



The Permissive Society

A permissive society is a society in which social norms become increasingly liberal, especially with regard to sexual freedom. "Permissiveness" claims to recognize each individual's 'right' (this is assumed rather than proved) to form their own system of values and their own ideas about the categories of good and evil, and allows one to assert that morality is, in essence, a relative concept. This usually accompanies a change in what is considered deviant. While typically preserving the rule "do not harm others", a permissive society would have few other moral or legal codes.

This was exactly what was happening in the social and sexual revolution of the 1960s. Various things collided into a sort of 'perfect storm'. The development of the contraceptive pill, the legalisation of abortion, and the great increase in the influence of TV, pop culture, music, movies, advertising etc, all came together to shape society. The decline of biblical standards in evangelical Christianity, stemming from an abandonment of the regulative principle in worship, played no small part. Churches adopted 'hippie' culture, with its music style, and informality came into worship. As well as this new evangelicalism, the charismatic movement did untold harm to the Church. These things majored upon the emotions rather than the mind, which is the real 'palace of faith'. Evolutionary ideas gained a popular foothold, and Existentialism and eastern

philosophical ideas became popular. The result was that people didn't seem to have to be so responsible for their actions (especially sexually), and were driven by their emotions, feelings, bodily passions and desires. Informality and even anarchy was advocated. A 'Counterculture' came in (a push back against the previous moral constraints and authority). There was a 'Sexual revolution' which essentially said "I want to be free to do what I want to do". Promiscuity became acceptable and people lost their shame at sexual sin. Before this most people got married before having children within stable family units. Even in non Christian society, the view was that sex was to be reserved for marriage. Many didn't obey, but it was still seen as 'sinful', because of a historical Christian heritage. The new attitude was characterised as "free love" but this was just a semantic substitute for 'unrestrained lust'. Soon the homosexual movement would hijack the civil rights movement to attempt to make their case equivalent, drawing upon false parallels.

So the ethical 'Permissive society' came in, and social norms became increasingly liberal. Practically anything goes in such a climate, just as long as you don't harm anyone. (Emotional, social or spiritual harms are just ignored). This was 'freedom' in sex, drugs, and general attitudes. (But it was a freedom to enslave yourself. Once again, it was the freedom of playing a game without rules, or jumping out of an aeroplane without a parachute! A fake freedom!). The results of this were multitudes of broken relationships, families and hearts, because of a pursuit of excess. From this time on the rates of all manner of social ills increased. It was as if a great social experiment was being carried out upon an unsuspecting 'guinea pig' generation. One that couldn't be reversed or stopped.

With regards to relationships, the deeper one gets into promiscuity the more shallow the love becomes, and if the pool of love is shallow it evaporates. Love quietly leaves by the back door, while up front no one notices because they think they're having so much fun! Marriage and the traditional family unit were under attack. That old Enemy had switched strategies again. He had attacked the mind, now he would go for the affections.

Hedonism is the philosophy of the permissive generation in the sense of the general devotion to the pursuit of pleasure. Overstimulating the senses by extremes and excess. Such a generation go out for an unforgettable night, that in the end they can't remember because a self-indulgent quest for bodily sensation has robbed them of their senses. These sentient 'tools' once valued by empirical philosophy to gain knowledge, were being misused and deadened, because the young had been robbed of a true sense of who they were as people, and left with existential 'angst'. The choice seemed to be nihilism or hedonism. The latter was a philosophy accepted without much thought.

The young engaged in a mindless quest for pleasure, excess, extremes, freedom and liberty, and found it harder to be happy because they threw away the rules that enabled people to enjoy the 'wholesome' things in life, as I have said, like following the rules to

enjoy a game. But the old 'rules', the standards still preserved in society from the great Christian revivals, were being cast aside. The abandonment of objective ethics left the young without a mooring, and they drifted into an intoxicating whirlwind, enjoying putting themselves into a spin, not realising they were like a fly caught, and spinning in a web.

Hedonism (the philosophy of the permissive society)

This was a modern iteration of the old Epicurean philosophy, except this time disengaged from the mind. This hedonism is the philosophy of the thoughtless. People can fall into it without much thought, especially the young. It appeals to the feelings more than the mind, and is enmity to the spirit. It chooses the desires of the flesh above those needs of the soul, like Esau desired the "pottage" over his birthright. The hedonist acts (if he realises it or not) as if the greatest goal in life is the pursuit of pleasure. "Please yourself" is a term of semi-derision, and it's not hard to see why. This was a selfish pursuit, whipping up sensuality, feelings, emotions, and lusts by the means of all sorts of 'vehicles' used for the purpose. These were the misuse of things like music, provocative dancing, sexual relations; substances like alcohol and drugs, or even simply food or drink, light and sound, or the shared rush of emotion at large crowded sports or entertainment events. Mass consumerism plays its part. Pleasure seekers are ruled by their feelings, and rely on these 'vehicles' to regulate their mood, and then depend on them, finding themselves unable to do without. They're held to ransom by what they ran after, locked into the vehicle which will no longer take them where they want to go, and will in the end crash and burn. These things are poor 'medicine' that soon becomes toxic, poisonous. The pleasurable sensations will get weaker the more they are over indulged because of desensitisation, leading to a desire for excess. This amounts to an over-emphasis on imagination and the fleshly affections of the heart, giving an unbalanced thought life, and leading to a 'see-saw' of feelings, swinging moods from extremes of high and low. By bombarding the senses with worldliness, one misuses them and re-sets them. The world will seem dull, as if a person had just shone a bright light into their eyes, and then the natural colours of things had bleached out for a while. The person who does this is seeking his/her satisfaction and happiness in all the low things of this physical world, and it cannot ultimately satisfy the soul. Pleasure seeking is dangerously deceitful. It seems to promise much happiness, but it doesn't fulfil its promises, only short term pleasure, long term pain. A spiralling decline into anguish, depression and even suicide. As is so often the case, there was no help, or answers from philosophy. The great void of meaning served up by Existentialism, was an philosophical empty plate, and the starving young increasingly developed Nihilistic 'malnutrition'.

Many of that generation purposed to be pleasure seekers, and opened the door to strong temptations and sins, and inflamed the desires that tend to dominate. The body is a good servant, but a bad master. It was a fire, and hedonism fed and fanned it into a blaze that society has found impossible to control, and it is still well and truly burning. A culture that had always existed on the fringes of society, in the gin palaces of Victorian times for example, had moved into the mainstream.

The modern quest for freedom, seen in existentialism, was now manifested in a far less intellectual philosophy. Attempts to throw off the 'shackles' of an older morality, only resulted in the forging of chains to self-bind and rods to self-beat, out of a misplaced sense of liberty which is just a liberty to enslave. This new morality said "There's nothing wrong, except telling me I'm wrong".

It has become mythologized that Emperor Nero played the fiddle while Rome burned; well from the 1960's onwards, the bands played while this philosophical mindset heaped the hot coals of desire into their laps, and invited the flame of God's anger at broken commandments.

The man who says "I can do whatever I want" will soon find the people, who still live within the boundaries he stepped away from, have what he needs. Sadly *he* can no longer have it, because he foolishly locked himself out of those boundaries! He has said "Throw off marriage, throw away being chaste, cast away sobriety, break out and use forbidden language and, unabashedly, do forbidden things. We'll call it 'empowerment, and free love". But, as already mentioned, this was just unrestrained lust. Any 'power' was the power to be 'free' to lose deep love, and security, to be more lonely and lost, more rude and crude, and polluted within.

In truth, they threw away something precious in those days because they thought it was restricting them, when all along it was securing them, like a wedding band on the hand. When men say they want freedom from law and order, no one is free to walk the streets!

The permissive society has taught generations "It's always been this way, anything else is abnormal." Whereas, the truth is, we're living in the late 20th century's great social experiment gone wrong, and no one's interested in examining the results. Because the kids, who ushered in this counter culture, and experimented on themselves, are now the rulers and teachers and parents. They're self-blinded, and conscience-calloused, but they're leading the next generation. They're pointing the wrong way with one hand, and with the other, covering the eyes of the young to their own misdeeds and damage.

The old standards were Christian standards. When a society abandons God's ways for 'Babylon's' ways (*"lovers of pleasures more than than lovers of God"* 2 Tim 3.4), the results speak for themselves. The results were bad, but things would get worse.