



The Myth of Inevitability

May 14, 2009

Dear Friend,

Following the defeat of Amendment B, my good friend and colleague in PC(USA) renewal work, Alan Wisdom, wrote a [commentary](#) that is posted on the website for the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

The left side of the Church has prophesied the "inevitability" of the ordination of "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people" so often that many orthodox Christians have picked up the theme. Alan says that believing the "myth" affected the turnout of the orthodox in the current round of voting. But he points out that the actual numbers belie any real gain by the Left. His commentary is so good that I am reproducing most of it in this email.

". . . Our liberal friends are convinced that history is on a steady leftward course: towards greater individual moral autonomy, greater freedom in entering and exiting sexual relationships, and reduced relevance of traditions or authorities that might restrain individual autonomy and freedom. (If they are religious, our friends hail these trends as the will of an 'inclusive' God.)

"Progressives see themselves as 'prophetic.' History will vindicate them, they are sure, and they will become the majority and sweep us conservatives into the dustbin. If they don't win a vote today, they will win it tomorrow. And if society goes their way, then the Church must surely follow."

The Church does not always follow the culture. "This 'progressive' myth has many obvious problems. The Church does not always follow the culture. Sometimes it resists the culture. Sometimes it changes the culture. Christians in past generations have taken stands against dueling, abandonment of unwanted infants, and polygamy -- all common in their day, and all rare today.

"Nor is it true that today's leftist cause is always destined to become tomorrow's mainstream reality. Think of all the past liberal enthusiasms -- communes, "God is dead" theology, Freudian psychotherapy, divorce as a wonderful growth experience, open classrooms with no grades, Fidel Castro and Mao Zedong as great liberators -- that have largely faded away. Sometimes the left is right about the future, and sometimes it's terribly wrong."

The tragedy of buying into the myth. "The tragedy is when orthodox Christians -- who should know better -- buy into the leftist myth of inevitability. I have heard friends saying, "Well, we won [the vote on 'fidelity and chastity'] this time, but they [proponents of non-marital relationships] will win next time." It is that kind of defeatist attitude, I believe, that caused this year's vote on 'fidelity and chastity' to be so much tighter.

"Close examination of this year's presbytery votes shows some striking patterns. Not only has the margin between supporters and opponents of 'fidelity and chastity' narrowed, but the turnout is way down (about 15 percent, by my calculations). And the decrease is almost entirely among conservatives."

Little actual change, except in turnout. "The votes to delete 'fidelity and chastity' have held steady. Contrary to common perception, the sexual revisionists are not persuading many new people; however,

they have motivated their longtime friends to show up at presbytery meetings. They believe they are on 'the winning side' of history. The people who are staying home are the supporters of 'fidelity and chastity,' whose vote totals have dropped about 25 percent. It's easy to become weary and give up the fight if you have been convinced that you are destined to lose eventually."

Nothing is inevitable. "But it doesn't have to be that way. A biblical worldview recognizes that the course of history is in the hands of a sovereign God who is working out his purposes in his time. No human political agenda is inevitable. There is much that both liberals and conservatives fail to understand.

"God allows the wheat and the weeds to grow together, and it often may appear to us that the weeds are growing faster. There are times when God's people become inattentive and 'do what is right in their own eyes'; however, there are also times when God's Spirit refreshes his people and renews their love for him and their devotion to his ways.

"Our duty is to be faithful in seeking God's righteousness, regardless of today's apparent trends, and to pray for the times of refreshment. Ministers and elders turn out for presbytery meetings because they have promised to participate in the church's government -- not because they have any certain knowledge about the outcome of a particular vote."

Sin does not bear good fruit. "In the long run, we know that sin does not bear good fruit. In the case at hand, we can be sure that a society or a church will not prosper if it downgrades God's good gift of marriage into just another option on the lifestyle menu. (Just look at Europe with its catastrophically low birth rates -- a continent that is committing a slow-motion spiritual and demographic suicide.)

"Sooner or later, the prodigal will come to his senses. We pray and work that the time of repentance and restoration may be sooner rather than later. This denomination can (and may) turn around before it goes all the way down the road to the "far country" of individual autonomy. We can give thanks for good signs such as these repeated votes to uphold the biblical 'fidelity and chastity' standard."

(About the author: Alan Wisdom is an elder who resides in the Presbytery of National Capital. He is Vice-President of the IRD and Director of Presbyterian Action.)

I hope you find encouragement--and truth--in these words.

With you in Christ's service,

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