

CULTURE AND CHRIST

In the Biblical book of Ruth we read that Ruth the Moabite wanted to go with Naomi the Israelite, to live in the land of Israel where Yahweh was God, and Israel was the nation He had chosen to be the recipient and custodian of His Word. But Ruth, being a Moabite, was of a different race, and had been brought up to believe in a different god and adhere to a different religion and culture. The Moabites were polytheists, but their supreme god was Chemosh, a superstitious pagan deity, akin to the Canaanite god Molech, involving the worship of idols, images, the stars, rude naked statues, and the sacrifice of children, which was as bad as cannibalism. The Israelites were monotheists who worshipped the one and only true creator God, who was against idolatry, and child sacrifice.

So in order for Ruth to go with Naomi to live in the land of Israel, she knew that a change of religion and culture was necessary. So she made that famous and well known commitment to Naomi, saying: “Your God will be my God, and your people will be my people.” Ruth knew that she could not call Israel’s God her God and Israel her people, and still hold on to the religious culture of Moab without being a double-minded hypocrite. More to the point: she knew that she could not expect to be accepted by the God and people of Israel, if she held on to the pagan religious culture of Moab.

Israel’s religion and culture was inspired by the one and only true God, but Moab’s religion and culture was not divinely inspired. It had a human origin and therefore catered for carnal sensual desires in many ways, which had great appeal to the lower nature of man. It was a collection of human customs and traditions involving, as human traditions often do, a lot of myth and superstitious nonsense.

Now this raises the question about culture and what the Christian concept and attitude towards it should be; are the customs of human culture in conflict with, and unacceptable to the Christian culture, and if so, in what way and to what degree?

In some circles the very mention of the word “culture” can cause negative vibes but it shouldn’t. We all practise it to some degree or other, and it can be a positive and enjoyable thing.

So, for a starter, lets define our terms. The word “culture” derives from the Latin word “cultura” which means cultivation, involving farming, tillage, growing and developing crops. There are also several different Greek words which relate to culture, one of which is “kalliergeia” which also relates to cultivation. In science, a “culture” is a group of bacteria or cells which are grown, i.e. cultivated, usually in a laboratory as part of an experiment.

So “culture” basically refers to a process - a process by which habits,

practises, routines and customs are cultivated, grown and developed and become established. Culture simply involves customs which easily become hard and fast traditions. The words “customs” and “traditions” can therefore be used alternatively for culture. Such customs and traditions can encompass a very wide range of things like the ideas, beliefs, habits, practices, routines, wedding, funeral and burial rituals and ceremonies, language, dress, what to eat, how to eat and how to greet etc.

Let me give an example of how the development of cultures can take place. Take the example of six children in a family who all get married and live in a different house in a different suburb. Left to themselves, they all have their own personal individual likes and dislikes (tastes) in relation to the type of house to live in, its design and colour, the type of food they eat and how they cook it, how they prefer to dress and express themselves, the kind of language they use etc. etc. They all have their own individual tastes and preferences. In other words, they have their own “culture,” i.e. customs, habits, routines.

Now, although the six of them are brothers and sisters and come from the same source, they are not stereotyped. They are individuals and have individual preferences and therefore end up with different cultures. But because their cultures are all humanly contrived and based, who would be proud or conceited enough to say theirs was better than the others? Would it not be pride or conceit or even arrogance for one of the six to claim that his choices and way of doing things was the best, and worse still, to despise and criticize the others? Or, even worse still, to set out by force and coercion to try and make the others conform to his culture. Such an attitude and action can only lead to one result, namely: tension, conflict, division and alienation.

So then, as there can be cultural diversity among members of a family, so there is also in the family of nations through the same natural process involving individuality of choice. As people migrated into different corners of the world and became clans, tribes and different races and nations, they developed (“cultivated”) their own individual life or culture, resulting in myriads of them, all with different preferences of food, dress, language, routines and rituals.

But once again, would it not be pride, conceit or arrogance for any one of them to claim that they are the best, and to despise, criticize or condemn the others, and set out by force or coercion to make them all conform to theirs? Such an attitude and action would be bad manners and rude and counter productive, creating an anti-attitude to that particular culture, resulting in conflict, division and alienation. Being humanly contrived and based on individual human choices and preferences, makes the assessment of each culture very subjective, from a purely human point of view, and it would be an exercise of vanity for anyone to exercise

judgement as to which one was the best, and to try and conduct a competition to determine it.

Nevertheless, it is common for cultures to distinguish themselves from each other, and human pride being what it is, can easily result in one culture being motivated by a desire to distinguish itself and elevate itself above others. The desire to be recognized and regarded as significant and superior, unique and important, has always been a function of pride, and has proved to lead to a downfall many times. Members of a culture are particularly susceptible to placing great value on their cultural differences if they think their national identity depends on this. In extreme cases, nationalism can spring from this. And over-identification with one's own nation or race, contending for its culture to the exclusion and detriment of others, can result in racism which is akin to cultism. Strangely enough, the first half of the word "culture" is "cult." Nazism is an example of this process, due to Hitler having an over-inflated view of his culture - his nationality and race.

So then, it is not impossible for the underlying motive of a culture to be a desire for its particular race or nation to be dominant and distinguished. But from the point of view of Christ and his Christian followers, one should not feel the need to be distinguished by race, nationality or culture, but by the kind of person and personality he or she is. Otherwise it amounts to national and racial pride, rather than personal pride in oneself as a good individual person. The Bible, which is the Word of God and text book of the Christian faith, makes it very clear that God places no significance or value on the race or nationality of people. The colour of the skin is immaterial to Him. He made them all. Members of all races on the planet have been made in God's image and are equal. The colour of skin and nationality of a person will have no bearing on whether or not they become a candidate for God's promised eternity. The all-important thing is their relationship with Him and the kind of life they live. In this respect, cultural connections are valueless.

So then, cultures can be quite harmless but they can also be very divisive. They are harmless if they are not politicized and forcefully imposed on others who do not want to identify with them. For example, there is nothing divisive about members of a culture wanting to speak among themselves the language of their culture, or cook and eat and greet one another in a certain way, or have wedding, funeral and burial rituals and ceremonies according to cultural tradition. It is in fact the great variety of cultural customs in the world that makes it an interesting place and is the motive for overseas travel for many people. But a culture can become divisive if it is treated like a religion and sets out to forcefully impose its customs on others in order to have control and monopolize.

CULTURAL RELIGIONS

Talking about religion: many cultures have their own particular brand of religion, and many of them have the same thing in common, namely idols and images. The question that needs to be raised in relation to these religions and in fact all religions is: where and how did they originate? What is the source of their customs, traditions and rituals?

In relation to the Christian faith, it has a Divine supernatural origin and source. It has a collection of writings called the Bible, which claim to be inspired by God. This claim is vindicated by many incredible prophecies which have been fulfilled and continue to be fulfilled - prophecies to which human horoscopes and prognostications miserably fail to be in the same league. The claim to inspiration is also vindicated by its reference to the major sciences not known or discovered by science until centuries later. (Send for the free booklet: "Is the Bible Scientific?") And the historicity of the Biblical writings has been confirmed time and time again by the archaeologists. In spite of numerous digs, archaeologists have not found anything that contradicts Biblical history. Quite the opposite. They have confirmed it. Cities referred to in the Bible which disappeared in the sands of time, and which critics of the Bible claimed never existed, have been unearthed. And the reliability of the original Biblical text has been confirmed by the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls.

Now the fact of the matter is that there is no other religion or culture in the world that has this kind of authentication and infallible and authoritative origin and source. Religious cultures are a dime a dozen in the world and they are all man made. They all have human fallible origins. That is why they involve different deities and different rituals. That is also why so many of them are basically superstitious nonsense, whose origins can be traced back to paganism which was rife with its idols and images and rude naked statues, which are abhorrent to the Biblical teaching.

It is at this point that a culture can become dangerous, because anyone who belongs to, identifies with, and supports such a culture which involves the belief in false gods and possession of idols, cannot qualify for the eternal life promised by the true God. For this reason Ruth the Moabite whose culture involved pagan idolatry, had to give it up and move to higher ground by embracing the Biblical culture. And it is no different today for those who belong to cultures which believe in and worship false gods but who want to believe in and worship the true God and embrace the Biblical culture.

And why wouldn't anyone want to embrace it? It promises all who believe and obey it, that they will be raised from the dead to eternal life in an immortal body by Jesus when he returns to set up his kingdom on earth at the time of the end of human rule. And to prove and give full assurance

of God's power to raise the dead, Jesus himself, the only Divinely begotten son of God, died and rose again and was seen by hundreds of people. The resurrection of Christ is no hoax but undeniable and well attested history. (A free booklet is available which demonstrates it).

No other religion or culture can give the evidence or assurance of life after death like the Christian faith. Cultures claim, like all the pagan religions before them, that man has an immortal, invisible, immaterial soul which lives on after the death of the body which is basically the devil's lie that "thou shalt not surely die." But no one has ever seen such a soul to prove this. How could you if it is invisible?! It is a human theory with no evidence. Science has proved beyond doubt that identity does not survive brain destruction. All the so-called life after death experiences are simply subjective experiences which can occur when the heart has stopped beating but before the brain cells have died. No one has returned from the dead with a life after death testimony, after their brain cells have died; even though the heart is revived.

Because of cultural belief in the immortality of the soul, some pray to the spirits of their dead ancestors, and genealogies figure quite prominently in their culture. But praying to dead men is condemned in the Word of God. And the Bible's view on preoccupation with genealogies is: "Do not occupy yourself with myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than godly edifying" (1 Timothy 1:4). "Avoid long lists of ancestors for they are unprofitable and futile" (Titus 3:9).

Jesus alone, the Divinely begotten son of God, lived on after death as an immortal bodily being, having been resurrected by the supernatural power of God. And His promise is to do the same at his second coming for all who believe in Him. Cultures all around the world may have their various beliefs, rituals and routines, but none of their founders or members have demonstrated power over death like the founder of the Christian faith. They are all dead but Jesus is alive! And they will all remain dead and never have eternal life if they never believed in and belonged to Jesus.

Cultures all around the world may have their particular food and cook it in their own particular way, but it won't commend them to Christ or qualify them for eternal life. Cultures all around the world have their own particular rituals and routines for marriage, funerals and burials, but no matter how elaborate or emotional, they won't bring the dead back to life. Cultures all around the world have their own distinctive form of art and dance, but no matter how decorative demonstrative or dainty, it won't impart any power to rise from the dead. Cultures all around the world have their own distinctive language or "mother tongue" or dialects (7,000 of them). But you can speak in any one of them until you are hoarse and blue in the face, but it won't stop you from dying or give you eternal life.

LANGUAGES

Talking about languages: originally the early inhabitants upon earth all spoke the same language. But according to the Bible, they became proud and ungodly, and despised the name of the Lord and set out to make a name for themselves. So the Lord intervened and caused a confusion of languages, resulting in migrations and the development of many different languages. But ultimately when Jesus returns and establishes the kingdom of God on earth and unifies all nations, the result will be the phasing out of all 7,000 languages and dialects. and the establishing of one universal language - probably the original pure one when man was first created. A prophecy in Zephaniah 3:9 refers to this. It says the Lord “will change the speech of the people to a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord.”

So, eventually every language presently spoken will be phased out and become history. Jesus is not going to make everyone learn and speak English, French, Chinese, Maori, or Italian etc. Anyone knowing and believing this would not be inclined to make a big deal out of their own particular language, or believe that everyone else should learn and speak it. To attempt to do so would indicate a lack of knowledge and understanding of the ultimate purpose of God, and too much pre-occupation and focus on the present temporary world system instead of the ultimate eternal system. Strenuous efforts on the part of any culture to force its language on others can be very counter productive and divisive. And for someone to speak in a language that others cannot understand when he or she is able to speak in their language, would be rude and bad mannered. Such conduct could easily be interpreted to be showing off, which is symptomatic of pride. Either that or it could simply be trying to make a statement - a protest against those who refuse to learn the language, which would be childish.

Interestingly enough, there is a chapter in the Bible that relates to this kind of thing, namely 1 Corinthians 14. Reference is made in this chapter to the gift of tongues which God bestowed upon some Christians, enabling them to speak in a language foreign to their own. But they were not to speak it in church unless it was interpreted in order to be understood. Some unfortunately did not follow the rules and gave vent to a foreign language that no one could interpret or understand. Motivated by pride, they were showing off, and earned a stern rebuke. The point to notice in this is that even though the foreign language they were speaking was a supernaturally endowed gift of God, they were nevertheless not allowed to speak it in front of people who could not understand it.

IMMATERIAL CULTURAL CUSTOMS

Coming back to what is immaterial to God in the long term view of things: it is immaterial to Him what particular food a culture prefers to eat and how they cook it. It is immaterial to God how people greet one another, whether by a hug, kiss, hand-shake, nose touch etc. It is immaterial to God what rituals or ceremonies are performed in relation to weddings, funerals and burials. There is a great variety of non religious customs in all the cultures in the world and they are not offensive to God so long as they are not forced on others against their will. However, as already pointed out, the nature and customs of a culture's religion is not immaterial to God. If a culture involves the worship of other gods, idols, images, naked statues, and the worship or deification of ancestors and the stars it is offensive to Him and He will not grant eternal life to those involved in it. It is stressed throughout the Bible that substituting the personal powerful living Creator God for dead, dumb lifeless wooden idols, is an insult to Him and highly offensive. It is therefore impossible for idolaters to be accepted by Him. For such people to qualify for eternal life necessitates doing what Ruth the Moabite did, namely: turning their back on that cultural religion and turning to the one and only true God, the God of Israel. Initially this can be a "culture shock" due to the very different nature of the religion, but it is the only religion that leads to eternal life.

SHOULD CULTURAL CONNECTIONS CONTINUE?

Turning the back on a cultural religion does not have to necessitate turning the back on the people that belong to that culture or on their daily way of life, unless of course they try to force and exert pressure to keep to the religious side of their culture. It was probably because of that threat that Ruth the Moabite not only declared that the God of Israel would be her God, but also that the people of Israel would be her people. Ruth did not merely say to Naomi "your God will be my God," and simply stop believing in Moab's god, but stay with the people of Moab and restrict her company and fellowship to them. But this kind of thing can happen. A person involved in a cultural group may get converted to Christ, but not want to make Christ's people His people, but prefer to confine fellowship to the cultural group. This would amount to putting cultural family above Christ's family which is His church. No! Ruth not only declared that the God of Israel would be her God, but also that His people Israel which was His church, would be her people.

The truth of the matter is that you cannot make God your God without making members of His church your people, i.e. your family. You

cannot belong to Christ without belonging to his church. Christ is the “head” of the church and the church is his “body.” To want Christ but not the church is like wanting a head without a body, and this is unacceptable to Christ! It is natural to wonder why a person belonging to a particular cultural group who has committed himself to Christ, would want to confine his fellowship to the cultural group and not fellowship with Christ’s group especially if members of the cultural group don’t believe in Christ and may in fact be anti-Christ. Sadly, it sometimes can turn out that those who accuse others of being racist are in fact unknowingly racist themselves and for that reason give priority to their own particular race.

It would not be surprising if Jesus, when he returns, says to those who believe in him but did not want to support and fellowship with his church: “You didn’t want to fellowship with my family during your mortal life, so why would you want to spend eternity with them during immortal life? Your attitude has disqualified you from doing so.”

It is also significant to note that Ruth did not try to superimpose some of the ways and customs of her culture upon the religion of Yahweh the God of Israel. And the people of Israel, God’s church at the time, did not feel the need to patronize the Moabite culture and incorporate aspects of it in their religious service, for Ruth’s sake. In New Testament times some of the Jewish Christians tried to incorporate aspects of the old Jewish culture into their Christian faith in order to attract Jews who still held to that culture. And they received a severe reprimand for attempting to do this.

VAIN TRADITIONS

During New Testament times when the Gospel of Jesus Christ went out into the pagan idolatrous nations, those who were converted did what Ruth did. They put no value on their cultural religion which involved pagan superstitions and traditions which they inherited, and they exchanged them for divine truth. There are several words used in the Bible to describe man-made religious beliefs, such as you have in many cultures throughout the world. “Traditions of men,” “rudiments of the world,” and just plainly and simply “the world” are some of those words. And one thing is certain: the Bible puts no value on the ways of the world and traditions devised by men, especially when they are contrary to, and undermine the divine teaching.

Here are some examples:

Romans 12:2: “Be not conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Colossians 2:8: “See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy (i.e. human reasoning not based on the Word of God) and

empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the rudiments of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Colossians 2:20 “If with Christ you died to the rudiments of the world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?”

Mark 7:7: “In vain do you worship me, teaching for doctrine the traditions of men.”

Matthew 15:6: “How ingeniously you neutralize the Word of God by your traditions.”

Interestingly enough, Israel is the only nation in history to whom God gave rituals and ceremonies to observe in the law given through Moses. God has never done this for any other nation (Psalm 147:19-20). However, the rituals and ceremonies in this divinely given culture were not intended to be permanent. They simply acted as types and foreshadows of Christ until he came, and then they disappeared as shadows do when the sun arises.

Now, even though this Old Testament religious culture passed its use-by date, it was nevertheless originally divinely ordained. Yet, in spite of this, the apostle Paul said that he regarded it all “as dung” because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ (Philippians 3). Now, if he counted as dung a culture originally ordained by God, how much even lesser value would He put on cultures ordained by men. Incidentally, Paul used the rather strong expression “dung” to refer to the outdated and outmoded rituals and ceremonies, because to keep observing them resulted in people being held back from accepting Christ, and ending up as dung buried in the ground forever.

ACCOMMODATION OF CULTURES

However, Paul was not disrespectful towards those who held to non-Christian cultures. When he was with those who conformed to them he accommodated some of their customs to a degree in order to open a door of communication to share the Gospel with them. However he never accommodated them to the point of worshipping false gods or compromising the fundamentals of the Christian faith. His attitude is expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:20: “To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win the Jews; to those under the law (of Moses) I became as one under the law, even though I myself was not under that law, that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law (pagan Gentiles) I became as one outside the law - not that I was without a law of God but am under the law of Christ (the rule of love) that I might win those outside the law.” There are examples of this policy of “when in Rome do as the Romans do” in the book of Acts.

The subject of culture is a very broad and controversial one and it is

important for Christians to have a Biblical perspective of it in view of the counter-Christian pressures some cultures exert. Culturism and its racial ties can be very compelling - so compelling as to prevent people from coming to Christ and being committed to him and his church family. Culturism has even in some instances proved to be a snare and a stumbling block due to seducing those who have committed themselves to Christ to turn their back on him and his church and exchange him for a culture that has no eternal future.

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CHAPTER TWO LAND ISSUES

In some countries, governments support and encourage indigenous races by offering monetary and promotional incentives which are not offered to other races in the same land. Such policies of partiality and preference really amount to racism. They are divisive and do not foster unity and harmony with the non indigenous population who equally (and sometimes more than equally) contribute to the cost of running the country.

Not surprisingly, such selective policies for particular races have been adopted by the United Nations Organization which has proved to be a racist organization by its anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian policy. It manifested its ignorance of Jewish history by claiming the Jews had no historical connection to Mount Moriah in Jerusalem where their temple once sat and where a Moslem mosque now sits. Archaeological and historical evidence can prove that a Jewish temple sat there 1,500 years before Mohammed was even thought of! (Send for the free booklet: "Palestine - whose land? Jerusalem - whose city? Islam's or Israel's?").

The United Nations Organization's anti-Israel policy, fuelled largely by pro-Islamic nations and their sympathizers, is a hypocritical policy, because what they fail to acknowledge is that Israel represents the indigenous race in Palestine, not the Arabs. Due to the Romans invading Israel and forcing the Jews into exile, the Arabs moved into the land and took over. But the Bible prophesied that God would regather the Jews back to their land and make them a nation again, and that is what has happened. So anyone who backs the Palestinian cause which claims ownership of the land is ignorant of history not to mention the promises of God. Moreover, they place themselves in a precarious position because a divine edict went forth a long time ago declaring that whoever blesses Israel shall be blessed and whoever curses Israel shall be cursed. Many cases in history could be quoted of this edict taking effect.

Indigenous races in particular should therefore identify with, and support Israel, and it would be hypocritical and racist not to.

However, there is no other indigenous race that can lay claim to its land quite like Israel. Israel is the only nation in history to whom God personally and directly bequeathed land as an everlasting inheritance, and for that reason it has forever been known as "the promised land." The promise is well documented in the Bible. All other indigenous races either seized their land from someone else without instruction from God, or just happened to come across it and decided to settle there. But none of them can point to a divinely inspired record like the Bible which says God gave them that land or that He wanted them and only them and no one else to live in that land.

It is natural and common of course for an indigenous race to assume that because they rolled up at a particular land that it is theirs and no one else's. But the truth of the matter is that it is not theirs. Did they make or create it? No! No indigenous race made their land. They didn't put the mountains or hills or valleys or lakes and rivers in place. This was all done by creator God. As the Bible says: "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." The Bible also declares that God gives it to whoever He pleases. And if there is no God - if we along with all the animals etc merely evolved, then the rule of evolution which is the rule of the jungle applies, which is the survival of the fittest. This rule results in the strongest and fittest race conquering the weaker and owning and occupying their land.

There are actually examples in the history narrated in the Bible, of God sending a nation to invade another nation to disinherit it of its land because of its idolatrous and immoral way of life. It even happened to Israel several times. Due to them giving up on their monotheistic and holy faith and degenerating to the idolatry and immorality practised by the pagans, God sent nations against them to punish and humble them by exiling them from their land for a period, until they repented and reformed.

Due to the earth and everything in it belonging to the Lord, it would be presumptuous for any nation or race to assume that they own the land in which they live and can do whatever they like and get away with it. It is reasonable to assume that God has allowed them to occupy it, but for how long and whether or not any other race should be allowed to occupy it with them, or invade and take over is in God's control.

So if a particular race comes across a particular uninhabited land and settles there and becomes the indigenous population, it is, as already stated, reasonable to conclude that God has allowed it. But, if another race comes across that land at a later date and also wants to live there, could that mean that God has also allowed that and intends for the land to be shared? It is not difficult in some cases to see some good reasons for such sharing to take place.

POPULATION ISSUES

Take for example the islands of Australia and New Zealand where the Aborigines and Maoris are regarded as the indigenous population; i.e. the first to occupy (although this is a disputable point). According to the Bible, when God first created man and woman, He proclaimed His purpose for creating humanity by saying: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." God's intention was for the planet to be well populated. But

this could hardly be said of Australia and New Zealand if only the indigenous people remained the sum total of the population. Even today, if only the truly full blooded indigenous population occupied the islands, it would be grossly out of proportion to the size and potential of the islands, and they would never be able to afford the infrastructure that a modern developed country has. So it would not be difficult to believe, from a Biblical point of view, that God intended His lands in these areas to be shared by different races.

If this was the case, it would also not be difficult to conclude that divine providence saw to it that the British race was to be the one to share the islands with the indigenous people.

There can be no doubt that initially the British abused and misused their position which has caused a deep scarring effect that cannot be justified. However, later governments have recognized and acknowledged this and have continued to attempt to make reparation to the tune of many millions of dollars and have committed themselves to a process of returning stolen land.

Unfortunately, some racist extremists who basically resent sharing the land with non indigenous races, keep raking up the past, giving the impression that the present British descendants are responsible for past injustices committed by their ancestors, and are not welcome in the land. But the fact of the matter is that these descendants were born and raised in the land just the same as the extremists and have equal right to be there, and are not by any stretch of the imagination responsible or accountable for the past actions of previous generations.

It can actually be quite serious to allow the heart to be filled with bitterness, resentment and hatred, as it can lead to violence and even murder, and in extreme cases, civil war. There is a saying that: "If you don't bury the past it will bury you." For that reason the wisdom of God as taught in the Bible, discourages the negativity which causes bitterness and resentment etc. Instead it encourages love and forgiveness and looking positively towards the future.

To anyone who resents the British coming to share their country, this question needs to be asked: "Are you so naive to think that if the British had not come, no one else would?" In the ever expanding world at the time, when ocean-going ships were prowling the seas looking for new territories, it was inevitable that someone else would have rolled up at the shores and moved in if the British hadn't, and not necessarily bother about making a treaty, but simply take over by force. Would the indigenous people of Australia and New Zealand have preferred the Indonesians to have come and bring with them their oppressive Islamic faith and fill the country with Mosques? Or would they have preferred the Japanese to have come, whose culture at the time would have slaughtered the

indigenous population as they did when they invaded China, and as did the Spanish to the indigenous population of South America? Or maybe the Chinese, resulting in everyone worshipping Buddha or speaking Chinese?

Let me repeat: It was inevitable that another nation would find Australia and New Zealand and make it their home, and the indigenous people of Australia and New Zealand need to be thankful and grateful that it was the British and not some other nation. Yes, the British were not perfect, but neither were the Aborigines or Maoris. Yes, as a result of the British coming, rats and opossums and other pests came, but so did sheep, cattle, pigs, deer, goats and poultry not to mention a whole range of beautiful flowers, fruits and vegetables and a network of roads, rail and bridges and motorized vehicles to drive on them throughout the length and breadth of the land with ease. To this could be added the English language which was not, like the indigenous language, confined and restricted to a tiny population on a small island, but which opened up communication channels to over a billion people in many countries in the world. The regular payments given to those who can't find work or are unable to work is also something to be grateful for.

Yes, certain sicknesses and diseases came with the British to which the indigenous people were not immune, but if the British had not come, another nation would have brought those sicknesses and diseases and maybe worse. And if another nation never came, and the indigenous people ultimately wanted to take advantage of trade and travel in the modern world, they would have ended up in contact with those sicknesses and diseases anyway and have to deal with them.

THE GOSPEL HAD TO REACH ALL NATIONS

Coming back to the Bible, it is recorded that Jesus said the Gospel would be preached throughout the whole world to all nations. People in all nations were to be given the opportunity to qualify for the eternal life promised by God. This included the indigenous people in Australia and New Zealand.

Now, as things stood, prior to the British coming, this was impossible. The indigenous people did not have Bibles and even if they did, they could not read. So one does not have to be a rocket scientist to realize that someone needed to find their way to these islands and share the Gospel with them. It couldn't be the Indonesians, Japanese or Chinese for obvious reasons. Britain was the best possible choice for this mission and the hand of God can clearly be seen in it. As a result of the British coming, Christian missionaries also came. They taught the Gospel and also taught the people how to read, enabling them to read the Word of God themselves. As a result, over time thousands of the indigenous people

have been converted to Christ and become candidates for the eternal kingdom of God. And some of these indigenous Christians are among the finest and most dedicated in the world. Having a humble and honest appraisal of history, they have no resentment but thank God for sending the British and not some other non-Christian nation.

From a Christian point of view, prior to the British coming to Australia and New Zealand, before the Gospel was taught and believed, the indigenous people were in the same position as the pagan idolatrous Roman Empire prior to the Gospel being preached. In the words of Ephesians 2: “Dead through sin, separated from Christ ... having no hope and without God in the world.” As pointed out before, there is no hope in pagan polytheism. There is no divine seal of authentication in it. It is all man made and largely consists of humanly contrived superstitions. Jesus alone, the very son of the only living God, conquered sin and death and proved it by rising from the dead. He alone is the way, the truth and the life. There is no other man or name under heaven by which eternal life can be gained.

So then, to conclude with words already quoted: “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it,” and He gives it to whoever He pleases. New Zealand does not belong to the Maoris and neither does it belong to the Pakeha. It belongs to God and He can give it to whoever He pleases. Maoris and Pakehas living in the land who do not believe in or belong to Jesus Christ are just temporary tenants in the land. The threescore and ten years they live here (if they are fortunate) is all they get. However the promise of God to all who are truly Christian, Maori and non Maori alike, is that they will inherit the land forever. As Jesus said: “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”

Living forever on an earth that has been renewed, regenerated and restored to its original paradise condition is the wonderful hope promised to all who belong to Christ.

In the final analysis therefore, New Zealand and every other country on the planet will belong to Christ and his Christian family, which will include all nationalities such as Maoris, Aborigines, British etc. All will be united and made one people in Christ, and will live together forever in perfect harmony and peace, due to all racial and cultural barriers being removed.

Truly as Jesus said: “Narrow is the gate and hard the path that leads to eternal life, and only few find it. But wide is the gate and easy the path that leads to destruction, and many (the majority) enter it.”

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