

The Last Hope

By Steve Schmutzer

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I suppose you could call me a news junkie. Every day it's my habit to scan through a few websites to see what's going on in the world.

While I have no desire to support the deceptive agenda of the left, I check out their media staples just to know what they're pushing now and plotting next. As Jack Ryan said in The Hunt for Red October, *"It is wise to study the ways of one's adversary. Don't you think?"*

That means I routinely glance through The Washington Compost, the Huffing & Puffington Post, PMSNBC, Clinton News Network (CNN), The New York Slimes, and The Associated Depress (my nods to Rush Limbaugh and Mark Levin) just to get their angle on things.

Then I peruse through The Drudge Report, Breitbart News, Infowars, The Powdered Wig Society, The Jihad Watch Daily Digest, and Fox News just to balance things out a bit. I've learned that somewhere in between the two groups – and leaning more towards the second one - lies the truth. The right isn't perfect, but the left is shamefully wrong.

A link on The Drudge Report a few days ago caught my eye, "Hungarian Leader Calls Christianity 'Europe's Last Hope.'" The article reviewed the State of Hungary speech by the Prime Minister of – you got it, "Hungary" – Viktor Orbán.

According to Viktor Orbán, things are bad in the world and Europe's got the worst of the situation. His concern is current policies have "opened the way to the decline of Christian culture and the advance of Islam." By his assessments, central Europe is being systematically conquered beneath a tsunami of Muslim immigration.

He's right.

He's not politically correct for calling it like it is, but boiling critical issues down to their lowest common denominator is hardly the remedy for a crisis. Instead, we need *more* people who state the facts, who "call a spade a spade," and who don't cower from the reactions of those who wish to destroy the things that preserve a culture. Political correctness has never been an ally of truth.

But it's how Viktor Orbán said what he said that gives me pause. He didn't say, "A change in immigration policy is Europe's best plan." He didn't try to advance new laws to encourage tolerance and assimilation. He didn't propose the notion that a blended faith will save Europe, he didn't require any church to report the topics of its sermons, and he didn't scold his countrymen for "bitterly clinging" to the things they cherish.

Rather than stand in front of his nation and smugly gloat that, "Whatever we once were, we are no longer a Christian nation...." he reminded them of the value of what they had discarded. He said simply that Christianity is "Europe's last hope."

Those are remarkable words from a national leader within a continent that has all-but-abandoned its Christian heritage. All over Europe, hundreds of stately cathedrals stand empty of worshippers. More pigeons poop in their belfries than parishioners pray in their pews. Many European “Christians” care more about their stained glass than their stained hearts.

Americans are frequently naïve. They thump their chests over their nation’s “Christian heritage,” but it was to continental Europe where the early apostles embarked on their missionary journeys and preached the Gospel with passion. That history is noted in the Scriptures.

Europe gave us Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. It also gave us John Wycliffe, John Calvin, William Tyndale, John Wesley, William Wilberforce, and C.S. Lewis among many other giants of the faith. In short, the Gospel has been advanced around the world in large part due to the leaders and leadership of “Christian Europe.”

But it’s nothing like that now; the present situation instead is a shocking plummet. In the UK, 62 percent of young people 18 to 24 years old claim to have “no religion.” In Scotland, church attendance has fallen by more than half in the past 30 years. France and Sweden rank among the highest percentage of people who openly deny the existence of God at 40 percent and 34 percent respectively. These are just a few of the sobering trends which underscore Europe’s dramatic decline from its reformation roots to today’s secular society.

Because America is slow to appreciate the lessons which Europe has learned the hard way, our nation is running a close second in a race that nobody is wise to win.

Like Europe, we’ve largely abandoned our moorings of faith – and as a direct result, we’ve *also* abandoned our sound judgment (Romans 1:21-22). Whether we’re discussing immigration, free speech, gun control, or any other matter that pivots around sensible talking points, we’re showing we’ve lost our grasp of the obvious.

Now we hear our nation’s lemming politicians and copycat companies spouting, “People don’t want thoughts and prayers!” in response to national tragedies. They’d rather impulsively push for changes to laws and to the constitution than soberly reflect on the need for a change in our moral culture.

And that gets us right back to the timely words of Viktor Orbán. They are profound – and it turns out, they are also unwelcome. According to Gatestone Institute, “Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is the Eastern nemesis of the European elite. No one else in Europe except him speaks about defending “Christianity.”

Hungary’s Prime Minister is the proverbial canary in a coal mine, and he could hardly care what his critics think. It was Hungary and her eastern European neighbors who defeated the Ottomans in 1699. He is justified in feeling threatened by their descendants who love death more than most people love life.

Orbán’s objective is to turn his country’s dilemma around by exercising some common sense, to reinforce his culture with faith-based amendments, and to save his nation from Europe’s epidemic of foolishness. It’s not exactly a call for national repentance, but saying “Christianity is Europe’s last hope” is a positive step in the right direction.

The closing portions of the prophetic Scriptures emphasize a clear “last hope” message, but it goes well beyond any rhetoric that seeks to return a nation to cultural stability. It is instead an urgent and divinely-mandated appeal to get one’s heart right with God before the little time that’s left runs out.

When the angel in Revelation 14:6-7 issues the “eternal gospel” to the whole world, it is in every sense of the concept “the last hope” for anyone that hears it. Pressures will be fierce to give in to the antichrist’s agenda, and critics will be many against the few who see the light and resist his articulate deceptions.

This angel’s “last hope” dispatch shames the easy-to-swallow, seeker-sensitive, and story-based delivery of the salvation message we typically toss around with questionable intentions today. There is no goal in the angel’s approach to be attractive to the lost or to “have a conversation.” He has no ambition to identify with one group or avoid offending another. The angel’s words hold no regard for errant doctrines nor do they give any respect to any religious practices which are removed from the literal truth of God’s Word.

Instead, the angel’s mission is a last-ditch effort to arrest the attention of those people in the world that are still redeemable. Plenty won’t be since they will have made choices that seal them for eternal judgment (Rev. 14:9-12), and so the message is also a warning against abandoning reason.

We don’t think about it much, but “the last hope” Gospel message from the angel is based in common sense. Conditions in the world at that time will plainly support everything he says. The result is the angel’s words are in-your-face, confrontational, brief, - and by every one of today’s lukewarm standards, “politically incorrect.” They are also very effective!

While “the last hope” for a culture under siege may be a return to Christian roots wherein justice, common sense, and order are once again restored – and while “the last hope” for a lost soul in the clutches of destruction is the frank declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul reminds true believers of their own “blessed hope” in Titus 2:13. This is the rapture, and it has encouraged the saints and given them real hope since the church began.

The wonderful truth for those who are already secure in Christ is they can focus on “the present hope” rather than “the last hope.” Jesus promises to come for us at any moment - unannounced - to take His bride away to be with Him forever (1 Thess. 4:17).

We cannot possibly imagine the glory of this imminent event which rescues us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10), but we are sustained and encouraged by the veracity of that hope each and every day.