

## **What road are we on as a society, and how did we get here?**

by Rev. Tom Aicken

In 2022, we find ourselves living in a very troubled and rapidly changing world. I am referring not just to troubles abroad, but also to deep-rooted divisions, clashing ideologies and the loss of moral standards here at home. To uncover the root of the problem we have to go right back to the dawn of history, to Adam and Eve and their encounter with the serpent in the garden. In the words of the old New England primer,

“In Adam’s fall,  
we sinned all.”

As a result, Adam’s offspring are born in sin. Having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, Jesus of Nazareth did not receive the imputation of Adam’s sin. But for the rest of us, we are dead in sin from conception and unresponsive to the calling of God until we are made alive in Christ. Indeed, for those who continue in sin, who do not believe in the Son of God, the wrath of God abides on them forever (see John 3:35,36). The trouble started with Adam.

In this paper, however, I want to address events of more recent history. In doing so, my purpose is not to examine them in depth, or even to look at as many as we can, but to gain an overview of major cultural movements which have brought us to where we are today, to note the markers which triggered them and the direction in which they are leading us in the days ahead.

Let me begin with the post-war years of the mid-twentieth century. In spite of the cold war, life for many of us back in the 1950’s was a time of relative peace and prosperity. We enjoyed a growing economy. As we laid aside the poverty and hardship of the 1930’s and 40’s, the road to recovery was well underway and, with few clouds in the sky, the future seemed as bright as can be. Such naive optimism, however, leads to ignoring our Creator and slipping into the careless mode of taking everything we have for granted. That is exactly what happened. What, have we learned nothing from the past? Turning away from God to the ways of the unbelieving world is the epitome of folly, as history has repeatedly demonstrated. Why should we think that it would be any different for us?

As a result, we were totally unprepared for the sexual revolution of the 1960's. We could not imagine, with our blind assumption of unwavering morality and so recently displayed patriotism, that a new generation would suddenly spring into action with ideas of their own. Of course, there were as always other contributing factors to influence this change of direction. The mismanaged Viet Nam War, for instance, and the countless number of draft-dodgers uprooting themselves to avoid the war, exacerbated the situation considerably.

This was a time when many young people rebelled (in their own words) “against the establishment.” In point of fact, it was a rebellion against previously held moral standards, against accepting personal responsibility for anything they did, including having to plan for the future and care for the wellbeing of others. These young people were determined not to fight and die for freedom in times of war as their fathers and grandfathers had done. It was a period of excessive drugs, of unrestrained sexual activity, and of just “hanging out” and preparing for nothing.

In the 1970's, particularly when the twenty-year Viet Nam War ended, when these same young people got tired of their lot and matured enough to realize that they needed some kind of future, they put on their three-piece suits and got to work. It appeared that the sexual revolution had finally ended. As we learn from history, however, revolutions are never over in the short term but have lasting effects which become the foundation for what is to follow. What followed the sexual revolution of the 1960's was a much quieter, though equally significant cultural movement – a time in our history when what did *not* happen actually became more important than what *did* happen – and the Quebec version of it would be called “the Quiet Revolution.”

What was it that did not happen? In just an eight-year period, from 1966 to 1974, Sunday school attendance in North America dropped more than half, and it continued to decrease in the ensuing years. In other words, parents – even unbelieving parents who never went to church themselves but once sent their children to Sunday school because they wanted to give them a moral foundation for life – no longer thought that the Bible needed to play any role in the nurturing of their children. This was a huge departure from past practices, even if it slipped by us virtually unnoticed at the time.

Prior to the 1970's, many children in North America could tell you something about Abraham, Moses and David – even the meaning of Christmas – whereas today there are few who know anything about them. From the often-quoted statement of Daniel Webster (1823), “If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, error will be. If God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy; if the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will; if the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end.” Sadly, this is precisely what we are seeing today!

Following this widespread abandonment of the Bible, the 1980's brought in the feminist movement, something that would have been considered quite abhorrent to most people (including women) only thirty years earlier. But you see what happens when the Scriptures are neglected and the previously established principle of male headship (1 Corinthians 11:3) is abandoned.

According to Phyllis Schlafly, those who originally proposed this brand of feminism were women who had been abused by men, whether fathers or husbands, and this was their way of fighting back. But what, precisely, is it? Feminism is generally thought to be a cause formed to preserve the equality of the sexes, to give men and women equal opportunities in the workforce and with equal pay. In reality, however, this feminist movement was much more than that; it sought to affirm that women can replace men, not only in the workplace but everywhere else as well, thus making men dispensable. This has had the effect of emasculating society, and it has also contributed to today's push for transgenderism, which insists that biological males do not have to be men at all but can be anything they want to be. Today, in fact, some of the leading feminists do not oppose even sharia law, which shows more than anything that fighting for the equality of the sexes was never really their agenda. As with so many leftist ideologies, we have to look beyond the rhetoric to uncover the real substance and intention of the campaign.

The Bible says that God created man, that He created them male and female in His image (which clearly establishes their equality), and that He made the woman to be a helper comparable to the man (which sets forth the principle of complementarianism, that men and women are to function in different yet complementary roles). Equality does not imply uniformity. Biological males, then, are to remain just that, and to serve the Lord God in that role, using all the gifts, opportunities and means of serving Him that He has bestowed upon them. In the same way, biological females are to remain just that as well, biological females. This is their Creator's own appointed purpose for them, and any attempt to undo that or turn them into something else will only pervert what is divinely appointed and make them extremely unhappy. It is a well-documented fact that 80% of all children who experience gender dysphoria choose to be what God has made them by the time they arrive at puberty, and that there is a high suicide rate among the 20% who do not.

There are so many other issues which mark the breakdown of our society over the last seventy years – abortion, euthanasia, the sexualizing of our children by the public schools, the special rights demanded and now received by the LGBTQ community, plus all the attacks on marriage and the family – but what we have taken up here is quite enough to show what happens to our society and whole way of life when we turn away from the Lord and look to the ways of the world, when we neglect His Word and every man, left to his own devices, seeks to do what is right in his own eyes (see Proverbs 14:12).

Almighty God calls all people to Himself through a living faith in Jesus Christ and promises eternal life to all who do. This is a great and precious promise, but it calls for a total commitment on our part, a commitment to hide His Word in our hearts, to let it dwell richly within us, and to do so to the end that we might live it out in our life. From Proverbs 29:18, “Where there is no revelation” (no word from the Lord to give godly counsel) – what happens? – “the people cast off restraint” (they go their own wicked way and perish in their sin); “but happy is he who keeps the law” (the evidence of a saving faith, the proof that God is working in someone to will and to do His good pleasure, is the believer's heartfelt desire and determination to keep His commands).

