

The Effects of Societal Influence on Christian Values

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DEFINITIONS

The Effects – The results, consequences, outcome, end product

Societal Influence – The impact of society, social import, community's sway or pressure, world imprint

Christian values – The gospel derived principles, standards, morals, ethics or virtues that govern and permeate the lives of the disciples or followers of Christ.

PREAMBLE

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

John 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

John 17:13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, *having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*. 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 *For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*. 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*.

INTRODUCTION

The society consists of our neighbors, institutions (educational, economic, socio-political and religious), and virtual environment. It connotes those other humans with whom we relate and interact. Man in his natural state seeks pleasure and glory for self in every society. People struggle for material success and dominance "by any means necessary" believing it is 'the survival of the fittest.' However, from the scriptures stated in our preamble, it is evident that Christians are redeemed out of the evil world and must strive to abstain from its corrupting influences. It is not easy for one who has been part and parcel of the world (Gal 4:3, Eph 2:2,12), now redeemed but who still lives in the world to pretend as if s/he is totally immune from societal influence. Nay, it is '*not by power nor by might, but by my Spirit says the Lord*.' The essence of this lesson is therefore to identify the dangers and any possible benefits associated with "societal influence." Should it be more deleterious than beneficial in the life of a Christian, how do we restrain or reverse it?

The Lord Jesus from the beginning emphasized the spiritual nature of his kingdom. He stressed that it is not worldly in origin, nature and purpose -Mt 16:15-19, Jn 18:36-37. Before, during and after the Lord's personal ministry, people have always misconceived the nature of His kingdom – Mt 2:1-12, Jn 6:15, Acts 1:6-8, Acts 17:7. It is a perpetual struggle for even Christians to fully realize and prioritize the spiritual nature of His kingdom or church! **Note these features:**

1. We enter the kingdom via a spiritual birth NOT the natural birth –Jn 3:1-7, Col 1:13, 2 Thess 1:5
2. We have ALL spiritual blessings in Christ as citizens of the kingdom -Eph 1:3 & 2:19-22. God promised to meet our [basic] material needs NOT to provide ALL wants and whims –Mt 6:33, Phil 4:19, Heb 13:5-6.
3. We are a spiritual house offering spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet 2:5) and as a body partake of spiritual teachings (1 Cor 2:13), spiritual songs (Eph 5:19) and spiritual meals (1Cor 5:8 & 10:1-7). Unfortunately, some in the church focus too much on material buildings, inspirational talks/human philosophy, non-spiritual songs and parties. They advocate social reform and revolution from the pulpit, think the church is one big charity organization and attempt to make her derail from the divine mission.
4. Christians are spiritual people (or are supposed to be!) – 1 Cor 3:1-3, Gal 6:1 and are engaged in spiritual warfare (2 Cor 10:3-5, Eph 6:10-13, Rm 12:18-21), spiritual service and responsibility (Rm 12:1-2, 1 Tim 2:1-2, Mt 5:14-16), spiritual reign (Eph 2:1,6 & Rm 5:17) and expect spiritual rewards (Jn 17:1-3, 2Cor 5:1-4)

If one is not yet a member of the kingdom there is no need to delay. S/he needs to accept the Lordship or rulership of Christ who is reigning NOW on the spiritual throne of David –Acts 2:30-35. That is done via faith, repentance, confession of His name and baptism into His body, the church –Acts 2:36-41. Once we realize the spiritual essence of the Christian life, the inherent dangers of “*worldliness*” becomes apparent or visible.

THESIS

The society though religious does not really know God, at least the Christian God who has revealed Himself in nature and the Bible. Jehovah desires that “*they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being;*” (Acts 17:24-29, 1 Tim 2:3-4). Only then would His will be truly done on earth. The god of this world, Satan; “*hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*” (2 Cor 4:4). The world is sold under sin and its carnal tendencies strive to overcome the children of God over and over again. Thanks be to God who has given us a Comforter as well as an Advocate (1 John 2:1), even Jesus who is “*able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*” (Heb. 7:25).

The fruit of the Spirit and attributes listed in Gal. 5:22-23 & 2 Pet 1:5-7 outlines the core Christian values:

1. **Spirituality** - Faith, Godliness, Joy
2. **Godly Sense of Judgment** - Knowledge, Wisdom
3. **Self Control** - Peace, Gentleness, Patience, Temperance, Longsuffering
4. **Love** - Brotherly Kindness, Goodness, Virtue

These values moderate our belief system, perception, attitude and behavior. The society more often than not, unfortunately try to affect them negatively. Nevertheless, the greater the darkness, the brighter a glimmer of light! We must shine as lights in the midst of a crooked generation –Phil 2:15.

1. The world is inherently unbelieving and unrighteous, so Christians are expected to limit their association with the people of the world - James 4:4, 2 Cor 6:14-18. The society via its educational system is eroding human spirituality. For example, by teaching evolution, self-dependency and relativity of truth and morals. Neglect of divine essence and absolute standards has led to Christian compromises. Those who want to accommodate every scientific theory invariably select portions of the Bible to belief and consequently end up to lose faith in the book and its divine source.
2. The society if permitted will also impair a Christian's sense of judgment. Peer pressure requires us '*to (do whatever it takes to) belong and keep up with the Jones.*' The world's perverse reasoning is ever ready to lower and corrupt Christian thinking as regards what is right or wrong, modest or immodest, natural or unnatural, etc. This is manifested in the way we dress (fashion), speak as well as the things we celebrate and how e.g. marriage (gay marriage, 419, etc. - *Isaiah 5:20*, Rm 1:22-28). The bombardment of youths used to be mainly from Magazines and Television which could be somehow controlled by parents. The modern generation is Blackberry pinging, Facebooking, Twittering, YouTubing 24/7 on their smart phones and are more exposed. ***Watch what you feed your eyes and your mind on, these tools and technologies can equally be used for godly purposes by those who are willing.*** There are websites for online Bibles in different translations, sermon outlines, apologetics, debates, etc. but I guess more brethren here probably know where to download home videos and the latest hip-hop music. *You find what you seek.* **Andrews Challenge** (www.andrewschallenge.net) introduced to promote e-learning and refocus from Yahoo-yahoo.

We are severally warned against relying on human philosophy and our own wisdom when it comes to godliness and things of the kingdom -1 Cor 2:13-15; 3:18-19; Col 2:8. Unfortunately, many are importing the world's way into how the church should be organized as well as her work (Single Elder, 'holy solemnization' functions, etc.). Though the nation of Israel was fore-warned about desiring a King to rule over them (Deut 17:14-20), a few centuries later, they still went ahead to reject Jehovah's reign over them in 1 Sam 8:5,20. Some in the church are gradually repudiating the ruler-ship of Christ for that of local Diotrepheses, Chairmen of regional Forums, etc. akin to denominational General Overseers.

3. Nowadays, it is considered 'dulling' to be patient and meek. The world is accustomed to the arrogant, boastful go-getter who bulldozes his or her way through to fulfill personal desires. ***Christians must learn to keep their body, emotions and ego under check*** (Rm 8:8-14). As youths we must avoid exam malpractices and get-rich by all means syndrome, disrespect to elderly ones, disobedience to parents, etc. He who starts life at the top can only go down! *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another* -Gal 5:25-26.
4. The world is full of lust not love, thus real kindness and goodness is a rarity amongst the children of men. Most do semblance of good with the expectation of getting something in return. As Christians we should imitate God's unconditional love and Christ's selfless service -Rm 5:6-8, Gal. 6:10, Heb 13:1-3.

CONCLUSION

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.