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What's Inside:

"Do people have a moral right to help on demand from their neighbour? Does the government have a moral right to intervene in this process? Who says so? . . .

"For all its talk, home schooling has failed to produce Christian leaders. It has failed to produce to date the outstanding students in our community. . . .

"It has become fashionable in some parts of town to tell congregations that they no longer need to obey the Ten Commandments. . . .

"They take law out of theology then pretend they have somehow advanced our knowledge of God (Jesus) by eliminating our need to obey parts of the Bible. . . ."

HINDRANCES TO REFORM

by Ian Hodge, Ph.D.

There are a number of issues that seem to hinder real reform in the marketplace. By real reform I mean changing things for the better. And by changing things for the better, I mean making them Christian in their orientation by applying principles obtained from the Bible, God's Word.

This essay is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of the hindrances. Rather, just a few key ones are highlighted. Taken together, however, they form a powerful block. In order to create a new Christian civilisation, which will only come about as people are converted and live the way God wants them to live, some current practices will need to be challenged. Here, then, are my four items that I think are key to any change in the future.

1. Welfare as Theft

For all the talk about welfare reform, little has changed except for one thing: there are more and more people collecting something from the government. While the aim of government to keep people

in basic necessities is a noble ambition, the question that remains is this: Is government welfare the *right* way to provide relief?

Consider the process. People want help in some form. They may genuinely be in need of it. In many instances of welfare (e.g. family supplement) we need to ask, why do people already able to earn a living now want money from the government? And where does the government get its money in the first place? Why don't people voluntarily give money to those who feel they need family supplement? Should the government intervene if people do not voluntarily want to help their neighbour in this manner?

So the government nominates a form of taxation, taxation that is payable as defined by the legislation and backed by the policing power of the government. Payment of the tax is not an option, it is legally enforced. Distribution of the money is optional, since people are not compelled to apply for assistance.

In this environment, we have people who demand

assistance, individuals who do not respond to the demand, and a government willing to step into the environment and *insist* that individuals help their neighbour, whether they like it or not.

Something does not seem right. Do people have a moral right to help on demand from their neighbour? Does the government have a moral right to intervene in this process? Who says so?

The Christian answers to these questions begin on the premise of the First Commandment (which some people say we don't have to keep any more, so it's OK to have many gods in their opinion). There is one God and one only. He is, by definition, the One who makes the rules. This is why in Eden, the temptation was to be "like God, knowing (or determining) good and evil." Man, in his fallen state, now wants to be the rule maker, and he will go to extraordinary lengths – even misread the Bible – in order to maintain this prerogative.

But a reading of the Bible leaves us without doubt that there is no welfare on

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corner of this universe that does not scream out, "made by God, made by God."

The Christian school movement, however, seems to have stalled. Its growth, once phenomenal, has faltered. The historical religious schools that have been at the forefront of private education (but not necessarily Christian education) remain in peak demand. Parents want the best chance of success for their child, success meaning university and work opportunities. These private religious schools have the best reputation for academic success, as well as a reputation for the highest fees for private schools.

Home schooling has continued to grow, but it appears to be a socio-economic based system. Parents with the financial means prefer to send their children to schools, rather than take the risk of missing out university, even though the evidence is there that home schoolers do succeed, and succeed well, at university. So, home schoolers tend to be the lower socio-economic groups within evangelical Christianity. But home schooling itself is not without problems.

For all its talk, home schooling has failed to produce Christian leaders. It has failed to produce to date the outstanding students in our community. You look in the newspaper at the end of the year for the Leaving Certificate results and the highest scores are not from the home schoolers. They will be from the elitist private schools or the better state schools. That's not the aim of home schooling, you say. But if the aim is to produce well-educated students, and that Christian home schools are the best way to do this, then we are still waiting for the evidence in this country to emerge that home schooling education *academically* exceeds school-based education. We are not disputing some other real advantages, such as keeping a child away from other children who may not share the same values as the Christian family.

Home schooling, however, does not answer all the questions of education. Most home schoolers (me included) end up with their children in a university - a secular one at that. The alternative: deny your children a career in medicine, law, mathematics, physics, etc.

demand. There are some obligations to help those who are genuinely poor and needy, just as there are obligations to pay tithes or pray to God. But if these obligations are not kept, has God ordained the political state as His nominated solution to involuntary obedience to his requirements? Only a gross misreading of the Bible could lead to this conclusion, for there is no evidence that warrants such a conclusion.

2. Education

Educational reform is in full swing. Twenty-five years ago, the idea of an individualised learning environment was an anathema to the public educators. They held seminars and talked of the dangers of individualised learning. They regretted even more that this education might also be Christian in its content and orientation.

Now, however, change is in the air. The state schools in Queensland are talking about "compacted curriculum" where learning is geared to the abilities of the child and a self-learning environment is created. While the 1980's and 1990s saw a massive swing towards private schools, now the government schools are fighting back. No, they still cannot teach Christianity in the government schools, so they still operate on the myth that educational is religiously neutral, when in fact there is no

The Mausolean Church:

by IAN HODGE, Ph.D.

When a crisis occurs in an age, it becomes extremely necessary to look closely at Christianity, or at least, what is paraded as Christianity in the churches of the day. As the Bible pictures the church as salt, a preserving agent, when a definite decline in civilization occurs there must have occurred a problem in the preserving agent (Matt. 5:13).

The Reformation was the culmination of two centuries of Christian re-awakening. From the time of John Wycliffe, the Spirit of God had been kindling a flame in the hearts of the people of God which burst forth in the early sixteenth century. The Reformation is often described as the time when the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ (as opposed to works) was brought back to life. While that is true, however, it is only one small aspect of that period. It is far better to view the greatest achievement of the Reformation as being the re-awakening of the sovereignty or lordship of the Triune God and His revealed will, the Holy Scriptures, as being the sole authority for the whole of life. This manifested itself especially in the Puritan movement, and as historian Alden T. Vaughan has observed, "Puritanism had political, economic, and social manifestations . . . for it required of its adherents a number of convictions about the role of government, about the nature of work, and about family relationships which in both tangible and intangible ways reshaped their lives. Subscription to Puritan theology imposed upon the believer an obligation to live all parts of his life in accordance with Holy Writ" (*The Puritan Tradition in America 1620-1730*, p. 29).

Unfortunately, this view of Scripture governing the whole of life soon waned. Christianity has always emphasized education, and the Reformation period was no exception. However, the Reformers, in keeping faith the popular view of the time, insisted that a good education included classical literature. This meant a study of Greek philosophy, and Greek philosophy incorporated the writings of Plato.

In addition, home schooling does not address well those subjects, such as music, which need to be taught in a group situation. It does not matter how hard you try, you cannot teach your child to play violin in a group without putting him one. But group learning is not supposed to occur in individualised home learning centres. Thus, there are some subjects that home schoolers do not learn well until they join a school of some kind.

There are two further things that continue to hinder education. The first is compulsory education laws. Now the political state can no more compel education to take place than it can compel morality in any other area. Yet the Christian community, even the home schoolers, will enrol their child by the age of five, and keep the child in school until he is at least fifteen, which is what the compulsory attendance laws require.

The second hindrance to education is the graded system. The graded system is for what purpose? To define sequence in the learning? Perhaps. To take learning outcomes and spread them over the compulsory school years? For sure. The trouble with the idea of sequence, is that in some subject areas the sequence is not so obvious. Compare, for example, the American based maths books with their Australian counterparts. Home schoolers using American maths books have great trouble if they are enrolled in Aussie schools, not because their maths is necessarily poor, but because of the sequence of things they have learnt. The graded system is the logical companion to the compulsory school years. While sequence is necessary, it is certainly not necessary to spread these out over ten years or more when the child is capable of covering the work in five or six years.

In music education, for example, something I'm closely involved in, the graded system we have in Australia is almost a guarantee that a student's career prospects will be ruined. Not because they necessarily teach him wrong things, but because they hinder the development of the individual abilities of the child. Russian pianists and violinists are some of the best in the world.

They don't have our graded music system. They do have, however, specialist music schools, where children spend half their day in the subject of music, learning and studying the instrument of their choice. They spend the other half doing their maths, language, etc. Which only goes to indicate, that if you can teach all these subjects in half a day (something the home schoolers know very well), then think what we could achieve with our children if we let them specialise for the other half of the day, in training for a trade or profession?

To make the educational curriculum Christian has been seen to be the goal of Christian education. We think this is just the beginning, and that Christian educators now need to get serious with applying the curriculum to the individual needs and abilities of the student. Then education might get somewhere.

3. A New Code of Conduct

It has become fashionable in some parts of town to tell congregations that they no longer need to obey the Ten Commandments. Jesus, it is claimed, abolished these when He died on the cross. No longer are we under any duty to obey these commandments. They certainly are not necessary for justification, as all are agreed. But are they necessary for godly living? If the Commandments are no longer applicable, on what basis do we make decisions about our work, about our relationships with others and with God?

We are given new and novel theories, some which our intelligent forefathers apparently overlooked (or maybe they just rejected them). For example, we are told that a particular interpretation of Galatians is now to be the ruling guideline for when we read the rest of Scripture. The fact that such an interpretation of Galatians is illogical, or contradicts other clear passages also written by St Paul, is not mentioned. Why this should become the ruling interpretation for the rest of Scripture, we are not told either. Perhaps we should rather have Romans become the ruling book for the rest of Scripture, so that when St Paul writes, "Do we then nullify the Law

Now the problem with studying nonChristian literature is that it is bound to affect the reader if extreme caution is not exercised. Consequently, it was not too long before Platonic philosophy, with its distinction between Mind and Matter, and emphasis that the spiritual realm was superior to the physical, crept into Puritan theology. Thus, by 1728, for example, we find comments such as the following from William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. "You are to honour, improve, and perfect the spirit that is within you, you are to prepare it for the kingdom of heaven . . . to save it from the corruptions of the body . . ." "You know, my children, the high perfection and the great rewards of virginity; you know how it frees from worldly cares and troubles, and furnishes means and opportunities of higher advancements in a divine life; therefore love, and esteem and honour virginity; bless God for all that glorious company of holy virgins that from the beginning of Christianity have, in the several ages of the Church, renounced the cares and pleasures of matrimony, to be perpetual examples of solitude, contemplation, and prayer."

Here we have a prime example of otherworldliness. The rise of Pietism, with its emphasis on "spiritualism" has led to an irrelevant orthodoxy in the Christian Church. The above examples taken from William Law have their modern counterpart, although not too many churches today extol the "virtues" of virginity in such a blatant tone. But the emphasis on soul as opposed to body is with us very strongly, and the consequences have been disastrous.

If Christianity is concerned only with the soul then large portions of Scripture must be denied, especially those sections that relate to living in the here and now, the laws that have been given to govern life in its physical aspects. Consequently there is almost total apathy to the law of God and its application to everyday life. As a result, the modern church has very few answers to the situations of real life, having no more than a pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die attitude. The church has become so heavenly minded, as someone has said, that it is of no earthly use.

Moreover, having denied the relevance of God's law, justification

through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law” (Rom. 3:31, NASB).

Or perhaps we could take the words of Hebrews 5:14-6:1: “But food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of reputation from dead works and of faith toward God.” Now how can you have this kind of maturity if there are no laws defining for us what is right and wrong?

These are the kind of questions never answered from the quarters that find it expedient, with a pretence of scholarship, to take away the Ten Commandments and leave us with nothing.

“Just ask Jesus,” we are told. “Do what He would do.”

“Yes, but didn’t Jesus keep the Ten Commandments as they way of godly living, both in his relationship with God and in his relationship with others?”

“Yes, but all that has changed,” they say. “Jesus initiated a new code of conduct. We do not need to keep the Ten Commandments as our way of Godly living. Now that His Spirit is in us, we will know what to do.”

“Will we? How? If the new heart created in us is one that will delight in keeping God’s Commandments as both Old and New Testaments indicate, should we not *desire* to keep the Commandments as the way God wants to live?”

“You’re being too logical about this,” they retort. “Why don’t you just accept what we say, that the Ten Commandments are out, there are no replacements, but somehow, mysteriously, we will all know what to do when the time arrives.”

For some of us, the alternative of being illogical does not cross our mind. More importantly, we fail to see – and it is never explained in language that is comprehensible – how you can have a standard that can never be explained.

“Is it OK to murder,” we ask them. “Of course not,” they reply.

“Is it OK to steal?” Same reply.

“Should we have Christian schools?”

“Irrelevant question. We are to seek the kingdom of God.”

“But doesn’t the Kingdom of God include Christian schools?”

No reply!

“Well, then, is fractional reserve banking a moral practice?”

“What’s ‘fractional reserve’ banking? We do not understand economics. We certainly cannot apply the ‘law’ of the Old Testament about keeping just weights and measures, since this is Old Testament and was never intended for anyone outside of Israel. Anyway, this is not the issue. Loving Jesus and having a relationship with Him is all that should occupy us.”

“So, if our politicians loved Jesus the way you want, would they continue the practice of fractional reserves?”

Don’t know, they say.

“Well, how then do we advise our politicians, especially those who claim to be Christian? Should they vote for legislation that incarcerates thieves or should they vote for programs that make thieving unprofitable, first by having the stolen goods returned (or replaced) by the thief (not the community), then by having compensation paid to the victim by the thief?”

Again, no reply.

This, at the end of the day is their answer to the problems of life. Silence. This is the “new” theology that is supposed to attract people of normal intelligence. I say new, because it is not the theology of the Bible. It is not the theology that built Western Civilisation with its fairly robust adherence to property rights (the Eighth Commandment). And it will not be the theology that transforms the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdoms of Christ. For all their correct preaching on the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the fact that Jesus has done all that is necessary, salvation is far wider than this. It incorporates the whole of a person’s life, not just that time when he becomes a Christian. In short, they reduce systematic theology to a mere one-hundred and twenty paperback pages and

must be given for such a position. Law has been superseded by grace, we are told, and Romans 6:14 is cited *ad nauseum* as “proof” that we are no longer under the law. But this merely indicates a radical inability to read the Scriptures as a whole with particular verses in their proper context; for it is obvious that Rom. 6:14 is *not* an argument either for or against the keeping of Biblical law. In its context, the statement “ye are not under the law, but under grace” is the reason why sin is not to have dominion over the believer. The passage is not speaking about whether we should or should not keep the law of God.

Taking verses out of context like this is one of the signs of the contemporary orthodox church. Only by such a practice can theological irrelevance be maintained. However, irrelevance is not the only result. Denial of Scripture has other repercussions also. For example, if other-worldliness is the be-all and end-all of Christianity, then it is a matter of indifference as to whether there should be co-operation between Christians who do not have total agreement on all doctrines. If Christianity only concerns the soul, then one can afford to separate from those who do not agree theologically at every point. This leaves us free to pursue our beliefs as they are personally perceived.

Once grant the fact, however, that Christian teaching also has implications in the here and now and a dilemma is posed: How are we to view those who call themselves Christians but who perhaps do not see eye-to-eye with us on matters such as baptism, eschatology or church polity? For if the Kingdom of God also includes the physical aspects of reality, then Christians, whatever their theological differences in some areas, are obliged to co-operate with one another, irrespective of the other person’s beliefs.

What we have at the moment, on the other hand, are theological nit-pickers who are more adept at noticing and criticising their fellow-believer’s supposed theological errors than they are at praising them for their correctness in other doctrines and practices. By pointing out errors, the nitpickers can justify and maintain (at least to

pretend this is Christian scholarship. Reductionist theology is just that: reduction by eliminating important biblical truths. They take sanctification out of theology then pretend they have somehow advanced our knowledge of God (Jesus) by eliminating our need to obey parts of the Bible.

This is not theology, a love of God's word. It is a denial of it.

Some people do not seem to live in the real world. The real world is one where ethical decisions have to be made. Employers have to decide how they are going to treat their customers and their staff. Employees have to decide if they are going to steal from their employer, either in time or in tangible goods. Politicians need to make real world decisions. How should thieves be punished? Should they be jailed? If so, for how long? Educators need to make decisions what they will teach. Should they teach six-day creationism, or atheistic evolution? Parents have to make decisions: Should they take money from their neighbour if he will not willingly hand it over? If he will not willingly hand it over, should they ask the government to use the police to force their neighbour to hand it over?

In some quarters around town, these questions are answered by saying "do what Jesus would do." What, then, would Jesus do? Obey the Ten Commandments? No, they say, the Ten Commandments are out. What then, would Jesus do? "Go and ask Him," they say. But hasn't Jesus already told us what to do in the Ten Commandments? "No, they say. "He changed His mind at the time He died on the Cross." Well then, we ask, what does He want us to do now that the Ten Commandments and all they mean have been done away with?

Once the idea of the Commandments is denied, then the Christian community ceases to be a community sharing God's standards of justice and equity. Instead it becomes a place where "feelings" are paramount, where it is more important to "feel good" than it is to have a serious Bible study. We are to have a "relationship" with Jesus, we are told. True. But what kind of relationship? An ethical one, or is this

relationship just designed to make us feel good, no matter how we live? We know the answer, because in some of these churches the Ten Commandments are never explained (especially the First), the first 87 verses of Psalm 119 can be studied in less than an hour, and it takes just 30 minutes to preach through the first ten chapters of Leviticus.

So much for godly living, for maturity as outlined in Hebrews 5:14. While this view persists, there is no possibility of real reform, since the real issues of life remain unaddressed by those who deny the validity of the Ten Commandments.

4. Polytheism.

At the heart of our problem is a commitment to practical polytheism. Polytheism is the idea of more than one god. And more than one god exists when the whole of life is cut up in such a way that answers in some areas supplied by one authority, while in another area another authority supplies the answers. Thus, for example, if we say that the development of penal codes is to be determined by the political state rather than the God of the Bible, we have set up multiple authorities for life. Or, multiple gods.

Our world is often described as a universe. Derived from this, we have had the development of the university. The idea of a uni-single-verse is a Christian idea. It is based on the fact that there is one Creator and one Authority for the whole of life, and that the Authority's jurisdiction is without limit. The university, however, is no longer a *university*. It is a *multiversity*, which is why so many Christian kids who enter university as Christians come out as practical pagans. They continue to pay lip service to Christianity, but in their actions and behaviour, they are their own gods, determining for themselves what is right and wrong.

A good portion of our problem here is a new attitude to intellectual pursuit. Christian thinking is often appalling.¹ It lacks the discipline necessary to create good scholars whose judgement we could rely on. It neither understands nor addresses the issues that people raise.

themselves) their isolationism and refusal to work beside those they disagree with. At the same time, it is a declaration that the Church is not one body consisting of several parts, each part vital and necessary for the health of the body, and that Christianity can therefore be lived in isolation to fellow-believers. This would be true if Christianity only consisted of attending church, praying several times a day, singing psalms and hymns and regularly putting money in the collection plate. That, however, is the Platonic, not the Biblical, view of Christianity. Once admit that Christianity involves the development of Christian social theory and action, and religious -or, rather, denominational isolationism cannot exist.

Thus, due to the influence of Platonism, Christianity has lost its saltiness and its relevance. After all, we are told by one ostensibly orthodox Christian minister, "Christianity has no blueprint for a Christian society such as many Marxists have for a Marxist society." In other words, there are no clearly defined Biblical guidelines for living. Apparently we are free to make our own rules and regulations in areas such as economics, law and politics, for example. This, however, is polytheism. It is an admission that God controls part of our life only, and that someone - or something - else controls the remainder. We thus have two, perhaps more, Voices of Authority in our lives and thus more than one God. For the Voice of Authority we acknowledge in life is the god we worship. But this is not Christianity. God does not share His authority.

The "no blueprint" Christianity has created a church that is both irrelevant and impotent against the challenges of the age that confront it. As Rev. Rushdoony has noted,

All too often the church is like a coffin. Instead of being a training ground and an armory for the army of the Lord, it is a repository for the dead. The people within have not the life and power to occupy any other ground, to establish Christian Schools, to conquer in the realm of politics and economics, to "occupy" in Christ's name even one area of life and thought and to bring it into

On the other hand, the good scholars in the non-Christian world cannot be relied upon because their presuppositions prohibit good scholarship. They are good thinkers acting with wrong ideas. In the Christian realm, we have poor thinkers who have the right presuppositions whereas in the non-Christian world we have good thinkers without the right presuppositions.

Thus we have no Christian economists, Christian musicians, Christian politicians (is this one an oxymoron?), because they cannot discipline themselves to master their subjects from their Christian presuppositions. On the other hand, we have secular economists, musicians and politicians who are masters at their subject, but because they start with the idea of a false god, they end up bankrupting their subjects and leading us up the wrong path.

This is where polytheism leads us. And the leading polytheists are those who refuse to tell us how to apply God's Word into some of these areas. They do not see that their failure in this regard establishes the multi-verse because it denies the uni-verse. And at the heart of the multi-verse is the commitment to man being his own god, the determiner of what is right and wrong, good and evil, true and untrue.

Conclusion

Will we get the reforms we so badly need? By faith, our answer is yes. If we read Hebrews chapter 11 we know that it is by faith the ancient patriarchs saw what God had promised. These promises did not materialise in their own lifetime, but they were as inevitable as night follows day, because God had promised it.

Those of us who call ourselves Christian share in these promises. These promises include the coming Saviour, the one who would be the Messiah, God's anointed. He is both

lord and Saviour, the one who even now is establishing His reign over the whole of the universe. This is the One whom we call Lord. Yet our lives so often tell another story. We do not obey our King in all that we do. Some of us are not even convinced he has left us with enough instructions to live our lives, so we manufacture new rules, new authorities, and take away from the Bible, the only divinely-inspired source of God's revelation to mankind.

True reform will come, then, when we can stand on the surety of God's Word, take the First Commandment at its face value and establish God as our single authority. Having done this, the right framework is in place to solve the issues that confront us in life. Then we can work our way down the remaining nine Commandments and begin to solve the issues of the role of the state and therefore welfare; we can establish real schools for real learning without the interfering hand of the political state; we will solve our ethical issues, because we will accept that God's Word is a unity, that He does not change, and that the principles of the Ten Commandments are as valid today as they were on day one of creation, because they are based on the nature and character of God. In so doing, we will establish once again the idea of Christian civilisation, because we believe and practice a university approach to life, not the multiversity approach.

And in so doing, we might again see the glory of God shine forth in our civilisation as the peoples of this earth increasingly come under the sway of our beliefs, because evangelism will be the key tool to make this occur. Evangelism is not militaristic, it is persuasive. It does not allow itself to be deferred from its task, which is to present Christ as the answer to sin. Since sin is the disobedience to whatever God commands, we cannot expect our evangelism to be effective

"captivity" to Jesus Christ (Luke 19:13; II Cor. 10:5). Where Christianity is confined to the church, it is dead, and it is only a corpse claiming that name but having none of the life nor the power thereof (II Tim. 3:5).

Christianity cannot be caged into a church and confined there like a zoo animal. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). Power commands; it exercises dominion, and it reaches out "to every creature" (Mark 16:15) with the good news of Christ's redemption and lordship. It works to bring all things under the dominion of Christ, who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). Jesus began and ended his ministry "preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14f). That Kingdom begins with our redemption through His atonement and continues with our exercise of dominion with knowledge, righteousness, and holiness over every area of life and thought.

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without the ability the state what those commandments are.

The task is before us. The challenges are many. The answers we have in God's word, plus His promise to never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5-6). Why, then, is reform so elusive? Why do we see evil triumphing again, after centuries of being held in check? What hinders us from reforming the world for Christ? Is it God who is the problem because perhaps He has given us an unwinnable task? Or is it our refusal to commit ourselves fully to the challenge, to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ and go forth into the world to conquer it for Christ?

1 See Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to Do About It*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994.