

of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches on that point."

These words ascribed to Martin Luther call for a severe examination of the life and testimony of every Christian. Unless he is prepared to put the magnifying glass of Scripture to his own life and to pray with the Psalmist for God to "search me" (Psalm 139:23), then he has already admitted defeat. It is defeatist and unchristian to abdicate responsibility in this war by leaving it to the corporate body, or by shifting the responsibility to those looked upon as the spiritual elite - the missionaries, minister or leaders in the Church. Not being conformed to this world means being transformed according to the "perfect will of God" (Romans 12:3). The distinction between "conformed" and "transformed" here is significant; it is the difference between the inward essence of the man and the outward fashion of life (I Peter 1:14). The difference is clear: it is the difference between the outward shape and the inward essence, between the life and walk and the inward heart and soul. Paul is saying here that the non-conformity to the world begins in the inner man.

THE CULTURE WAR IS PENETRATING

Paul said in II Corinthians 4:4 that *"the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not..."* It is Satan's design not only to penetrate the mind of unbelievers and blind them but also to demolish the mind of the Christian. The Culture War is a war for the mind. Satan is not concerned about Christian ethics or practices. So-called nominal Christianity poses no

threat to the kingdom of Satan. But a spiritual mind is a great threat; the "mind of Christ," (Philippians 2:5), "the renewed mind" (Romans 12:2) will menace every plan of Satan and obstruct the encroaching worldliness. This is what Paul said in Romans 12:2: "...be not conformed to the world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." It is the *mind* of the Christian that has been secularised, not his ethic or practice. This ungodly individual is not concerned about your practice; "to each his own" is the mantra of secularism. He accepts your morality and your religion, but he rejects out of hand your biblical view of life; a view which relates all of life, social, economic, political and cultural to the measure of God's Law. So oppressive and subtly penetrating is this war that Christians have been overtaken by it; convinced by a sceptical and critical world that Christianity is intellectually inferior and scientifically untenable, Christians have stopped thinking. The Culture War is won or lost in the mind.

Christianity has a mammoth task to *"gird up the loins of [the] mind"* (I Peter 1:13). The Christian mind is to be trained and informed; the philosophies of the world are to be replaced by the unchanging truth of Scripture and biblical presuppositions are to guide the life. Non-conformity to the world means having a mindset that is polarised from the world, a heart that is insulated from the world, a life that is contrary to the world, a witness that challenges worldly prejudices and practices. The strength to confront the world and the confidence to speak of Christ in a hostile world begins in the mind of the regenerate man or woman, a mind alive with biblical truth and fresh from communion with the God who speaks.

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Your Reasonable Service

The Christian Manifesto in the Cultural Milieu

The Christian & the Culture War

The Christian *and* The Culture War

The term culture refers to socially accepted and adopted thought and behavioural patterns. It is the external working out of inward thought and philosophies. These impulses or philosophies are always religious. Culture is in essence “externalised religion.” That culture is an act of religious devotion is seen also in the etymology of the word; it comes from the Latin word *cultus* which means “worship.” In recent years there have been an increasing number of “hot-button” issues arising which serve to define a secular humanist culture. With issues like homosexuality, abortion, lotteries, cohabitation and many others juxtaposed with Christianity, two definable polarities are discernable. Traditionally, many countries in Western civilisation would have considered themselves “Christian.” However, secular humanism and materialism now are the dominant cultural trends and true Christianity has come on hard times.

The Christian church historically has been divided in its opinion on how to deal with the culture and like many other areas has taken the path of two extremes: assimilation to the world on the one hand and abandonment of the world on the other. Medieval Roman monks locked themselves in monasteries and lived ascetic lives hoping to escape the sin of the then current culture. In more recent times the Seeker Sensitive movement and the Emerging Church have assimilated into the culture to try to win it for the gospel, so-called. Paul answers these extremes in I Corinthians 7:31 “*And they that use this world, as not abusing it*” and in I John 2:15 “*Love not the*

world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” How then is the Christian to live in the world and as Paul said in I Corinthians 7:31 use the world but not abuse it (‘overuse’ or ‘use to the full’)? The Scriptural mandate for the Christian is that he lives a life of non-conformity to the world, (Romans 12:2 cf. James 1:27). This lays a heavy obligation on every Christian individual: to recognize the “world” and not conform to it!

THE CULTURE WAR IS PREVAILING

As Christians we are living this war in a world where religion is oppressively popular but where biblical Christianity is increasingly repulsive. Tell anyone that you hug trees, empty your mind and levitate in a hot steamy room, listen to your inner self, or talk to dead ancestors and they stand back in reverent respect, afraid that any hint of negativity may be considered offensive or politically incorrect. But speak of the power of the cross of Christ and the knowledge of the true God, tell them that God speaks to you out of His Word, or defend the absolute authority of Scripture in all of life and you are avoided as an embarrassing freak and declared ‘dangerous to society.’ The twin development of individualism and tolerance has meant that the exclusive message of the gospel is not only rejected but there is a strange phobia against it and in this ‘Christophobic’ environment evangelical Christianity has taken the line of least resistance and been beaten into submission. Conformity to the spirit of the age has distracted the church with other programs and activities, muzzled the mouth of true evangelism in the call to repentance from sin, diverted the Christian from seeking to know God and many Christians have grown weary in well doing. Many in the “*good fight of faith*” (I Timothy 6:12)

have not struck a blow for Christ in years. They have thrown in the towel. Many have forgotten that conversion means “*not only to believe on him [Christ]; but also to suffer for his sake*” (Philippians 1:29).

But we must remind ourselves of the prevalence and nature of this war. The Christian is commanded to resist the spirit of this world; he is to be a ‘non-conformist.’ The Spirit of this world takes on a different form in different generations. The culture war is severe and subtle and the maxim “*be not conformed to this world*” (Romans 12:2) applies to the world in the form it takes in our own generation. Resisting the spirit of the age, or to use Paul’s words “*this present evil world*” (Galatians 1:4) is a resistance peculiar to this generation. Our parents struggled with different social attractions then we do and our children will be forced to address issues we’ve never dreamed of. But we must face the issues that confront us in the present. We must take a spiritual inventory of those things that have crept in and distracted, diverted and distorted our Christian world-view.

THE CULTURE WAR IS PERSONAL

We must take the battle to the gate and confront the world on an individual level. It is not enough to put our Bibles under our arms each Sunday and find security in the assembly of God’s people; it is not enough to lobby corporately in pro-life campaigns or signing of petitions. The individual must face the issues head on in his own mind and heart. External religion, i.e. corporate involvement and mere church activity, mean nothing if the mind has been lost to the world and the heart has been molded by the mores of society.

“If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion