



# The 1960s – long hair, flowers and morality mash: ethical appraisal of the clash that helped shape today's Western society

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## Abstract

**The 1960s – long hair, flowers and morality mash: ethical appraisal of the clash that helped shape today's Western society**

*The 1960s will be remembered as a major clash that helped shape today's Western society. Young people were breaking out of the moulds that had been cast by their parents' post-war era. The conflict brought about significant social change all over Western society. Western man searched frantically for a new world, willing to risk the hardship of revolution.*

*In a world full of confusing and conflicting approaches in terms of how to view man, the Bible has the clear answer: man is created in the image of God, and is, in this capacity, God's vice-regent and image-bearer. However, the Christian church is by-and-large remarkably indecisive as the social conscience of Western society.*

*The main thrust of the sixties was anti-status quo, anti-establishment, anti-materialist. In the process of man's self-determination on either side of the conflict, great erosion of man's greatest gift occurred: ethical distinction. The spiritual vacuum created by anti-establishment forces led to confusion and self-destruction.*

## Opsomming

### **Die sestigerjare – lang hare, blomme en 'n moraliteitsmengsel: etiese beoordeling van die “botsing” wat die teenswoordige Westerse samelewing help vorm het**

*Die sestigerjare sal onthou word as 'n belangrike tyd van konflik wat vandag se Westerse samelewing help vorm het. Jongmense het uitgebreek uit die streng vorms wat tydens hulle ouers se na-oorlogse era gegiet is. Die konflik het beduidende sosiale veranderings oral in die Westerse samelewing veroorsaak. Die Westerse individu het desperaat gesoek na 'n nuwe wêreld, gewillig om die risiko van swaarkry wat revolusie meebring, te neem.*

*In 'n wêreld gevul met verwarrende en teenstrydige benaderings van hoe die mens gesien moet word, het die Bybel 'n duidelike antwoord: die mens is geskape na die beeld van God, en is in hierdie kapasiteit God se verteenwoordiger en beelddraer. Die Christelike kerk is egter oor die algemeen merkwaardig besluiteloos wanneer dit moet optree as die gewete van die Westerse wêreld.*

*Die hoofrigting van die sestigerjare was anti-status quo, anti-instelling en antimaterialisties. In die proses van die mens se selfbeskikking aan albei kante van die konflik het 'n erosie van die mense se grootste gawe plaasgevind: etiese onderskeid. Die spirituele vakuum wat deur die anti-instellingsgesindheid tot stand gebring is, het verwarring en selfdestruksie meegebring.*

## 1. Introduction

“From the moment I could talk, I was ordered to listen”, Cat Stevens complains in his song *Father & son* (Stevens, 2001). In the dialogue between father and son there are two generations in conflict. The father has made it through the Second World War and has known intense poverty and much insecurity. He leans towards security, stability and bourgeois mediocrity. The son is full of ideals. He wants to try new things, step out and take the knocks. When he tries to explain this to Dad, the old man turns his back – much to the frustration and despair of the young man. The whole song depicts a generation gap that was very much in existence between the generation that lived through the war and the one that was born thereafter.

Basically, from the early sixties onwards, as the postwar children reached the age of discernment, the conflict between materialism and idealism came to a head. This era constitutes one of the watershed moments in Western history as one generation emerged,

wounded and cautious from a traumatic world war experience, and another reacted with vengeance against the resultant materialism and stodgy security focus (Libaw, 2002:3).

Naturally, such a conflict does not emerge in a vacuum. The world war survivors who nurtured the next generation were themselves already on thin ice with regard to their own moral bedrock. An example of this is the Dada movement (the name itself means something akin to “indulging in meaningless trifles”) which preceded the Second World War and tried to laugh away all that is of value in our world, a nihilistic, destructive movement of anti-art, antiphilosophy, anti-Western tradition, anti-human effort of any constructive kind (Esaak, 2008:1). Preceding this, other philosophical approaches had consistently eroded the Judeo-Christian society, starting right back at the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

Coming from such a culture and then moving into World War II, it is understandable that the generation following the war would cling to the only thing that was seen as a source of possible comfort, i.e. creature comfort as found in amassing material security (Cook, 2001:70, 230, 469). Such clutching to the mundane brought a seemingly inevitable pendulum swing reaction from the next generation, hence the frustrated exclamations by the son in the dialogue so brilliantly presented by Cat Stevens.

During this era there was certainly a search for answers to perceived dilemmas (meaning of life, Vietnam War, materialism of the parents). It was a time of intense probing. Many of the answers were found in Eastern religion as gurus lead hosts of Westerners to their idea of paradise, their “Shangri-la” (Wood, 2005:1). In the midst of all this stood the church of Jesus Christ with its guiding principles for wholesome and meaningful living. However, most young people also regarded the church as part of the establishment, part of the perceived negativity that coloured society.

This article seeks to analyse the phenomena that impacted society so markedly (also beyond the 1960s into the next decades), observe the reaction of Christians in that day, and evaluate which Biblical responses would be appropriate.

## **2. The clash extends ethical boundaries**

Ever since the early sixties, when the first postwar generation became articulated, we have been faced with the fact that we live in a society that has two main categories of people. The one group

seeks to find the answer to all of life's ills through various anti-establishment means, such as protests and ideological messaging through drugs in the 1960s (Schaeffer, 1977a: Tape IX), mingled with and succeeded by cosmic humanism, seeking saviours for all the perceived wrongs in this world by looking for answers in the inner self or in nature, plus ironically, to the governments of the world to solve the perceived problems (Schaeffer, 1977b: Tape X). The other group, while not entirely immune to their responsibilities to others around them, strive to lead a life of security as found in the fortress of materialism. In the midst of these two main streams stands the church of Christ, its people striving to live in obedience to the Biblical worldview – being in the world whilst not of it (John 17:16-18).

The reaction of the generation after the war against the materialism that drove so many of the World War II survivors was quite ferocious indeed. It was expressed in literary writings, in song (as in the example above), in protests, and in seeking a way of life that shouted a message of defiance against the established order of things – an order very much based on the Judeo-Christian teachings of what ought to be and what ought not to be. McGuire (1965) sings about the fact – as he perceives it – that we should all know that we are on the “Eve of destruction.” The song, *Eve of destruction* (McGuire, 1965), is full of anger against the violence that goes on in the world, against the hypocrisy seen in the United States where the Christian bourgeoisie was perceived to “hate your next-door-neighbour, but don't forget to say grace” (quote from the song).

The 1960s was a time of revolution. Young people were breaking out of the moulds that were cast by their parents' postwar era. There was disgust at the hypocrisy of the German postwar generation that wanted to cover up the atrocities of the Second World War. This disgust is expressed especially by angry, young German writers, many of whom joined forces in the *Gruppe 47* (the Group 1947).

The all-consuming desire for material security was met with disdain. The cry was for freedom from restraints, for pursuit of happiness without the straitjacket of materialism (private and institutionalised) and Judeo-Christian traditions. In the United States of America, Hugh Hefner single-handedly started the sexual revolution with the Playboy bunny concept. He had dreams of beautiful woman and happy abandon in terms of man-woman interaction. His Playboy Mansion has now “for forty years offered hospitality to thousands of celebrity guests – movie stars, directors, musicians, athletes, authors and politicians – and a never-ending stream of beautiful

women” (TVNZ Channel 3, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2004). “The man who said we could all go out and play, is actually out there and playing,” says journalist Bill Zahmi (*Inside the Playboy Mansion*, New Zealand Channel 3’s Thursday documentary, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2004). Hefner has written his own Playboy philosophy, which defends promiscuity and hedonism as virtuous and wholesome. The titillation for people in general is enormous, the influence of Hefner is worldwide, it plays successfully on man’s basic sex drive and debases it to emotional consumerism in which relationships are marked by fleetingness and shallowness. Yahoo discovered that over 80% of hits on its search engine are sexual in nature (Mcclure, 2003).

As Hefner overcame the barriers of the establishment, the media gradually came on board with him, because the commercial appeal was without equal. The result is that it is now normal to see nakedness, and all that goes with it, flaunted on television. It brought significant social change all over Western society. For Christians the challenge was to continue pure relational living in the face of such temptation. Behind the temptation is the view of man as a beautiful – or not so beautiful – animal which follows its instinctive, emotional drives (Papaplia & Wendkos Olds, 1992:23) with the ultimate goal to feel good and look good. The influence on young people may be illustrated by the fact that girls suffer from anorexia and bulimia at a younger and younger age, that young teenage boys are increasingly obsessed with the need to look super-toned and physically attractive. Television New Zealand’s prime TV broadcasted a documentary *Perfect Breasts* (Anon., 2004a), about girls who, barely past puberty, are saving for breast implants!

In The Netherlands, the Provos were the first anywhere to combine non-violence and absurd humour to create social change. Initially called “nozems”, they were disaffected teenagers who had seriously profited from their parents’ affluence, having plenty of money and even more boredom, cruising the streets on mopeds, only one aim on their minds: to stir up trouble, preferably with the police. Their potential was recognised by philosophy student Roel van Duyn. “It is our task to turn their aggression into revolutionary consciousness”, he wrote in 1965. The Provo phenomenon was an outgrowth of alienation and absurdity of life in the early 1960s. It was irresistibly attractive to the Dutch youth and threatened to spread worldwide. However, after a few years, the middle class Dutch actually became sympathetic to much of the Provo cause, resulting in public tolerance of the movement, effectively causing its death knell. As

leader Stolk said at the liquidation meeting: “Provo has to disappear, because all the great men that made us big have gone”, referring to the Provos’ arch enemies, the mayor of Amsterdam and his commissioner of police (Voeten, 1990).

The Provos may be regarded as a subculture of the worldwide Hippie-movement. The Hippies adopted a lifestyle that was at odds with the traditional Western values, seeing government, industry and other traditional, social institutions as part of the unified establishment that had no legitimacy. As a group, Hippies had longer hair than was fashionable for the day, creating offence with the establishment as this long hair was seen either as an expression of the iconoclastic motives, or as simply effeminate. Further anti-establishment traits of the Hippies were their nomadic life style (made known worldwide with the box office success film *Easy rider*, 1969), their unusually coloured and styled clothing, the music (“Grateful dead”, “Jefferson airplane”, “Jimmy Hendrix”, “Janis Joplin”, etc.), their outdoor fairs with music – the most famous ones being the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 and Woodstock in 1969, their communal living (*Easy rider*), use of incense, use of recreational drugs, particularly marihuana, hashish, and LSD (the first group to strive for legalisation of marihuana was the Provos) – smoked not so much for its escapist effect initially, but rather to make a philosophical statement against the establishment.

In all this, there was a deliberate striving for effect, namely to come across as non-threatening and peace-loving. After all, who would feel threatened by a long-haired individual wearing beads and flowers in his hair and a round-metal frame set of glasses on a benignly smiling face, walking around barefoot or on Roman sandals? The War in Vietnam was a very strongly unifying catalyst for the Hippie movement. Flowers became the obvious symbol of opposition to violence and many songs were written to spread that message, e.g. “San Francisco (Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair)”, written by John Phillips and made famous by the softly crooning voice of Scott McKenzie (Phillips, 1967). James Michener wrote his famous bestseller, “The drifters” (published in 1986), in which he unfolded a powerful and poignant drama of six young runaways adrift in a world they had created out of dreams, drugs, and dedication to pleasure. Fittingly, the Dutch translation was titled “De bloemenkinderen van Tormolinos” (“The flower children of Tormolinos”).

There are a few ironic observations to be made regarding the rise, existence and eventually the disappearance of this angry, young generation. Firstly, the fact that these young people were *able* to

protest, go to Woodstock, sit around singing their antiwar and anti-establishment songs in the Bob Dylan and Donovan mode, was because the material prosperity of their parents enabled them. They were able to do what they did against the establishment precisely because the establishment gave them the means to live and live well. Secondly, if one were to look up the financial organisation behind the making of the music of Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, and others, it would become clear that the establishment actually enriched itself further by virtue of the Hippie movement. Woodstock was a megadollar event, with Warner Brothers brought in to film this part of history. The film *Easy rider* with Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda was a victory for the capitalist industry as it was a box office major which, in the first place, brought in an enormous amount of money, and in the second place, stimulated the perpetuation of the Hippie movement for further financial exploitation. It seems strange that no authors who have written about the Hippies have noticed the irony in this.

Thirdly, and finally, as stated by the Dutch Provos when they officially wound up their movement, eventually many of the things the Hippies did as anti-establishment were simply absorbed into the establishment and became *normal*. Part of their behaviour was thus no longer regarded as offensive, but rather as curious or worthy of experimentation by the wider society. Effectively, this meant that the movement lost its teeth, not by violent suppression, but by candy-floss smothering. In the early 1970s the distinctives of the Hippie movement were lost. Bewilderment in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, acceptance by the bourgeoisie, loss of leadership to the establishment, the adoption of Hippie fashion by all of teenage society in the Western world, all this lead to a gradual osmosis into society, albeit a society that had widened its boundaries of tolerance as a result of the “new normality” introduced by the baby-boomer generation.

Much of this tolerant, new morality is seen in the current body-piercing rage (tattooing is already too ordinary). Young and not-so-young people try to look different by piercing baubles through belly-buttons, tongues, noses, eyebrows and even through the sex organs. Also in this, with everyone trying to be different, all end up looking the same, causing further acceptance, albeit that the strangeness of it all is not lost by those who are on the outside of such exploits looking in. At the same time, these trends create capitalist prosperity for some, i.e. those who provide the means to “look different” at a financial cost.

### **3. The Judeo-Christian ethical backbone broken**

The prevalent desire to be anti-establishment, antiviolenace and anti-tradition, had serious consequences as certain establishments of society have been eroded, humanly speaking reaching that eve of destruction which Barry McGuire sang about in the sixties. The first establishment that suffered was the family – the shipwreck of relationships in what had become a philosophically anarchistic society. Bob Dylan has sung many songs about people who live in the midst of confusion and who finally decide that it is best to keep the head down and make sure of economic satisfaction, “Climb into the frame and shout God’s name, but you’re never sure what it is” in “Political world” illustrates the spirit of the age in which people no longer know what is up or down (Dylan, 1989). It led to broken homes and lost children growing up without ethical direction. The antiviolenace thrust led to a legal direction that in general leans towards antipunishment in which educational institutes no longer mete out corporal punishment, in which prisoners are now placed on probation to check how the patients (as they are being regarded, consistent with evolutionary thinking in which lawbreaking is equated with societal retardation needing a cure) are able to fit back into society, in which churches have banished the Biblical principles of church discipline. With the erosion of a sense of collective citizenship, of corporate responsibility, individualism has led to an increased rights orientation for the individual citizen. Coupled with this is the estrangement, the removal of the sense of belonging, with increased multinationalism in both industry and state (Schlevogt, 2002), causing a sense of drift and indifference on the part of today’s citizenry.

The impartial observer cannot escape the irony of this peace-seeking generation’s means to achieve its ends: violent expression and public disturbance often accompany their strive. Man today – notably since the 1960s – is in revolt against the world in which he lives, against its dehumanising tendencies, against slavery under the computerised bureaucracy, against alienation and the loneliness of the mass man. On this last point Riesman (1950) already fired a warning shot as early as 1950 in the United States. Western man searches frantically for a new world, willing to risk the hardship of revolution. The tragedy is that there are no new principles on offer. All his endeavours result only in a world which is even more consistent with the principles of the Enlightenment, of autonomous man – autonomous, yet reduced to atoms or rabbits (Rookmaker, 1994:196).



Modern society has given many blessings in terms of advancement, technology, medical and educational. However, it appears that man has trouble finding the right attitude to these blessings. Technology is wonderful insofar as it offers man new tools and possibilities, but it is like the witch's apprentice broom that runs out of control and starts to dominate the apprentice (Von Goethe, 1749-1832). People become objects of technological development rather than the masters of it. This results in reducing the image bearers of God into economic and economy-driven consumer slaves in an all-encompassing and absorbing technocracy (Rookmaker, 1994:196).

Still, man wants to be human, trying to go beyond the material. In order to escape the economic and creature-comfort driven environment, he drifts into mysticism (Rookmaker, 1994:196). However, whereas mysticism in the early church had God as its object of worship, the mysticism of today is nihilistic, seeking a god which is everything and nothing. "God is dead, He remains dead and we killed Him", was Nietzsche's response, after observing where the rationalism of his day lead mankind. Man, in his quest, has moved from the rational to the irrational, escaping into Eastern religions which seek answers by virtue of bypassing reality in an effort to transcend the dilemmas of life and thought (Smith & Matrisciana, 1999). We now have the situation that man lives in a schizophrenic world, locked into the realm of rationalism on the one hand, and soaring in the irrational domain of mystical freedom. In this latter way there is a profound irony, because it still relies heavily on the technological realm it so despises, because one means to soar is drugs, another *virtual reality*. *Last action hero*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, made a worldwide impression on that score (Canby, 1993). The aim of drugtaking is to move into the mystical sphere of outer-consciousness, the transcendence of "self". The craving to be religious apart from Christianity is sought to be slaked. In using these drugs, however, people lose their sense of identity, they become confused, they end up relationally shipwrecked (Smith & Matrisciana, 1999). Drugs are the product of a technological world and the yearning for love in the technological world – as the Beatles made clear in their song "With a little help from my friends" which states "I get by with a little help from my friends, I get *high* with a little help from my friends" (Lennon & McCartney, 1967) and, therefore belong to the world of technocracy and science. Ironically, this is exactly what the hippies and others like them tried to escape from (Rookmaker, 1994:196).

#### **4. Indecisive Christian responses**

The Christian who is serious about serving God – as opposed to those who pay lip service to Christianity, the nominal Christians, and those who allegorise the Bible in the name of higher criticism – has to stand in the midst of all this and decide how to approach the seriously damaged view of man, how to apply his findings ethically in the various societal realms. “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” (John 17:15.)

In a world full of confusing and conflicting approaches in terms of how to view man, the Bible has the clear answer: man is created in the image of God, and is, in this capacity, God’s vicegerent and image bearer. Such a stance has ethical consequences, because it means that the will of God, His law, must be paramount and determinative in all activity. As all activity is relational, i.e. affecting others, man should be viewed with respect and approached with respect, because in honouring one’s fellowman, ultimately the Creator of that fellowman is honoured.

Reformed literature makes this clear (Van Til, 1972:5, 129), but the practice does not always reflect the theoretical understanding. In fact, the general inclination of Christians is to withdraw from the degenerative influences of society. Concern for one’s own spiritual well-being and for that of the children leads to a certain sense of isolationism. Biblical support for such a view is seemingly found in a text like 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, where the exhortation is given not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers and to come out from among them. Taken out of the wider context, such writing has led many Christians to avoid involvement with the people outside their church community. Their children are carefully nurtured in the things of God, but without providing them with an understanding of the world outside the church. This unwittingly creates either dysfunctional, or at least somewhat estranged citizens, or those who rebel against the domestic constraints and turn their back on the church. Notably, with the children of the late twentieth and early 21st century there is constant tension between maintaining the purity of Biblical living on the one hand and involvement in the world on the other. However, this is a false dichotomy, because the Lord of Creation insists that his people should be out there with the qualities of the tribe of Issachar, about which is written that they were men that had understanding of the times and so knew what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. 12:32). These were men whom Jesus prayed for (John 17:15-16), men who stood in the midst of society and who were able to look at

societal phenomena through the Biblical perspective. These are Christians who will not withdraw from the world (Paul warns against this world flight in 1 Cor. 5:10), but who will strive to be light and salt, an influence of healing in the Name of Christ. Such Christians take the exhortation of the apostle Paul seriously to “walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time” (Col. 4:5). It is precisely at this point that many Christians show signs of the confusion of Bob Dylan’s mixed-up people, or evidence of a full but horrified understanding of the times.

In the first case, the undesirable manifestations of worldly ethics tend to invade the Christian home, resulting in loosening of Biblical moorings, whereas in the second case, the statement “to know what Israel ought to do” is applied in terms of 2 Corinthians 6 with separatist living.

Where the world invades the Bible-oriented home, situation ethics become more and more normative in nature. In terms of schooling this usually results in seeking to establish a “school with the Bible”, in which the start of the day is marked by the compulsory Psalm verse recitation, prayer and Bible devotion, after which the “real” subjects are worked on without setting before the students the ethical teachings that ought to undergird each subject for truly Biblical training in which “every thought is brought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). This is a dualism which is not from God, because, in his plan, everything must be leavened with the Word. The Bible must be the ethical standard according to which every aspect of learning and living is to be measured. In many churches and the schools operated by them, education becomes man-centred instead of God-centred.

Where Christians decide to be separate from the world, it often results in a deep suspicion towards any new development, especially technological advancement and the permissiveness that marks society more and more. This permissiveness is particularly notable in terms of the way in which people handle relationships, reducing them to the consumerist level. In a world in which the word *discretion* is well nigh ignored by the media, the Christians’ suspicion is not groundless. With Goethe these Christians see how technology, when used in an ethical vacuum or in a non-Christian framework, will turn into the witch’s broom that wreaks uncontrollable damage. Currently, Western television is full of narcissistic programmes that show ugliness as entertainment, such as *SCU*, a reality series that follows the team from the New Zealand Police Serious Crash Unit as it investigates fatal road smashes, and promiscuity as virtue in

*Perfect breasts, Paradise hotel, and Pleasure island* (*The TV Guide*, programmes Feb. 7-13, 2004). The real revolution is caused by the claim that all values and norms are basically social, and that man is free to live as he wishes.

## **5. The spiritual vacuum cannot be denied**

As the young ones in the 1960s threw away the old values of their ancestors, it was discovered that a spiritual vacuum had opened up that could not be filled. The protesters who were very much anti-establishment, had a real schizophrenic problem: they wanted to be free from government, but at the same time looked towards the government to make the West a better world (Schaeffer, 1977b: Tape X). As a result, much of what had arisen was gradually reduced to the lowest economic denominator. Indeed, if this created world is all in which meaning can be found, then the ontological question “Why am I here?” should ultimately be answered within the material confines. So it happened that Western education now defines a good citizen as one who contributes to society mainly in the economical sense (Ministry of Education, 2002). Media entertainment is determined by the number of viewers watching, because this determines the interest and pay level of advertisers, and so, even news bulletins are more concerned with entertainment (e.g. spinning out the human interest story, rather than reporting in-depth on seriously impacting events that seem less attractive to the public). The way most politicians seek to gain the vote for election is on the economic platform, making promises, proffering ideas in the context of improvement to creature comforts. In medicine, the capitalism of genetic engineering has been well document (Kimbrell, 1993).

The main thrust of the sixties was anti-status quo, anti-establishment and antimaterialism. Essentially, the old cry of the French revolution – freedom, brotherhood, equality – was the motivational drive, coupled with disdain for the bourgeoisie, which was seen as focusing on acquisition of wealth within a tightly formulated set of rules for conduct. The ironic schizophrenia of all this has been noted earlier.

Whereas the pendulum swing inclined to the left in extremis, it is true that there is no smoke without a fire. Materialism *has* been a strong focus of the generation that came through World War II, and materialism continues to be a strong motivational force by which many people live their lives (as we could see, even among the most fervent idealists economic necessities or desires would dilute the purity of the message at times). For many non-Christians the world they live in is all they can live for, with the result that mammon

(money and all that is associated with it) necessarily becomes their god. Jesus said: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matt. 6:24.)

An excessive penchant for the material is doing ethical damage to society, causing people to become self-centred, individualistic and pragmatic, i.e. seeing the other person as an economic object to further one’s own cause, as made very clear in the field of genetic engineering (Kimbrell, 1993:221-226).

As erosion of Judeo-Christian values has received new impetus during the 1960s, Western education is reputedly in a critical condition (Postman, 1995). In the USA, England and various other Western countries, articles are written and television programmes are broadcasted time and again (e.g. Anon., 2004c). This media deals with the key question of how to improve the education of the children. Critics signal outward manifestations of inadequacy which essentially point back to the philosophical premise that has caused the perceived ills in the first place. The philosophical premise is founded in Enlightenment values, reappearing vengefully in the turbulence of 1960. Man’s subjective emotions are determinative of what is right and, consequently, the system is stranded in ethical water (subjectivism, situation ethics), leading to social constructs that have been arrived at by leaving no stone unturned, with everything up for grabs in order that each individual may hold on to what is valuable – for him. Set over and against this is the Biblical worldview approach which has objective principles as the starting point to all societal environments which, consequently, provide unifying ethical bedrock (application of education methods and determination of educational goals on the basis of unchanging ethics). This in turn results in proposed changes being checked constantly by principles.

There is an undeniable conflict between the one and the many. Dr. Rushdoony already alerted the world to this dilemma when he addressed the problems that were being visited on society early 1960 when he wrote about culture, crisis and education (Rushdoony, 1961). Dr. Catchpoole relates the trouble, including the shootings in high schools that happen with worrying regularity in the Western world (he writes in the context of the Columbine high school murders in April, 1999), directly to this education system which, in essence, gives young children an overload of responsibility regarding choice and near-emptiness in terms of guidance (Catchpoole, 2000:16-17).

## 6. Conclusion

Basically, from the early sixties onwards, when the postwar children reached the age of discernment, the conflict between materialism and idealism came to a head. In the process of man's self-determination on either side, great erosion occurred of man's greatest gift: ethical distinction. The boundaries between right and wrong became increasingly blurred as situation ethics and subjective determinism became increasingly normative. (As one of the children of the postwar generation, this author has lived through these developments personally while living in The Netherlands.)

People have striven to find a place to stand, an identity, via two different routes. One segment of society has tried to find the meaningful framework through anti-establishment approaches, the other in material security and in cementing the establishment as the fortress of materialism.

The two segments married, ironically, in the capitalist West, in that anti-establishment was actually quite profitable for big companies to get involved with. The sexual revolution initially shocked society, but all too soon acceptance led to economic exploitation, which has been successful to the point that search engines on the internet record unparalleled search intensity to sex related topics. Sex is still a top search term, concludes Sullivan (2005). He writes, "I had someone e-mail me recently asking whether the 'urban legend' of sex and porn being top search terms was still true. Hmm. Is it? I thought it would be fun to check back on the situation. *Wordtracker* sent me an unfiltered version of its *top 30 list* that I've posted for members. It shows sex is still number one – to the count of 302 993 searches per day based on data over the past 60 days from Infospace-owned Dogpile and Metacrawler. Number two? Porn, at 234 751 queries per day."

Rightly may the psalmist ask (Ps. 11) the question as to what the righteous can do where the foundations are being destroyed. The wicked bend the bow to shoot at the upright in heart. Should Christians focus on this fact of life it may well lead to despondence. However, the psalmist continues to notice that God is in heaven, in control, and that his vengeance will be meted out to those who set themselves up against Him and try to destroy his works. Indeed, tragic as it is to observe, the sanctity of life is trodden under foot and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), already in our day. In the course of history many a wicked world empire has come and gone. Today, the self-destruction of those who do not honour God, in

abortion clinics, in educational approaches (Weeks, 2007:141-157), in the drive for suicide and extreme experiences, is evident for all to see. It is interesting to notice that suicide is extremely high in rich nations, whereas in poverty-stricken countries suicide is nearly absent (Walton, 1990:302).

One way of responding to life has been that Christians strove to syncretise Enlightenment concepts with Christian ethics. The results for the education of children were a mixed blessing as ethical directives from Scripture were mixed with situation ethics prescribed by subjectivist ideals. The feet of the statue in Daniel, made of clay and iron (Dan. 2:41-43), caused the structure to break into pieces. It appears that the position chosen by these Christians is quite similar. The dualism that marked the church in Aquinas's time returned in a new jacket here.

In another response, Christians reacted against the eroding influences of secularism, in answer to the statement "to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. 12:32) by applying this, in terms of 2 Corinthians 6, with separatist living. It appears that in neither of these responses the problem of dualism has been negated.

The ultimate hope of the Christian continues to be what the psalmist declares with power in Psalm 115:3 and 4: "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands." This God, in total control, continues to raise up children of Issachar who have understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. 12:32). They become people in the Christian church who are capable of analysing societal trends and provide Biblical directives for the household of God wherever she is active in today's societies. By the grace of God, such understanding will then lead to Christian responses that are Biblical and healing and reach out to a world which is very much attuned to spirituality, but needs to be called to the King of this world. Church Father Augustine (354-430) put it well, "Thous hast created us for Thyself, and our heart is not quiet until it finds rest in Thee" (Anon., 2004b).

The people who emerged from the 1960s are spiritual people, that is, they are people who searched for the meaning of life beyond the tangible, material boundaries (the tragedy being that they still continue in a cyclic concept of history, the endless treadmill of death and reincarnation). This is encouraging, because the desire to look beyond the material world in search for meaning makes for fertile spiritual soil. The matter of concern for the Christian church, in

keeping with the great commission (Matt. 28:19-20), is that the right gospel be planted in that soil. When pastor Richard Wurmbrand saw his beloved Romania overrun by Russian troops, he sent his church members to the railway station to embrace them as targets of evangelism; he saw the invasion as an opportunity for Christ (White, 2001:43). Just so, the period from the 1960s to the present day is an opportunity for Christ as people see spiritual fulfilment.

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**Key concepts:**

1960s  
ethical distinction  
indecisive church  
spiritual vacuum

**Kernbegrippe:**

besluitelose kerk  
etiese onderskeid  
geestelike vakuum  
sestigerjare

