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THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE

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THE PROTESTANT FAITH

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The Bible enunciates an important principle of human behaviour in a verse in Proverbs 23:7 which reads "As a man thinketh in his heart so he is".

We have many modern illustrations of this principle. For example, Adolph Hitler expressed his thoughts in his book "Mein Kampf" long before he came to power in Germany. From this book it was plain that he sincerely thought that the German race was the master race while the Jews were a curse to mankind. When he came to power he acted on these ideas because, "as a man thinks so he is". Thus Hitler sent the Jews to the gas chambers, in millions, and strove to make the German race militarily supreme. Those who thought they could change Hitler by appeasement ignored the principle "As a man thinks, so he is", for Hitler had quite clearly expressed his thoughts in his book.

We have another modern illustration in Communism: under Stalin millions of Russian peasants were liquidated; in the Congo rebel soldiers under the influence of Chinese Communist advisers shot all Africans who could read and write in the villages under their control.

Neither Hitler's gas chambers nor Communist liquidations are examples merely of barbarism; on the contrary, they are the scientific outworkings of the thoughts and theories of those who perpetrated them. For example the principles of Communism are simple to understand, and they lead inevitably to the liquidation of an entire class of society. Communism believes that nothing exists except matter in motion, therefore there can be no God, nor any absolute standard of right or wrong. It believes everything is controlled and determined by matter in motion even though in human life the control is very complicated. In particular

Communists believe that human personality is created and controlled by the economic situation in which a man lives. Thus those who possess the means of production whom they call the bourgeoisie will, they believe, inevitably develop a certain character as a result of their economic situation, while those who do not possess means of production, that is to say, the proletariat, will similarly develop their own character. Communism believes that it is inevitable that these two classes should engage in class war, from which there can be no let up nor peace till the bourgeois are exterminated by the proletariat. This is what the Communists mean by peace. Thus the mass liquidations of Russia, China and elsewhere are simply the results of what Communists believe. It doesn't make any difference that events have shown the falsehood of Marxist / Leninism; Communists still believe that it is inevitable that these two

classes should engage in class war from which there can be no peace till the bourgeois are exterminated when the proletariat reach a position of dictatorship, that is to say when the Communist Party becomes dominant. It does not make any difference that their theories do not tally with the facts. Communists still believe them, and "as a man thinks, so he is". Communist behaviour can be predicted from Communist ideas, just as Hitler's behaviour could have been predicted from his book.

So too with Western man; as he thinks, so he is. The tragedy of our western world is that we no longer believe anything with conviction, and as a consequence our actions reflect this vacuum of thought. They have no objectives nor any standards, only our desires remain constant and so we have become the slaves of our desires.

Western civilisation has insulated itself from God. For example, modern theories of the origin of man have distracted our attention from the basic fact that God is our Creator. Modern medicine, one of God's greatest gifts, is used to deflect our thoughts from our ultimate destiny, while the modern welfare state, with the great boon of economic security which it brings, has diverted our minds from the duty of trusting God Who is the ultimate provider of all things. Consequently we feel no need to trust God because everything is provided. As Jesus foretold "When the Son of Man comes will He find faith on the earth?"

Modern Western life (of which Australia is a part) has very little thought for anything else except having a good time and seeking its own pleasure. The emptiness of modern Western life and thought means that we have no principles nor determination by which to resist the inroads of

error, whether in the form of immorality or Communism. We modern Christians are involved in our Western predicament of unbelief. Our neighbours don't believe, the group in which we mix doesn't believe and as a consequence we are tempted to water down our own faith. As a whole it is true to say that we modern Christians have relaxed our trust in God as Sovereign Lord, the Creator and Controller of all. We have relaxed our belief in God's holiness, and so in His judgment, in spite of the fact that the Bible clearly says that God's judgment is so complete that even every idle word will come up for examination. We have relaxed our conviction on the centrality of Jesus Christ in history, Jesus Who came from God to be our Saviour, Who is the One through Whom God has come into a relationship with mankind for the purpose of blessing and salvation.

"As a man thinks, so he is". Our modern Christianity

has become weak in faith and so is flabby in witness. It has no real message to the God-forgetting society around us. As individuals we engage in little personal evangelism, and as congregations we have a very weak witness. I do not say that we don't invite people to church, but do we testify to Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between God and man? Because our beliefs are weak we turn aside from evangelism whether personal or corporate and instead engage our attention in building up our institutions and church organizations. These church institutions and organisations appear to be more tangible to those weak in faith because they are things of this world. If we modern Christians are to be saved in the Judgment which is inevitable we must deepen our faith in God as Sovereign Lord, in the Holy God Who judges, and yet the loving God Who saves. We need to renew our faith in the purposes of God which find expression in Jesus Christ crucified, risen and

coming again. For God's purposes did not cease 2,000 years ago at the resurrection but are still being completed and will be completed. We need to renew our faith in Christ as Lord and in His coming Kingdom. If we believe these things we will have something to say to our God-forgetting community, but we cannot generate a renewed faith out of our own resources. First we need to pray for one another, for faith is of God; and secondly we need to have fellowship with one another on the basis of our common faith; for fire kindles fire, and fellowship strengthens faith. It is possible to have fellowship at different levels and on different bases, but Christians need to have fellowship on their fundamental beliefs. It is not enough to have fellowship merely in church projects, in working bees or even stewardship campaigns, but we need fellowship on the basis of a common belief that Jesus Christ is Lord. If we strengthen each

other in this then we will strengthen our witness in a God-forgetting community. Jesus foretold that "When the Son of man comes again, will He find faith on the earth?" This is a warning lest we should ourselves become involved in weak unbelieving attitudes which dominate society around us.

"As a man thinks, so he is". This principle implies that if we are to be Christians we need to keep in the forefront of our minds the facts of revelation. We should think constantly on the great truths that God is Creator and Judge and Saviour; that Jesus Christ is the One in Whom God has a relationship with us, and through Whom we become the sons of God and inheritors of God's purposes. Jesus Christ is Lord: Lord at Calvary and in the resurrection and coming Lord, to bring to completion God's purposes of judgment, and if we believe this and keep these truths before our minds and strengthen one

another in them, then our
actions will reflect our
Christian thoughts just as
Hitler's actions reflected his
thoughts and the Communists
theirs, while western society
reflects its God-forgetting
thoughts.

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