

## Proclaiming God's Truth in an Orwellian World

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In 1949, George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was published. It told of a fictional totalitarian state called Oceania, which created a language called Ingsoc (for English Socialism) to progressively weaken the independence of people's thinking, enabling the ruling Party to get citizens of Oceania to accept anything it decreed, even if it were entirely illogical. For example, the official slogans of the Party, inscribed on the white pyramid of the 'Ministry of Truth,' were "War is peace," "Freedom is slavery," and "Ignorance is strength."

Orwell's fictional world is looking more like ours every day. Some time ago I was watching a clip of an old TV sitcom (from the 1970s) with a friend. It was genuinely funny, and we both laughed out loud a number of times. Then my friend said, "Can you imagine someone in a TV sitcom saying those things today?! They'd be called sexist, racist hate-mongers!" I thought for a minute, and realized he was right. What is interesting is that most of the characters in the sitcom were black.

We are living in a time of cultural deconstruction. Western Civilization used to be a required course in a liberal arts education; it's virtually unknown today. High school and college students know embarrassingly little about our founding fathers or their spiritual heritage. Richard Weaver noted decades ago that "culture is more easily destroyed than created." Of American society, he wrote, "One of the main forces that created our country and modern western civilization was the Church. Now it is the disdain for the Church that is destroying our society."

What's taking its place is a contrived morality, where voices of influence (some call them 'elites') decide what is acceptable or unacceptable, and enforce their verdict unilaterally. Their creed is 'political correctness,' and saying anything 'politically incorrect' is grounds for open derision and removal from accepted society. This is evident especially in 'hot-button' areas; not 'toeing the line' on gender choice, abortion, marriage, or sexual orientation is an unpardonable sin. Not surprisingly, Scripture (which never minced words) is under attack.

Christians in America have been arrested for reading the Bible in public. The California Assembly has approved a bill banning counseling homosexuals who want to change their same-sex attraction. An evangelist in Britain was locked up for a hate crime after counseling a homosexual using the story of Adam and Eve. The Supreme Court of Canada unanimously convicted a Christian of hate speech for publicly declaring the biblical teaching on homosexuality. And yet, vile and vicious verbal attacks go unpunished, with some in media and politics even encouraging it – as long as these attacks meet the elites' approval. (In recent days, some attacks have become physical – and dangerous.) Nicholas Kristof writes, "Today, among urban Americans and Europeans, 'Evangelical Christian' is sometimes a synonym for 'Rube' ['country bumpkin']. In liberal circles, evangelicals constitute one of the few groups that are safe to mock openly." (NY Times, March 29, 2015)\*

The moral standards of our country, once reflecting the evangelical Church, are being displaced, dismantled, and destroyed by elite atheistic progressives who approve and embrace what was, just a generation ago, considered unethical. Abortion at the beginning of life (even marketing embryonic body parts), and physician assisted suicide at the end of life, are 'bookends' for a moral vacuum in the time in-between. As Scripture puts it, this is "worshiping the creature rather than the creator" (Romans 1).

Much of modern Christianity has capitulated to this godless ethic. The tragedy is that now more than ever, a secular world needs a biblically-grounded Church. May we, as the 'living Church' today, never submit to a contrived morality. We speak the truth of God, and we speak it with the love of God, even when it is met with mockery. Martin Luther King said, "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope."

That is something for every believer to remember in these Orwellian days: Our 'blessed hope' is coming again! Let us each 'run with endurance the race set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus' (Hebrews 12.1-2).

\* It seems that treatment of Christians in the west is 'catching up' to the rest of the world. A 2016 study by the Italian-based Center for Studies on New Religions showed that Christians continued to be the most persecuted religious group across the globe. In that year, some 90,000 Christians were killed for their beliefs worldwide, and as many as 600 million more were prevented from practicing their faith. As many news outlets reported earlier this year, the persecution and genocide of Christians across the world is worse today "than at any time in history," and Western governments are failing to stop it.