

# CHRISTIANS UNDER ATTACK

By

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About twenty years ago Elton Trueblood made the prediction that committed Christians, by the end of the century, would be “a conscious minority, surrounded by a militant and arrogant paganism, which is the logical development of a secularist trend.”

His prediction has come true sooner than he expected. Not since the first century has there been such an effort to destroy Christian faith and culture as is now taking place throughout the world and especially in the United States. The newspapers, TV, and magazine industries are almost unanimous in censoring the truth of Christ from all viewing and reading. Schools, from the first grade through graduate college, work for the extinction of Christian truth and influence, so that our Christian heritage is being eroded deliberately and systematically. A government-funded survey has placed the blame for teen-age suicides on the Christian teaching that sexual perversion is sinful and says that churches need to change their beliefs concerning homosexuality. The study recommends that churches “...enlist gay and lesbian adults to work with youth,” obviously to assure these children that their aberrant lifestyle is acceptable. This is typical of the state’s effort to control the church and an example of the general animosity toward basic Christian teaching.

In May of this year, the American Bar Association sponsored a seminar for trial lawyers, instructing them in how to use tort law against religious organizations and individuals. According to Attorney J. Shelby Sharpe, in the *Chalcedon Report* (October 1989), “War has been declared, and Christianity is in a fight to the death.”

Under the relentless pressure to conform to the world, many have taken the easy way, by compromise or surrender. Their churches have become social clubs, blending in with the pagan world and offering a kind of religious casserole where all may feel religiously blessed without having to make the choice of self-denial or renouncing the world’s agenda in order to follow Jesus. Such a compromise may seem to offer less conflict, but it does not bring peace of mind and leads to ultimate defeat rather than victory.

The question is: **How should a Christian react to this all-out attack on Christian faith and life?**

In the first place, one must accept the basic difference between the person of the world and the Christian, as Jesus presents it in the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 5:3-12. The difference is not in the environment nor work place nor station in life but in character.

Instead of boasting of self-sufficiency, the Christian is **poor in spirit** and humbly acknowledges his dependency upon God’s forgiveness through the gospel. Instead of

finding pleasure in sin, he now grieves over his weaknesses and mourns over the evils in society. Instead of striving for position above others and satisfaction for himself, he is **meek** and seeks the welfare of those above or beneath his position.

Where once he justified unethical practice, and tried to find ways to get around the Creator's commands, the Christian now has a completely different desire: hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of God. Having received God's mercy, the disciple of Christ refuses to take vengeance against those who abuse and injure him but extends to them his own mercy and forgiveness. Rather than pursuing a multitude of concerns, he is single-minded and pure in heart, setting his goal on pleasing God in everything. He is at peace with God and seeks to extend that peace to all within his influence, and as a peacemaker, he is one of the sons of God.

Such a life is diametrically opposed to that of the secular humanist and exposes the latter's shabby values and false sense of worth and security. For this he can expect the hatred of the world, its false accusations and persecution. There is no value in being different just to be different, but at the core of Christian faith is the purpose to be like Christ, to be conformed to the image of God, and this immediately is going to set us apart from the rest of the world and invite its animosity.

In the second place, we are called on to confront the world by giving it Christ's message, calling it to repentance and exposing its works of darkness. While we are under no mandate from Jesus to gain the world's riches, power or recognition, we are under His instructions to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The greater the evil in the world, the stronger the flavor of the salt and the brighter the light appears.

The real conflict of our day is religious, yet the major voices in the denominations refuse to speak out. The church retreats into its own ghetto and polishes its armor but leaves it behind when it goes out into the world. Many Christians not only will not speak out, they will not even hand out a tract or clipping on a timely subject. They may hotly debate current issues in the Sunday school class, but their witness is never heard outside the walls of the church house. If this is salt, Jesus said it is good for nothing (Matthew 5:13).

We are followers of Jesus. He drove the money-changers from the temple and openly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees. He spoke of love, but He also challenged falsehood and evil and demanded repentance. This is confrontation and is an example for every Christian.

In the third place, we are to apply God's purpose in all of life. We are created to be in God's image and to glorify Him in all things.

For too long, Christians have divided life into the secular and the sacred. Leaders talk about one's "spiritual life" or his "prayer life." Worship, evangelism, prayer, and Bible reading are seen as spiritual or sacred, while work, school, business and recreation are seen as secular and as less important in relationship to God. A portion of life is set aside for God's use, but the rest of it is lived as though God is not concerned. In some churches

every act is carefully regulated where the “assembly” is at “worship,” but the rules do not apply at home or at work. This reduces worship to church attendance and robs the believer of the joy and strength of daily worship and of being the church wherever he is at any time.

God’s image is to be reflected in the way one does business, in the way one farms, keeps house, sells a product, writes (or makes) music, in short, in every thought and action. The culture in this country is rapidly changing because it is being permeated with strains of pagan cultures. This could not happen if Christians brought the Creator’s purpose to bear upon every dimension of life.

In the fourth place, we must demonstrate that our security is in Christ and not in the world. Our generation seeks security in human guarantees: social security, unemployment benefits, health care, union membership, insurance, etc. We have relied on military protection for security, ignoring the fact that while we won World War II by military power, we failed to secure the nations of Europe, resulting in the loss of millions of lives and the loss of freedom for the survivors.

Jesus warned against trusting worldly means for security. Banks fail. Governments fail. Men fail. But God does not fail. “But seek ye first his kingdom and righteousness; and all these things (necessary to life) shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow...” (Matthew 6:33, 34).

No one fails who honestly pursues the goal to be in the image of God. You may fail to grow rich or to be successful in business. You may fail to win acclaim or to have an ideal marriage or even to enjoy good health. But none of this can prevent you from growing daily more and more in the grace and knowledge of Christ so that transformation to the image of God can be taking place in the midst of all your trials. In fact, scripture teaches that such trials are the very means by which we develop the patience and faith by which we live to please the Father.

The only security is in God. Christian faith is to believe that we may give everything, even life itself, over to Him, and in the resurrection He will give us glorious and incorruptible bodies that we may have eternal life in His new creation.

These are only a few of the basic things we need to have firmly in mind as we engage in this warfare. The enmity is against Christ, and we are His ambassadors. We do not stand alone. There are great numbers of others throughout the world who have not “bowed the knee to Baal.” Christ is in our midst and has assured us of the final and eternal victory.

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