

What is Culture?

When we think of culture we think of ethnic background, language, customs, literature, music, food and sport etc. But according to Augustine, a great Christian thinker who lived in the declining days of the Roman Empire, culture goes much deeper. He saw culture as a manifestation of man's worship of the God or gods they believed. In other words culture is the outworking of a people's creed or dominant worldview.

The National Day of Prayer and Fasting for 2013 called us to **"pray that we will see a culture of life replace a culture of death"**. What does this mean? The terms 'culture of life' and 'culture of death' are not found in the Bible and have only been in use since the mid-1990's. So let us explore what it all means.

A Culture of Life

This is a way of life that is based on the theological truth that all human life has been made in the image and likeness of God (**Genesis 1:27**). As such every human life, male or female; young or old; perfect or imperfect, is precious in God's eyes and has intrinsic and equal value from conception to life's natural end and into eternity. Because God is the Giver of Life, the culture of life opposes the deliberate destruction of human life by man. Jesus, as the **"author of life"** (**Acts 3:15**), came to make it possible for human beings to enter into eternal abundant life in this present earthly life and the heavenly life to come (**John 10:10**).

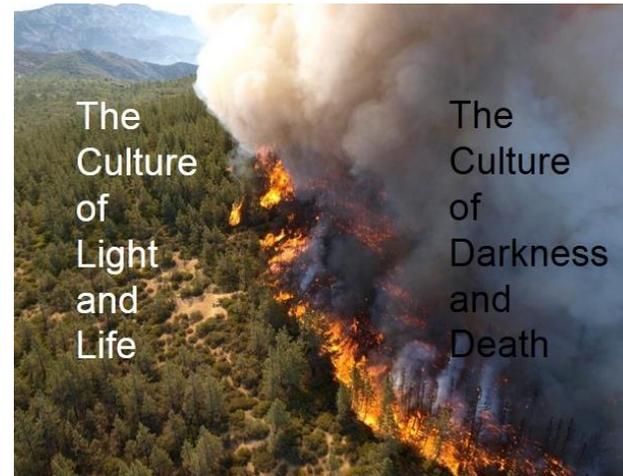
A Culture of Death

This is a way of death that is seen in the deliberate taking of human life through such things as abortion, euthanasia, destruction of human embryos, murder and suicide. These are manifestations of the Kingdom of Satan who Jesus said, **"was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him ... for he is a liar and the father of all lies"** (**John 8: 44b**). These manifestations of

death are consistent with Satan's ultimate aim to destroy those who are made in the image of God and prevent their entering into the eternal abundant life that God has planned. In his lying and murdering he will stop at nothing – not even the shedding of the innocent blood of pre-born babies.

Cultures in Conflict

We are seeing that the culture of life and the culture of death are in conflict. It is a clash between the values of the Kingdom of Light and Life and the Kingdom of Darkness and Death.



Today it appears the Culture of Darkness and Death is overtaking the Culture of Light and Life. And so as Paul exhorts, **"take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but ... against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"** (**Ephesians 6:11b,12**). We are called to contend, labour, strive and even fight for the Kingdom values of a culture of life. And in contending for a culture of life we are confronting the powers of darkness who are behind a culture of death.

Paul wrote, **"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light**

of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (**2 Corinthians 4:4**). Through belief systems such as atheism, materialism and hedonism, which are based on lies and deception, Satan blinds unbelievers to the way of eternal abundant life through Jesus. Working together, these belief systems are the different Satanic 'strongholds' that result in or make up a culture of death.

Contending for a Culture of Life

Paul again writes, **"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds"** (**2 Corinthians 10:3-5**). God has given us weapons to use against Satan's plans to destroy those who bear the image of God. These include the truth of the Word of God and praying in the Name of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Contending of John Wesley

18th century England was anything but a green and pleasant land. Drunkenness, poverty, ignorance and immorality were rife. To this desperate culture and society God called John Wesley. Expelled from the established church he began to preach in the open air on average two or three times a day and was many times attacked by mobs. Over fifty years it is estimated that he travelled 250,000 miles either on foot or on horseback throughout the length and breadth of Britain.

Compelled by the love of Christ, John Wesley often included the central truth that man was created in the image of God in his preaching. In one sermon he stated **"This great gift of God, the salvation of our souls, is no other than the image of God fresh stamped on our hearts. It is a renewal of believers in the spirit of their minds, after the likeness of Him that create them."**

Consistent with his concern for those made in the image of God John Wesley left societies who fasted, prayed, preached and looked after the needy everywhere he went. He had a passionate hatred for war and the slave trade, speaking out and writing against them. The ministry of John Wesley is acknowledged by historians as the key reason for the transformation of British culture and society.

Eternal and Loving God, Thank you that You that from one man You made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth and seek You and find You. But in our fallen world help us to follow the example of Jesus to restore the image of God in a lost mankind that may will become new creations in Christ. Thank you for the examples from church history and in our present day who contended for a culture of light and life. Help us by the power of Your Holy Spirit to be history-makers and transformers of Aussie culture and society. In the powerful and precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

About 'Image of God' Leaflets

In the Bible we read that God *"created man in His own image"* (Genesis 1:27). Many maintain that all human history revolves around this truth. The Judeo-Christian belief in the unique dignity of human beings is at the very foundation of Western civilisation.

The 2010 Canberra Declaration therefore states:

"We believe that all human life, being made in the image of God, has intrinsic and equal value from conception to life's natural end."

'Image of God' leaflets relate the doctrine of man as created in the image of God to various issues we face in Australia today.

The 21 leaflets in SERIES ONE are dedicated to Sophie Scholl who was martyred at the age of 21 in World War II for writing and distributing leaflets.

You can download other 'Image of God' leaflets at The Canberra Declaration website.

Please:

READ & SIGN

**The Canberra Declaration
to Protect**

- ***Religious Freedom***
- ***Marriage and Family and***
- ***Human Life***
in Australia

Website: www.canberradeclaration.org.au

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Date last modified: 20 September 2017

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Culture



and the
**Image of
God**