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If not, what then??

A consideration of the 'same-sex marriage' debate



The first same-sex marriage in N. Ireland was conducted recently because of a change in the law.

Of late, there have been some reports in the newspapers of the concerns Christians have regarding the Government's regulations regarding 'same-sex weddings'!

'The Christian Institute' has raised the issue regarding the situation in Northern Ireland. It reported back in January '02 that: "Public order law will be amended to underline that criticism of same-sex marriage is not an offence. He (former Secretary of State for NI, Julian Smith) also said that equality law is being amended so that religious bodies and staff cannot be sued for declining to take part in a blessing or other event marking a civil same-sex wedding. Changes will also protect the ability of religious organisations to dismiss a staff member who enters a same-sex marriage if that is incompatible with the organisation's values.

The Secretary of State says he is also in discussion with Northern Irish equalities bodies about guidance for employers and schools to make clear that beliefs and opinions about marriage should be respected." (<https://www.christian.org.uk/news/govt-acts-on-ni-same-sex-marriage-concerns/>)

It is right that Christians oppose the introduction of wicked laws which openly and flagrantly breach God's Law. It is also right that when Governments press ahead, as they invariably do, with the introduction of such laws, that Christians demand freedom to be exempt from them.

In the case of 'same-sex marriage' here in Northern Ireland, churches have been given some measure of exception. However, there have, quite rightly, been calls for ALL Christians to be able to disassociate themselves from such 'wedding' ceremonies.

Under the law, those who may come into contact with such events, council officials, caterers, photographers, florists etc, may not exempt themselves from them. It would be a breach of the law for any Christian, in response to their obedience to God's Word, to reject any request for their professional services.

Just what is the Christian to do in such circumstances?

As we turn to the Bible we will discover that such circumstances as we see developing here in Ulster and throughout the United Kingdom, are not new.

God's people have always found themselves 'outside' the laws of men. Man's laws spring from his depraved nature and it is for it that he is catering!

Divorce, remarriage, abortion, legalised immorality of all forms, and in more recent days, the re-emergence of legalised sodomy and its associated perversions, all have their origin in the fallen, wicked nature of man.

All these things are declared unlawful by God and no legislative edicts of men can alter that.

Sadly, it was stated by Free Presbyterian minister Rev Kyle Paisley, that 'recriminalisation would be "ridiculously unworkable" ' (**Irish Times November 1st, 2015**).

There is no law of God 'ridiculous or unworkable'. To suggest such is surely an affront to the wisdom of the Lord! Furthermore, it will be seen that such laws are very workable when the Lord Jesus returns to this world and takes up the governance of it. This will be seen in the great day when: ". . . the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever," Revelation 11:15. The Law of God will then be



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administered universally for Christ shall "rule all nations with a rod of iron," Revelation 12:5. There will be no exemptions from His Law in that day!

However, while man rules in this 'his day', Christians will ever find themselves in conflict with man's laws. What are we to do when our appeals for exemption are rejected - as they habitually are? Again I say, the Bible holds the answer to that question.

Examples

In the long history of the confrontation between the world and those who seek "to obey God rather than men," (Acts 5:29), we have many examples of what the godly ought to do. The verse I have just quoted refers to but one example. Peter and the apostles have been commanded by the leaders of their nation that they "should not teach in this (the Saviour's) name?" (Acts 5:28). The actions taken by the apostles in response to this command by the leaders of the nation is given us in the words of the leaders who have been defied. ". . . behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us," verse 28.

Holy Defiance

There are times when it is right to defy man's law. Just such a time is approaching us here in Ulster!

I could add many examples from the recorded histories of the words and actions of the prophets to support what I say. Perhaps the famous reactions of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and of their friend, Daniel would suffice to illustrate what I am saying.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up," Daniel 3:16-18.

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime," Daniel 6:10.

Suffer the consequences

It will be seen that not only is it required of us to defy the laws of men when they would have us act contrary to God's Law, but we must be ready and willing to suffer the consequences. Such willing suffering is every bit as much part of our testimony as speaking out in the first place.

Peter said: "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed," 1 Peter 2:19-24.

Again, he said: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator," 1 Peter 4:15-19.



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We may appeal to governments and legislators but I feel that as it has been in the past, so it will be again. The Christian's concerns will be ignored. It is there that we must commit the keeping of our souls "to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

Darkness

Dark days indeed are coming upon us. We must not act, as did foolish British politicians in the late 1930s under the leadership of Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. They ignored Hitler's skirmishing in Europe which had they but recognised it, heralded a coming conflagration with Nazi Germany!

No, a spirit of a 'greater than Hitler' is at work in the nations today and we should consult the Bible and study carefully the revelation given us there of the coming days. The Saviour said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man," Luke 21:33-36.

Is that not plain enough for us! The Saviour would have us informed so that we are not taken 'unawares' by such events.

Pulpits

Oh! How our pulpits need to ring out with these truths in these evil days.

May the people of God today be as were the Thessalonians in the first century. "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him," 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10.

How as it that the Thessalonians knew "perfectly (exactly, accurately) that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night"?

2 Thessalonians 2:5 explains their knowledge. "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"

May the Lord give His Church men of Paul's spirit again.

Ivan Foster.

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