

# A Protest Against Protests

The modern church is a complete mess. Churchgoer numbers are diminishing at the rate of thousands a week. Righteousness has been abandoned. Heresy is rampant in churches. Yet there is one thing that Christians in the UK are still good at, and that is protesting.

Every time the world takes another snip out of long cherished Christian values in society, the church gets very uppity and stages various types of protest: lobbying MPs, petitions, marches, press releases and other forms of social action. Indeed, it is considered axiomatic that this is what Christians do and to fail in this is a blot on your copybook.

However, there is no Biblical basis for this form of political action whatsoever. Indeed, the very doing of it proves that your focus and hope is upon the wrong thing and not upon God's kingdom, which is heavenly. In this paper I want to show you why.

## Regarding evil in the world

First, we must affirm that refusing to engage in political protests does not mean that we are hard hearted and ignore the wickedness in the world.

### **We condemn evil**

The believer condemns evil when he sees it. The testimony of the believer is that he stands for righteousness and truth; thus evil is exposed by his presence. In the same way Christ exposed evil,

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. Jn 1:4-5

Those who have the light will expose darkness by their mere presence.

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practising evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God. Jn 3:19-21

Everything is to be judged and evaluated by the believer.

He who is spiritual judges all things. 1 Cor 2:15

Thus the believer, being in the light, cannot but expose darkness by his very presence. Therefore, believers should have a view on all things and discern the truth about it. That which is evil must be called evil. Believers must not be deceived into accepting evil as good.

### *A practical example*

Although we are in God's kingdom and not of this world, we are still in the flesh here on earth and are citizens of our country. Therefore, we are called to do good while we are in this place. We don't get involved in the world's politics and use the weapons of this world, but we must do good.

Therefore, if you choose to vote it is vital that you vote for a righteous man and for a party committed to righteousness. Tony Blair was a deceitful man from the beginning, and some of us pointed this out. His concern was appearances and he used spin and outright lies to

achieve policies. Books have been written about Blair's reliance upon lies.<sup>1</sup> The worst lie was that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction that threatened Britain. This was a grand lie that was obvious to anyone who had read the reports of the UN Weapons Inspectors, such as Hans Blix and Scott Ritter. Members of the Cabinet later stated that they knew this was untrue, such as Foreign Secretary Peter Cook and the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon.

This terrible lie led to war and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians; something Blair and GW Bush will answer to God for.

However, our argument here is about being light and exposing evil. My point is that thousands upon thousands of Christians fell for Blair's lies and supported him, even voting for him after the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gulf War as the atrocities continued. In discussions about this at the time, I faced Christians who were so supportive of Blair that they shouted at me, and stormed out of the room when I criticised him. These Christians were not being light and were fooled to believe political lies. They had failed in their testimony to God for a time and will answer for it.

I repeat, believers must not be deceived into accepting evil as good. The correct stance regarding Blair as Prime Minister was condemnation of a wicked man; but his pleasant appearance, wry smile and smarmy ways meant that many Christians supported him.

So, regarding evil in the world, Christians are not to be gullible or weak but must identify it and condemn it in their testimony. They must demonstrate that they are light. In other words, the position that God has on a thing is to be what believers demonstrate. As God condemns evil, so do believers; the difference is that we wait for God to do something about it,

Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in *due* time; for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them. Deut 32:35

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance *is* Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Rm 12:19

### **The presence of wickedness makes us righteously indignant**

Since we are to reflect God's position on anything in the world, it is righteous to be angry at the results of sin in it. God's hates wickedness and violence (Ps 5:6, 11:5, 45:7) and so the believer is to hate wickedness and violence.

When unbelievers see our reaction to anything, it must be the reaction that God has. So Christians become a weathercock to reflect God's opinions and judgments. Therefore we must take great care not to support evil in any way, but rather oppose it and speak against it in our personal lives. It is God's job to judge the evil in his way,<sup>2</sup> but it is our job to identify it.

For more information on this point see my paper, '*Anger at Sin*'.

### **We deal with the evil in our sphere of influence in Biblical ways**

So, the believer is to speak out against the evil that he sees in the world and be a testimony to God in these matters; but what of evil that arises in our path?

<sup>1</sup> For example, Peter Osborne, '*The Rise of Political Lying*', Free Press.

<sup>2</sup> Overall, God will judge all evildoers at the Day of Judgment. However, there are times when God brings this judgment into the temporal sphere also. Sometimes a man is judged in part here on earth and his life unexpectedly cut short, and is also ripe for later judgment. For example see, Lk 12:16-21.

When faced with evil in our sphere of influence we are to do good. Note that, we do good; we do not protest about the local evil.

**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Rm 12:21**

If we see someone suffering as a result of evil, we help the person who is suffering. This is the model Jesus gave us in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Now the evil may result from the world's system, or it may be the result of local action, either way we do good to the sufferers.

For example: I know a couple who live next door to a gay man who works hard but is very poor. He has no social life and struggles to eat. He is not rampantly gay, like some extroverts, and is otherwise a good citizen. My Christian friends regularly provide meals for this man and helped him through a recent protracted dental problem. They lend him money occasionally and have always had it paid back. Now there are many Christians who campaign actively about gay rights and some waste all their time on this one issue. Many believers would ostracise the gay neighbour and protest about gay incursions in society. However, it is my opinion that my friends are behaving Biblically and the protestors are not. My friends are doing actual good to someone not deserving it; the essence of Christ's sacrifice.

When hooligans damage your elderly neighbour's fence; fix it for them. When a neighbour is sick, help them with their shopping. When a neighbour is the victim of a robbery, give them some money to help them through. In the face of evil, we must do actual good.

### **Interim conclusion**

So, we have seen that we must be aware of evil in society and have an opinion. That opinion must reflect the character of God. It is right to condemn the evil in the world and be righteously indignant about it, and be especially angered by the innocent casualties of wickedness. We do not attempt to use political means to change the world but when we are directly faced with the results of evil in our neighbourhood, we react by doing good not by protesting.

## **Regarding protesting to the world about its wickedness**

### **There is no apostolic precedent**

The apostles did not waste their time making protests to the imperial government about social injustices neither did they protest to the provincial governors about social deprivation or cultural imbalances.

In the time of Jesus and the apostles slavery was a normal fact of life. Neither Jesus or the apostles condemned slavery at all; indeed they adopt the position of being a slave or 'bondservant' (Rm 6:22; 1 Cor 7:22). Servants were also commonplace; this is not condemned by Jesus or the apostles and again the position of servant-hood is adopted (Col 4:7; 2 Tim 2:24).

Homosexuality was rife at this time; it was especially rife in Greece and Rome, but quite common elsewhere. The apostles did not seek to change the law regarding this and accepted the position of homosexuality in the world but they condemned it in the church.

The imperative of the apostles was to preach the Gospel, build up the church and glorify God by doing good to neighbours. They never encourage the believer to take social action to change the secular world in any way.

For example: when the church gets involved in high level protests about gay issues it does the Lord's purposes no good at all. Genuine evangelism is at an all time low; converts are few on the ground; church membership everywhere is diminishing; many young people do not even know who Jesus Christ is. The church has failed its mission to evangelise and yet finds time to protest vigorously about gays; this is a wrong priority. What does this say to the world? It says that the church cares little about evangelism and doing good works but is focused on bigotry. It works against the Gospel presentation. Those who know the Lord will centre upon doing his will, which is preaching the Gospel, building up the church and doing good to all.

Another point is that evangelicals get very hot under the collar about gay issues but say nothing about equally important matters. Where the apostles condemn homosexuality, they do so in the context of other sins of the flesh. These include gossip, backbiting, pride, covetousness, boasting, envy, evil-mindedness, whispering, disobedience to parents etc. (e.g. Rm 1:29-32). Many of these things are openly practised in some churches that are vigorous in condemning gays publicly. The words 'stones' and 'glass-houses' come to mind.

### **The world is not our home**

**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:2-3**

Protesting reveals a lack of clarity as to where we are placed. We are ambassadors of a foreign kingdom who live in a heavenly realm in the Spirit and who have no place on this earth. We are not only called to deny the world around as being dead to it, but the truth is that we have no part in this world at all; we are heavenly people in Christ. The affairs of this world are no concern of ours except as they relate to the concerns of God, such as preaching the Gospel to those we know. We must set our minds on the things above.

Why would anyone who is a citizen of heaven seek to enter into the politics of the world and try to change it?

Just what do you think Paul means by this:

**The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Gal 6:14**

If I am crucified then I am a dead man, dying a slow lingering death. As far as the world around me is concerned, I am crucified to it; I am dead to it. Does a dead man care whether gay people can get married or not? Does a dead man care about the ordination of women and gay bishops in the Anglican Church? If I am dead to the things going on in this evil world, I will have no concern whatsoever to try to change them. I am focused upon working for a better kingdom and obeying God's commands regarding that kingdom.

This does not mean that we are callous? No; God's law commands that we do good to all we meet. Those in need in this world who are our neighbours require our help by God's ordinance. Thus we do good in this world to individuals; but regarding the world's politics, we have no command.

It is ironic that often the very same people who spend a lot of time campaigning for changes in the world are the same people who are isolated to their neighbours and do no good to them. Thus they disobey a divine command in order to do something not commanded.

### **Our hope is not for this world**

[We] have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus. Heb 6:18-20

Where your hope is will be the centre of your affections and aspirations. The hope of the Christian regards salvation and a home in heaven, where Jesus is at the right hand of God. We are now new creatures in Christ and not part of this world anymore; our place is with Christ and our hope is the fulfilment of God's eternal plan to make us fully part of God's family in the body as well as in the spirit.

This hope is an anchor to our soul today, enabling us to be firm and steadfast in God's purposes; fixed on heavenly things. Our hope in God keeps our attention on heavenly things and not on the world. Thus we do not get involved in worldly politics in order to try to change the world. There is no point for the believer trying to change the world when he is already a citizen of a better world; when he is seeking a better country, 'they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country' (Heb 11:16).

Activity in worldly politics and trying to change the status quo means that you have left behind your hope as an anchor to the soul in heaven and have adopted a lower position of worldliness. You are throwing your pearls before swine.

### **Our weapons and strategies are not fleshly**

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Eph 6:12-13

There are two important things to note here. The first is that our wrestling against wickedness is spiritual and not earthly. This means that we must not adopt a fleshly attitude to dealing with evil in this world. To adopt civil action, political pressure, social action and so forth in order to protest about policy is to adopt strategies which are fleshly and earthly. This is disobedience to God's instructions in Ephesians 6.

The second matter is to note that our job is to stand and withstand evil in the world. The satanic purpose behind evil that affects us is to make us move from our position of being steadfast in Christ. He tempts us to fall from our position of spiritual security in Christ. The moment you adopt worldly strategies you have fallen from this secure place. God does not command us to take action to stop the wickedness in the world, that will continue and worsen, he commands us to stand fast and not move from being in Christ. Acting in a fleshly manner is not being in Christ.

### **The necessity of a divine perspective**

Protesting to change the world today is working against God's plan, which we are clearly told will involve the world getting worse and worse and where homosexuality is a major symptom of a broken wicked world ready for reaping. For example:

In the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. 2 Tim 3:1-

5

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. 2 Thess 2:3

It is a major mistake to believe that we are called to change the world; we are not. We are called to change individuals by preaching the Gospel; the world will continue on its course of growing in wickedness until it is ready for judgment by God. Men will scoff at Christianity until God overcomes them at the return of Christ,

Scoffers [mockers] will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.' ... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 2 Pt 3:3-10

There is no utopia before Christ's return, but rather a deterioration of morals worldwide.

### **Trusting in the world to act is not an option**

Those who have the wisdom of God and have the discernment of the Spirit are well aware that the general tendency of the world is downwards not upwards. Most the theological stances that generated church interest in developing a Christian Utopia arose in the Victorian Age when man's social aspirations were at his highest. With the Industrial Revolution and inventions of steam power, electricity, telegraphy and so on, it seemed that man was getting better and better. The rising popularity of evolutionary principles at this time also generated a positive effect for the betterment of man. Thus various theological principles and church developments arose at this time that were based upon an expectation that the world would get better and better. For example: the building of Christian communes and cities in America, Kuyper's idea of Common Grace, Pentecostalism's tongues as initial evidence to foster missionary activity, postmillennialism and so forth.

All this optimism changed when the First World War erupted in 1914, to be followed by the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War with its aerial bombing of cities and then the multiple holocausts of World War II. These put paid to the previous idea that man was evolving upwards and society would become more and more positive until all evils were eradicated.

Those with any spiritual discernment realise that only moderate attempts will be made to improve the lot of the poor in this world or to improve social mores. Despite 13 years of a socialist government in Britain, the gap between the rich and the poor got worse. Child poverty was not tackled at all, despite promises that it would, and now the homeless young are living on the streets of London in greater numbers than 20 years ago.

Let us take the example of the Festival of Light led by Mrs Whitehouse and supported by such luminaries as Cliff Richard and Billy Graham. There was never such a widespread Christian rallying as this period in British social history. It dominated newspapers and TV reports for years. Sometimes rallies in Trafalgar Square attracted thousands of Christian protestors. The purpose was to clean up society and particularly television. Judged by the standards of today this was a cataclysmic failure. It did not the slightest good whatsoever and in fact actually spurred on the media to become even more liberal in ethical values. What it did do was make Christians look foolish. All that huge effort and expense would have been better spent in evangelistic activities.

Trusting that your attempts at protesting and civil action will actually do anything to change the way Satan is ruling the world through sin is utter folly.

### **The bad example of Constantine**

Christians successfully evangelised the Roman Empire and became the dominant religion in the west in a short time. This was despite continual persecution by the Roman emperors

in a series of ten attacks. However, after the supposed conversion of Constantine, the new emperor, the Roman Empire suddenly officially tolerated Christianity in the Edict of Milan in 313. Indeed, the church gained increasing favour as courtiers and sycophants tried to curry favour with the emperor by adopting Christianity. In a short time the empire was Christianised and large buildings given for housing the church.

It seemed like a dream come true, the ability to worship in peace. In fact this was the beginning of a bad time for the church, which became more and more worldly and corrupt. Soon bishops worked hand-in-hand with the emperor and his ministers and church decisions required imperial approval.

The Christianising of society did the church no good at all; indeed the church not only lost its purity but its evangelistic momentum slowed down. Within 250 years the Dark Ages had begun where the truth was virtually eclipsed until the Reformation in 1517. The 'Christianising' of the world achieves nothing for the church and is a foolish venture. Modern believers should learn from history.

### **The action of the OT prophets – protesting is not abstract**

Most Christians who get involved in social action, especially to protest about the degeneration of supposed Christian values in a supposed Christian society, do so because it makes them feel good. [In actual fact there has never been a Christian society ever. The only theocracy the world has ever seen in OT Israel utterly failed to obey the laws of God and the theocratic people rejected their own God and committed spiritual adultery.]

This feel-good attitude often temporarily supplants a prior feeling of uselessness or lack of opportunity in Christian matters. Because the church is universally failing and there is no genuine Biblical church life hardly anywhere, people throw themselves into social action to protest the degeneration of society as a fall back. In other words, often the reason for protesting is an abstract matter based upon self-fulfilment. It feels good to fight for one's cherished values.

But this is not an adequate reason for engaging in political protests. Christians should only work to achieve something that has a divine sanction and a divine end in view.

It is true that the OT prophets engaged in protesting civil oppressions and the degeneration of God's law in Israel and Judah. However, we must remember certain crucial factors.

The first is that they were in a theocracy. God was the ruler of Israel and the kings were merely delegated servants of divine rule. When kings failed to rule as God intended they needed reprimanding by God's anointed prophets. This is not the situation in England today, far from it. Though God owns the world and everything in it, he is waiting in his divine purpose for man's sin to come to fulness before he directly acts to change things. Until that time, the devil acts as if he is in control and seeks to dominate the world through the sin of men. We are in a totally contrary position to that of the OT prophet.

Now the prophets are an example to us in being moved by evil in the world. We are not to ignore the evil we see but we must be as indignant as the prophets were. When they saw the poor people of the land oppressed by kingly actions, they were horrified and spoke their mind. Christians should be equally horrified and speak the truth; we must have a view on these things. The difference is that the Christian is called to prayer, doing good locally and doubling his witness in the world; the prophets could actually change national events.

Because they were in a theocracy, prophets could challenge the kings and call upon God to act; they were acting as God's spokesmen to call a God-appointed delegate to account. This is not the case for us unless God directly calls a man to do this. The protests of the prophets were not abstract and well-meaning gestures, they were divine challenges to achieve several divine objectives. The first was to give the king no excuse before his divine condemnation. The second was to demand repentance and show the displeasure of God, the king's master. The third was to proclaim the judgment that would follow such wickedness. The fourth was to be a general warning to the population to walk righteously or they would be judged like the king was. The fifth was to be an illustration to us in the church today (1 Cor 10:11). The kingdom of God that the prophet was in at that time was material; the kingdom of God for Christians is immaterial, spiritual, heavenly and awaiting us.

The actions of the prophet always resulted in action, even if the social oppression was not alleviated. At the very least the prophet's action hardened the king and made him more ripe for God's condemnation. Sometimes the prophet actually brought about repentance, as when Nathan confronted David. Frequently, the Lord's remnant of faithful people were consolidated and encouraged; even if the nation as a whole degenerated (as with Elijah at Mt. Carmel). The chief role of the prophet was as a testimony to divine character; he stood for the law of God and directed people to fear God. This role today is centred in the church, which is the divine ambassador to the world. [Sadly far from being prophetic, most modern churches are trying to be friends with the world instead of decrying it.] The testimony of the true church in demonstrating the righteousness of God is meant to be a signal condemning the world, just as light shows up darkness.

## Erastianism

Erastianism is the erroneous doctrine that the church and the state are wedded together and work together to form Christ's kingdom. Thus the power and government of the state are the means God uses to govern and support the church. The church can only admonish; punishment belongs to the civil authority. It was a doctrine founded by Thomas Erastus (1524-1583).

For centuries the church was Erastian and under the political power of the papacy, which wielded monarchical authority over nations. The Reformation brought some ecclesiastical reforms (e.g. removal of idols, lavish ceremonies and corruption), but its main focus was the establishment of Biblical doctrine in the area of salvation. Consequently, the early Reformers merely adapted the old system. Thus the power of the magistrate was seen as divinely appointed to serve the church; but not rule the church (as in Erastianism).

Later generations correctly saw that the church and the state should be completely separated as two different spheres of government, one secular; the other spiritual. However, the introduction of the Reformation in different places was applied differently. In England, Henry VIII took upon himself the authority as the Head of the English Church. In actual fact this was a blasphemous thing to do; Christ is the head of the church. However, with the authority of Henry, church reformers did the best that they could to introduce Reformation principles into the Church of England. The English church under Elizabeth was not much better, though there were some compromises. This is why the Puritan movement sprang up, seeking to reform the church even further.

Thus the English church developed over centuries with this close connection to the crown and thus to the state. When the church and the crown were relatively pure this worked

reasonably well; but when one or the other, or both, were impure the result was appalling. Thus the much loved Authorised Version of the Bible came about as a political act of compromise by James I who sought to water down the Calvinistic intensity of the Puritan's Geneva Bible and seek universal approval.

Therefore, Britain has always had this seminal idea undergirding it that it is a Christian nation and many Christians have sought royal patronage to defend Christian values in the state. Legal developments over the last four hundred years have strengthened this idea of Christian Britain. At the height of Britain's imperialism under Victoria there were many good repercussions of this as the Bible was held in high esteem by the Royal family, the courts, and Parliament. Victoria boasted that her empire was built upon Scripture. The state, at that time, supported Christianity, even if it was superficial in many ways.

However, that is not the situation today. Society in general is not Christian at all but a multi-culture of many faiths; predominantly paganism and atheism. The Royal Family is not supportive of the Christian faith as the bedrock of English society but now represents pluralism. Parliament is, in general, opposed to Christian principles and intent on bringing in legislation to subvert them. The justice system is frequently found to be subverting Christian principles in its interpretation of the law. The sovereignty of this country has been passed to the EU, which is anti-evangelical and fiercely Roman Catholic or atheistic. The media, in all forms, which is the main influence in society, is anti-Christian. The education system is now anti-Christian.

All this means that any sentimental idea that Britain is a Christian nation is folly. Any idea that the state will support genuine Christian agendas is stupid. The basis of most church protests is that Britain is Christian and action is needed to defend Christian principles in the nation that are being undermined. Even in the past this was an unorthodox position since Erastianism is not Biblical; the state should not impose its authority to support or discipline the church. But to attempt this in today's circumstances is foolish in the extreme. Such is a failure to appreciate what has happened in history as well as what God's will is. The power of secular authority, in the state, in the monarchy and in culture, is opposed to Christianity. The sooner Christian people understand this and do some real good in preaching the Gospel, building the church and doing good works locally, the sooner we can achieve something genuinely spiritual instead of wasting time arranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

## Objections

### **If no-one opposes such wickedness, the other side wins by default**

This is a variation of the old quote that if good people do nothing then evil reigns [*evil triumphs when good men do nothing*]; sic. Edmund Burke]. The problem for this argument is that it fails to realise that believers are not in this world at all and should not involve themselves in its politics. Those who trust that God is working out his sovereign plans for history can trust that what happens is for his good purpose and we do not seek to change it. Our fight is not for this world but for another.

It also fails to realise that Satan is ruling the world through the sin of men already; and God has told us in his word that such wickedness will worsen towards the end. Our job is not to try to reverse that misrule.

It also fails to realise that the weapons of our warfare are spiritual and not human. The Christian fights battles with prayer, faith, the Gospel and trust in God's word. Christians do not fight against this world; they are already delivered from it.

Essentially, this objection utterly fails to have any trust in the absolute sovereignty of God in the affairs of men. God is controlling all human affairs, whether of nations or of individuals, to achieve his eternal purpose. He is fully capable of doing what he pleases in our society without our help. Those who engage in such worldly protests have already missed the mark and have been distracted from God's kingdom.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love. Col 1:13

Walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. 1 Thess 2:12

Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.'  
Jn 18:36

### **Protests are a means of preaching the Gospel**

Some people use the scenario of protests against something as a stage to preach the Gospel. Now preaching the Gospel is a good thing, but not if it brings the Lord's testimony into disrepute.

It is one thing to be castigated or arrested for purely speaking God's word, but it is another when you are being arrested for a breach of the peace or harassment while attacking something, or for public disorder chanting slogans in a public place and being a general nuisance. In this case the persecution is deserved and does God's testimony no good at all.

In such cases the preaching is not accompanied by good works but by bad ones and the public will be put off Christianity in general by your bad representation of it. No wonder converts are hard to come by these days when there is so little genuine evangelism in public, and the evangelism there is, in some cases, is part of protests against this or that which ruins the Gospel message.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Matt 5:16

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. Rm 13:3-4

Having your conduct honourable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God. 1 Pt 2:12

### **We must defend the social gains made by past Christians**

Again this is a failure to understand the spiritual nature of the kingdom we are delivered into. We do not defend the things of this world, however laudable they may be. Our job is spiritual – it is to preach the Gospel, give a testimony to God in our good works and to build up the church.

The good works of Christians in the past led to some excellent social developments in Britain, such as the establishment of schools, hospitals, orphanages, prison reforms, release from child labour, and so on. In some cases these subsequently led to beneficial

changes in the law. Modern godless governments are undoing some of these legal gains by passing unrighteous laws and repealing good laws. However, our task remains the same. We must not be distracted from doing good and tempted into doing bad works, marring our testimony and perhaps even breaking the law in some foolhardy attempt to change a law or save a law.

### **Christians must fight to uphold good standards in society**

Just where does Scripture tell us to do this? 'Nowhere', is the answer.

The apostolic church did not fight to eradicate slavery or prostitution. It did not even start a crusade to legally get rid of heathen worship. It just obeyed God and preached the Gospel. Jesus himself never tried to change the general evils of Jewish society, nor did he attempt to overturn the social evils imposed by Roman occupation. Indeed, he distanced himself from political agitators.

Striving to make a good society here and now is failing to understand that we are not in this world but are in a spiritual and heavenly kingdom; our hope is set on the consummation of our salvation in Christ when he returns.

## **Conclusion**

Some have defended the strategy of protesting to the world by saying that, 'it does no harm'. This is a rather foolish approach. Firstly, we should do things because they have a clear focus, strategy and purpose. Our time is to be spent glorifying the Lord, redeeming the time and not wasted on trifles. If something is of questionable value, why do it at all? Secondly, such focus upon worldly things does do harm; it takes us away from our focus on Christ and directs us away from Christ's kingdom. By working in the world, according to the world's objectives and to change things in the world, we set ourselves up for attack from the usurper-ruler of this world.

There was a time in the 60s and 70s when the church was centred upon a fear of Communism. There were rallies, protests, petitions, books, sermons, and so forth about the Communist threat to the west and to the church. Communism was thought to be the final antichristian kingdom. Christians wasted enormous amounts of time dealing with this fear; a fear which never materialised. All that effort was totally wasted; effort and time that could have been spent in evangelism and building up the church.

The current chief target for Christian social action is the legalisation of homosexuality and its corollary legislation. This is but a symptom of the downfall of society as it has been in previous civilisations (e.g. Greece and Rome). Just as Christians facing the proliferation of homosexuality in classical cultures (even in the Roman imperial court) refused to get involved and instead concentrated upon preaching the Gospel, so we too should get our priorities straight.

The devil works chiefly through deception. The concerted effort to tempt Christians to concentrate upon protesting against Communism a few decades ago was a clever action to get Christians in the wrong place. By centring all their attention on this wasted effort, Satan was able to use his energies to actually do some real damage elsewhere, particularly in establishing the Charismatic Movement and the Pentecostal revival of fortunes. These became Trojan Horses for untold numbers of heretical ideas, which now permeate the modern church. The Communist threat to the church was a diversion and all that Christian

energy protesting it was not only a waste of time but enabled Satan to successfully achieve other ends.

Christians must always do what God wants, how he wants and when he wants it done. Thus we need to study his word to see what it is God wants. What is God's will for believers? When you can answer this you will stop wasting time trying to change the world and you will start building the church, edifying your brethren, doing good to your neighbours, preaching the Gospel and worshipping Christ.

Note: for a further examination of politics, see my paper, '*Politics and the Christian*'.

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