

A FAITHLESS AUSTRALIA MAY LOSE MORE THAN JUST GOD

This article was written by Jennifer Oriel a feature writer for The Australian Newspaper.

Australia was created as a nation under God. In the latest census, only 52 per cent of the population identified as Christian. Atheist groups are celebrating the decline of Christianity and the prospect of a nation without God, while cultural relativists are heralding a brave new world of multiculturalism. Contrary to popular sentiment, the loss of Christian faith is not a cause for celebration or apathy. Christianity is the generative principle of the free world. Without it, liberal democracy will become hollow and the light of liberty will be put out. The Atheist Foundation of Australia (AFA) campaigned for people to mark "no religion" on the national census. Despite Christianity being the leading religion in Australia, "no religion" was ranked first on the list of possible responses to the religious affiliation question.

When questioned about the AFA's no religion campaign, its president Kylie Sturgess said: "Census data is used by governments to make important funding decisions, planning educational facilities, aged care and other social services." Across the West, governments are withdrawing funding for Christian groups while activist networks intensify the war of attrition against the faithful by means of propaganda and lawsuits. Religious freedom exists in the 21st century West, but the cost imposed on Christians who exercise it can be prohibitive. In the education sector, the media and even the military, there is advocacy against Christianity. The anti-Christian position is invariably couched in the language of diversity, inclusion, and minority rights.

The most aggressive displays of intolerance towards Christians sometimes come draped in the rainbow flag. Queer activists have participated in violent protests against advocates for heterosexual marriage. Some have joined with civil liberties groups to deny Christians freedom from PC tyranny by suing small business owners that won't sanction gay marriage. More recently, big business has entered the fray by denouncing conservative governments that uphold democratic processes such as the proposed plebiscite on same-sex marriage. We used to have a name for a corporate politics that subverts democracy by throwing cash at politicians: fascism. I believe the Black Hand of the Liberal left calls it "the winner's circle". Beyond the winner's circle, the battle for the free world is raging and Christians are on the front line.

It is no coincidence that at the time of Christianity's decline in the West, Islamists have stepped into the breach to denounce democracy, the secular state and freedom of speech. For all its pretensions to moral authority, the PC left is remarkably slow to realise that the foundations of the free world rest on a Judaeo-Christian value system. But perhaps that is too optimistic. It is evident that neo-Marxists on both sides of politics simply don't care. For those who venerate democracy and liberty, the fall of Western Christianity is more than a spiritual tragedy. It announces the death of the world's greatest civilisation. In his book *What's So Great About Christianity*, Dinesh D'Souza explains what I regard as the basis of Western civilisation: "The preciousness and equal worth of every human life is a Christian idea."

Despite the common belief that secular statehood, equality of opportunity, individual rights and limited government are modern creations, all took root in Christian scripture. Christ embodied a revolution against the social order of His day by recognising the worth of human beings was not dictated by bloodlines, wealth, or race. Rather, each human being had inherent worth by virtue of being created by God in His image. The idea of inherent human worth gave rise to the concept that each of us is born equal yet with an individual purpose. The balance between equality and individuality was set in scripture. Equality of opportunity (as we now call it), is necessary to manifest our unique God-given talents. The idea of inherent human worth forms the basis of modern democracy in which the citizen rules the state, not the reverse.

But the full development of the citizen was enabled by another feature of Western civilisation. The secular state is justified by Jesus's instruction: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's: and to God, the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). Christianity thus provides the ultimate defence against totalitarianism: the limited state. Despite the decline in professed Christianity, the core values of Western society are intrinsically Christian. For example, do you believe that it is good or bad to murder, cheat on a partner, steal, lie or treat a person like they're inferior? Most people would consider such behaviours unacceptable. In the West, they are either illegal or elicit social opprobrium. But fewer people might recognise the origin of our shared morality. Of the 10 Jewish commandments, Jesus kept six.

The prohibitions listed are against murder, adultery, stealing and bearing false witness (that is, the things most of us deem unacceptable). Christ said "the greatest and the first commandment" is "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" (Matthew 22:36-38). We are urged also to honour our mother and father (Matthew 19:18-19). Jesus added the new Christian commandment: "That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). It is the most challenging commandment to uphold without collapsing into moral relativism. Australian society and the values we cherish are the fruits of a civilisation built on the word of Christ. To state such a truth is to invite ridicule. We are supposed to attribute the virtues of the modern free world largely to science, technology, or the Enlightenment.

Our righteous anger about the horrific sexual abuse of children by priests increases the temptation to ignore the decline of the church. But our understandable anger about ordained paedophiles and those who shield them should not blind us to the extraordinary promise of Judaeo-Christianity. It has given us inherent human worth, dignity, equality, freedom, secular statehood, and liberal democracy. Christ gave us the soul of Western civilisation and the form of freedom. We owe Him more than our scorn.

Source: *An article written by Australian Journalist Jennifer Oriel*