

# **The Ideology of Indifference**

**By Elder David Pyles**

Lack of conviction concerning religious principle is a prominent characteristic of our times. The same indifference can also be seen toward principles of government and law. The attitude seems to be that there is no significant or absolute truth in any of these, and that little is to be gained by commitment to presumed principles. This mindset also tends toward ignorance because it says any quest for truth is apt to yield little or nothing of real value. Many today seem committed to no other principle apart from their belief that there should be no commitment to principle. How a person lives or what they believe is thought to be strictly a matter of personal choice, and they are at no risk of error provided they do not denounce the choices of others as being erroneous. Because this and other aspects of modern thinking were common to the ancient Pagans, some have claimed that Paganism is in fact the fastest growing religion in the world today.

This indifference manifests itself in the religious world in the non-denominational movement, declining and unreliable church attendance, declining morals and increasing worldliness. It can be seen in the secular world in judicial activism (reinterpreting the law to conform it to current whims), a lax attitude toward law enforcement, situational ethics, declining self-discipline and ever-increasing government to compensate for the irresponsibility of the governed. It can be seen in both worlds in complacent attitudes toward ever-increasing levels of ignorance.

We as a race not only go through epidemics of body but also epidemics of mind. We have a very strong tendency to get caught up together in a common current of thinking. We revive together in spirituality or languish together in worldliness; we rise together in faith or fall together in doubt; we err together or correct together; we transgress together or repent together, and we also rise together in conviction or fall together in complacency. These powerful tendencies are what give rise to the science of sociology. Epidemics of mind are even worse than epidemics of body because the latter affect many but the first affects nearly all. Indifference is a mental epidemic of our times, and be sure that all of us have been adversely affected by it to one degree or another. The only reliable remedy for this is a healthy, proven standard independent of ourselves to which we can turn. To all true Christians, this standard is of course Jesus Christ and His Word.

Before considering what the Bible says on this subject, I will speculate on the question: How did we get from the idealistic, highly-principled World War II generation to the state of mind we have today? Since the final remnants of that generation are now departing the world, this is a question that is especially interesting to ponder. During the youth of that generation, one had the Germans, who were highly committed to their doctrine of National Socialism (i.e. "Nazism"); the Russians, who were highly committed to their doctrine of Communism; the Japanese, who were resolutely entrenched in monarchism, and one had the Americans, Europeans and others, who were committed to their doctrines of democracy. All of these were so convicted in their beliefs that they were willing to die and kill for them. This of course terminated in the most

horrific war in world history. My speculation is that subsequent generations viewed all this and concluded it would have been better to let everyone live and love their own lie, and then such a war might have been avoided. This pattern of thought was also true of religion. Arminians were then very passionate about their Arminianism; Calvinists were passionate about their Calvinism, etc, and this terminated in a fractured Christian world. So, more recent generations came to the conclusion that doctrine divides, and that the religious world would be a happier and more unified place if doctrine were simply laid aside.

While the intentions of such people might have been good, their analyses were bad. The simple truth about World War II is that America and her allies were right, and the Germans, Russians and Japanese were wrong. In proof of this claim, consider how Europe has fared since abandoning autocracy and imitating America in democracy. For the last 70 years, those nations have been able to accomplish what they were never able to do before, namely, to live with each other in peace. Indeed, insofar as I am aware, no two democratic nations in history have ever gone to full-scale war with each other. Next consider what has happened to Japan and Germany after being subdued and forced toward democratic systems. In spite of being decimated by the war, they have emerged to become the second and third largest economies in the world – unless you believe the statistics coming out of China, in which event, Japan and Germany remain third and fourth, respectively. World War II was not caused by a commitment to principle; rather, it was caused by a commitment to *wrong* principle. Sad to say, Europe has now become so complacent about its principles that it has allowed itself to become infiltrated with contrary and corrupt principles that may well serve to its ruin.

The same bad analysis is applied to the world of religion. Rather than unifying Christianity, the ecumenical movement has been accompanied by an explosion in the number of denominations, leaving Christianity in a more fractured state than ever been before. While Christians in former times were indeed divided over certain principles, there were many others on which nearly all of them agreed. Now, there is no aspect of this religion that is immune to debate.

As for the common saying that doctrine divides, though this presumed proverb has been the backbone of the nondenominational movement, it is an absurdity to anyone who cares to think. The opposite is actually true. Nothing unites us like doctrine. Many a troubled marriage has been saved because a husband and wife, though at odds with each other, remained committed to a sound doctrine. Many a battle has been won because fearful soldiers refused to succumb to their emotions and remained committed to the principles they were taught in training, especially principles that preserved them as a unified, coordinated force. The United States would have been torn apart long ago had its diverse people not been committed to the doctrine set forth in the Constitution. This nation will come to an end when commitment to that doctrine ceases, in which event, it will fragment into separate entities. The truth is that sound doctrine unites, and no unification of men can endure without it. This is why men throughout history, in seeking agreement, have signed covenants and contracts, drawn treaties, ratified constitutions, etc. – all of which expressed a doctrine or derived from such.

Real and enduring peace cannot be secured without a firm foundation in doctrine. It is for this reason that the Bible, while putting great emphasis on the importance of peace, is no less emphatic on the importance of doctrine. Indeed, the same Bible that commands protracted forbearance and forgiveness also commands that a corrupter of doctrine be dealt with promptly: *“A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject,”* (Tit 3:10). *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them,”* (Rom 16:17). *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed,”* (Gal 1:8). Forgiveness, forbearance, mercy and peace are all uniquely beautiful aspects of Christianity, but these concepts are built upon a doctrinal structure. They will fall and shatter when that structure is broken. This is why the usual rules of forbearance do not apply to those who corrupt doctrine. A man cannot consistently claim to value forgiveness, forbearance, etc. while laying doctrine aside. The latter is the only enduring foundation for the former.

Though modern Christianity is fragmented into many doctrines, it was not commitment to doctrine that divided Christians; rather, it was a lack of it, and their multiple doctrines are a symptom of the true problem rather than the cause of it. This is why the modern ecumenical movement in its effort to achieve unity by discarding doctrine has instead done the very opposite.

Simple observation alone is sufficient to show that our Creator is committed to definitive and absolute principles. To see this, take several rocks of equal size and weight, and drop them each from the same elevation. You will see that every rock invariably falls, and falls in exactly the same way, with exactly the same acceleration, striking the ground over the same interval of time and with exactly the same degree of force. Next, draw several cups of water from different sources and place them one by one on a stove. You will see that each boils at exactly the same temperature. At that point, put the cups in a freezer, upon which you will see that each freezes at exactly the same temperature and in the same amount of time. Now, if after all this you are still questioning God’s commitment to principle, then rather than dropping rocks, try dropping yourself from a tall building. Be sure to have a watch and calculator in hand. While doing the computations – hopefully before splattering on the ground – you will find that, remarkably, you are falling under exactly the same principles and parameters as the rocks. Next, consider what the world would be like if God were not committed to such principles. It would surely be an unpredictable, unreliable, precarious and disconcerting place to live. It should then be no wonder that all of these adverse adjectives well-describe the unprincipled society in which we live today. Nature gives absolutely no reason whatsoever to suppose that God is in any degree disposed to rewrite the rules as He goes. His commitment to principle is absolute. Though it was common for Pagans to be worshippers of nature, they seem to have learned very little from it, especially in regard to the present point.

As one should expect, the true word of God clearly corroborates what we observe and experience. This will explain why unprincipled people seldom have any use for the Bible except to disparage it, dismiss it or disallow it. Their own testimony is sufficient to show that the Bible

stands against them. But if there be any doubts, the following words of Jesus Christ should dissolve them:

*For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. – Mt 5:18-19*

One could scarcely imagine a statement expressing more conviction about moral principle. If this kind of statement could be made of the Law, then much more would have Christ applied it to the principles of the gospel. He elsewhere said it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for those who rejected it (Mt 10:15). All other words and actions of Christ were consistent with the high standards He here set for interpreting the Law. While He was very ready to forgive sinners, never did He make any excuse for their sin. This is a distinction we must always be careful to make. It is one thing to fall short of an acknowledged standard, but quite another to dismiss or destroy that standard. Our doctrinal foundation must be solid and sure. We must be rooted in sound principles.

Oftentimes, young people will see their elders as being hard and overbearing. However, I think even older people understand that the temptation and corruption of our age presents a moral briar patch that not even Brer Rabbit could traverse. We must therefore have a greater readiness to forgive, forbear, admonish and encourage each other. But we must do this without compromising or dismissing the standards of our morality, doctrine and practice. Any Christian who develops a dismissive attitude about even the least of God's principles of either Law or Gospel is headed for a demotion, and Jesus Christ said it can be a demotion sufficient to carry him from the top to the bottom of God's kingdom.

Ezekiel was one of the last prophets sent to Israel before the hammer of divine justice befell them in the Babylonian captivity. The prophet found the same dismissive attitude toward the principles of the word of God that is commonly seen today. Many of the Jews then impudently asserted that, regardless of their own action, the Lord would neither do good nor evil (Zeph 1:12). Their obvious intent was to dismiss the importance of obeying Him by saying there would be no benefit if they did and no consequence if they didn't. Others said, "*The way of the Lord is not equal,*" (Ezek 18:25). The intent here was much the same, i.e. to disregard divine principle by saying that obedience to it had no sure effect, and could possibly be met with loss instead of gain. Another saying was, "*The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not,*" (9:9). So, even if God had principles, they said He was no longer around to enforce them. Yet another saying was, "*The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth,*" (Ezek 12:22). By this they meant that threatening prophecies presumably pertaining to them would either fail in fulfillment or could only apply to distant generations. In all of this the Jews showed themselves to be consumed with a doctrine of "it-doesn't-matter-ism." Even when they gave outward assent to

the words of Ezekiel, God complained that the prophet was no more than a songster to them (33:32). They swayed to the music but gave no serious consideration to the words. They also dismissed the plain meaning of his speech by saying it was parabolic (20:49), implying that it was mystical language having meaning very different from what simple intuition would suggest. This pliable method of interpreting what God said is exactly the methodology used by many so-called Christians today, and is also the policy of judicial activists toward the Constitution. Finally, the Jews sealed their own condemnation by saying, "*The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,*" (Ezek 18:2). This was a blatant and impudent case of blame projection, attributing their problems to the errors of their forefathers, thus absolutely refusing to acknowledge their own responsibility to principle.

One can expect this doctrine of "it-doesn't-matter-ism" to be met with the severest forms of divine punishment. When a man acknowledges that divine principle matters, but disobeys because he capitulates in a moment of emotion or temptation, then he only needs punishment sufficient to remind him of what he already professes. But when a man is firmly committed to an ideology of indifference, his punishment must be severe enough to show him in unmistakable terms that what he professes and how he lives are of definite and significant consequence. The first man has doctrine without discipline, but the second man has neither doctrine nor discipline. This is why God was not content to give ancient Israel a mere slap on the wrist. He gave them utter destruction. The same divine attitude can be seen in Jesus Christ when admonishing the Laodicean church: "*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth,*" (Rev 3:15-16). God does not merely dislike "it-doesn't-matter-ism." He despises it.

To understand why, one need only to consider their own experience. All good Christians are people who fall short from time to time and find themselves in trouble with God. However, it is the case with nearly all of them that 99% of the time they are people who are conscientious and convicted about their moral principles. The problem is that from time to time, either because of anger, frustration, excessive temptation or lapse of faith, they slip into a state of mind where they simply do not care anymore. At that point, the Devil has them on the ropes, and they had better be prepared to duck because the next blow he intends will be calculated to put them on the mat. A good Christian may not go looking for trouble in such times, but he surely does not need trouble to come looking for him. Now it is this "it-doesn't matter" frame of mind that sets them up for the fall, and this explains why God hates it. There has been no greater stumbling-block for His children than the ideology of indifference. This also explains why drugs should be a terrifying toxin to any Christian. However varied in their chemistry, nearly all drugs produce this soon-to-be-regretted state of mind.

To further emphasize the point, consider what the Bible says in its prophecies of the last days. Isaiah said that malleable morality and plastic principles will be the final undoing of planet earth. In explaining why God will destroy it, the prophet said, "*The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the*

*everlasting covenant,*” (Isa 24:5). Hence, people will not only be falling short of the standard (a thing they have done since Eden), but will also be rewriting it to suit themselves. Their perversions to the doctrine of Christ will also be such that God will judge them as utterly corrupting the “everlasting covenant.”

Paul said one of the characteristics of men in the last days is that they will be “incontinent” (2Tim 3:2). This word in old English meant to lack self control. Now consider how applicable this word is to our own times: People cannot control their eating, drug use, spending, indebtedness, rage, etc. Indeed, they cannot even control their own attention span without being aided by medication. This lack of self control is a sure symptom of minds that are not anchored in principles.

The Bible says concerning the antichrist that “*he shall think to change times and laws*” (Dn 7:25). Also, he shall honor “*a god whom his fathers knew not,*” (11:38). Hence, it will be his intent to sever cables to old, reliable anchors. In 2Thes 2:8 where he is called “*that Wicked,*” the meaning is “*that lawless one,*” and is so translated in some modern versions. He is a man without commitment to principle and will undertake to sell the world on his way of thinking.

All of these prophecies imply that the world in the last days will be a convictionless planet, and that such will be the occasion of its ruin. It is important that God-honoring Christians understand this and remain committed to the principles of the Bible. The importance of this will only increase as we move forward in time. After warning the Thessalonians of the extreme deception and delusion that will exist in the last days, Paul said, “*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle,*” (2Thess 2:15). When warning Timothy of the same He said, “*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,*” (2 Tim 3:14-17).

I will finish with a well-known scripture that expresses the blessedness of those who are convicted about divine principles and committed to keeping them:

*And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The*

*Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them. – Deut 28:1-14*

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