

ANGER--HATE--FEAR

A distant In-law relative sent me a message. The message simply said: "Tell Hughston that I hate Bush." Now, I have no idea why that In-law relative felt moved to reveal that state of mind to me. Was it a joke? I had never discussed President Bush with that In-law relative. What provoked the message? It was, perhaps, part joke and a lot of real negative feeling. People who really dislike President Bush rarely address him as President.

But the message did quicken me to start seriously considering the Anger, Hate, and Fear that is abroad in the world today. It is not decreasing but is apparently increasing in many parts of our planet.

I read in a book on Philosophy by Will Durant that Plato said, and that was a long time ago that Plato said it, that people do what they do because of: "Desire", "Emotion", and "Knowledge". Anger, hate, and fear certainly fit into these categories. What is "desire"? It means to long for, to hope for; it is the conscious impulse toward something that promises gratification of some sort. The desire for "power", political, business, control, can generate varieties of anger, hate, and fear. Poet Lowell, characterized desire in this manner: "The thing we long for, that we are for one transcendent moment." That 'transcendent moment' often becomes a fixed attitude, a way of thinking... a motive for action... a specter of fear.

Of course 'emotion' is a driving force that creates action. Emotion is a state of feeling, sometimes a deep and driving state of feeling. It is a psychic and physical reaction subjectively experienced, and a cause for resolution and action. The contemporary

raging revolts in France were likely not the results of long range plans. They were more in the category of exploding emotional reactions. For a long time France had been allowing the conditions that promoted such out-bursts to build up and come to the action point. How can a people come to the point where they defy the government, fight the police, burn 1200 cars in one night? Emotions have built up. Desires have reached the frustration point. Fears release energies!

Now we are forced to ask, "How stable is our Country?" How long will it be before the "desire" and "emotion" tensions explode? Just this week, a Senator stood up in the Senate and literally vilified the government and President of the United States. Elected senators publicly call each other liars and call the President a liar. Politics in the United States has always been a mean, nasty trade. Anger, hate, and fear, contributed to the murder of President Lincoln though time has proven him to be a great and good man. But the meanness and dirtiness of the politics has generally been overshadowed by the works and wills of a few outstanding and worthy statesmen and women. Not so in these present days. Our population is rapidly changing. People are coming in from many different countries. Many know little and some care little about our heritage. Their desires and emotions are out of step with our historic values, practices, and standards of conduct. Loyalty to Country is declining. The desire for what I can get from the Country and what can I make the Country do for me is increasing. Our elected officials are more and more concerned about being re-elected than being right. We have governing bodies

that are considering deleting the holidays that have religious connotation and replacing them with holidays that recognize secular events. One thing is certain, merchants are not going to give up holiday sales! Another thing is certain, sometimes significant social and moral trends are signaled by subtle custom modifications.

Plato listed 'knowledge' as one of the things that causes people to do what they do. But Plato did not have electronic information transmitting media. Something could happen in one part of the world and not be heard of in another part for years. Neither did he have scores and scores of news reporters and correspondents who make their living reporting news, true and untrue. No longer is it safe to accept as truth much of what you hear, see, and read. For the most part, teachers were instructors and not propagandists. That too has changed, especially in colleges and universities.

Knowledge is the fact or state of knowing something, of being aware of something. Knowledge indicates the range and extent of one's information and understanding of reality as far as reality is perceived.

The Church, these days, must be deeply aware of the fact that it's caught up in the affairs of "anger", "hate", "fear", "desire", "emotion", and "knowledge". There is no standing on the sidelines watching while all manner of social and economic forces shape our times. As its great heritage, the Church has the desire, the emotion, and the knowledge to enable it to be a guiding force in society's struggles. It has the knowledge, gleaned across the centuries, for guiding the standards and conduct of

human beings. More than mere knowledge, it has "faith", ... "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen." The Church has an "enlightenment" that exceeds knowledge. The October 2005 issue of InFoPak of the Presbyterian Church strikingly demonstrates this reality. Just look at the pamphlet, "Ideas for a Christ-Centered Holiday 2005". It is speaking to our current situation. The InfoPak is literally packed full of ideas and helps for enhancing the work the Church is called to do today. Messages from the pulpit should be clear and ringing proclamations of what the Church is, vital portions of knowledge and faith.

Anger, hate, and fear challenge our peace today.

Hughston R. Peyton
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