

people. It is a war over *ideas*. And someday soon, I believe, a winner will emerge and the loser will fade from memory. For now, the outcome is very much in doubt.

On one side of this Continental Divide are the traditionalists whose values begin with the basic assumption that "God is . . ." From that understanding comes a far reaching system of thought that touches every dimension of life. Their beliefs are deeply rooted in Scripture, beginning with the Ten Commandments and continuing through New Testament teachings and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Adherents believe (1) in lifelong marriage; (2) in the value of bearing and raising children; (3) in the traditional family, meaning individuals related by marriage, birth or adoption; (4) in the universal worth of the individual, regardless of productivity or other contributions to mankind; and (5) in a complex series of immutable truths, including premarital chastity, fidelity and loyalty between spouses, the value of self-discipline and hard work, and more.

On virtually every moral issue of the day, the conservative, Christian perspective can be found in scriptural understandings. For example, consider the practices of abortion, infanticide and euthanasia. Attitudes toward these forms of murder are shaped by words that were spoken four thousand years ago, including this passage: "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Countless other illustrations could be cited.

Until approximately thirty years ago, these biblically based concepts were the dominant values and beliefs in Western society. Not everyone agreed, of course, but most did. Decisions made in Congress or by the judicial system typically reflected this broad understanding. And you can be sure that the public schools also conformed to it. Parents saw to that.

Then, slowly at first, another way of looking at the world began to emerge. It evolved from the basic assumption that "God isn't . . ." Everything emanating from the Creator was jettisoned, including reverence for Scripture or any of the transcendent, universal truths. "Right" was determined by what *seemed* right at a particular time.

All the old rules and commandments had to be reconsidered. Since in their view human beings have no eternal significance, the value of life was cheapened. Our species became just another member of the animal kingdom, perhaps brighter than the rest, but of no more value. Thus, secular humanists easily embraced abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia when convenience demanded.

Historic perspectives on morality and ethics gave way to a "new morality" based on changing social attitudes. Prohibitions dissolved, rules changed, restrictions faded, and guilt subsided. Obviously, this moral free-fall was very liberating in the early days, as self-discipline and restraint yielded to a less demanding master. And it caught on like wildfire.

A Wasteland of Values

It has been said that never in human history has a culture discarded its belief system more quickly than America did in the sixties, or so it seemed at the time. I remember hearing a television producer say in 1967 that within ten years we could expect to see unedited depictions of sexual intercourse in a movie made for the general public. His statement shocked me and I expressed disbelief to my wife.

I thought it would never happen. As it turned out, the producer was only partially correct. It happened *one* year later when the movie *I Am Curious Yellow* was released in the U.S., featuring a nude man and woman engaged in simulated sexual intercourse on the silver screen. It was