

Radical Church

**A Call to Rediscover the Radical
Roots of the Christian Faith**

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Introduction

In Scotland, 18 years ago, I was living a life which was at odds with mainstream society and the law. A constant cocktail of narcotics and alcohol had rendered me unfit for work. I lived in a constant drunken state. Most nights on the drink led to either a pub fight or a street fight. I landed in a jail cell twice for a combination of breaching the peace, assault and vandalism. As I've recounted in my first book, *Christ, the Cross and the Concrete Jungle* my life was completely turned around by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Scotland has often been referred to as 'The Land of the Book'—a reference to the rich Christian heritage. As I turned to the Book, the Book worked its magic. Instead of living on benefits, and abusing the system; I work full time and pay my taxes. Instead of living life drunk, I live life sober. Instead of drifting from one sexual encounter to another, I'm happily married and the father of two amazing sons. Instead of cursing Christianity, I now preach and teach Christianity. My children, instead of growing up in a godless environment, are growing up learning the ways of

God. Yet here's the irony—in turning back to the Book that once underpinned the social fabric of the land, I once again find myself living a life which is becoming increasingly at odds with mainstream society and the law. It is not outside the realms of possibility that I could, in the future, find myself in jail, for living my life according to the Book, and teaching my children to live according to the Book, and calling society to turn to the Book.

What's happened? Whilst Jesus has been saving sinners, like me, to himself, society has been transitioning away from the faith that once defined our culture. Almost overnight we have seen a dramatic shift in our culture. The dramatic shift is this: to live and speak according to the values and customs, that were once taken for granted, is to live and speak as a radical extremist. What was a cultural norm yesterday, is a cultural taboo today.

I grew up in the central-belt in Scotland between the 80s and 90s. We were a Roman Catholic family, we attended a Roman Catholic school, and we lived in a 'diverse' community—a community divided between Catholics and Protestants. Despite the sectarian divide, the reality is, most of us had more in common, than we had differences. Both sides grew up with a church connection, most of us were baptized as infants, most of us had a shared sense of right and wrong (even when we didn't comply with it!). In my early primary school years, there was a religious and moral coherence woven through life. Church, school, and home life shared the same moral and religious framework.

Today things are very different. Just a few weeks ago I had my two sons (who were six and seven) baptized in our

local Presbyterian church (it wasn't a believer's baptism). I shared the pictures on social media for friends and family to see. Somehow the picture ended up on a Secular Society discussion forum, accompanying an angry thread, full of outraged atheists expressing their disgust at my children being baptized because it was a breach of their individual human rights to have such a ceremony inflicted upon them. It suddenly struck me, something once considered a cultural norm (the baptism of a child) is now something very radical. It's a statement of rebellion to the secularism that wants to dominate every sphere of life—from the market place to the home. Baptism is an act of defiance that says to the secularist worldview—*You don't reign here, Jesus does.*

What we are seeing in the West is a shift of worldviews. We need to understand though that the new secular humanism which has replaced the Judeo-Christian worldview, is not neutral territory. Despite its foundational dogmas such as freedom, equality, tolerance and respect, the reality is that the new secularism is a dictatorial philosophy that leaves no room for non-conformity. This god of equality will not share its throne with diversity—all must comply, all must conform.

Two recent examples demonstrate this. In one case, a UK judge was sacked because he believed that it was more beneficial for adopted children to be placed 'with a mother and father'. The judge argued, 'As a magistrate, I have to act on the evidence before me and quite simply, I believe that there is not sufficient evidence to convince me that placing a child in the care of a same-sex couple