

Richard Neuhaus in 1984 wrote in his book, *The Naked Public Square* that: Liberal democracies need the foundation of public virtue, which in turn is based on the moral and religious values of its citizens. Societies... which seek to marginalise faith do so to their own detriment.

The multiple threats facing us have galvanised the Christian community into action as never before. 2004 has not only been a landmark year in Christian activity in the public square but has also highlighted that the political front is here to stay.

It was Martin Luther King Jr that wrote: Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. It is imperative that we mobilise now for this new frontline of Christian activity in Australia for the immediate and long-term future and to specifically identify, target and equip people – including our young – for this purpose.

It was in observing the Children of Israel camped in their tents before entering the Promised Land that Baalam, having been commanded by Balak to curse them, could only speak the words that God gave him to speak and blessed them: The LORD their God is with them; the shout of the King is among them (Numbers 23:21). What a glorious observation that was.

Now is the time to establish more firmly our identity as children of the King; we are citizens of heaven; we are Kingdom people. We have a story and a message to tell. Let us boldly speak for truth in the public square and know we are on Kingdom assignment. Now is the time not only for a strong Christian voice and to be a distinctive people of God, but to have the shout of the King among us. It is time for the people of God to be heard in this land. It's time to take a stand. Until the return of the King.

Until the Return of the King!

A call to uphold what it means to be created in the image of God



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In *The Return of the King* Gandalf describes how the Stewards of Gondor are given responsibility for rule until the King has come. The steward of the time fails that responsibility miserably. In the face of oncoming danger he gives up and seeks to drag others down with him.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And we read in those opening words of *Genesis* that God created man in His image. Male and female created He them. And God said “be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it; rule over every living creature.” God establishes order and mankind is given the responsibility to see order is done.

In these few words we have the basis of all that we are, all we have, and all that we must do until the King returns. We are created in the image of God. This brings with it a consciousness of God’s Moral Law that is present in all people even though sometimes it is barely evident. All our creativity, all our ability to love, to rule with justice mixed with mercy is dependent on us having been created in His image. We are given freedom, but in this freedom we are to be responsible stewards. Until He comes.

The world has changed markedly since the beginning of the new millennium. There are the uncertain threats of the ‘clash of civilizations,’ the prospect of ‘religious wars,’ and ongoing suicidal acts of terrorism by people seemingly determined to hate and destroy innocent people. There are increasingly destructive forces operating on marriage and family – the basic building blocks of a healthy society. Freedom of speech on issues that concern our faith and moral values in society is under threat as is the freedom to choose teachers of like-minded values for our children.

We live in a world that seeks to de-humanise with respect to euthanasia and manipulation of the embryo. In this era of taking life, making life and maybe soon faking life, we need to be thinking ahead of where science takes us and uphold the intrinsic value of human life from fertilisation to natural end.

It is in the blurring of what it means to be human, the rebellion against what it means to be created in the image of God, that we are facing humanity’s greatest crisis. When does human life begin and when does it have value? What does it mean to be human?

The answer to this is critical to our thinking with respect to abortion, destructive embryo research, cloning, eugenics and euthanasia. There is reason to believe that what we are facing in the attempted manipulation of life and death is the most significant issue of our time.

When does human life really begin? The ‘designer child’ knows: “Mummy, what would have happened to me if my tissue match had not been right?” But you were just a clump of cells, dear. “But Mummy it was still me, my hair colour was determined and my eye colour was determined.” But you weren’t really a ‘person’ then, dear. “Mummy, even the shape of my smile was determined – that was me!” Though not yet expressed, individuality is inherent and real in the genetic programming from the time of fertilisation! Unique adult characteristics are already determined.

The call to Australia is to Choose Life: to uphold the intrinsic value of human life from fertilisation to its natural end. This affirms our view of the Imago Dei, what it means to be created in the image of God and what it means to be human. It is even more foundational than the introductory articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* that reads: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

All human life is of value. To value people is to respect them, to aid their freedom, and to care for them at times of vulnerability.

If our children are of value then we must encourage and facilitate traditional marriage and family believing that all children should have a father and a mother. Access to education of parental choice is important as is the need to protect our children from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Are unborn babies of value? Yes – and it is a huge tragedy that we abort 80-100,000 yearly in Australia in the name of family planning. This is compounded by the fact that abortion is Medicare funded at a time when funds for immunisation are limited and mental health resources are severely strained.

Are the frail elderly and the disadvantaged of value? Yes – and their care is ideally within the family. Carers need to be supported so that the much greater costly option of institutional care is avoided. Euthanasia must be opposed – our elderly need to feel secure and valued when seeking

medical attention and not feel as if they have an obligation to die.

If all people are of value, then their freedom to speak of who they are and what they believe is of value. Our freedom to say in our churches that no man comes to God but through Jesus Christ the Son of God is under threat with religious anti-vilification legislation. Such laws serve only to work against religious freedom and freedom of speech and effectively target Christians.

What must be done

We are gradually accepting that we need to move away from our reluctance to be involved in social and political action. The gulf between Christian and non-Christian has been highlighted in a way that is new to our generation. It is no longer possible to stay neutral. Out of a false sense of respect for our neighbour and society we have not challenged as we ought. We are to be salt and light in our communities. We are the watchmen and have a responsibility to warn our neighbour and the world.

There are many fronts in which Christians are actively involved including direct evangelism, workplace witness, market place expertise, community work, teaching, medical and ancillary professions, law and education. Those impinging more directly on our government include letter writing, petitions, rallies, magazine articles, lobbying, having a Christian presence in major political parties, and having a more specific Christian party promoting Christian ideals and values. The latter has been on the scene since the election of Fred Nile in 1981 to the upper house of NSW parliament.

Because of the fine balance of power in the Australian Senate and in several State Upper Houses, a window of opportunity exists as perhaps nowhere else in the world for Christians to be elected and influence our future by wisely holding that balance and ensuring that legislation is consistent with the God-given values that have been the basis of our society – and also to counter current forces that actively seek to destroy them. We believe that when we insist that human laws line up with Natural Law, we are not ‘imposing religion’.