

Saving the World from Suicide

Romans 1:18-32

Stuart W. Bryan

I. *Our Culture, What's Left of It* by Theodore Dalrymple

THE FRAGILITY of civilisation is one of the great lessons of the twentieth century... The most civilised of peoples [have] proved capable of the most horrific of organised violence... [C]ommunism and Nazism... destroyed scores of millions of lives, in a fashion that only a few short decades before would have appeared inconceivable. Many of the disasters of the twentieth century could be characterised as revolts against civilisation itself: the Cultural Revolution in China, for example, or the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Only ten years ago, in Rwanda, scores of thousands of ordinary people were transformed into pitiless murderers by demagogic appeals over the radio. They achieved a rate of slaughter with their machetes never equalled even by the Nazis with their gas chambers. Who now would bet heavily against such a thing ever happening again anywhere in the world?

One might have supposed, in the circumstances, that a principal preoccupation of intellectuals, who after all are supposed to see farther and think more deeply than ordinary men and women, would be the maintenance of the boundaries that separate civilisation from barbarism, since those boundaries have so often proved so flimsy in the past hundred years. One would be wrong to suppose any such thing, however. Some have knowingly embraced barbarism; others have remained unaware that boundaries do not maintain themselves and are in need of maintenance and sometimes vigorous defence. To break a taboo or to transgress are terms of the highest praise in the vocabulary of modern critics, irrespective of what has been transgressed or what taboo broken...

And the prestige that intellectuals confer upon antinomianism soon communicates itself to non-intellectuals. What is good for the bohemian sooner or later becomes good for the unskilled worker, the unemployed, the welfare recipient – the very people most in need of boundaries to make their lives tolerable or allow them hope of improvement. The result is moral, spiritual, and emotional squalor, engendering fleeting pleasures and prolonged suffering.

II. The Progression of Societal Decay (cf. 2 Tim 3:1-9)

Step 1 → _____ (vv. 18-23)

Step 2 → _____ (vv. 24-25)

Step 3 → _____ (vv. 26-27)

Step 4 → _____ (vv. 28-32)

Note that “the last days” are characterized as “_____ times” – times when it is difficult any longer to tell up from down; times of barbarism and anarchy.

“Of the twenty two civilizations that have appeared in history, nineteen of them collapsed when they reached the moral state the United States is in now.” Arnold Toynbee

“The world is trying to experiment with attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuilt civilization, and save the World from suicide.” T.S. Eliot

III. Gender Identity

As we consider Paul's outline of cultural collapse, we find ourselves at step 3: the increasingly open embrace of sexual abnormality in the form of homosexuality. But note what lies upstream of this: idolatry and immorality. In other words, one of the consequences of worshiping idols is incredible confusion about what it means to be a man or a woman and how men and women are to behave in relationship to one another.

IV. Idolatry and Gender Confusion

A. The Root Cause of Gender Confusion (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-11)

In Romans 1, Paul insists that this large-scale gender confusion is a result of our cultural idolatry. Therefore, the fundamental issue in regard to male and female is not information about male and female – the fundamental issue is an issue of worship, of authority, of idolatry. Who is your God? Our gender confusion is the result of our rebellion and idolatry; and this idolatry must be rooted out before any measure of sanity shall return to us.

B. The Word and Gender Identity (Ps 19:7-8; Prov 3:5-7; Is 8:20)

Last week studied Paul's command that we *bear with the word of exhortation*. That topic and the issue of gender identity are integrally related – how? Because God is the Lord! This means that His voice cuts through the confusion of our culture and gives us wisdom and direction - what he says goes. He is the Master; He is the Designer; He is the Creator. And His revelation in His Word brings clarity to our confusion.

V. Conclusion