

# The Mob Grows in Strength...

The herd mentality. The susceptibility to propaganda. The philistine disdain for higher ideals. The inability to calmly entertain and discuss ideas. The loss of virtue.

Many of us are troubled by these trends that we see in society today, for they signal that “the mob” is growing in strength.

And all of it, according to T.S. Eliot’s famous essay “The Idea of a Christian Society,” can be traced to Western society drifting away from its Christian identity.

Writing in 1939, Eliot explains that “a society has ceased to be Christian when religious practices have been abandoned, when behaviour ceases to be regulated by reference to Christian principles, and when in effect prosperity in this world for the individual or for the group has become the sole conscious aim.”

At some point in history, depending on what period or events you trace it back to, Western man began to tire of the Christian narrative. A proposed substitute for Christianity eventually arose in the Enlightenment called by the name of “Liberalism.” This [Liberalism](#)—not to be confused with, though still related to, the social liberalism that’s more familiar to people today—exalted the idea that man was most fundamentally an individual who should be free to pursue his desires, apart from any supposed restrictions of nature, as long as these desires did not impinge too much on others’ freedom.

But as Eliot noted, the very term “Liberalism” represented not so much a positive philosophy as a negative one; a freedom *from* the supposed chains of the past and present rather than a freedom *for* a concrete end or goal. Commitment to avoid such things as government overreach and burdensome laws is

certainly laudable, but it's not really something on which you can build or support a society.

The effect of this democratizing, Liberal philosophy was to more sharply break Western society from its Christian tradition, a tradition that gave man a positive ideal on which to mold himself and his world. But according to Eliot, this kind of freedom that Liberalism inaugurated is not really a freedom at all, and the internal slavery it breeds (unchecked freedom) eventually manifests itself in an external slavery, the beginnings of which we're already beginning to see:

*"By destroying traditional social habits of the people, by dissolving their natural collective consciousness into individual constituents, by licensing the opinions of the most foolish, by substituting instruction for education, by encouraging cleverness rather than wisdom, the upstart rather than the qualified, by fostering a notion of getting on to which the alternative is hopeless apathy, Liberalism can prepare the way for that which is its own negation: the artificial, mechanised or brutalised control which is a desperate remedy for its chaos."*

As alluded to in the quote above, Eliot believes that Liberalism has helped create a society in which most have no attachment to a past and prize material well-being above all else—in which most, in other words, are part of "a mob":

*"[T]he tendency of unlimited industrialism is to create bodies of men and women—of all classes—detached from tradition, alienated from religion and susceptible to mass suggestion: in other words, a mob. And a mob will be no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well housed, and well disciplined."*

As the saying goes, "Nature abhors a vacuum." Confronted by the growth of the mob as a result of the negative philosophy

on which Western society is now based, Eliot holds that there are three options for us:

1) "A gradual decline of which we can see no end."

2) The acceptance and embracing of a pagan society.

3) The reconstruction of a positive Christian society.

If we could see into the future, and behold all of the implications, Eliot maintains that most of us would prefer the third option.