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"The Protestant Faith"

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Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge, the well-known T.V. personality, who has been visiting Sydney, **has** now left for home, and I expect many of you heard him speak or else read reports in the paper. He emphasised that Western civilization is rapidly disintegrating, and the reason is because it refuses to recognize any dimension of life which is beyond the material and the temporal. As a consequence society becomes an animal farm where the manipulators of our life decide who should be allowed to live, whether infants in the womb or old people at the other end of life. They are responsible to no-one but themselves. Hitler was such a manipulator. He incinerated six million people whom he thought the world was better without, for no other reason except their ancestry, and it is inevitable that our society will take on the same form in due course, perhaps in the near future, for the reason is the same. Our Western civilization refuses to have God in its knowledge, to quote Paul the Apostle.

Human life depends on having an eternal dimension if it is to remain human life, otherwise it becomes an animal farm where the farmer selects what animals he will keep alive, according to his own decision. But human relationships and human society cannot exist on these terms. For this attitude to life de-humanizes everything, and this is what Western society, by its own choice, is sinking into. For example, it deliberately shuts out the concept of God from the way it organizes its political institutions and its educational curricular. It shuts out God from its moral decisions, for example, setting aside beaches for naked bathing without asking whether it is right for people to expose their bodies to each other like this, whether it is in line, that is, whether it is in line with the Creator's purposes in giving us a body. But the idea of the Creator has been shut right out. But when you shut out the concept of God, right and wrong have no foundation but likes and dislikes remain as the criteria for decisions. Western civilization may shut out God and

as a consequence will quickly fall into disintegration, anarchy and dictatorships; but fundamentally God does not cease to exist because we shut our minds to Him. What happens to us we will richly deserve, but God is merciful and will redeem His people through these judgments.

Those who know God have a plain and simple duty to live in the light of this knowledge and to witness to God in every situation we are in, whether at work or at home or wherever it may be. This witness may involve us in suffering as it involved Jesus and as it involved the early Christians who followed Him, but it will be the way by which God brings salvation to those who are at present turning their backs on Him. If we are to witness effectively we will need to be in constant relationship with God through prayer and we will need to know His mind by reading and reflecting on Scripture both individually and in the group which is His church. In the end Christians are optimistic because God remains unchangingly the merciful and gracious God who will bring His purposes of salvation to fulfilment. That is why we ought never to budge in our obedience to Him. But woe to those on whom the judgment of God falls, which we bring on our own heads if we try to shut God out of His own creation. We must make God the centre of our life and always acknowledge Him, for human life must have an eternal dimension if it is to remain human.

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17.10.76 42/76

THE PROTESTANT FAITH
is broadcast every Sunday at
8:25 p.m. over Radio 2CH

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