

The Marginalization of Christianity

From “The Death of Western Christianity” Chapter 7, by Patrick Sookhdeo

The West is not merely passively post-Christian and indifferent to Christianity; it is now actively anti-Christian and profoundly intolerant of the Christian faith.

What is Christian-o-phobia? A state of fear and hatred against Christianity and Christians.

After the second World War, the shock and horror of the atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jews compelled many Western nations to introduce laws aimed at eliminating hatred and violence based on ethnicity and religion. This was a guard against anti-Semitism. Over the years and with the rise of the women’s rights and civil rights movements, Western nations passed laws to include other groups facing discrimination based on gender, colour and race.

More recently, as more and more minority groups claim victim status, governments have passed more and more legislation banning discrimination against people on the grounds of race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, birth, trade and sexual orientation.

At first glance, such laws appear noble and commendable. They profess to promote equality, tolerance and non-discrimination. New legislation in the West has protected minority groups in contrast to many other countries where rights of women and religious minorities are trampled upon.

HOWEVER, the increasing amount of legislation under the heading of ‘human rights’ is now open to abuse and is impacting freedoms enjoyed in democratic countries such as the freedoms of religion and expression.

Discrimination

Anti-discrimination law is intended to protect the right of all people to be treated equally. This is a good thing.

BUT what happens when the right of a religious group to practise their religion competes with the right of another minority group? Is there a hierarchy of rights? Is it right for the rights of sexual minorities to be set above the rights of Christians, who are then forced by compelling laws to do something against their core beliefs?

Hate Crime

Christians must stand firm against all forms of hatred and prejudice.

What is a hate crime? It is not easily identified. Hate is a feeling, not an action. A person can feel hated. It may be their opinion that a person hates them. So, if a person feels hated, they can sue another for hate crime.

Hate may result in an act, **but** it’s not an act. The law only has the right to judge acts, not feelings or thoughts.

Hate speech

Hate speech is an expression (spoken or written), image or gesture made privately or publicly that promotes or incites hatred or aggression towards certain groups or individuals based on group attributes.

The problem lies in what may be perceived as hateful.

How does one determine what is hate speech?

Hate speech is almost impossible to define.

Laws against hate speech and against “offense” are tools in the hands of those who would severely restrict religious freedom.

What constitutes hate or abuse or offense is highly subjective. What one group considers sacred, orthodox and central to their identity may be seen as dangerous, damaging and detrimental by another group. One person’s free speech is another person’s hate speech.

“The clear problem of outlawing insult is that too many things can be interpreted as such. Criticism, ridicule, sarcasm, merely stating an alternative point of view can be interpreted as insult.” (Rowan Atkinson 2012)

Are some groups more valuable than others? Do some groups deserve more protection by the laws than others? Is this discrimination?

The silencing of Christian belief

A tidal wave of restrictive legislation is battering the church and orthodox Christians who find themselves slapped with penalties. Jews are also affected.

In liberal and secular societies, a variety of viewpoints and lifestyles are in open conflict with the most basic teachings of the Bible. Christians are now increasingly prevented from expressing views or practising their faith in a number of areas.

Christian counselling and prayer offered to a homosexual wanting a lifestyle change is seen as ‘conversion therapy’ and is a criminal offense.

The uniqueness of Christ

The Bible teaches that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. We believe that followers of other religions are unfortunately mistaken or deceived. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone and a person who is not saved is lost for all eternity. Sharing the good news of Salvation with people of other religions (or no religion) to save them from certain eternal torment in hell, is essential for Christians, and rooted in the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ. This belief cannot avoid clashing with other religious beliefs and worldviews who offer a different way to salvation. However, such a view is condemned as exclusive, intolerant and hateful.

Other Biblical beliefs that clash with a secular society

1. The sanctify of life – Biblical Christians believe in the right to life of the unborn

2. The nature of gender – we are born male or female
3. The nature of homosexual practice – the Christian should have the right to offer help to the homosexual
4. The sanctity of marriage

It is important to distinguish between individuals and ideas. People must always be protected from harm and allowed to express their beliefs freely, but the beliefs themselves should not be protected from analysis, critique or criticism. The protection of people is vitally important because they are created in the image of God and carry His dignity and therefore should never be insulted, abused or attacked. No matter how much we disagree with a person's beliefs, ideologies and practice, Christians must never attack the person. This is part of the Christian command to live a life of love (Eph 5:2). The criminalization of homosexual practice is completely unacceptable, as is the criminalization of opinions disagreeing with homosexual practice; any judgement must be left to God.

Christians are facing a swelling tide of legal judgements against them. The Bible is in effect being censored as laws and legal judgements against reading, teaching or displaying sections of the Bible are passed. Christian parents are prevented from adopting or fostering children if they hold Biblical views on homosexuality. There are now multiple cases of unfair employment discrimination based on the traditional view of sexuality. Christians are not even allowed to express their conviction that Jesus is the only way to Salvation. Irish pastor James McConnell, who was charged with a 'hate crime motive' said:

"The police tried to shut me up and tell me what to preach. I believe in freedom of speech. I'm going to keep on preaching the Gospel. I have nothing against Muslims. I have never hated Muslims. I have never hated anyone. But I am against what Muslims believe. They have the right to say what they believe in and I have the right to say what I believe."

Questions

1. Explain how certain issues that are protected under 'Human Rights' laws are becoming a problem for Christians in societies that are becoming increasingly anti-Christin.
2. Name two beliefs that Christians hold to, that are becoming increasingly under attack by the wider world.
3. The average person who is not a Christian believes that "all roads lead to Rome". This means that whatever religion you choose will lead to the same destination. How is Christianity different? Does a true Christin believe this?
4. Because the Bible is the gold standard for truth, and the only truth, what does tolerance of other religions mean for Christians?
5. How should we stand in the light of Matthew 5:10-12?

What is hate speech?

<https://www.gospelway.com/christianlife/hatred.php>

Can Christians in the future be falsely accused of hate speech?

When people accuse others of hatred for speaking out against certain practices, the practices being discussed usually include homosexuality and abortion - both of which were once illegal in most places in the USA within our lifetime! Everybody spoke against them (if they spoke at all). Nobody was accused of "hate speech" or a "hate crime" to speak against them! How can it be that, in a single lifetime, speaking against an act change from something everybody knew should be done to a hate crime?

Do these people really believe that every time anybody speaks out against anything, he is guilty of "hate speech"?

Do they think they are guilty of a "hate crime" every time they speak out against anything? Of course not. The consequence of their view is that nobody could ever speak against anything. But even they speak against some things. Then how do they know that everybody who speaks against homosexuality is guilty of an improper hatred?

The truth is they know better than to say the things they do! Whether they consciously realize it or not, they are part of a deception. When they speak against what they oppose, they defend that as "freedom of speech." When we speak against what we oppose, they call it a "hate crime"! They know it is not always wrong to speak against practices.

So why do they accuse us of hatred?

It's a psychological trick, a form of manipulation and intimidation. By accusing us of hate:

- 1) They hope to make us feel guilty and keep quiet. Christians are supposed to love, not hate (they think). So if they can convince us that speaking against evil is hate, we will hush.
- 2) They hope to discredit us in the eyes of others. They believe people in general are opposed to "hate." So if they can make it look like we are guilty of hate, people won't want to stand with us.
- 3) They are preparing the groundwork for persecution of those who speak against homosexuality and other immorality. First, they convince people it is "hate" just to speak against these practices. Then they pass laws to penalize "hate speech" as a "hate crime." Then if we won't hush, we get thrown in jail or fined. This is not imagination. It's already happening in other nations.

But this all follows if they can convince people that speaking against evil is "hate speech," even though they must know it really is not true!

So we have learned that everyone hates.

Good people hate evil practices, and evil people hate good practices. So whose hatred is wrong? Good people hate and speak against the practices that God hates and speaks against. They are just imitating God and obeying His word. But evil people love what God hates, and they try to silence and punish those who obey God's command to oppose evil. What you hate depends on whether or not you believe in God and His word.

Do you hate what God hates? Do you love what God loves?

Questions

1. What are some examples of 'hate crimes' that Christians may be prosecuted for in the near future?
2. Name 3 things we should hate.
3. Name 3 things we should never hate.

Government over-reach in 2021

In 2021 and 2022 The world's governments largely united on how to deal with the world-wide pandemic -the Covid virus.

Once an untried vaccination was developed, (by fast-tracking), the vaccination became compulsory for all citizens 18 years and over. Those who did not accept the vaccine were deprived of employment, not allowed to attend church, prohibited from shopping (except for food). During certain periods, lock-downs were enforced, meaning that people could not leave their homes except for essential food shopping or medical appointments. Those who broke these laws faced imprisonment in some countries such as Australia.

Now, years on from the event, governments have admitted that there was over-reach, but it seems like there will never be an apology for the thousands and thousands of people who had adverse reactions or died, as a result of the vaccine. Governments, and people who supported those government decisions, will say it cannot be proven. But statistics show otherwise.

What about Sweden? This country took exception to the status quo, and decided not to enforce vaccines or lockdowns. The result? Incidence of Covid was no different to countries who took the measures

The pros and cons of the Covid vaccine is controversial, even among Christians, but what is not controversial is the government interference into people's lives during this time. Government legislation removed people's choice of what goes into their bodies, and compromised people's right to choose their own health measures.

Question

How do we know when it is right to obey the government or whether there could be a reason not to? See Bible verses on Discernment

1 John 4:1 - Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Romans 12:2 - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

James 1:5 - If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.