

Arthur Hay

Assignment 7

The UK and probably most of the western world went through a massive cultural shift between my parents' youth and my sister and I growing up which at times caused tension over differing values picked up at school, in the media and our friends which at times caused tensions. I grew up in rural southern England, the wealthy end of the country and a very conservative neighbourhood.

My father and both my grand fathers were all army officers so army was was a big thing in our family, values revolved around the British Empire and I was brought up to be proud of our Country's military achievements. I think growing up during World War 2 affected both my parents as it did the entire generation, which also caused gaps in our relationships. I was half expected to also become an army officer possibly for a short service before going in to civilian life and I did join the Territorial Army (reserves) because I felt pressured to, however I look back and am glad I did but also glad I never saw active service. Both my grand fathers were freemasons and so was a cousin of my father's who lived in Scotland and we saw quite a bit of while growing up, even though my father was not my parents did respect freemasons and after I became a Christian and criticised Freemasonry my parents were quick to defend the institution.

We were towards upper class but after paying school fees, my parents would only consider private education, there was at times not a lot of money left, we did not have a colour tv till 1980 and my parents went without a lot to pay the fees. I was also raised Church of England and as a good little boy I was confirmed at 14, my father was not overly impressed with our school chaplain who was in the ministry for a trade rather than a calling, but their loyalty to the C of E was unstoppable even though they were both involved in running the church on a local level and were often harshly critical about other parts of the organisation. After becoming a Christian and going to a Baptist church I was criticised for abandoning the C of E, I told my mother to be grateful I was a Christian when my sister had said she no longer believed, I don't know where she stands now but she does occasionally go to the same church, it is still a key part of local village life. Everyone was assumed to be C of E unless they were Roman Catholic, that church was respected, and I remember once being told off very severely by my father during a religious argument for daring to accuse my sister of not being a Christian. That was also a national attitude, once in the army we were given some beer and told to tell jokes to each other, one man said "this one about Jesus" at which point I stopped him and said some of us are Christians, someone

piped up "but weren't we all Christians" so I asked him what kind of Christian he was if he thought a joke like that was going to be funny. My mother said I should not have made the stand, I retorted with some scripture but could not convince her. In the Anglican Church gambling in the form of buying raffle tickets and consuming alcohol are more than accepted and I had to do some hard scriptural research when I attended an independent Baptist church that almost forbade the drinking of alcohol and I did some thorough research of my own and came to the conclusion that consuming alcohol in moderation is ok. In this church I have been challenged about unclean meats and I must admit after research I do have a different stand to the church but I respect those who wish to abstain from them. There are a number of things that are in my view grey areas and people must be able to agree to disagree.

I probably related to Ruth well because church wise we had similar childhoods, today I am happy to associate with Anglicans but we have a lot to disagree about but I did hear the Gospel in an Anglican church and at my parents church there was a family who were good Christians who were interested enough in me to make sure I also got spiritual nourishment elsewhere as well, they also quite often visited the local Baptist church. There was a lot of associating between the Anglican and Baptist church in the area, a number of other Anglican children went to the Baptist church raising the average age of the Anglican one. I held off getting baptised for some time because I thought having been confirmed and sprinkled as a baby I was ok, when I was eventually baptised, which I did while back packing in New Zealand and never had the guts to tell my father, I realised I had been delivered from a deception. I am happy to associate with other denominations, Rachel went Orthodox but we had her priest and his wife to dinner one night and we could talk spiritually on the same page, just the way we worship is very different, but there are also theological differences. After I started keeping the Sabbath Ruth went back to the Anglican church, the difference between someone who willingly left and someone who left because of me, but when they were between ministers everyone was filling in various roles I did offer my services to preach a sermon and if asked I would do so although I knew the offer would likely be declined, it was because I had not been licensed by the bishop to preach, let alone trained in an Anglican seminary.

In English society Christmas is a very big thing and while I know what it is and is not it is a very hard one to shake, especially in a family of still Sunday keepers who do celebrate it, every year I struggle between my conscience, my family and a past I have trouble letting go of. Last time I went back to England, 2022/23, my sister felt I probably missed out on Christmas a bit so organised a full Christmas dinner for me with her full family and an aunt, even though the decorations by that time had been down a few days.

My parents political views were of the Conservative Party, the equivalent of the Liberal National Coalition, I was a rebel who joined a centrist party because I did not agree with Mrs. Thatcher's policies but they respected that and were very civil to any political associates who came round to the house.

Wealth was respected and as capitalists to deride the rich was wrong, could get you called a snivelling little socialist. To that extent hard work was more than encouraged, in fact laziness was frowned upon and if you did earn good money good for you, and my mother often resented her taxes paying for things for people who did not work, dole payments or for nice extras for state schools, or when all the local council houses (Housing Trust) got upgraded kitchens, at her expense.

Culturally there was a lot of gay bashing, racism and enforced social class separation, even my parents strongly condemned gays and one time I had a group of friends round to a BBQ and Fireworks night, English tradition on 5 November, one person who came was gay and my mother derisively afterwards mentioned about hosting parties for poofs. A gay who stayed celibate and kept it to himself was ok but I was still advised not be too friendly with them. While I still do not support that life style I must say I have had positive meetings with gay people and we are all sinners, some are more lost than others and it is the Feather's will that none should perish. My parents also had racist attitudes as well as did a friend of mine who joined the police force, the Afro Caribbean community and the police had poor relations at the best of times. Our area did not have many non-English non-white people and when things like the Brixton riots happened in 1981 my parents were quick to condemn the black people involved, my mother said they should be deported even if born in the UK and when I asked what if they had a white parent or grand parent I was told they should not have. Mixed racial marriages were a no no, a cousin of mine from New Zealand living in London at the time married an Indian girl and while my parents did all the right things they were both critical, my mother never had a nice thing to say about the girl although once they were settled back in NZ and raising kids her opinion about his wife did change. In society racist and gay jokes were almost as common as the traditional jokes about the Irish. I am not racist and have friends of many ethnic back grounds but I know some of the attitudes are in my sub conscience, Ruth has told me and I am often afraid I may have unintentionally offended someone of a different race. The social class system was enforced at and by all levels, the workers would not socialise with snooty self righteous toffs and the upper classes would find a working-class social function beneath their dignity. It was not uncommon to see a reasonable looking middle-class house with a sign pointing to the back door saying Tradesman's Entrance, and

in the army, soldiers socialising with officers was a real taboo. As an Australian now I reject what I called social apartheid and am glad that in this country a man in fluro overalls can happily associate with a man in a suit and tie. Racism in English society extended to the British looking down on other Europeans yet I learned 2 languages at school and went on stays with French and Austrian families and made good friends. That is probably one reason the British refuse to drop miles and embrace kilometres, the first time my father had to buy petrol by the litre rather than gallon he was not happy and had a swipe at the mainland Europeans who bought it by the litre. Having done metric education in school and travelled around Europe much more in my youth than they did I wanted the British to become more like them, they have nicer chocolate too!

I still can be judgemental of people for their appearance but I fight that attitude, it is very hard when you were always told you were a Christian but were also taught to embrace some very un-Christian values, but in all things we are a working progress on our walk with the Lord. I try to base my opinions on Biblical values and have spent a long time sifting the values I grew up with that needed to be changed, but it is hard to shake all of your back ground.