

Have you ever been caught between two realities?

- "In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is." -- Yogi Berra
- How many people live in Saanich but your postal address is Victoria?
- That's not quite as difficult to reconcile as being a dual citizen, or an Albertan moving to the West Coast and finding himself surrounded by anti-pipeline neighbours.
- There can also be two realities in a trick question – eg. What word would you use to describe a person who does not have all their fingers on one hand? Answer: Normal, because people usually have half their fingers on one hand.

Jesus too lived in a world of conflicting loyalties and realities:

- Samaritans & Jews: mixed blood Jew verses pure blood Jews.
- Herodians and Zealots: those who supported King Herod and nationalist who resisted.
- Saducees and Pharisees: those who believe in no resurrection and those who believe keeping religious law is the core of Judaism. In Matthew's gospel reading of this morning, the Pharisees and Herodians are presented as allies. Hear these words:

**Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap Jesus in what he said. 16 So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"**

- Implications of the trick question: there was a potential clash between the requirements of Roman state law and the duty of Jewish religious law
- Real goal of Pharisees and Herodians is to trap Jesus and get him arrested

As modern people it is easy to read into the passage a teaching on separation of church and state. To do so would be to jump too quickly to that conclusion.

- There was a Roman State in Jesus' day, but there was no Church
- Church became the institutionalized version of the Jesus movement
- Emperor Theodosius, took the step in 380 AD, of making Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire ... obliterating any distinction between Church and State. The Roman state would even help to build churches.
- Most Christian countries in the Middle Ages believed in the Divine Right of Kings, i.e. God blesses the state/king as God's instrument on earth.
- With that kind of legacy, Canadians of Euro-Christian background in the 19<sup>th</sup> C. tended to view both church and state as complementary institutions to build a Christian nation and colonise the territory of British North America

One of the biggest areas for not only cooperation but collaboration in colonial and later times, was relationship between Church and State in creating a system of Residential Schools, beginning in 1830 (in a Brantford, Ontario school).

- **Definition:** Residential schools were government-sponsored schools run by churches.
- **Purpose:** The purpose of residential schools was to educate and convert Indigenous youth and to integrate them into Canadian society. In general, this was a program of assimilation .... Finish the job of colonization of a 'new land'.

- **Numbers:** An estimated 150,000 children attended residential schools.
- **Deaths:** An estimated 6,000 children died at residential schools (records are incomplete). This was because of poor nutrition and crowded conditions.
- **How many schools?** In total, over 130 residential schools operated in Canada between 1831 and 1996. In 1931, there were 80 residential schools operating in Canada. This was the most at any one time.
- **Last residential school?** The Gordon Residential School in Punnichy, Saskatchewan, closed in 1996. It was the last residential school in Canada.

The separation of Church and State in Canada was virtually forgotten altogether in the latter 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> C.

- Indian Act (1876), the government was required to provide indigenous with an education and to integrate them into Canadian society... actually, a continuation of colonization policy. Our federal government not provinces, was responsible for education when it came to the Indian Act.
- The federal government supported schooling as a way to make First Nations economically self-sufficient. Its underlying objective was to decrease Indigenous dependence on public funds. Churches had 'cheap labour' and the government could 'contract out' the running of schools.
- Most of the residential schools were in the four Western provinces and the territories, from the 1880's onwards, for next 50 years. There were also such schools in northwestern Ontario and in northern Quebec.
- Residential schools were built in centralized locations, in order to replicate the school model already established. A teaching staff could be recruited to serve in a central location. The fact that students were away from home would break bonds of traditional culture, viewed as a necessary step in assimilation.
- Only an elementary school curriculum was taught. Many of the teachers were not trained. Students were not really prepared to enter Euro-Canadian society, or to return to their traditional societies.
- The suppression of Indigenous culture and language would now be termed a form of genocide, by the definition used in international law; historically we have tended to use the term only for mass executions, but the international law definition is broader and relates to intent to eliminate a culture or ethnic identity of a people, leading to the death of a people
- Focus of many residential schools was to suppress Indigenous languages in favour of English, replace Indigenous spirituality and practices with Euro-Canadian version of Christianity, assimilate the young into dominant culture
- By 1930, the residential school system totalled 80 institutions. The Roman Catholic Church operated three-fifths of the schools, the Anglican Church one-quarter and the United and Presbyterian Churches about 15%.
- This system only ended completely with the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement 2007, signed by then Prime Minister Harper, who delivered a full apology for Residential Schools on behalf of all Canadians (in 2008).

Why were the mainline denominations of Canada such willing partners in running residential schools? Why did Jesus' conversation with the Saducees and Herodians not trouble Christians in our mainline churches?

- Missionary Goals: “convert the heathen”; there is “one true religion”; “civilize the uncivilized”; Euro-Canadian culture is normative
- Sunday School movement was created initially to assimilate immigrants from E. Europe and other “foreign” places. Their children would be taught English and Bible stories, such that they would absorb “good” Protestant values of hard work, thrift, honesty, etc. A good Christian society would be White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant, even if immigrant stock was from “away”.
- Progressive mainline Christians believed strongly “power of education” as a force against poverty; as a tool for next generation to enter “society”.
- The liberal belief in transformative power of education tends to be blind to the abuse that can come from the dominant culture legislating education that perpetuates its own value and values as normative.
- 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> C. Christians saw no contradiction between goals of Church & State; the State can be used to further the goals of the Church ... a “Christian Canada” in the Euro-Canadian mould would be the mould.

How do we live the Kingdom in a secular society, where there is in law a separation of church & state?

- One approach has been formalized in Quebec: secular society requires no religious expression by those who are representatives of a secular state.
- In Canada generally, a secular state is one that is neutral towards religion; religious expression is allowed in public space, as long as all religions are treated equally.
- In the case of Residential Schools, we became uncritical agents of a national policy of colonisation and assimilation. By not taking seriously a separation of Church and State, we were simply absorbed by the state in a dubious nation-building project.
- It is not sufficient to say that the past is past and everyone just needs to accept the way things are ... and have been.
- To begin to achieve restitution and reconciliation, we first need to know and own our colonisation history.
- Owning our past can make us uncomfortable because we own not only what we have done personally but what was done collectively by us and our kin; our settler ancestors probably did not seek to exterminate indigenous peoples but their very coming in large numbers had that effect.
- Jesus reply to the Pharisees' and Herodians' question, requires us to discern when we acting out Godly justice and when we are just uncritically reflecting the goals of the State; we pay our taxes to the emperor, but we have a greater obligation to the Kingdom of God.
- We proclaim the Kingdom when we bring spiritual values of justice and compassion to the public realm when legal reform is discussed, or the needs of the few are being displaced by the power of the many.

- We proclaim the kingdom when we seek to create faith communities that include people of many diverse backgrounds and experiences; the dominant culture may marginalize and exploit people but there is a witnessing in creating communities of faith that model compassion and tolerance.

As a child I grew up on a small mixed farm on Indian Lands in Glengarry County in eastern Ontario. We had 50 acres cleared and 125 acres of bush, where we made maple syrup in the early spring.

- The Indian Lands was a two mile-wide strip of land that ran along the western edge of Glengarry from the St. Lawrence north to the Ottawa River, dividing the Algonquian lands from the Mohawk lands. The Crown extinguished the tract in 1847 and began making land grants to settlers and squatters.
- Once a year we received a visit from Stanley, who was of Mohawk ethnicity, from nearby Cornwall Island ... part of the Akwesasne Reserve. Both he and my father liked hunting and catching up on family news. After the social part of the visit, Stanley would go into the bush and harvest birch bark from certain desirable trees.
- Neither he nor my father spoke about legal rights, or restitution, or property rights. It just seemed natural that Stanley would take what he needed, as his ancestors had always done.
- My father once jokingly asked if Stanley thought the Mohawks might want the Indian Lands back again. Stanley threw up his hands and declared emphatically, "Heavens no. This place is a swamp! It's really no good for farming. Cornwall Island is much better real estate. You can keep the old Indian Lands tract. I just want my birch bark."

We cannot erase the evils of the past but we can commit to a conversation in the present about redressing a merging of Church and State that has been destructive for Indigenous Peoples and their modern day descendants.

- Caesar had a visible kingdom, but Jesus proclaimed an invisible Kingdom, to be made visible by all those who are called to love God and neighbour as themselves.
- Despite the challenges and the inconsistencies in which we often find ourselves, we are called to live as citizens of an invisible kingdom that makes our worldly kingdom more humane, more just, more inclusive, more caring ... than we might otherwise choose to be.
- Jesus embodied such a radical notion of community, 'afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted'. Originally that phrase was used in 1902 to describe the proper role of newspapers in society. Surely the Church's mission is no less prophetic when it comes to our role with Indigenous reconciliation in a secular society.
- This is the Kingdom of God, rather than the kingdom of Caesar.
- This is the Way of Jesus. Amen.