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To Be Madly in Love with Oneself

By Peter Barnes

In Paul's warning against ungodliness in the last days, between the two comings of Christ, he heads the list with those who will be 'lovers of self' (2 Tim.3:2). Recently it has become possible to plumb the depths of what exactly that might mean. On 1 December 2020 an actress named Ellen Page, whom I had never heard of but who was in a lesbian marriage, announced that she had decided to become a transgender man, with the name of Elliot Page. Furthermore, her pronouns are now 'he/they', in case the pronoun police are active.

All that is one thing, but she finished her announcement on a rhetorical crescendo, the like of which is rarely seen:

I love that I am trans. And I love that I am queer. And the more I hold myself close and fully embrace who I am, the more I dream, the more my heart grows and the more I thrive. To all trans people who deal with harassment, self-loathing, abuse and the threat of violence every day: I see you, I love you and I will do everything I can to change the world for the better.

No doubt what I write will be seen as harassment and abuse, but my first response was simply to raise my eyebrows.

Have we gone from 1 Corinthians 13 to this posting on social media? Hillary Clinton, who nearly became the US President in 2016, became all teary, and posted: 'It's wonderful to witness people becoming who they are. Congratulations, Elliot.' One might recall that during the 2016 presidential election campaign, both Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama made much of 'When they go low, we go high.' 'Pretentious' might have been a more appropriate word. Hugh Kingsmill once remarked that 'Homosexuality, which aims at duplicating the self instead of complementing it, is the natural outlet of exaggerated self-love.'

Elliot Page writes what he does without any obvious sign of blushing or embarrassment – something Jeremiah might have remarked upon (Jer.6:15). Christianity takes us outside ourselves, to die to self, that we might live to Christ (2 Cor.5:14-15), and so love God with our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and our

neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:29-31). We fail because we are sinners. As Jeremiah put it: 'The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jer.17:9) That is a key point – if we believe in ourselves, if we see no danger within, if we reject God's revelation to us, then love becomes self-love, which is the most dangerous form of delusion. Attractive words veil a ghastly world view, and the bondage will only get worse.

When God pours out His Spirit, He gives us a new power to obey His commandments (Ezek.36:26-27). 'Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations' (Ezek.36:31). This is not to make us ready for the psychologist but to humble our hearts before God, and make us grateful to Him for His grace and mercy.

There is a general sense of foreboding that the worldly powers are fast losing their sense of reason or equilibrium, and closing in on us. Academia and the media provide no protection, and nor does much of the professing Church. It has become an age of misleading slogans and vacuous thinking. George Orwell portrays it in 1984: 'War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength.' We could add 'Love is lust.' We are fast losing the capacity to think clearly and decently, because all things come from God, and without Him they become orphans who lose their way and become dreadfully distorted.

To be madly in love with oneself, as Elliot Page proudly professes, is not to enhance one's life and to thrive. Quite the reverse. As Thomas Watson put it: 'Self-love is self hatred. The man who cannot get beyond himself will never get to heaven.'

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