

Created in the Image of God (Part 2)
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

“If everyone could see the image of God in his neighbour, do you think we would still need tanks and generals?” Mother Teresa

The whole philosophy of human rights and the sacredness of human life stand on the doctrine of humanity created in the “Image of God.” Jesus constantly affirmed the dignity and worth of the disrespected and neglected members of his first-century society. Christ taught that each individual human being is precious in the sight of God.

An interesting and ominous parallel exists between Nazi Germany in the 1930s and society today. How could the nation of Germany, with its obvious learning and culture, be guilty of exterminating 6 million Jews and committing other atrocities?

Hitler embraced Relativism, the philosophy of Rousseau and Nietzsche. This led to the rejection of all absolute truth; making all moral distinctions equally valid. There arose two extremely different views of man. The strong, skilled and attractive were pronounced valuable contributors to society; the handicapped, old or mentally deficient were not.

The principle that “all men are created equal under God” was replaced by the Aryan clause that Germans were the master race. “A higher race subjects to itself a lower race.” The principle of “reverence for life” – that each human life comes from God and is therefore sacred, was replaced by the totalitarian state, personified in Adolph Hitler – the new voice of God. The youth of Germany were taught that since we are merely collections of molecules in a meaningless cosmos, why should all mankind have any inherent or essential rights?

By contrast, the Judeo- Christian ethic, the cornerstone of Western civilization, teaches that all humans, whatever their differences, have the same blood and reflect the image of their Creator. Destroy this powerful concept of human dignity and anything can happen – even ethnic cleansing and the ruthless devastation of the Holocaust.

As political scientist John H. Hallowell put it: “Having lost sight of the fact God created mankind in his image... We are left without any rational means of defending the belief that all men are equal. The solution lies in return to a society that intellectually and spiritually is God-centred rather than man-centred.

In the 1930s the nation of Germany was in a state of chaos. Unemployment figures were huge; inflation was out of control making their money almost worthless. Then Adolph Hitler stepped forward and promised to restore order. Factories began producing bombs, tanks and other instruments of war. But,

under those circumstances many greeted Hitler as a conquering hero. Jobs and bread on the table became more important than religious freedom, moral values and honest government. True, man must have bread in order to survive, but no amount of bread or even caviar can ever meet our deepest needs.

Why?. Mankind is two- dimensional- biological and spiritual. Because we are created in the image of God this material and visible world order cannot possibly satisfy. Without God , the hungers of the heart remain unfulfilled. God forbid that we should allow this to happen in Canada today.

"If you will not have God, you should pay your respects to Hitler and Stalin."

T.S. Elliot