

Christ's soldiers need to heed call to arms and champion their faith

KEVIN DONNELLY THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM July 17, 2018

While there is no doubt that religious freedom must be protected, it's equally true that Christians must be more assertive in entering the public square to champion what former British prime minister David Cameron termed a "more muscular defence of our Judeo-Christian heritage".

Given the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the dangers of cultural relativism promoted by multiculturalism, Cameron argued that Christians must have "the confidence to say 'yes', we are a Christian country and be proud of it".

The argument that there is no place for Christianity as we are a secular society is only half true. The separation between church and state, unlike Islamic theocracies where religious doctrine is all-powerful, cannot disguise the reality that Western liberal democracies such as Australia are inherently Christian.

While epochal events such as the Enlightenment and the Reformation are significant and lasting in their impact, equally, if not more influential, is Western civilisation's Judeo-Christian heritage and ongoing beliefs and traditions.

It's no accident that parliaments around Australia, with the exception of the ACT, which is more like a local government authority, begin with the Lord's Prayer and that the preamble to the Constitution contains the words: "Humbly relying on the blessing of almighty God."

And while it is true that the percentage of Australians identifying as Christian has fallen to 52 per cent, according to the 2016 census, it is still the most dominant religion, with Islam at 2.6 per cent, Buddhism at 2.5 per cent and Hinduism 1.9 per cent.

Australia's legal and political systems can be understood only in the context of the New Testament and the teachings of Christ. As argued by Larry Siedentop in *Inventing the Individual* when tracing the historical development of Western civilisation, concepts such as the inherent dignity of the person and inalienable rights are deeply imbued with Christian morality.

Beginning with the impact of Christ's teachings in Rome and following a gradual evolution across hundreds of years in what is now Europe, Siedentop argues that the liberties and freedoms we take for granted at our peril are steeped in the word of God and the teachings of the church.

He writes that Christian beliefs "lay the foundation for a new conception of society" based on individual conscience, free will and the need to love thy neighbour as thyself; a view of

society where: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Perth-based academic Augusto Zimmermann, in a recent monograph titled *Christian Foundations of the Common Law*, also argues that our legal and political systems are indebted to Christianity.

When detailing the evolution of our common law system, Zimmermann writes: “Indeed, there is little doubt that Christian philosophy influenced the origins and development of the English law.”

Zimmermann argues in relation to those living under English common law: “This religious identity resulted in an enviable political environment whereby citizens could take their rights seriously, such as by considering these rights to be God-given and not government acquired.”

Not surprisingly, the American Freedom House ranks those countries associated with Christianity, including the US, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Britain, highest in terms of democratic rights, including freedom of religion, speech, assembly and the press. Countries to our north, including China, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, as well as those under the yoke of communist dictatorships and Islamic fundamentalism, are ranked at the bottom of the freedom index.

Such is the freedom and liberty we take for granted that millions of migrants and refugees are flooding into Europe — and, if not for the Howard government policy of border protection, also would be arriving on our shores.

And while there’s no doubt that Christianity has been guilty of many transgressions, ranging from religious persecution to the evil crime of pedophilia, it is also true that its saving grace is the ability and willingness to acknowledge the sins of the past, to reform and better contribute to the common good.

As argued in a values statement signed by 22 Christian leaders and presented to the British House of Commons, Christianity is responsible for “the struggles to establish the rule of law and to defeat slavery and the slave trade; the establishment of the rights of conscience and the consistent opposition to intimidation, coercion, corruption, tyranny and oppression; the founding of numerous charitable institutions and the upholding of human dignity”.

As detailed in *The Black Book of Communism*, totalitarian dictators such as Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot and Kim Il-sung, on the other hand, are guilty of starving, murdering and executing about 94 million people in the forlorn and impossible hope of establishing a socialist utopia.

As Islamic terrorism is on the rise and secular nihilism is increasingly pervasive, the irony, Douglas Murray points out in *The Strange Death of Europe*, is that Christianity is ignored and undermined.

Given the existential threat confronting Western civilisation, Murray also makes the point that unless those in the West rediscover and champion what makes their culture so unique

and worth preserving, they are destined to be foreigners in their own land.

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