

Position Paper

Western civilisation is like the Titanic, fatally holed and facing impending destruction while many of its admirers still believe in its indestructibility. The discerning recognise the danger but are primarily concerned with patching the breaches, undoing the recent changes and getting back to the way things used to be.

There are several basic fallacies here. First, there has never been a golden age of social justice, harmony and prosperity for all. Secondly, it is a gross misunderstanding of human nature and social organization to believe that a harmonious social order is a natural phenomenon.

In society, as in the natural world, chaos rather than order is the natural state. Society has to be regulated to produce order and harmony. Left to themselves without rules, human beings will create chaos and destruction, like unsupervised infants in a nursery stocked with lethal weapons.

Christian theology has always recognized the proclivity of human nature towards evil and it was for this reason that the church adopted the practice of infant baptism, believing that sinful human nature could only be changed by the redeeming work of God.

It is widely acknowledged that the current direction of social trends in Britain is heading towards social disintegration. If there is to be a change of direction leading to a healthy and prosperous period in our history there has to be a strategy based upon an understanding of human nature and a proven theory of social change.

Wilberforce used to say that his objective was 'to make goodness fashionable'. This can most effectively be done by harnessing the chief engines of human action and inaction, which are love and fear. Moral systems will only work if they can, either make us afraid of wrongdoing, or make us love what is good.

Fear of wrongdoing can be inculcated by legal restrictions or by community action such as ridicule, ostracism, or loss of privileges. Societies where the moral system is based upon fear are rarely happy and are usually repressive such as totalitarian regimes. A community where relationships are based upon love is outward looking, seeking to serve others rather than to gain self-advantage. Such a society enjoys freedom from fear and promotes a sense of fulfilment among its members.

*An effective strategy for social transformation has to have a twofold objective, (a) **influencing individual behaviour**; (b) **initiating institutional change**.*

(a) **In terms of individual behaviour** there needs to be a sustained campaign based upon the positive promotion of goodness rather than repressive measures of punishment of offenders. This requires a programme of community education to promote the positive values of goodness whilst also showing the negative effects of deviant behaviour.

(b) **In terms of institutional change** there has to be a clear objective of the kind of society that will both promote the good of each individual and the health, prosperity, and well-being of the whole community. A strategy of change within each institution can then be devised and a programme of action agreed by those who are involved in each institution.

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August 2003

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