# THE PERILS OF LIBERALISM

I was recently lent a book called Suicide of the West by James Burnham, published in 1964. The author was for much of his adult life a communist, but came to see inherent contradictions in what he called "liberalism", an extreme aspect of which was for him communism. I think it worth looking at his views. I do not agree with everything he wrote, but there is substance nonetheless in the broad framework of his argument. He didn't foresee a quick collapse of the West, rather a decline over a few decades. He saw liberalism as I will define it below as the ideology of the decline.

A quick word about Burnham's "liberalism". This is perhaps what we would call "secularism" today. It is more than a political belief system. It is the fundamental collection of beliefs held by the leading men and women of our society. We will probably hold some of these too ourselves, but not all. In isolation, any one of these beliefs is benign. What is important in this analysis, is that it brings together individual beliefs into a whole way of life, showing its over-riding destructive tendency.

For Burnham, liberalism had conquered corridors of power, the media, the universities. In its mid to late 20th century form it was wedded to welfare reform, and to an internationalist agenda (that is, larger and larger administrative areas such as the European Union), and was overwhelmingly positive about human nature. As man was essentially good, when things went wrong it was not the fault of individuals; rather, it was the institutions of society that forced certain people into bad ways.

Rioters, criminals and layabouts were commiserated for the bad social structures and institutions inflicted upon them. They were not villains, rather victims, according to the liberal ideology. It was bad housing estates that led to drug addicts, pushers and criminality. It was therefore the job of government to remove or change these bad institutions so that man could realize his potential, which was otherwise being hampered by faulty institutions.

For those who fail, there is still the temporary need to lock people up. In prison, or wherever they end up, they are offered "re-education" to reposition them in society. Money and schemes abound to help those who fail, whether in chronic unemployment or other disheartening situations, with some but generally little success.

The money also creates thousands of projects, financed indirectly by the government, where the liberal creed is preached with a devotion that would not have seemed out of place in a 19th century revivalist meeting. This adds burdens on the public purse and pelts the miscreants with the liberal agenda. There is a lot of sympathy and very little direction, for that is against the liberal creed.

The same policy is followed with Islamic extremists. The government showers any organization that works for harmony with Muslims, or even Muslim societies themselves, with money. When I was chairman of the East London Three Faiths Forum, I always resisted taking this money as I saw it as immoral. This policy was changed as soon as I resigned. It is the same policy followed in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. It assumes if you give enough for new roads and hospitals and schools everybody will see it your way.

What these people fail to see is that both liberalism and Islam are ideologies. That means that they are complete systems of thought, where arguments are circular and mutually confirming. Nobody who believes in an ideology will quickly give up on his mutually confirming ideas. Something else

must bring about the shift, and this is unlikely to be achieved merely by money. This is why I believe most government policy to combat Islamic extremism is very misguided.

Liberalism was deeply egalitarian, and sought to level all onto a similar level playing field, giving all an equal opportunity to enjoy this life. It is the task of government to remove the prejudice and privilege that leads to social injustice, whereby some are disadvantaged in relation to others. It was always institutions that must change, not individuals who were at fault per se, such as when the police were called institutionally racist after the death of Stephen Lawrence.

Liberalism was also relativist, seeing all religions and definite statements about truth as misleading. Nobody had the right to say that something was absolutely true. It was better to assume that that was beyond our reach, if not absolutely false. What was important was to end the ignorance that many people had that allowed bad institutions to continue to exist. Therefore liberalism sought to end this prejudice and error through good schooling, where the new citizen could flourish and grow to adulthood. Once people were correctly educated, they would see things aright. They would see things in the liberal way. This was the way of liberation from prejudice.

In 2014, fifty years later than Burnham's 1964, I believe we have come to a crisis point. The liberal/secularist creed has driven all before it. Children are now raised with a completely relativist outlook. As far as their teachers are concerned, there are no such things as absolute right and wrong; rather, you choose your own right and wrong. You mustn't criticise those who hold different views. You can certainly criticise absolute beliefs, like the ones Christians hold, but provided you are not dogmatic, anything goes. It's your affair.

Children are also taught that sex is a recreational activity that they can choose to exercise with whom they will. This point is reinforced by the teachers having live-in boy and girl friends and occasional pregnancies outside of wedlock. Liberalism has presided over a destruction of the family unprecedented in all human history, as people have chosen their own personal ends over the venerable but frequently patriarchal institution of marriage. Religion, whatever its type, is an outdated prejudice. It is studied in school purely out of interest for its variety and quirkiness, whereas when I was at school it was normative to start the day with prayers and the Bible.

Liberalism downplays its own nation. It undervalues its own culture (Christianity again) for the sake of mankind generally. The host culture is now badly imbalanced by the overhasty influx of the world's humanity through immigration. This adds to the betrayal of Christianity, as naturally many of the newcomers do not follow the faith that built Britain. Many of these do not follow the liberal code either and may assist the destruction of the host culture, if the liberals do not get there first. Throwing money at them does not make them see things differently.

If you think this borders on racism, know that these are not my thoughts alone but the thoughts too of the black Ghanaian Catholic Cardinal Turkson, who warned precisely in these terms of the dangers of excessive immigration into Europe. This change – that is the rise of the non-European in Europe – is now irreversible. How our European Christian culture will emerge from this melting pot is anybody's guess.

That the situation has been allowed to continue so long is a major failure of government. However, it is not a failure of liberalism, which desires equality and diversity and desires with great if blind faith

a big harmony of humanity. Noble as this vision may sound, all the evidence historically suggests that it will not turn out this way. I am not against immigration, but if it is not Christian it will undoubtedly change us if there are not very strong checks to the contrary. Those checks have been deliberately avoided.

There are three important points to take from this analysis.

Firstly, the liberal ideology is deeply anti-Christian. When Christians are butchered in the Middle East the liberal doesn't see. When Muslim Palestinians are manhandled, it sees very quickly. Prince Charles has recently pointed this out. At no time in history has there been so much persecution of Christians, or so much silence in the media. The anti-Christian stance is in part motivated by Christianity's sense of moral and historical certainty. This offends the liberal's dictum of relativism. Liberalism sees Christianity as a reaction against its progression. I would not disagree, provided we put "progression" in inverted commas.

Secondly, the liberal system does not work. It produces mountains of public debt, hordes of unemployed, addiction-broken families and full and overflowing prisons. Surely if liberalism were the right way, after the seventy year welfare experiment, shouldn't this be the other way round: less unemployment, fewer people in prison, fewer drug takers? We know that it is the opposite that is true: an increase by at least a factor of ten, if not much higher. This is a damning judgment of liberalism. Any normal person would therefore say: QED, liberalism is an ideology that has failed. The liberal assumes on the contrary that he has been sorely served by those who have ostensibly helped him. No data, however negative, will make him rethink his course.

Thirdly, all the major UK political parties are liberal, differing only in the smallest degree. There may be rhetoric this way or that, but essentially nothing will change given the current complete liberal control of the corridors of power, from the BBC to local councils and finally to Westminster. This is not to say that these liberals or secularists are the majority. I do not believe that they are any greater in number than committed Christians. It is just that they have cleverly managed and commanded their views such that we have come to accept their dominance almost unquestioningly.

At heart, this ideology is very dangerous to the West. It has duped most of us, essentially because we rightly want to accept the stranger, care for the ones who fall by the wayside and think the best of our fellow men. Many of us have assumed that the ideology is essentially Christian, including most Anglican bishops. However, it has also educated people to have very few moral values. As adults, those people are now in many cases hostile to Christianity, the faith from which the special ethos of the West originally sprang.

Most worryingly, the ideology has weakened modern man. Without morals a man is weak, as he will not have to stand up for right, because ultimately there is no right other than the right of equality. The natural man has been given full leeway, on the assumption that the natural man is good: witness the support given by industry and even government to Gay Pride marches, essentially the figurehead for the casting off of sexual restraint, whether homosexual or heterosexual.

The evidence is that, unless trained for character by wise and careful teachers, the child will grow up to be unruly and even in many cases prone to destroy himself and others. This has until very recently always been the basis of all education in the West. It was always moral as well as factual and grammatical. Now it is otherwise, and I believe we will soon reap the harvest of this fundamental change, namely, allowing children to choose their own moral standards instead of leading them into the constraints of a timeless tradition, such as that provided by Biblical teaching.

The liberal solution and counter-argument largely depends on money to achieve its dubious ends (more money for schools, under-performing areas, work schemes, etc) but it is showing itself increasingly incapable of raising it. Meanwhile, without clear moral goals many are floundering, with little the social services can do to help, over-stretched as they are.

There is only one way to save our society: to return to the faith of our fathers and to the teaching which seeks to create moral people of the highest character and faithfulness to their saviour Christ. This is the opposite of liberalism/secularism. It finds a firm belief and provides clear moral boundaries. I believe as a lone voice that this must be national, and it must stem from Parliament as well as the archbishops and bishops of the Church of England. This is what made Britain great in the nineteenth century. May God provide the way to restore this wholesome way of life, now undervalued and frequently hated.

Father Robert

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