibility for military failure aside, and tried to use the ark of God as some kind of good-luck charm for deliverance.

Could we do something similar? Well, we’re doing it now. It is obvious that Christians are essentially ignored in politics. This has happened for generations now, and we haven’t liked it. We say, *“We want to get better representation in the Parliaments. We want things done God’s way. We want legislation that isn’t humanistic and pleases God.”*

So far, so good. But what did we do next? About eight years ago, some Christians decided that what we needed was a lobby group in Canberra: people who could influence parliaments to do the right thing. So, a number of Christians founded the Australian Christian Lobby. Now that sounded like a good idea at the time, didn’t it?

Israel sent the ark of God into battle for them, hoping it would help in their deliverance. But it didn’t. The Philistines were not convinced they should run away, and God didn’t give them

victory. It was a gimmick that failed, and thirty thousand soldiers died (I Sam.4:10) in a fruitless battle. Why? The change that Israel made wasn't what God wanted. No repentance, no change of heart, not even a token effort.

Why is this Old Testament story relevant to today?

We hoped the Australian Christian Lobby could do the trick for us. We foolishly thought they were just the thing we'd need to get rid of bad policies. But we found out that there are plenty of lobby groups competing for the ear of politicians: ACL is just one. Politicians aren't convinced by a Christian lobby group to change their policies: the biggest lobby group they'll take note of is the electorate at large. So, after ACL's many years in Canberra, the values there are ... worse.

Now, what happened next time in Israel?

From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the Lord with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the Lord and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hands of the Philistines." So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the Lord alone...

Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel (I Sam.7:2-4, 10).

Conclusion:

It wasn't enough to "send the ark." God wanted so much more from His people then, and now. He didn't want His ark sent off as a good-luck charm against the Philistines: what He wanted was His people's obedience. Without that they were defenceless, and without it we are defenceless.

If we want political change, it begins in the homes, workplaces and churches of Christians. There is no other way for the nation to be really changed for the good. Think about this:

Please Don't Tell Me That

1. Don't tell me God is a holy God and I must regularly repent of my sin before Him.
2. Don't tell me God doesn't love everyone unconditionally.
3. Don't tell me hell is a real place.
4. Don't tell me I should tithe to my church a tenth of all I earn.
5. Don't tell me sex is only for marriage, and that what I do with my girl-friend in the car or bedroom does matter.
6. Don't tell me that if she falls pregnant, we shouldn't have an abortion.
7. Don't tell me my wife should give up her job, take our children out of Child-Care and that we are both fully responsible before God for their upbringing.
8. Don't tell me that Education, Health and Welfare are family responsibilities, never given to the State in scripture.
9. Don't tell me Christians should therefore withdraw their children from the Local Centre of Humanistic Indoctrination, the State School.
10. Don't tell me that dressing modestly is a means of honouring God.
11. Don't tell me the Church shouldn't go to governments to help pay for Christian endeavours.
12. Don't tell me the real and lasting answer to national evils in every society begins with Christians obeying God's Word.