

## A Public Apology

As a Christian, I would like to apologise for the state of the Christian Church today.

The church was created by God so that his people could gather and worship him, support and encourage each other, and go out and tell others of the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is supposed to promote biblical beliefs and values, and be a light to the world, unencumbered by worldly values and practices. It is meant to be distinct from secular political and social beliefs and practices in which it is situated. It is also supposed to be distinct from the beliefs and practices of other religions.

And yet, over the centuries, the message and purpose of the church has been distorted by its close working relationships with governments and by the adoption of various other beliefs and practices.

For example, the close relationship of church and state means that, in many ways, it no longer has an independent voice. And that is seen in its being unable (or unwilling) to speak out on a variety of political and social issues.

Its embrace of government contracts restricts its ability to do things in ways fitting for a people of God. As a consequence, it is seen by many to be a welfare agency.

Its employment of non-Christians (paid or volunteer) to deliver its services (in regard to welfare, hospitals, schools, retirement homes, etc.), sends a clear message that Christianity is not about belief, but about doing good—and that the message of the Gospel is only for those who have a need to be more 'religious'.

Its engagement in appeals to the public for money (for building or for general upkeep), confirms the idea that people are right in believing that going to church is not important and that one can earn salvation by simply contributing to the coffers of the church.

Its acceptance of other religions—and more particularly the practices associated with those religions—promotes the idea that there are valid alternatives to a faith in Jesus Christ.

And its participation and promotion of practices which have been coloured by government requirements and other values, distorts biblical values. Indeed, in the case marriage, the church's view of valid relationships has been tempered to accommodate Roman beliefs and practices, and its involvement in weddings—registration and ceremonies—has more to do with government control than any biblical requirement.

The sad thing, of course, is that not only are all these things practiced, but there is a tendency among churches to then base its teaching on these beliefs and practices. And by doing so, it often pays scant regard to the context of a passage when interpreting scripture.

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As a consequence, I would like to apologise firstly to God because, by its beliefs and practices, the church, in many ways, has become indistinguishable from many other secular organisations. And therefore, the message of salvation is often blurred or lost.

And secondly, I would like to apologise to church goers and the general public alike, because any Gospel message they have received may well have been distorted by these beliefs and practices.

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The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is, perhaps, the singular most important thing in the world. It's what our eternal welfare depends upon. As a consequence, we need to make sure that it is not corrupted in anyway. And when it is, we need to peel back the layers to return it to being more biblical.

This, in part, has happened periodically in the church over the centuries, and most notably in the reformation of the 16th Century. But while reformers have done much to restore the basic message of the Gospel, they haven't gone far enough to undo the connection between church and state—and the various associated practices—which have become such a problem in the church today.

Furthermore, as in biblical days, identifying the problem is one thing. Getting leaders to actively pursue reform is another thing altogether. Indeed, the church seems to be far more comfortable with the ways things are, than to make any changes at all.

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As a consequence, and maybe as one of a small number of voices, I am sorry. I am sorry that the church is not the establishment it was intended, by God, to be.

I can only hope that as you read this, you will not be put off from hearing and responding to the true Gospel. After all, Jesus really did come and die for our sins. And no matter how corrupt—and unbiblical—the church has become, it is important for us all to respond to the one true unadulterated message of salvation.

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