

Sunday, April 30, 2017

## **THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF NEO-CALVINISM**

Why is this Blog called "Dutch Treat"? Because my point of view is based on Neo-Calvinism which has its origins in the mind of Abraham Kuyper who was Dutch.

**THE ESSENTIAL (AND SIMPLIFIED) PRINCIPLES OF NEO-CALVINISM**Creation, Fall and Redemption: What God Formed, Sin Deformed and Grace shall Reform

God's Creation is good. It has been radically corrupted by the Fall. Redemption includes restoration of that Creation in Christ

Rejection of Dualism.

Dualism is common in much Christian thinking. The most notable dualism is between Nature and Grace. Neo-Calvinists maintain that Grace restores Nature (and that the Church, as Salt and Light, is meant to transform Culture)

Jesus is Lord over all of Creation.

Jesus' lordship extends over every area and aspect of life-it is not restricted to the sphere of church or of personal piety.

All of life is to be Redeemed- i.e., Re/formed

The work of Jesus on the cross was intended to defeat Evil in all areas of life. The resurrection of Jesus is meant to lead to the renewal of all life for both individuals and Society.

Cultural Mandate

Genesis 1:26-28 is the mandate from God to Humanity to care for and cultivate all of Creation, including Culture and Civilization, to God's glory

The Role of Law.Law is more than the Decalogue. It is the Torah (Five Books of Moses) and begins with the creation ordinances (Norms) established by God as His will for the living of life in all Spheres

Sphere sovereignty.

These Spheres are God-given Institutions (Marriage, Family, Faith Community (Church), Civic Community. and Civil Government. Each of these creational Ordinances or Institutions has boundaries that mark off its sphere of responsibility and influence. All are responsible to God. In relation to each other, they are autonomous (sovereign), but cooperative.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:29

Thursday, May 26, 2016

## **HELPFUL ARTICLES FROM A BIBLICAL VIEW ON MANY SUBJECTS**

These are the categories of Articles I have written and posted on my website <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Re/Formation Institute ( 8 Articles )  
Philosophy of Mathematics ( 1 Articles )  
Cultural Mandate ( 13 Articles )  
Philosophy of Education ( 6 Articles )  
Introduction to Logic ( 3 Articles )  
Philosophy of Science ( 12 Articles )  
Civil Government & Politics ( 39 Articles )  
Law ( 10 Articles )  
Justice ( 13 Articles )  
Economics ( 22 Articles )  
Life Issues ( 10 Articles )  
Marriage & Family ( 5 Articles )  
The Arts ( 9 Articles )  
The Arts II ( 3 Articles )

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:46

Thursday, April 7, 2016

**WHAT IS THEONOMY? an article I wrote 5 years ago**

[http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=220:theonomy-living-by-the-law-of-god&catid=63:law&Itemid=57](http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=220:theonomy-living-by-the-law-of-god&catid=63:law&Itemid=57)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:42

Friday, April 1, 2016

## **NEO-CALVINISM**

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Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:39

Sunday, June 21, 2015

## **WHEN GOD DOES NOT ANSWER PRAYER**

"Our Father...lead us not into [trials] and deliver us from Evil". Our Father God obviously did not answer this request for the members of the church in Charleston who were murdered last week. Does this make us very skeptical about prayer? Well, yes, it might do that! The need is for Christians to be realists: Evil is real and does attack us! We must accept that. We must heed the warning given by the Apostle Peter: 1 Peter 4:12 5:8-9 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Elizabeth Elliot entered glory this last week. She and 4 other women missionaries experienced grief back in the 1950s when their husbands were murdered together in Ecuador. Christians are being massacred around the world even as I write this. All of them had prayed to the same Father God for protection from evil and did not get it.

Nevertheless, we should continue to pray for journey mercies. At the very least it makes us mindful that we do live in danger every day and need to be aware of our need for God daily and always. And we can't tell how many times he does answer positively. I'm sure there are many such times! But we must accept the fact that Satan, the lion, does occasionally strike us hard, sometimes fatally, and we suffer terribly.

Painful as that is, we also must take the long view. Ultimately, if not always obvious in the immediate, Romans 8:28 is true. We survive the horrors by faith in that promise. Absolutely marvelous and abundant good came out of the death of those missionaries. And we take the long view of Eternity and claim Rev 14:13 and redeem the time we do have right now.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:43

Tuesday, May 19, 2015

## **SALUTING CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS**

Can you be a soldier and a Christian at the same time? The answer is obvious to most of us. "Yes" Nevertheless, there is a valid Question: if a Christian is seeking to follow Jesus and live a life of love and service, how could s/he engage in violence as a soldier. Isn't that a contradiction? Isn't "love" non-violent?

This question assumes that what the military and law enforcement (the police) do is not loving and serving. Protecting individuals, our communities and our Country from evil of all kinds is love and service. Ensuring that justice prevails is love and service. What is the alternative? Where would we and our communities and Country be without those who love and serve us in this way?

This question forgets that individuals in the military and law enforcement are not serving as private individuals. They wear uniforms. They act as part of units, small and large, not on their own. What the units do and require of them is determined by Officers or Officials in a hierarchical chain-of-command in accord with policies and protocols determined by them for the common good. God created and instituted such Powers and we as Christians are citizens who must submit to them in our duty and loyalty as citizens. Indeed we pray for their welfare and work and support them with our taxes. That is not disloyalty to Christ. That is the will of Christ. See 1 Peter 2:13-17, Romans 13:1-7, 1 Tim 2:1-2

It is significant that the New Testament does not denigrate soldiers. Quite to the contrary. Consider how Jesus commends and praises a Roman Centurion [a commander of a unit of 100 soldiers]-Matt 8:5-13 and then what Peter says about another Centurion in Acts 10-11 Both military men are not only Gentile soldiers, they are men of faith and righteous. Neither Jesus nor Peter criticize the men or tell them to leave soldiering.

Here's to saluting all Christian men and women who are or have loved and served America in the military!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:39

Tuesday, April 21. 2015

### **MORE MARTYRS FOR CHRIST**

The hate and the war against Christians not only goes on but expands!

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/april/more-martyrs-isis-executes-ethiopian-christians-libya.html?>

Would I be willing to lose my head, my life, rather than deny Christ? Would you?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:12

Friday, April 17, 2015

## **WAS ABRAHAM LINCOLN A CHRISTIAN**

When the solid have been separated from the spurious, the stories show Lincoln's respect for God, his own personal sense of living under the authority of divine providence, and his eagerness to commit the Civil War to divine rule. When it came to the war, Lincoln often displayed a higher, finer theology than did the nation's professional Christian theologians. Lincoln knew that God had not enlisted on either side. As early as 1862, he would write in a private memorandum: "In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party."

Still, what this account and the other stories do not show is a clear-cut profession of orthodox faith: his faith was genuine, but only partially Christian. That was the testimony of those who knew Lincoln best, including his wife, who said shortly after his death that he was "a religious man always" but not "a technical Christian."

A different question is "Did God use Lincoln to accomplish His work in America?"

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1998/february9/8t2064.html?share=op4ayzpKbK8xIMmwUUI942Z2gaxEk5G7>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:58

**Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>**

Saturday, January 3, 2015

### **THE REST OF THE ZAMPERINI STORY**

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/lyris/eblast/archives/2015/booksandculture-bgea-010215.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:36

Monday, November 3, 2014

## **FOOTBALL AND PRAYERS**

This is a very thought-provoking article that tackles the issue of public prayers at football games (and the reasoning applies to other sports events as well).

"Why should anyone, least of all Christians, consider prayer to be so vitally important at football games? Prayers have long been banned in classrooms and commencement ceremonies—environments where we might justifiably argue that prayer makes more sense. But nothing has gotten Christian dander up quite like laws that muzzle football coaches who want to pray.

"Why football? Why do Christians consider it so important to insert prayer into a spectacle that borrows, as philosopher Kurt Eisner once put it, "the means from war and the mood from festivals?" Is there a rightful place for prayer in a spectacle that thrives on violence..."

[http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/october-web-only/bless-this-tackle-not-prayer.html?utm\\_source=gallireport&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=13345478&utm\\_content=311660264&utm\\_campaign=2013&start=2](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/october-web-only/bless-this-tackle-not-prayer.html?utm_source=gallireport&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=13345478&utm_content=311660264&utm_campaign=2013&start=2)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:41

Wednesday, October 22, 2014

## **ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN CULTURE**

Christians may and do enjoy and value a diversity of peripheral cultural matters, but we are joined together, wherever we live, as a recognizable social group by core beliefs, morals and values which are Biblical. These are the essential core of Christian (not American) Culture-

The following values are 7 ideal marks of that essential Biblical Culture (regardless of how well we practice it)

Life- Core Christian Culture is very pro-life in every sense.

Marriage- Defined as a life-long, committed relationship between a man and a woman, Marriage is very highly valued.

Divorce is disapproved. Virginity before Marriage and Marital Fidelity in Marriage is greatly valued.

Family- Parenthood and children are desired and valued; abortion is strongly disapproved; extended, cross generational families are the norm; children honor (respect) their parents and the elderly are respected by all.

Individual Responsibility- individual persons are accountable and responsible to God, themselves, their family and church for their decisions and actions

Work- everyone who is able works throughout life for the welfare of the family and community. Social, Economic and Political Freedom to work is highly valued.

Biblical Welfare- People who become destitute due to circumstances beyond their control are the responsibility- first, of their extended family and then, of the Church and then, of the local community

Biblical Religion- Christian Culture, above all, is Christian. It is centered on the worship and service of the God who has revealed Himself in Creation, Scripture and, particularly, in Jesus Christ. People who share Christian Culture see themselves as the Covenant People of God. This is their primary identity, no matter what their ethnicity, first language or country of origin may be.

The above seven Values are the essential marks of Christian Culture. An important task for the Church is to help Christians to be very flexible about peripheral non-essentials and to stand firm in these essentials.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:26

Thursday, October 16, 2014

### **TESTIMONY FROM A "CUTTER"**

<http://www.churchandculture.org/blog.asp?id=7548>

How a young adult went from shedding her own blood when she came to know Jesus shed his for her. -a very touching testimony

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:58

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

## **HOW ARE WE TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS?**

The Bible reveals very practical ways we are to love others. I have summarized them on my new post at <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:33

Saturday, September 20, 2014

### **"THE LORD'S PRAYER" AS WE MINISTER**

I read the "Lord's Prayer" in the context of missionary work. Jesus had commissioned the Disciples to go out and preach the Gospel. And so we pray-  
Our Father in heaven,  
As we spread the Word, we pray more and more people today will come to honor, exalt and worship You.  
As we spread the Gospel, may more and more people come to know and obey your Word and do your will in their lives  
As we go about serving You today, please give us the necessities needed for the work  
Forgive us our sins against you and give us the grace to be forgiving toward others  
Save us from trials, troubles and tribulations  
Deliver us from sin and darkness within and from evil and evil doers without  
And help us to remember always that the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
Amen.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:47

Thursday, August 21. 2014

**ARE TEAM SPORTS TAKING OVER OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?**

YES, THEY ARE!

<http://www.churchandculture.org/blog.asp?id=6342>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:30

Monday, August 18, 2014

### **MY DAILY MORNING PRAYER**

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your might and power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. BCP

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:01

Monday, April 7, 2014

## **THE BIBLE SAYS: PAY YOUR TAXES -AND YOUR BILLS**

Rom 13:6-7 you [must] pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God ... 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Where do Federal Taxes come from?

"Washington has two main sources of revenue, which together account for 80 percent of all federal income: (1) payroll taxes, which are split between employers and employees to fund programs like Social Security, and (2) income taxes, which you're all too familiar with now that it's the middle of April. The media tends to focus on income taxes, because they are the main arena of battle between Republicans and Democrats fighting over deficits, and Buffett Rules, and millionaires. But, surprise!, payroll taxes make up a nearly equivalent share of government revenue, especially since corporate income taxes have shriveled in the last 60 years as a share of the total pie."

Where do Federal taxes go?

"The federal government was once elegantly described by Ezra Klein as a big fat insurance company surrounded by a standing army. It's a useful quip, because our government is basically in the business of security. Social Security, income security, health care security for the elderly, poor and veterans, and guns-and-helmets security account for about 80% of government spending. That's what we pay for when we pay taxes."

<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/04/how-we-pay-taxes-11-charts/255954/>

<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3822>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:41

Sunday, March 30, 2014

### **CHICK-FIL-A OUTDOING KFC**

Anyone in the northern half of the U.S. is likely scratching her head and wondering why she hasn't seen Chick-fil-A outlets opening in the neighborhood. Last year Chick-fil-A only had about 1,775 U.S. stores to KFC's 4,491, and most are in the South. Yet in dollar terms the Colonel is coming up short even with that much larger footprint: Chick-fil-A's 2013 sales passed \$5 billion, while all of KFC's U.S. restaurants rang up about \$4.22 billion, according to Technomic. And that's with zero dollars coming in to Chick-fil-A on Sundays, when every restaurant is closed.  
<http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-03-28/chick-fil-a-stole-kfcs-chicken-crown-with-a-fraction-of-the-stores>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:17

Thursday, March 27, 2014

## **WORLD VISION AND GAY MARRIAGE**

This week, World Vision USA changed its personnel policy to now accepting gay persons in legally marriages to be on their staff. There was an immediate negative response from many evangelical Pastors and leaders of other organizations. This led WV to reverse its decision. There are many issues involved here. James White's Blog post addresses them

<http://www.churchandculture.org/blog.asp?id=5731>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:51

Wednesday, February 26, 2014

**QUIET TIME THOUGHTS [QT THOTS]**

<http://www.qtthots.com/>

a selection of my writing for personal devotions, arranged topically and attractively formatted by KUDOS PRESS

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:57

Monday, January 27, 2014

## **NEW BIBLE STUDY DEVOTIONALS**

I continue to post my Devotional Writings based on Scripture Portions (QT THOTS) on my website  
<http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:49

Thursday, January 16, 2014

## **BECOMING A BIBLICAL FAMILY TODAY**

I just wrote and posted an extensive, 3-part Essay on God, Holiness and Family. It follows a short study on Marriage. They can be found here- <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

The Biblical Basis for what I say about Marriage is the Torah. Evangelicals do not normally use that word. Sounds strange to them. The Torah is what the first 5 Books of the Bible, or the Pentateuch, is called by many. It is the Mosaic Law. It is what the Psalmist is talking about in Psalm 1 and 19 and 119 and so many other places. It is not enough to say we stand on the Bible or the Word of God, meaning the Scripture, because we often omit or neglect these 5 Books. We usually do that because, we say, we are saved by Grace, not the Law. Yes, we are saved by Grace. But how are the saved to live their lives? That is where the Mosaic Law comes in.

The posts, the arguments, above about Marriage and about Abortion are not based on the Gospel or the Sermon on the Mount or Love. They are grounded in, and absolutely depend on, the teaching of Genesis and other texts found in the Mosaic Law, although that is not mentioned by those who wrote the articles linked to in the posts.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:39

Thursday, January 9, 2014

## **PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS**

Christian martyrdoms doubled in 2013. This is the annual review listing countries where Christians suffer the most for their faith  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2014/january/50-countries-where-hardest-to-be-christian-world-watch-list.htm>  
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Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:30

Monday, January 6, 2014

### **DEALING WITH ALCOHOLISM**

Helpful article with a candid interview of an alcoholic Pastor and cogent comments.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/december/dealing-with-alcoholism-my-interview-with-anonymous-pastor.html?>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:35

Thursday, December 26, 2013

### **BEST TOYS EVER?**

Enjoying the simple things  
<http://www.churchandculture.org/blog.asp?id=5332>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:35

Tuesday, December 24, 2013

## **WHEN CHRISTMAS IS TERRIBLE**

If you are reading this on December 25, be assured Advent is over. Christmas has arrived. The time of preparation for the Lord to come is complete. He is here among us and with us. We sing worshipful and yet happy songs. The day is all about joy and hope. It is all about receiving the gift of God's love and being reconciled and born again through that Love and sharing it with others. BUT-For many of us, all this is either a lie or meaningless or painful. For many, celebrating Christmas is a charade, a show- we go only through the expected motions. For many this Day is filled with sadness, lonely and regret. There are bad memories of past Holidays. We have more tears than laughter. We are experiencing breakdown or estrangement in our relationships. We are going through heartbreak, disappointment. Some are longing for what once was and no longer can be. Perhaps tragedy has just struck, someone we love is in serious trouble or has died and we are not in the mood for singing carols. But the truth remains, God has arrived. He is here, a totally helpless baby, the child of an unmarried teenager with no money to her name, far from her home, The baby is lying on a bed made of dirty, smelly straw in a dark, flea ridden, dirty old room with no water or electricity. Things couldn't get much worse than that. She gives birth unattended and cares for the needs of the new baby and of her own body by herself. She is accompanied by a much older man, who is of little help, and an old mule. How hopeless is all this? And yet it is not! That hungry, crying dirty baby is God in the muck and mess of Mary's life. The baby was Immanuel: God with us. As long as they held on to the baby, Mary and her friend, Joseph, have hope and reason to believe all shall turn out well for them in days ahead. They would come to realize that their helpless, weak baby was going to grow up and change their lives and save them. Having Him, they had God and if they had God they had hope and help was on its way. Knowing that it would become a good Christmas after all. I pray yours shall be one, too, for the same reason, no matter what you are going through right now.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:06

Wednesday, December 18, 2013

### **LEARNING FROM A QUIET TIME WITH GOD**

Out of the hundreds of Devotionals I have written and emailed to many over the years, my son Kevin has selected 64 and arranged them topically, especially for new Christians and all those seeking to better understand our Faith. They are called QT THOTS and can be found at this attractive website with other related, helpful material as well- <http://www.qthots.com/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:03

Thursday, November 21, 2013

### **C.S.LEWIS- the beginning**

On the same Day President Kennedy was shot, C.S. Lewis also died. Here is a good account of his conversion to Christ and the beginning, from Eternity's perspective, of the far more important and influential life- he explained and defended Biblical Christianity, and still does, perhaps more than anyone else in the 20th Century. Multitudes have been led to Christ through his writing.

<http://www.churchandculture.org/blog.asp?id=5193>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:45

Tuesday, October 22. 2013

## **WHY I CAN NOT ENDORSE 'GAY MARRIAGE'**

I wrote the post below explaining why Christians can not accept "Gay Marriage". I am not against Gay People or Civil Unions between them- just Gay Marriage. Every wedding I have performed over the years has been as an agent of the State: "By the powers vested in me by the Commonwealth ...". All weddings are civil unions, ie- a contract or legal relationship sanctioned by the Laws of the State. If the State declares that a Gay Couple may enter into such a Contract they may. But according to the Bible, it can not be called a Marriage- only what it is- a Civil Union.

I know and like, admire and even love, some people who are homosexual. I am willing to concede that some of them may have been born that way (although I suspect many have chosen to be Gay for personal reasons). I am not in the least homophobic. I do not hate any one.

But I am an Evangelical. I accept the time-honored, classic or traditional definition of Evangelical. That definition includes honoring the entire 66 Books of the canonical Christian Scripture as the propositional revelation of God, to be read following traditional common sense rules of grammar and literary interpretation.

That means, with all due respect to Tradition and Reason, on any topic I begin and end with what I believe the Bible says that is relevant to it- any Topic, all Topics! That is what a true Evangelical must do.

So no matter how much I respect and value individuals who identify as Gay and no matter how strong the pressure is to endorse homosexual Civil Unions as Marriage (and how much vitriol is directed against those who do not), I can not endorse them for one major reason: I am under the authority of the Bible and God's Word does not allow me to do that.

Rather, I accept all the reasons why God instituted heterosexual Marriage in the first place (Genesis 1-2)

[I sadly observe that the growing acceptance of Gay Marriage by many who call themselves Evangelicals is further evidence that they no longer are. I was greatly encouraged by the New Testament Reading this past Sunday-]

2 Tim 3:14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, 15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:32

Monday, September 9, 2013

### **WHEN IS WAR JUSTIFIED FOR A CHRISTIAN?**

Here is the reasoning that justifies a Just War. James White explains well why a Christian can and must support such a war. He gives guidelines to help us decide if what is proposed for Syria is indeed Just.  
<http://www.churchandculture.org/blog.asp?id=4876>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:04

Tuesday, August 27, 2013

## **REAL COLLEGE PREP**

According to recent studies, almost half of all American college students will abandon their Christian faith during their undergraduate years. Half. The most common reason given is that the environment of higher education is often anti-faith. A recent study by the Fuller Youth Institute found that almost a third of college students say their institute of higher learning was not helpful in keeping or growing their faith. In fact, it was antagonistic toward it. Most universities would defend themselves by saying that examining one's faith in an intellectually stimulating environment such as a college or university should lead to a deeper understanding of a childhood faith. It's a good line. But it's not true.

According to the research of political scientists Robert P. Putnam and David E. Campbell, "Young Americans are dropping out of religion at an alarming rate of five to six times the historical rate." Another study found with each year of education, there is a 15% increase that the student will believe that there's "truth in more than one religion" and believe in a "higher power" rather than a personal God.

<http://www.churchandculture.org/blog.asp?id=4814> This situation is related to, but very different than, youth dropping out of the local church. This is youth dropping out of Christianity. There may well be an overlap, but the main issue here is intellectual, not sociological- a different set of problems and issues. Churches must prepare their youth intellectually for secular college (and for "Christian" schools that are increasingly secular).

Many years ago, I realized that to effectively make a difference for Christ in the world, the key is to reach young people who will be change-makers in the world, ie- college students (and increasingly, high school students). The usual or typical church and church member is not going to make much of an impact on Society, on changing social, economic or political structures for Christ. To confront and change the Powers that be, this requires, besides faith and spiritual tools, a mind well-educated in the way the world works and well trained in applying Biblical Precepts and Principles to that world. Our youth must be well-grounded in the Bible and our Faith and able to cogently witness to a Biblical World view and defend it against all it's detractors. That preparation must begin early on. School must be put back into Sunday School.

Our original Vision for our bookstores (my wife and I had three of them) was to offer the resources to Christian students to do this in tandem with the secular courses they were studying or to help answer questions that they were being asked by secular and often severely critical faculty and fellow-students. Most Christian students are totally unaware of the Christian scholarship available for this work- hence we made materials and study groups available to them.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:00

## **DEVOTIONAL WRITING AVAILABLE NOW**

Three times every week for several years now I have written and emailed devotional material to friends that I pray will be a blessing to them. These are called "QT Thots" [Thoughts for Quiet Times with God]. My son, Kevin, a Publisher and Editor, has selected 64 of them and arranged them into 16 Categories with 4 Topics each on a new website. I believe he has done an excellent job and I hope you shall visit the site and see if these QT Thots are helpful to you or to other readers you may know. We pray they shall be.

<http://www.qthots.com/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:11

Tuesday, July 9, 2013

## **PURSUING THE "AMERICAN DREAM"**

Americans' top five goals the government should work toward to help people get ahead:

Ensuring all children get a quality education (88 percent)

Promoting job creation (83 percent)

Ensuring equal opportunity (79 percent)

Letting people keep more of their money (78 percent)

Providing basic needs to the very poor (75 percent)

Percentage saying the goal is "one of the most important" or "very important."

Study the entire Pew Poll on American's Views of Economic Mobility-

<http://www.pewstates.org/research/analysis/economic-mobility-and-the-american-dream>

Should Christians share these values and views? Are they Biblical?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:11

Friday, May 24. 2013

### **TIM TEBOW- STILL A TESTIMONY**

Tim Tebow faces the future

<http://www.denisonforum.org/cultural-commentary/713-what-tim-tebow-will-do-in-the-future>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:26

Friday, May 17. 2013

## **THE BIBLE OF THE MIND?**

"On May 22, the American Psychiatric Association will deliver a tome unto the medical community: The fifth revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The clinician's handbook. The DSM-5. Allen Frances, the chair of the DSM-IV task force ... is speaking out against the DSM-5. A few decades ago, ... when he became involved in the field again, he decided that the field had drifted toward over-diagnosis and over-medication. Frances is one of multiple vocal critics who have expressed doubts about, reservations over, or downright hatred toward the new

manual." [http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/the-bible-of-the-mind-turns-the-page/2013/05/12/17d8fc1c-b1b6-11e2-baf7-5bc2a9dc6f44\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/the-bible-of-the-mind-turns-the-page/2013/05/12/17d8fc1c-b1b6-11e2-baf7-5bc2a9dc6f44_story.html)

Last week, the National Institute of Mental Health, the largest mental health research organization in the world, announced that it had concerns about the DSM-5 and would begin reorienting its research away from DSM categories. "The weakness is a lack of validity," NIMH director Thomas Insel wrote in a statement, criticizing the DSM-5 for basing its diagnosis on clinical symptoms rather than on "objective laboratory measures."

David Kupfer, the DSM-5's chair, responded to the NIMH's concerns by arguing that objective measures, like biological and genetic markers, are still too far off to wait for. "In the absence of such major discoveries," he wrote in a statement, "it is clinical experience and evidence, as well as growing empirical research, that have advanced our understanding" of many disorders.

Understanding has been advanced — but not reached. Because even for medical professionals, "fact" is a moving target, a difficult destination. Throughout its history, the DSM has remained a consensus document, says Shorter, ... "Psychiatry aspires to scientific status," but it's also subject to the political or interdisciplinary nuances of the day.

"People don't change quickly," says Frances. "Labels change on a dime. Labels follow fashion. Whenever there's a sudden jump, it's not because there's more pathology, it's because there's a difference in labeling it."

It brings up an essential, philosophical question: Who are we? Are we the same people we've always been? Sicker? Healthier? Wounded as ever, but with better terminology? The DSM might relabel our suffering, but does it bring us any closer to understanding the unquiet of our minds?

"We're very comfortable with what we've done," says James Scully, the APA chief executive, back in his office overlooking the Potomac. "Will there be changes in the future? I hope so. It's not the word of God. It's the best science we have currently," he says.

Scully did not realize how true his off-handed remark is: the DSM is not the Word of God and Christians should not accept it as such. Many of the so-called disorders people suffer have spiritual causes not mentioned in the Bible. And spiritual solutions which are.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:09

Sunday, May 5, 2013

### **ON THE DEATH OF A WIFE AND CHILD**

Testimony by R C Sproul Jr, a strong Calvinist

"Sorrow over the loss of a loved one, at least for those of us who trust in God's loving, sovereign care for us, is pretty simple to understand. We don't, when our wife passes, have to wonder what God is thinking. We don't, when our little girl joins her, have to listen to the accusations of the devil that we must have made our Father mad. He knows what He's doing, and one thing He is assuredly not doing is expressing His anger toward us. He loves us as He loves His Son; His anger is no more. But the sorrow is easy to grasp—we miss those who are no longer with us.

I am still asked, thankfully, how I am doing, and my answer has not changed." ...

<http://www.ligonier.org/blog/its-little-things-ok-its-big-things-too/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:51

Thursday, April 11, 2013

### **THE RE/FORMATIONAL or NEOCALVINIST WORLDVIEW (3 Parts)**

You may have noticed that this Blog [and especially my website] is written from a Neo-Calvinist perspective. This is not a play on my name, Calvin, but a serious World View (and there are variations of it out there in limited circles). It also goes by the adjective, "Re/Formational". I have tried to explain this before, but I shall try again for those who may have missed that effort.

Signs of the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God defined as the dynamic Reign of God is constantly, irrepressibly "breaking into" our every day world, our current events. What are its Major Signs? They are these Movements-

Pro-Missionary: world wide Evangelism and the consequent making of Disciples of Christ

Pro-Life, from the birthing of every child conceived throughout the span of her or his life

Pro-Biblical Marriage and Family

Pro-Environment: Stewardship of Natural World, its care and cultivation; Culture

Pro-Freedom- Political and Economic: Theonomic Democracy and Free-Market Capitalism

Theonomic Democracy and Free-Market Capitalism as I define them are Government and the Economy functioning according to the Law of God [The Bible] Where we find these Movements, we see the Reign of God at work and the coming of His Kingdom on Earth. Christians, as individuals and in groups or organizations, are to be zealous activists in these fields according to gifts and opportunities- agents of God for the Kingdom.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:18

### **SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM, continued**

Signs of the Kingdom, continued: Corollary I- Common Grace

Spirituality

Creativity

Rationality

Morality

Communality

These qualities are not the Goal of the Kingdom. They are components of the Image of God. They are the faculties that God has gifted to all human beings ("Common Grace"). They enable us to do the work of the Kingdom, particularly as they are re/formed in us by the Word, Sacrament and Spirit. They are also the guidelines of how to do that work. Any projects or developments that ignore, deny or damage these faculties are not right. What God has formed and Sin has deformed, Christ must and shall reform.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:16

### **SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM, continued**

Signs of the Kingdom, continued: Corollary II- Sphere Sovereignty

The most fundamental Doctrine (to Calvinists at least) is the Sovereignty of God. This applies to every aspect of Personal Salvation: the 5 Doctrines of Grace (T.U.L.I.P.)

But, (to Neo-Calvinists) the Sovereignty of God also applies to every aspect of Life. This means that God's Word (General and Special Revelation) is sovereign over all of life- literally. Where we see this, we see the Kingdom of God. All of Life is intended to Glorify God and it does that by adhering to God-given Norms. Any aspect of living which does not do that is literally ab-normal. This has huge implications for all Epistemology.

Furthermore, in order to enable human beings, whom God has created to be His Lieu-Tenant or Representatives on Earth, to fulfill the "Cultural Mandate" (Genesis 1-2) God delegates or shares His Sovereignty (Governance) with Husbands and Parents (@ the Sphere of Marriage and Family) and by extension with Teachers (@ the Sphere of Education); with Pastors (@ the Sphere of Church); with Rulers (@ the Sphere of Civil Government); and, again by

extension, with Leaders of @ Commerce. These are separate and sovereign, but interdependent Institutions (functioning like parts of a Body), each necessary and making its own God-given contribution. Civil Government shall respect and not interfere with or supersede the other Institutions (Spheres). And Government should follow the Principle of Subsidiarity, i.e.- social, economic and political projects are to be operated at the grassroots or lowest, smallest level wherever possible, with the people effected being involved directly in leadership and decision-making.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:12

### **CHRISTIAN SPORTS FANATICS**

Here is an excellent, in-depth critique of the fanatical love-affair millions of Christians have with Sports and the worship give to athletes, teams and coaches. And it is written by a man who has had a life-long career in Sports at all levels. Recommended reading!!

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/february/3.20.html?start=1>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:13

Wednesday, February 20, 2013

## **JUSTICE GOD'S WAY: BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO LIVE AND ACT BY**

I am going to try again to lay out the Principles we are to live by and that are to guide our economic and political choices. The conservative Evangelicals I know and read seem to always look primarily to conservative secular authorities, columnists and media for their social and cultural analysis and guidance for their politics and activism. This is not good. Scripture is the primary, fundamental Word we should be reading or listening to about these matters. It offers the only reliable Light on the hot-button topics of our Times.

In this Post I shall lay out a simple outline of Biblical Principles we are to live by as Christians, as Americans.

### **JUSTICE GOD'S WAY: THE PRINCIPLES TO LIVE AND ACT BY**

Universal Rights (based on The Ten Commandments)

1. The Triune God revealed in the Bible has exclusive right to allegiance (no other gods)2. God has the right to be honored- particularly His Name and Day and Law3. All People have a right to live4. Human beings have the right to work and to periodically rest from work5. Husbands and wives have a right to the fidelity of their spouses6. Parents have the right to be honored, respected and obeyed7. Property owners have a right to their property8. People have a right to a fair and honest trial -to due process9. Neighbors have a right to their privacy

Also-

a. Widows and Children have the right to be cared for by extended Family if not able to care for themselves

b. Land and animals have the right to be cultivated and cared for, and must not be exploited

Individual Human Responsibilities (based on The 10 Commandments)

1. I owe God my allegiance above all else.2. I owe my honor and respect to what belongs to God, especially His Name and His Day.3. I have the responsibility to both work and to rest periodically [as do the Land and Animals]4. I owe my parents honor, respect and [while I live at home] obedience5. I owe respect to the life of others. I am my brother's keeper.6. I owe fidelity to my spouse. I am responsible to respect the marriage vows of others.7. I owe respect to the property of others8. I am responsible to be honest with others and to never slander them9. I am responsible to stay out of other people's business

These are the most fundamental Human Rights and Responsibilities. In order to have a realistic opportunity to actualize them, there is a concomitant Essential: Freedom. All human beings must have political and economic and social freedom - opportunity and security to exercise these rights and responsibilities.

The Biblical Principle of Sphere Sovereignty

A Government that is Biblical shall respect the autonomous Spheres of Religion, Marriage, Family, Education, Commerce and Culture. As part of its promotion and preservation of Justice for all and the General Welfare of the Nation, Government must respect the boundaries of each Sphere and maintain the conditions necessary for all of them to co-operate and function as God intends.

In turn, Government must be respected and supported when it fulfills its God-given purposes, including the payment of taxes (Romans 13:1-7 cf Luke 20:25). Citizens have the right to withdraw support or to resist a Government if it does not.

The Biblical Principle of Subsidiarity.

Nothing should be done by a larger and more complex organization which can be done as well by a smaller and simpler organization. In other words, any activity which can be performed by a more decentralized entity should be. This Principle is the opposite of the centralization and bureaucracy characteristic of the Modern State.

Government functions must not exceed the capacity of individuals or private groups acting independently. Functions of government should be as local as possible. If a complex function is carried out at a local level just as effectively as on the national level, the local level should be the one to carry out the specified function. The Principle of Subsidiarity emphasizes the importance of small and intermediate-sized communities or institutions, like the family, the church and voluntary associations.

All social, political and economic Issues and Government policies must be examined by Christians. They obviously can be very complicated, but the discussion of each must begin and the analysis proceed in the light of the above Biblical Principles, no matter what other material is considered nor what the outcome of the study may be. The following Questions must be asked for each Topic-

Which of the Rights or Responsibilities are involved?

Is the Principle of Sphere Sovereignty being followed?

Is the Principle of Subsidiarity being followed?

Friday, January 11. 2013

## **MUSLIM CHRISTIANS?**

This is an interview [with related links] of a former Muslim who became a Christian but remains a Muslim. Confusing? Yes. It explains a very practical, apparently successful method for evangelizing Muslims. Actually the principles apply to all good evangelism among any "people group". But the problem I have with what he says is the lack of clarity about what the person interviewed means by "Culture". His description of Christian Culture (his definition of it) and the comparison he makes of it with Muslim Culture seems very inadequate or misleading. There is also a serious lack in his understanding of "Church". I recommend my Essay on "Christian Culture and Civilization".

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/january-february/>

[http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=153:is-there-a-christian-culture-and-civilization&catid=57:cultural-mandate&Itemid=57](http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=153:is-there-a-christian-culture-and-civilization&catid=57:cultural-mandate&Itemid=57)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:36

## **HERE ARE 7 ARTICLES I POSTED IN JAN, 2009- RECOMMENDED FOR 2013**

WORDS OF WISDOM #1- Keep America a Republic

Posted by Cal on Thursday, January 29. 2009

WORDS OF WISDOM #2- Beware Big Government

Posted by Cal on Thursday, January 29. 2009

WORDS OF WISDOM #3 Beware rumors of WMD

Posted by Cal on Thursday, January 29. 2009

WORDS OF WISDOM #4 Beware the Pied Piper

Posted by Cal on Thursday, January 29. 2009

WORDS TO THE WISE #5 Forget the "American Dream"

Posted by Cal on Thursday, January 29. 2009

WORDS TO THE WISE #6- Manage our Money

Posted by Cal on Thursday, January 29. 2009

WORDS TO THE WISE- #7 Keep the Spheres separate

Posted by Cal on Thursday, January 29. 2009

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 17:05

## **WHY CHRONIC PAIN?**

Interesting reflective article about in which a 22 year asks meaning questions about Why? and considers Answers she has been given by others and thought of herself- includes a link to her blog

[http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2013/january/asking-why-to-chronic-pain-at-age-22.html?utm\\_source=ctdirect-html&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=11430839&utm\\_content=149058734&utm\\_campaign=2013](http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2013/january/asking-why-to-chronic-pain-at-age-22.html?utm_source=ctdirect-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=11430839&utm_content=149058734&utm_campaign=2013)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:31

Friday, December 28, 2012

## **NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS FOR MARRIAGE**

An ongoing series profiling couples who have been married for at least 35 years. As sociologist Mark Regnerus writes, "Young adults want to know that it's possible for two fellow believers to stay happy together for a lifetime, and they need to hear how the generations preceding them did it." It is also important to see that marriages are not always happy all the time, but commitment is crucial.

[http://www.worldmag.com/topic/marriage\\_longevity/](http://www.worldmag.com/topic/marriage_longevity/)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:38

Saturday, December 22, 2012

## **WHY WE MUST TALK WITH OUR CHILDREN ABOUT "EVIL" IN THEIR WORLD**

[http://blog.christianitytoday.com/women/2012/12/not-how-but-why-talk-your-kids-sandy-hook.html?utm\\_source=ctdirect-html&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=11430839&utm\\_content=146652419&utm\\_campaign=2012](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/women/2012/12/not-how-but-why-talk-your-kids-sandy-hook.html?utm_source=ctdirect-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=11430839&utm_content=146652419&utm_campaign=2012)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:30

Wednesday, November 28, 2012

### **THE REAL DEAL? THE WORLD ACCORDING TO ANGUS JONES**

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/november-web-only/i-am-paid-hypocrite-two-and-half-men-star-talks-to-ct-about.html?>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:43

Saturday, November 10, 2012

**NEW MATERIAL Re THE ARTS (AESTHETICS)**

What is Art? What is good Art? What is Christian Art? What is not any of these things?  
New Essays and Notes on Art at [reformedliving.org](http://reformedliving.org) [cut and paste or highlight and drag]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:56

Friday, November 9, 2012

## **A PRAYER**

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:37

## **LEARNING TO THINK AND WORK BIBLICALLY- FOR CHRIST'S SAKE!**

As I wrote below, I believe in the Sovereignty of God. Therefore I believe He is interested in, involved with, everything. It means that He has a will for all things and that His will is revealed in Scripture. If He is Sovereign, His Word is sovereign.

I am convinced no Academic Subject is neutral or objective. Every Discipline is religious, i.e, based on assumed suppositions- presuppositions. They all have faith foundations and rest on, or are ultimately derived from, fundamental philosophies or ideologies- all of them.

For many years I have researched major academic fields: Law, Government, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, including Economics and Mathematics, Technology, the Humanities and the Arts looking for their underlying faith foundations, philosophic presuppositions, ideology, or World View. This is a life-long enterprise. I have barely scratched the surface.

Having a grasp on the commonly accepted faith assumptions of a particular Subject, say Mathematics or Economics, I examine that in light of the Bible and try to understand what God's Word, His will as Sovereign, is on the Matter. The latter should be of serious concern to Christians.

I seek to expose weaknesses, inconsistencies and illogical positions in a particular Field in an effort to create doubt in Christians who advocate the dominant presuppositions of a Discipline to the point where they might be willing to consider another, i.e.- a Biblical approach to it.

My primary hope is to find and teach Christians the Principles, Norms and teaching of Scripture for each Academic subject, from Art to Zoology. I believe Christians who claim God as their Sovereign are bound to do His will in their academic work and thus to build their Field, their lives, upon it. In this way they extend God's Kingdom on earth and Glorify Him in all things. I know this shall often lead to conflict with the status quo and may lead to loss of a career. If this is the result of thinking and acting biblically, this is what it means to be a Disciple of Christ and gives meaning to "bearing one's cross". The alternative to profess that Jesus is Lord but not seek His will and obey it in one's vocation or work is unacceptable. To tolerate such a Dualism in our lives is to be unfaithful to God.

There remains much to do and my time here to work on this Project is getting shorter as I become older. I know many others also do this intellectual work. But I have found very few Evangelicals who are interested in the project or in my work. I wish many more, especially young people, would join the effort. See my Essays posted at [ReformedLiving.org](http://ReformedLiving.org) I hope and pray at least some who know me and read my work will be inspired to pick up the challenge and do better and more. Pro Rege!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:16

Thursday, November 8, 2012

## **MY WEBSITE, REFORMED LIVING.ORG**

Welcome to Re/FORMED LIVING! <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

This website is the portal to the writing of Calvin (Cal) Fox. I hope you will browse and discover material that will be interesting and helpful to living a Re/Formatted life, that is, a life being formed by the Word of God in all aspects! Pro Rege!

My Theology is grounded in the Bible as primarily understood by the 16th Century Reformers, especially John Calvin. Calvinism is far more than the 5 famous doctrines having to do with Salvation. It is about the Sovereignty of God over all and is actually a World View to live by. (Many who call themselves Calvinists do not grasp this or do not want to do so.) The Calvinist worldview was developed by the Dutch Theologian, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), and it is known as Kuyperism or Neo-Calvinism. Kuyper proclaimed, "there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" Amen! The post below is a list of the key principles of Neo-Calvinism. On the Front page of my Re/Formatted Living website, you can find links to many essays I have written in several Categories: EcclesiastiCAL (church related topics, mostly from an Anglican perspective), TheologiCAL (theological topics), Re/formation Institute (articles on a variety of academic subjects such as Economics and Government) and also to this Blog, "Dutch Treat" and my to some of my occasional devotional writing called "QT Thots".

Begin by clicking on one of the Topics on the Menu bar at the top of the page then click again on subtopics. Notice the space provided for Searching the site below the Menu Bar. Icons at the top of each Essay enable you to turn it into a PFD or to mail or print it. There is provision for your comments. Please do me the courtesy of using your real name if you do comment.

My indispensable partner in setting all of this up is Norm Gosselin, webmaster and son-in-law! We welcome suggestions for improvements. We do this as a serious Ministry for Christ (Pro Rege) and appreciate your prayers. We hope you will recommend the site to others. Thanks for visiting!!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:23

## **NEO-CALVINISM**

### **ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF NEO-CALVINISM**

Creation, Fall and Redemption: What God Formed, Sin Deformed and Grace shall Reform

God's Creation is good. It has been radically corrupted by the Fall. Redemption includes restoration of that Creation in Christ

Rejection of Dualism. Dualism is common in much Christian thinking. The most notable dualism is between Nature and Grace. Neo-Calvinists maintain that Grace restores Nature (and that the Church, as Salt and Light, is meant to transform Culture)

Jesus is Lord over all of Creation. Jesus' lordship extends through every area and aspect of life-it is not restricted to the sphere of church or of personal piety.

All of life is to be Redeemed- Reformed. The work of Jesus on the cross was intended to defeat Evil in all areas of life.

The resurrection of Jesus is meant to lead to the renewal of all life for both individuals and Society.

Cultural Mandate. Genesis 1:26-28 is the mandate from God to Humanity to care for and cultivate all of Creation, including Culture and Civilization, to God's glory

The Role of Law. Law is more than the Decalogue. It is the Torah (Five Books of Moses) and begins with the creation ordinances (Norms) established by God as His will for the living of life in all Spheres

Sphere Sovereignty. The Spheres are God-given Institutions (Marriage, Family, Faith Community (Church), Civil Government and Civic Community). Each of these Institutions has boundaries that mark off its sphere of responsibility and influence. All are responsible to God. In relation to each other, they are autonomous (sovereign), but cooperative.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:34

Wednesday, October 24, 2012

### **TRYING TO EXPLAIN EVIL IN THE WORLD**

Interesting testimony of this Blogger about why he has become a Theist instead of the Agnostic he has been for many years. The comments that follow the post make good points, too, as well as give two good links to follow. It should be obvious that the man is on a spiritual journey- the missing part is the person of Christ. What a difference He will make in the journey when he Blogger comes to Him!

<http://polipundit.com/?p=43209#more-43209>

NEW: Highlight with cursor then right click to open link

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:49

Sunday, October 14, 2012

## **BLOODY RELIGIONS?**

It is mind boggling that Muslims are killing Muslims in countries around the world. What kind of Religion is Islam that its adherents are so violent with each other?

But then, weren't the soldiers and civilians involved on both sides in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, WWI and the European Theater of WWII mostly all professed Christians? What kind of Religion is Christianity that its adherents are so violent with each other?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:43

Sunday, September 30, 2012

### **NEW J.I. PACKER TAPE ON APOLOGETICS: Explaining the Faith**

J.I.Packer spoke at the Reformation Study Center in Los Altos, CA in 1978. He outlined his understanding of apologetics (the discipline of defending a position through the systematic use of information) as they pertained to the cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s.

He starts off his talk by asking the question, "How do we make better sense of the Gospel to our contemporaries?" He follows this up with, "I don't think you can teach apologetics. I think it has to be practiced and learned in practice." To hear what he means, listen in to this recording.

J.I. Packer speaks about relevant Christian communication for today's generation in his: Discussion of Apologetics, 1978 (49:02) This digital recording was created at Kudos Press from an original tape cassette recording.

<http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/archives/154-JI-Packers-Discussion-of-Apologetics.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:46

Friday, September 21. 2012

### **NEW ARTICLES ON REFORMED LIVING WEBSITE**

I have just posted new Articles on my website: <http://www.reformedliving.org/>  
Evangelicals, the Social Gospel and Changing Times  
Private or Public Schools: What is Christian Education?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:02

Saturday, September 8, 2012

### **ANTI-CHRISTIAN BIAS IN SPORTS MEDIA**

If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Here are some examples of Christian athletes who have been convicted by some sports writers  
<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2012/09/05/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 21:52

Tuesday, August 21. 2012

**NEW DEVOTIONALS ARE NOW POSTED AT KUDOS PRESS**

My QT Thots for August are now posted

The Resurrection Gospel  
The Shining Light Gospel  
The Whole Bible Gospel  
The Alleluia Gospel

[http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT\\_Thots\\_August2012.html](http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT_Thots_August2012.html)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:17

Thursday, August 9, 2012

### **THE AGONY OF DEFEAT AND GOD AT THE OLYMPICS**

Does God really help athletes who are Christians? What about when they do not win? Good article that contains wisdom for all Believers dealing with disappointment and loss.  
<http://blog.christianitytoday.com/women/2012/08/where-was-god-when-lolo-jones.html?>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:01

Friday, July 27, 2012

### **OYLMPIC GOLD FOR CHRIST**

My wife and I are graduates of the University of Connecticut. Some of our children and one grandchild are also alumni. We are avid fans of the Huskies Women's stellar Basketball Team. Half of the current Olympic Team, as well as its Head Coach, are from UConn.

Here is a profile of our current favorite Player which includes her Testimony to Christ  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/july-august/maya-moore-olympic-team.html?>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:04

Friday, July 20, 2012

## **WE ARE NOT JUST CONSERVATIVES**

I read and benefit from many Conservative columnists. I am often tempted to simply link their articles to this Blog and let their views be as they are. But as a Christian I am committed to analyzing everything I read from a Biblical Perspective. I want to persuade all Christians to do that! We can not be simply social or economic Conservatives! I say "Biblical" not "Christian". We are committed to approaching and understanding the world from a Biblical World View- more than that- a Neo-Calvinist World View, not simply a "What would Jesus do?" view and not a "according to the Gospel" view. You may have noted the tagline on this Blog: "A Neo-Calvinist Commentary". I explain what that means on my website, <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:40

Tuesday, July 17, 2012

## **WHEN GAMES BECOME GOD**

<http://www.masslive.com/sports/index.ssf/2012/07>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:09

Wednesday, July 4, 2012

### **CAN WE MIX GOD AND COUNTRY? HOW?**

"Many American Christians are ambivalent about their homeland. We are citizens of another kingdom, after all, so sometimes it's hard to work up enthusiasm for this one. Besides, we're told the church is called to take a prophetic stance against the culture, pointing out its immorality and injustice. We certainly don't want to be caught celebrating America—we may be accused of mixing God and country." Irishman Os Guinness suggests a fresh path to this conundrum in his *A Free People's Suicide: Sustainable Freedom and the American Future* (IVP, August). Perhaps we can celebrate the American experiment and hold it accountable to its founding ideals in a way that doesn't compromise our loyalty to the kingdom of God."

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/julyweb-only/os-guinness-freedom-in-balance.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:45

### **COULD THIS CEO BE A CHRISTIAN?**

"He was a poster boy for corporate arrogance, telling Parliament last year that the time for bankers to apologize had passed. Bob Diamond is just the latest victim of growing public anger at a British establishment regarded as greedy and ethically challenged.

"The hard-driving CEO of Barclays bank resigned Tuesday. "I thought he was a swashbuckling entrepreneurial character, self-made," said Allister Heath, editor of the daily financial newspaper City AM. "He's American, a workaholic, wants to win, wants to become rich. Not ashamed of money."

What part of this description can fit a Christian?

<http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/banking/story/2012-07-03/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:24

Tuesday, July 3, 2012

**DEVOTIONAL READING BY CAL FOX AT KUDOS PRESS**

You may find QT Thots, a devotional weekly at the Kudos Press Library.  
<http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/archives/53-Devotional-Readings>At present, 56 QT Thots are available for the following 14 themes:

- Resurrection
  - Prayer
  - Our Protector
  - Live For Him
  - God Values
  - Believe
  - Food
  - Heart
  - Choice
  - Character
  - Renewal
  - Praise
  - Faith
  - Church
- Generally, a new weekly is published on Wednesdays.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:42

Saturday, June 16. 2012

### **NEW DEVOTIONALS POSTED**

Four of my devotionals (QT Thots) are now available at  
[http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT\\_Thots\\_June2012.html](http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT_Thots_June2012.html)  
Their Theme is Resurrection

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:51

Thursday, June 14, 2012

### **Steve Saint in accident testing invention for missionaries**

Son of martyred missionary Nate Saint invented flying car to advance indigenous missions. This is a fascinating story of a fascinating person and his fascinating testimony and . Read his letter below the fold here and on his FB page.  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/juneweb-only/steve-saint-partly-paralyzed-testing-new-missionary-tech>.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:04

Monday, June 4, 2012

### **NEW ARTICLES ON WEBSITE**

Bible Study on Gifts of the Spirit and Speaking in Tongues

Comparison of Types of Worship Services

The Juvenilization of the Church

Saving Christ's Substitutionary Death

The Need to Update Your Church Website

What Fruit Does Christ Expect from the Church?

<http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Please Note the buttons to link this and every Blog Post to FB and Twitter

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 21:49

Saturday, June 2, 2012

### **THE CHRISTIAN WHO SPLIT HIS PANTS**

Did I ever tell you about the young Zoad? Who came to a sign at the fork of the road? He looked one way and the other way too - the Zoad had to make up his mind what to do. Well, the Zoad scratched his head, and his chin, and his pants and he said to himself, "I'll be taking a chance.

If I go to Place One, that place may be hot. So how will I know if I like it or not. On the other hand, though, I'll feel such a fool if I go to Place Two and find it's too cool. In that case I may catch a chill and turn blue. So Place One may be best and not Place Two.

Play safe," cried the Zoad, "I'll play safe, I'm no dunce. I'll simply start off to both places at once." And that's how the Zoad who would not take a chance Went no place at all with a split in his pants.

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/the-zoad-in-the-road->

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:05

### **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF AMERICAN CULTURE**

1. Be a Success
2. Be Tolerant
3. Have Lots of Fun
4. Shop till You Drop
5. Just Do It
6. Get Tough, Don't Whine
7. Stand Up for Your Rights
8. Don't Waste Time
9. Think for Yourself
10. Work Hard

Which of these Commandments do you obey? Which ones are Biblical? Christian?

For a good description of each one see

<http://www.gmi.org/products/books/american-cultural-baggage/ten-commandments/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:47

Monday, May 28, 2012

### **ELIZABETH ELIOT- Original tape recording**

Do you remember Shadow of the Almighty and stories of Jim Eliot, missionary to the Aucas in Ecuador and martyr for Christ. His former wife has been one of the most influential Christian women of our time. Her books are well written and filled with wisdom about all aspects of marriage, family and life.

One of her many conference messages is now available in two parts at  
<http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/archives/120-Elizabeth-Elliot->

The purpose of her talk was to challenge her listeners to be specific and deliberate in expressing themselves as Christians, as an outpouring of identifying with Christ and being an example of Christ to the world. recordings made in 1977. These digital recordings were created at Kudos Press from original tape cassette

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:48

### **LATEST QT THOTS (my Devotional Writing)**

You can find my latest QT Thots on the subject of Prayer here:  
<http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library.html>  
I can be reached by email at [cfoxinstitute@thinkersloft.com](mailto:cfoxinstitute@thinkersloft.com)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:43

Monday, May 14, 2012

**NEW QT THOTS (my Devotional Writing) AVAILABLE**

A new devotional is now available at <http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?>

This month's "QT Thots" focus on prayer, where we actively ask, implore, seek, thank, praise, talk with, and otherwise communicate with God our Father, Jesus our Savior, the Holy Spirit our Counselor.

Consider taking extra time to pray this month, to pour out your heart, as Hannah does in 1 Samuel 1:12-20, the reference text for Vol. 5, Issue 1.

You may email me at [cfoxinstitute@thinkersloft.com](mailto:cfoxinstitute@thinkersloft.com)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:46

Saturday, May 12. 2012

## **HOW WE READ THE BIBLE EFFECTS HOW WE VIEW GAY MARRIAGE**

I have family members and friends who are Homosexuals. For them that identity is a given- how they were born- not a choice. Some of them are Christians. They are creative, enjoyable, moral and respectable people. Certainly there are heterosexuals who are not. There are also people who undoubtedly are experimenting with homosexual acts and a certain life style which is by choice. Either way, "Gay" is here to stay. And the Movement for Homosexuality to be fully accepted in America as legal and normal is not going away. A recent poll quoted in CT shows 44 percent of younger evangelicals oppose same-sex marriage and 17 percent were not sure; 63 percent of older evangelicals also oppose it and 7 percent of older evangelicals were uncertain. This means 56% of younger evangelicals do not oppose same-sex Marriage with 17 % not sure. Thus the majority of young evangelicals are favorable to Gay Marriage. Other surveys indicate that bigotry, narrow-mindedness and legalism, especially about homosexuality, are common criticisms by young evangelicals of churches and a major reason they are leaving churches. What accounts for these statistics besides the influence of the world and the pressure to be Politically Correct? Many in our Society, Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals, believe that Marriage must be defined as a Legal Right for any two adults, Gay or Straight, who want to live in a loving caring, committed relationship. How can Evangelicals accept Society's definition of Marriage? Those who do insist the Bible agrees with this definition. Accepting Gay Marriage is Biblical because doing so is in accord with the Bible's teaching about Justice for all and the teaching of Jesus about love for all. How can they make this claim? Because they do not interpret the Bible according to the classic, grammatical-historical (Original and Common Sense) Rule of Interpretation. If they did, they would agree that Scripture tells us that God instituted Marriage, not Society, and He intends it to be only for heterosexual couples who want to live in a loving caring, committed relationship. [This, in turn, involves what the Bible also teaches about gender, gender roles and the purpose of Marriage and Family]. The grammatical-historical interpretation of the Bible is the only foundation for this view of Marriage. I do not believe, apart from it, there is any real defense of Biblical Marriage and Family. The issue of Homosexuality is a separate subject. The option of same-sex Civil Unions is a separate subject. If we want to insist on the sole definition of "Marriage" as being only for heterosexual couples who want to live in a loving caring, committed relationship, Evangelicals must get back [not just to the Bible, but] to the time-honored, historical grammatical interpretation of the Bible and teach that to our young people. Apparently the majority of them do not know it.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:29

Wednesday, May 9, 2012

## **LEARNING HOW GOD THINKS**

God has a mind- Romans 11:34 "who has known the mind of the Lord"

God thinks- Isaiah 55:9 as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are ... my thoughts than (yours)

God thinks logically.

Logical thinking or rational discourse presupposes and requires certain Rule or Laws of Thought: Identity (A is A) Contradiction (A can not be Not A at the same time and place) Excluded Middle (A or Not A) "The Law of Contradiction is a presupposition and non-negotiable principle for Christian Theology and Apologetics." "Without [logic] no knowledge of anything cognitive can be achieved." "The basic Law of rational intelligibility (is) the Law of Contradiction." - R.C. Sproul Secular Philosophers agree- "denial of [the 3 Laws] would make all discourse impossible." "Without assuming the Law, [no one could] assert anything, not even a denial of the Law itself" - Hospers "any system to be workable at all must be governed by some principle of consistency" - A.J Ayer

What is the justification of these Rules of Logic? They are considered self-evident. Their proof is pragmatic: they work. However, these Laws have a much better foundation: they are derived from the way God actually thinks. He is not obeying the Laws, they are derived from Him.

[http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com\\_](http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:18

## **LEARNING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

Critical Thinking is a skill set that we can all learn. Identify what you already know and then apply explorative questions to discover what was not initially obvious. In 1956, Benjamin Bloom led a group of educational psychologists in a study on intellectual behavior used by learners. The result is known as Bloom's Taxonomy. According to his original research, learners move up through six levels of critical thinking skills: 1) Knowledge 2) Comprehension 3) Application 4) Analysis 5) Synthesis 6) Evaluation. In the 1990's, Lorin Anderson, a cognitive psychologist, changed the terms and order, demonstrating that multiple viewpoints exist on how we learn and how we view learning. Having said that, the following adheres to Bloom's original taxonomy as I see it. Read the full Article and learn the skills at <http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/archives>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:08

Thursday, May 3, 2012

### **NEW: MY LATEST DEVOTIONAL (QT THOTS)**

My latest QT Thots are available on <http://kudospress.com/serendipity/>  
The topic is Prayer.

Also available there is John Stott's excellent taped message on the writing of sermons

Note: I can be reached at [cfoxinstitute@thinkersloft.com](mailto:cfoxinstitute@thinkersloft.com)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:45

### **WITHERINGTON, DEATH, GOD AND EVIL**

Ben Witherington, Professor of NT at Asbury Seminary and prolific author lost his daughter to a sudden pulmonary embolism last January and has written several pieces and an entire e-book about his (and his family's) experience and grief- all within a couple of months. So they are very fresh, honest, emotional, painful and inspiring. These articles challenged me to probe my own thinking on the subject of tragic or unexpected death again. This is related to the debate about Theodicy [if God is Good and All Powerful, how come He doesn't prevent Evil? He must not be Good or He must not be All Powerful]. But the unexpected death of Witherington's daughter does not turn him from or against God or to deny His existence. On the contrary. He affirms his complete faith in God and His goodness. Here are excerpts from an article Witherington posted and my response to it and to a version published in the April edition of CT. My purpose is to clarify my own thinking and faith, not to criticize Professor Witherington the person or father, who has my respect; but I do wrestle with his beliefs and disagree with what he writes about Calvinism and what he says it teaches about God. The Professor says-  
<http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:43

Friday, April 27, 2012

### **FULL MILITARY HONORS FOR COLSON**

Chuck Colson will be buried with full military honors at Quantico National Cemetery and a Memorial Service shall be held at the National Cathedral in DC. Check out the links attached to this article for more testimonies to God's grace in this man's heart and his conversion to a life of Ministry and Prison Reform. Thanks be to God  
[http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2012/04/chuck\\_colson\\_to.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2012/04/chuck_colson_to.html)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 17:42

Thursday, April 26, 2012

**NEW DEVOTIONALS (QT THOTS) ARE NOW AVAILABLE**

My devotionals (QT Thots) for April are now posted  
[http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT\\_Thots\\_April2012.html](http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT_Thots_April2012.html)  
The Theme of the month is the Protection of God over us  
PS Check out the entire website, especially if you like classic cars

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:03

Tuesday, April 24. 2012

## **REMEMBERING THE MARTYRS OF ARMENIA**

"Armenia is located at the east end of modern Turkey, with some of its traditional territory now in Turkey and some across the border in the former Soviet Union. The Armenians were converted to Christianity around 280 or 290, and are accounted the first country to become predominantly Christian. Their country is located at a spot where empires have clashed for centuries, and they have often been caught in the middle. For centuries they have been dominated by their moslem neighbors, most recently the Turks of the Ottoman Empire."The Turks were concerned about the possibility of an Armenian revolt. In 1895 and 1896 the Turkish Army killed about 100,000 Armenian civilians. Then in 1915, early in World War I, with Turkey fighting on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary, and Russia fighting in alliance with the British and French on the other side, the Turkish government accused the Armenians of plotting with the Russians to assist a Russian invasion of Turkey. That spring, around 600,000 Armenians were killed by the Turkish Army, in an attempt to exterminate the Armenians completely. Much of the slaughter took place on 24 April 1915. The survivors were driven eastward and escaped into Russia. On 29 November 1920, most of Armenia was annexed by the Soviet Union."It is sometimes said that the issues here were national, political, and ethnic rather than religious, and that the victims therefore do no qualify as martyrs. However, many of the Armenians, when about to be killed, were given the option of saving their lives by converting to Islam. Few did."written by James Kiefer (printed in today's Morning Prayer from Mission of St Clare)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:04

Friday, April 13, 2012

**NEW DEVOTIONALS (QT THOTS) ARE NOW AVAILABLE**

New Devotionals I have written (QT Thots) have been posted on

<http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library.ht>

The entire Kudos zine has very interesting photos and articles, especially for car buffs

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:43

Friday, March 2, 2012

## **SAVING CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS -Part 1**

"Research shows that Christian, particularly evangelical, institutions demonstrate a marked moral difference in five areas: (1) faculty attitudes; (2) Bible, theology, and ethics in the curriculum; (3) measured or reported impact on character or moral attitudes; (4) students' moral reasoning; and (5) alumni views about moral education. While less than half of the faculty at public universities think it very important or essential for higher education to help students develop moral character, one study found that close to 75 percent of faculty at Catholic and Protestant institutions affirm this view. If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, then it should be no surprise that conversations about wisdom and character have diminished at secular universities while remaining robust at Christian universities. In light of this research, Christian colleges and universities can celebrate their distinctive moral contributions. "BUT they must also ask how they can continue to avoid the flight from wisdom to expertise taken by secular universities. The temptations are many: Financial and peer pressure to attract a greater variety of students, particularly through bare bones online degree programs, entice Christian universities to abandon their theological and moral distinctives or to gear curricula toward building professional qualifications. The desire to bolster one's academic standing may lead administrators and faculty to downplay an institution's Christian identity when hiring. And the personal failures and struggles of faculty members may discourage them from moving beyond narrow forms of professional training. I'll offer four suggestions for how universities might flee these temptations." [emphasis added] You read the rest of this helpful article here- [http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article\\_print.html?id=95517](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=95517)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:07

## **SAVING CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS -Part 2**

The CT article above concludes with this advice- "If Christian universities hope to remain more than training grounds for narrow forms of competence, they must avoid the secular temptation to be satisfied with providing disciplinary expertise in a field of study. They must continue the grand quest to offer the world wisdom about what God's story of creation and redemption entails for the good life and a good world." (my emphasis) I think this is far too general and inadequate. As the professor who wrote the piece himself said, wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. Yes it does! But look more carefully at the verses that say that. Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; but the Professor's world wants none of that. The search for true and full wisdom begins with God. This world is comprised of people who who are fools who despise wisdom and instruction that comes from God alone. Prov 2:3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; The wisdom that God gives is found in His Word, the Scripture. The title of the article above is "How to save Christian Colleges" and I might add, all schools that want to be "Christian". I urge that they begin with God, the God revealed in Christ and the Bible. They are not doing this if they do not facilitate heart knowledge of the Lord and a personal spiritual life within every single student; nor are they doing it if they do not teach what the Bible says about every single subject in the curriculum whereby students learn to think Biblical about everything! Yes, this is possible. I have been saying this for years! This is what I am trying to do with my Website and my Blog. This is the way to save "Christian" schools. I do not believe this goal will be achieved by all such schools. I believe strongly that the responsibility is really on the local church and, behind that, the family at home. Church and Home are to be schools. True rigorous Biblical education must begin there. I know most students will still attend public schools and can learn many important things there, but only when what I am "preaching" here happens shall this Promise come true- Prov 2:9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; 10 for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; 11 discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, 12 delivering you from the way of evil, from men ...13 who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness

...

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:00

Thursday, March 1, 2012

## **WHAT DOES SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE MEAN?**

"Our nation has no religious test for those who would hold elected office. Mostly. We do, in truth, have one, unwritten though it may be: A candidate who would allow his personal religious beliefs to dictate his actions, to rule his conscience, is considered, by most citizens, to be out of bounds. During his 1960 campaign for the presidency, John F. Kennedy was dogged by claims that his Catholicism would interfere with his abilities to act in the best interest of the nation. If elected, he'd answer to Rome, to the Pope. Or so his most vehement critics claimed. There were whispers, pamphlets, rumors aplenty. A vote for the Massachusetts Catholic would be a vote for the Vatican. Eventually, Kennedy would address the matter head on. He did so before a group of Protestant ministers in Houston. His speech was masterful. If elected, he'd take an oath to uphold the Constitution, and he would always endeavor to do just that. First and foremost. He spoke of an America where there was a wall of separation between church and state. Kennedy defused the issue, confronting it fully, addressing any possibly lingering questions. It was seen that way at the time, and to read the text of the address more than half a century later is to find that it has lost none of its luster. Unless, that is, you are Rick Santorum, the Republican candidate for president who recently said that reading Kennedy's address made him want to "throw up." Santorum made his odd statement, one of many such, in the run-up to Tuesday's primaries in Arizona and Michigan. Santorum is also a Catholic, but one of an obviously different kind. He doesn't really believe in the separation of church and state. He has said that, too. Kennedy had it exactly right in 1960. And Santorum has it completely wrong today." [emphasis added]

The above was the lead Editorial in our local daily paper. It is also typical of many columnists and many who have written letters to the paper. They are the ones who have it totally wrong! First, what Rick Santorum said was, "I don't believe in an America where the separation of church and state are absolute. The idea that the church [people of faith, not the RC Church] can have no influence or no involvement in the operation of the state is absolutely antithetical to the objectives and vision of our country. ... To say that people of faith have no role in the public square? You bet that makes [me] throw up." [emphasis added] I agree with this. I do not know any Christian, Liberal or Conservative, that would not agree. The Editorial says, "A candidate who would allow his personal religious beliefs to dictate his actions, to rule his conscience, is considered, by most citizens, to be out of bounds". That, if true, makes me sick. I would hope and expect that all citizens would be ruled by their consciences. Furthermore, I would hope and expect that the consciences of all citizens would be ruled by some ethical and moral principles and values. Most probably are. Where do they get these principles and values? Religious people get them from their religious beliefs. What kind of Religion has no moral and ethical principles and values? President Obama has said that he is a Christian. I am sure his Religion informed and inspires his actions, Certainly Martin Luther King Jr did. And that was a good thing, right? Judaism and Christianity believe in and teach the principles and values of the 10 Commandments. All Religions hold to some form of the Golden Rule. Aren't these principles and values supposed to rule our actions? It is a very sad commentary if most of our citizens think applying the moral and ethical values of our Religions is "out of bounds" Thankfully, I do not believe that is the case at all!. We must share a set of common core ethical or moral values as American or we will be divided and fall as a Nation. Ultimately we must have basic agreement about that. It forebodes trouble for America if we do not. It seems the argument is not really about Religion as such, but about how we work out the applications of it on particular social issues. That is where we do not agree. We all agree that the command not to kill or to steal or to bear false witness is good, the problem is we do not agree on what killing, stealing and bearing false witness is.

\_\_\_\_\_The second issue that needs clarification is the phrase "separation of church and state". It appears nowhere in the US Constitution. The only thing close to it is in the First Amendment which says, Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; In the first 150 years of colonization of the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic area "Religion" was commonly (not exclusively) understood to be Protestantism, which came in the form of several Denominations. At the time of the Pilgrims and Puritans, Separatists from the Church of England, what became the State Govt required land owning citizens to pay taxes that would go to support of their churches and Clergy. In the Northeast this involved Congregational churches, while in the mid Atlantic and South it involved primarily the Church of England. This is what the "establishment" of Religion commonly meant in that time. As the number of Denominations and independent churches, as well as the number of non-Protestants grew there was resentment and resistance by many of them to that system of church support. The latter wanted it to stop. Thus they advocated "dis-establishment" in which the State would not support any Denomination or institutional Religion or Church. Baptists were in the forefront of this movement for dis-establishment. Thomas Jefferson wrote a private letter in 1802 to such a Baptist church in Danbury CT assuring them that the Federal Govt would not interfere with the free exercise of their Religion. This is what he meant by the "separation of Church and State". Such a "separation" was intended to protect Churches from the State, not vice versa. "[F]or the men who wrote the Religion Clauses of the First Amendment the 'establishment' of a religion connoted sponsorship, financial support, and active involvement of the sovereign in religious activity." However, the Court's reading of the clause has never resulted in the barring of all

assistance which aids, however incidentally, a religious institution. Outside this area, the decisions generally have more rigorously prohibited what may be deemed governmental promotion of religious doctrine. {emphasis added}  
Reference:[http://www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/html/art1toc\\_user.html](http://www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/html/art1toc_user.html)<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-CONAN-2002/pdf/GPO-CONAN-2002-9-2.pdf>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:55

## **SPIRITUAL COLONOSCOPY**

This is Colorectal Cancer Prevention Month. It is also the Month of Lent. There is a connection. Here is James White's helpful article about both. By the way, in recent years, I have had 3 colonoscopies, a sigmoidoscopy and an endoscopy- all assuring me of no intestinal or colon problems. I urge you to have at least the colonoscopy as part of your cancer prevention. Do it! My wife and I have each had cancer. You could have it, too.  
<http://www.churchandculture.org/blog.asp?id=2436>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 07:41

Friday, February 24, 2012

### **NEW "QT THOTS" ONLINE**

NEW: More of my Devotionals, called QT Thots, have been posted online at my son, Kevin's website [http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT\\_Thots\\_February2012.html](http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT_Thots_February2012.html)  
Through the Bible (from Genesis to Revelation) Lenten Devotionals, very well written by my daughter-in-law, Linda, with an almost Unreached People Group in China, called the Dong, in mind, can be found here- <http://www.oursaviorpalmbay.org/gpage15.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:17

Tuesday, February 21. 2012

## **HAIR IN THE FOOD AND OTHER FOLLY**

I just posted an Article on my website declaring "The Bible forbids Ash Wednesday- Read why."  
<http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:23

Sunday, February 12. 2012

### **NEW DEVOTIONALS AVAILABLE ON-LINE**

Four of my Devotionals (called QT Thots) have just been posted at [http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT\\_Thots\\_January2012.html](http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT_Thots_January2012.html)  
I normally e-mail them 3 times each week to people around the Country and in other Nations. The ones on Kudos Press are attractively formatted. If you would like to receive my QT Thots directly by e-mail, I would be glad to send them. Request them at [cfoxinstitute@verizon.net](mailto:cfoxinstitute@verizon.net). P.S.- There are also good Christian books written by my sons available at the Kudos Press Store

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:15

Monday, February 6, 2012

## **BEING A CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR**

This Blog is a stimulating and helpful resource if you are concerned with being a Christian Academic or Intellectual or simply a Christian Student in the University. Check out all the previous posts as well as this one- <http://us1.campaign-archive1.com/?u=361cc9ae30aef481e4029f600&id=229ac1ee0c&e=79b8ecec3a>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:42

Friday, January 13, 2012

## **REMEMBERING AN EXCEPTIONAL MISSIONARY**

About 20 miles from our house, in Northampton, once the home of Jonathan Edwards, is a cemetery in which are buried the remains of David Brainerd. He was a missionary to Native Americans in New York, New Jersey, and eastern Pennsylvania. Born in Connecticut in 1718, he died of tuberculosis in Edward's home at the age of twenty-nine. He had been cared for by Edward's teenage daughter, his fiance, who herself contracted TB. She is buried next to him. He was an effective Evangelist and God used him to bring many to Christ and influenced others to do the same. He persevered in spite of suffered great hardship and illness. Many Christians have been influenced by his Diaries, edited by Edwards. In them he shared his inner distress. On January 14, 1743, Brainerd wrote: "My spiritual conflicts today were unspeakably dreadful, heavier than the mountains and overflowing floods. I seemed enclosed, as it were, in Hell itself; I was deprived of all sense of God, even of the being of a God; and that was my misery. I had no awful apprehensions of God as angry. This was distress, the nearest akin to the damned's torments, that I ever endured; their torment, I am sure, will consist much in a privation (lack) of God, and consequently of all good. This taught me the absolute dependence of a creature upon God the Creator, for every crumb of happiness it enjoys. Oh I feel that, if there is no God, though I might live for ever here, and enjoy not only this but all other worlds, I should be ten thousand times more miserable than a reptile. My soul was in such anguish I could not eat; but felt as I suppose a poor wretch would that is just going to the place of execution." [Read more](http://www.christianity.com/ChurchHistory/11630242)  
<http://www.christianity.com/ChurchHistory/11630242>  
<http://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biorpbrainerd.html> [a very good resource]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:54

Monday, January 2, 2012

## **RESOLUTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS AND CHURCH LEADERS**

Here is a list of Resolutions specifically for Christians and church leaders- lots of wisdom here.  
<http://www.churchandculture.org/blog.asp?id=2177>

God gave us the year now past, but He has not given us a new year. He has given us a new day!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:39

Friday, December 23. 2011

## **TOP 10 ALBUMS**

Here are the Top Ten Music Albums of 2011 as chosen by Christianity Today magazine. There are reviews of each one, plus runner-ups. Wide variety of lyrics and styles.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/music/commentaries/2011/2011ctmusicawards.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:14

## **CAN A CHRISTIAN BE A LIBERTARIAN?**

"The Iowa State University/Gazette/KCRG survey is the latest poll to show Paul leading in the Hawkeye State's caucuses. Paul's supporters are disproportionately young, independent, non-interventionist, non-Christian and ...dedicated. [emphasis added]" In the Iowa poll, Paul gets more than 50 percent support from the two youngest age groups — 18-29 year olds and 30-44 year olds — but gets less than 12 percent of 45-64 year olds and those 65 and older. In the Post poll, he gets 20 percent among 18-49 year olds, but just 8 percent among those 50 and older. That's a remarkable age gap."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/post/who-is-a-ron-paul-supporter/2011/12>

I note that many supporters of Ron Paul, a Libertarian, are non-Christians; but I know Evangelicals (mostly Tea Party members) who support Dr Paul. I do not understand how a Biblical Christian could be a true Libertarian. The highest values of Libertarians are individual free-will, free-thought and personal liberty. These are not Biblical values. The word "libertarian" is the antonym of "authoritarian". Isn't a Biblical Christian someone who is under the authority of God and His Word in all areas of life? Biblical Christians are committed to the Lordship, the absolute authority, of Christ over their hearts and minds. They are his bond-slaves. They do not have or believe in or desire personal autonomy or free-will.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:50

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

## **HIS WILL SUSTAINS ME**

My latest Devotional on Kudos Press website is now available-  
[http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT\\_Thots\\_December2011.html](http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/QT_Thots_December2011.html)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:08

Friday, December 2, 2011

### **NOT MY VALENTINE! NOT MY KIND OF GUY!**

"STAMFORD, Conn. - This is home. This is the place he loves, the place that loves him. This is the place where, no matter what happens, the controversies and failures, the enmity and injuries, Bobby Valentine can be the person, the star, he was always meant to be. The awe still lives here, the wonder, the adulation. This is home. This is where Bobby Valentine is - and always will be - everything."He is who he is because of Stamford. Here he is deified, always has been. His star has been bright as long as anyone can remember, from the first days he showed athletic promise, in baseball and football and track. It is the foundation of everything he is, including the parts that don't win him favor, the brashness, the bluster."

[http://articles.boston.com/2011-12-01/sports/30463784\\_1\\_](http://articles.boston.com/2011-12-01/sports/30463784_1_)

The new Manager of the Red Sox may be good for the Team, but if this adulatory description is true, he is also the kind of guy that got the Sox in trouble and what is wrong with Sports everywhere else. Can Christians root for a man described like this? Could a Christian ever aspire to be such a person?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:32

Thursday, November 17, 2011

**NEW DEVOTIONAL ON-LINE NOW**

My latest Devotional ("QT Thots") are now available at <http://kudospress.com/serendipity/>  
Look for Cal's Call

- Cal's Call May 2011
- Cal's Call June 2011
- Cal's Call July 2011
- Cal's Call August 2011
- Cal's Call September 2011
- Cal's Call October 2011
- Cal's Call November 2011

Kudos Press website is full of practical resources for daily living

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:02

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

### **MISSIONS TODAY**

If you want to keep up on what is happening in the world of Missions, especially in the Global South, an excellent resource is "Engaging the Adventure". This FB Wall is constantly updated with stories of what is happening today in many countries and among many people groups, especially those most unreached with the Gospel. You will be able to read about all kinds of people and evangelical ministries seeking to share Christ in many ways and marvel at what the Lord is doing through them. I do not know of any other more complete resource on Missions today. Check it out- you will be amazed by the wealth of information you will find there!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Engaging-the-Adventure/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:06

Saturday, November 12. 2011

## **B. Graham Thoughts on Veterans and Sacrifice**

From time to time we have had the opportunity to visit veterans' hospitals. After a service, we've gone from bed to bed talking and praying with the patients. Many of these people feel neglected. They have lost limbs, eyesight or health in service to their country. Some have been in the hospital for years and will remain there the rest of their lives. What a price they have paid for all of us. I once talked to a man who had lost a leg in World War II. When I remarked about the price he had paid, he said, "It was worth it, wasn't it?" Let some veterans show you the scars that they have received in battle, and you will realize how much suffering, heartache and blood our freedoms have cost.

Out of this comes a great lesson to Christians. The Apostle Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" Galatians 6:17, NKJV. In other words, Paul said that he bore in his body the branding marks of a slave. When he called himself a servant of Jesus Christ, he did not mean a paid worker, as the word connotes today. He meant a slave, in utter subjection to the Master. But this subjection is borne out of love and devotion to Christ, and it ultimately brings liberty." – Read more at BGEA: Service and Sacrifice.

<http://adrianwarnock.com/2011/11/billy-graham-quote-for-remembrance-day-veterans-day>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:16

Saturday, October 29, 2011

## **OIL, THE MIDDLE CLASS AND JESUS**

A major concern of mine is that many Christians (as well as many others) do not appreciate how complex social issues are (political, economic, historical, religious, scientific, etc). Most people seem to prefer quick or simple bumper sticker slogans like the Occupy Wall St crowd uses. Christians who simply want to share the love of God with everyone as the answer to everything are seriously out of touch with reality and the way the world works.

Here are two articles that explore the oil and energy problems

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/daniel-yergin-for-the-future-of-oil->

[http://oilandglory.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/24/daniel\\_yergins\\_much\\_awaited\\_sequel](http://oilandglory.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/24/daniel_yergins_much_awaited_sequel)

Here are two articles that explore the economy, particularly the economic troubles of the Middle Class

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/09/can-the-middle-class-be-saved>

<http://moneyland.time.com/2011/09/08/the-sad-sorry-state-of-the-middle-class/>

Christians who want to "make a difference" in the real world need to do their home work and seriously consider where and how their Faith can intersect with the real world issues mentioned in articles like these.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:07

Friday, October 21. 2011

### **AMPERSANDS ANYONE?**

Here are 365 creative ways of looking at the same thing. Isn't imagination wonderful? If you are a conservative who does not like variation and change & believe your way is the only way, this will give you serious reason for pause and humbleness-

<http://ampersandampersand.tumblr.com/archive>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:11

### **CHRISTIAN MANGA**

Have you heard of Japanese Manga? It is not a food. It is a kind of comic book or graphic novel. I am not recommending them to you. But reading the posts at the attached link, I found very interesting and helpful. The Blogger is trying to develop Christian Manga. He brings up all the major Themes that Missionaries and Missional Christians are concerned about- a lot of cross-cultural issues and the challenges of contextualizing the Gospel. What he says about trying to integrate the manga style and Christian Faith and Morals applies to those who are trying to do the same with all the Arts. Since this is a subject most of us (certainly me) are not familiar with, his discussion brings new perspectives to all of these matters.

<http://dizzcity.com/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:34

Monday, October 17, 2011

## **THE WORLD DOES NOT OWE ANYONE A LIVING**

The Fourth Commandment is "Thou shalt work" (Exodus 20:9) and The New Testament says (2 Thes 3:10 ... If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 11 For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command to ...work and to earn their own living. But, the world does not owe anyone a job! They are out there. We hear a lot about the 9% who are unemployed, but that means 91% of the American workforce have jobs. The challenge is to find one, granted not always easy, and to do what is required to be employable. But the Federal Government does not owe anyone a job, food, clothing, housing and healthcare or even education. Where does the Dogma that it does come from? Multitudes seem to fervently believe it. Why? Why do masses of people, mostly young, become indignant when they are not given these things and stridently demand them as though they were their unalienable rights- entitlements- simply for being alive in America? Why? Certainly people of Biblical faith should not believe this false Dogma! When we pray, "Father God, give us this day our daily Bread", we are not looking to Him for a handout. We are praying for the ability and the opportunity to earn the necessities of life- and thanking Him for that daily.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:30

Friday, October 14, 2011

**NEW QT Thots DEVOTIONAL AVAILABLE**

The latest Issue of my Devotional Writing, "Cal's Call", is now available at

[http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/library/Cals\\_Call\\_October2011.html](http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/library/Cals_Call_October2011.html)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:27

Friday, September 30, 2011

## **CHANGE THE WORLD? SAVE THE CITIES? REALITY CHECK!**

Change the world! Redeem the Culture! Build the Kingdom! Make a Difference! These slogans are everywhere in Christian magazines and books. Christians Colleges promote themselves as the way to prepare students to achieve these Goals. Nationwide Conferences with celebrity Pastors and Preachers are all over the map promoting this Agenda and seeking to excite young Believers and motivate and equip them for this kind of Ministry. Such Ministry is usually cast in social justice terms, increasing directed toward Cities, with a soft, generic, non-denominational "Gospel". We hear a lot about planting churches in those Cities and these "churches" are often described as intentional, missional communities (rather than our grandparent's type of church). Time Out! Please read the rest of my Essay [change-the-world-redeem-the-culture-build-the-kingdom-](#)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:49

Thursday, September 29, 2011

## **NEW DEVOTIONS AVAILABLE**

The latest Issue of my Devotional Writing, "Cal's Call", is now available at [http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/Cals\\_Call\\_September2011.html](http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/pages/library/Cals_Call_September2011.html)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:46

## **RECESSION FORCES REVALUATION FOR YOUNG ADULTS**

It seems all the rage right now for churches all across the Nation to sponsor Financial Management Workshops. This is good and it is in response to declining income, growing debt and job insecurity among Christians. Hopefully it will help them sort out their values and lifestyles and make appropriate, long-range changes. Many Christians are as worldly and materialistic as their non-Christian neighbors and need to make such changes anyhow. It is overdue. But what about work itself, education and career planning? What does the Bible teach about these related Topics? Are churches helping young adults, especially, to think Biblically about these Topics, too? The current "Recession" is forcing this issue as much as Financial Planning. "Census: Recession takes big toll on young adults 20-somethings and 30-somethings struggling to find work, shunning long-distance moves to live with mom and dad, delaying marriage and raising kids out of wedlock, if they're becoming parents at all. The unemployment rate for them is the highest since World War II, and they risk living in poverty more than others — nearly 1 in 5. New 2010 census data released Thursday show the wrenching impact of a recession [on young adults] Employment among young adults 16-29 was 55.3 percent, compared with 67.3 percent in 2000; it's the lowest since the end of World War II. Young males who lacked a college degree were most likely to lose jobs due to reduced demand for blue-collar jobs in construction, manufacturing and transportation during the downturn. Among teenagers, employment was less than 30 percent. The employment-to-population ratio for all age groups from 2007-2010 dropped faster than for any similar period since the government began tracking the data in 1948. In the past year, 43 of the 50 largest metropolitan areas continued to post declines in employment: Charlotte, N.C., Jacksonville, Fla., Las Vegas, Phoenix, Los Angeles and Detroit. Each experienced a severe housing bust, budget deficit or meltdown in industries such as banking or manufacturing. Among adults 18-34, the share of long-distance moves across state lines fell last year to roughly 3.2 million people, or 4.4 percent, the lowest level since World War II. For college graduates, who historically are more likely to relocate out of state, long-distance moves dipped to 2.4 percent. Opting to stay put, roughly 5.9 million Americans 25-34 last year lived with their parents, an increase of 25 percent from before the recession." [census-recession-takes-big-toll-on-young-adults](#)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:37

Friday, September 16. 2011

### **"CAL'S CALL"**

Each week I write and email 3 personal "QT Thots" [Quiet Time Meditations] to a select list of family and friends. Each week my son, Kevin, selects one, improves it with his editing and formatting, and posts it on his own Blog as "Cal's Call". I think he does a great job and I invite you to check out his work (and mine) at <http://kudospress.com/serendipity/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:02

### **WHAT WOULD JESUS DO IF HE HAD A WIFE WITH ALZHEIMERS**

"This week on his television show Christian broadcaster Pat Robertson said a man would be morally justified to divorce his wife with Alzheimer's disease in order to marry another woman. The dementia-riddled wife is, Robertson said, "not there" anymore. This is more than an embarrassment. This is more than cruelty. This is a repudiation of the gospel of Jesus Christ."This thought-provoking and very helpful article and the comments that follow explore this situation. <http://www.russellmoore.com/2011/09/15/christ-the-church-and-pat-robertson/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:58

Saturday, August 20, 2011

### **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CAN BE VERY MESSY!**

In my morning Quiet Time I have been reading 1 and 2 Samuel, the Book of Acts and the Gospel of Mark and biographies of various Christian Leaders through the Ages. Over and over I marvel at how much controversy, intrigue, betrayal, jealousy, anger, conflict and violence there has in the lives of God's chosen servants. Many of them were guilty of wrong-headed, stubborn and foolish decisions and behavior. And yet, God used them to accomplish His purposes. The life of Believers is not easy or smooth by any means. Though saved we are still sinners and far from perfect. Likewise, even the life of our Lord, who never committed any sin, was filled with hardship, suffering, loneliness and rejection. Being neither a Christian nor Christ is protection against trouble. And yet, over time, God remains with us and uses all the trials of His servants to His Glory!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:09

Thursday, August 11, 2011

### **WHAT ONE WEALTHY PERSON DID**

The news headlines for days have been about the stock market, and, for months, about the Economy and Money. Many seem especially intent on "taxing the wealthy" as a way to help the Nations with its debt problem. Money, Money. Money! Jesus said we can not worship, serve and live for God and at the same time for Money or Wealth or Possessions ["mammon"]- Matt 7:24-34. We must chose which it shall be. It is interesting that the Church Calendar for today commemorates Clare of Assisi, a young woman of wealth, who decided to emulate here friend, Francis, of the same town and social class. She became "Poor Clare", forsaking all her worldly privileges and status. To her and to Francis, this is what being a disciple of Jesus required [There are many sayings of Jesus that seem to say so]. Clare and a number of other wealthy women, in August 1253, adopted a rule of life of extreme austerity and of absolute poverty, both individually and collectively. They had no beds. They slept on twigs with patched hemp for blankets. Wind and rain seeped through cracks in the ceilings. They ate very little, with no meat at all. Whatever they ate was food they begged for. Clare made sure she fasted more than anyone else. They devoted themselves to prayer, nursing the sick, and works of mercy for the poor and neglected. In today's world and American Society, so obsessed and worried about Wealth, the story of Clare and her friends is refreshing and challenging. Is this what Jesus would have all [any?] of his "followers" to do today?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:09

Monday, July 11. 2011

## **BUT HOW ARE WE TO LIVE?**

I have always given great importance to Preaching the Gospel, Evangelism and Church Planting. A number of years ago I became concerned that something very important was missing. How does God want us to organize our personal and corporate, our private and our public, lives after we have been "Born Again"? I now focus on this matter far more.

Of course, we always sought to "disciple" new Believers, teaching them about Baptism, Church Membership, Bible Study, Basic Doctrines, Prayer and--doing Evangelism. There was also teaching about the Holy Spirit and the Spirit-filled life, enjoying and using the Spirit's gifts and fruits. Eventually, there was teaching about marriage and family and relationships, etc. Typical stuff that most Evangelicals are familiar with and practice.

But still, the world remained the same and we lived most of our daily lives like our neighbors did. The focus was on the New Testament and when we read the Old Testament, it was rather selectively and very spiritualized. We said the Bible was our Authority for Faith and Practice but it turns out that is not quite true about the Old Testament section of the Bible. Believing we are saved by Grace and not by the Law we shunned most of the Law (even while enjoying Psalm 1, 19 and 119 which extols the Law). But it is in the Law (the 5 Books of Moses) that we learn how God wants saved people to live! Evangelism and church planting are not enough. They are only the first half of the Mission. Believers need to be taught how to live their lives biblically, according to the Law as well as the New Testament. The Apostle Paul was referring to the Old Testament and the Law when he wrote, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16) Meanwhile, we either ignore the problems of the world or get caught up in them. When we do the latter, we do not bring anything particularly Biblical to the discussion. We have gagged God and failed to hear large portions of His Word about how the world works and how we are to live and work in the world. For some time now I have been addressing this subject to little avail. I have posted a number of essays about what the Bible says on matters of Marriage, Family, Economics, Law, Justice, Government and many other real world topics.

In an effort to get more attention for these studies, I am posting below some of the material (revised) from my website, praying this will spark new interest. I hope you will find what is here stimulating and challenging and that it will lead you to read and study more. It is about how God wants us to live!

<http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:07

## **BIBLICAL SHAPE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING: SPHERES**

### **Bible's View of Individualism**

One of the most important values we share in our society is the importance of the individual, especially the individual's freedom of conscience and choice. However, today's Western, American understanding of the "Individual" is neither Scriptural nor Reformed. Every one of us has infinite worth, not because of our potential, or what we may do in life or may contribute to Society, but because of what we are as human beings. We each share the same human nature that images God's nature. We are all like God inasmuch as we are all (in varying degrees) rational, creative, moral and spiritual beings. We are also like God inasmuch as we are communal by nature. We are created with the ability and need to live with others- to live in community, even as God the Father, Son and Spirit do within the Trinity. We were never intended by our Creator to be solitary, autonomous, self-determined individuals. Rather we can find and develop our individuality, our life as a person, when we live in community. We become and fulfill what God created and gifted and called each of us to be, only when we live in relationships with others. That is the absolute prerequisite context for all consideration of "Human Rights". Our Rights are Rights only within relationships with others and with God

### **Living in Spheres**

And the relationships or communities we are to live in are not of our individual choosing or design. All of us are intended by God to live within social systems or relationships of His design, as part of Creation itself. These social systems or communities are part of Creation or the order that began with creation, hence- "creational". They are designated as Spheres in neo-Calvinist social thought and are not meant to be aggregates of individuals who voluntarily associate in ways and times they each deem important to meet their respective individual needs or purposes.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:02

## **THE SPHERES IN WHICH WE WERE CREATED TO LIVE**

The following material outlines the basic creational communities or spheres. Each of these has specific functions and norms or boundaries. They are permanent inter-relational communities or spheres, even though the forms they take and the actual members of them at any specific time and place may vary. Each Sphere has its own inner working or system, with members fulfilling various functions or roles. Marriage and Family Individual men and women are meant to live together as husband and wife, as "one flesh", i.e.- in a committed, covenant relationship. They are to be as fruitful as possible, i.e.- have children (if possible) and live together as an inter-generational family, i.e.- as a core "Covenant Community". When a son marries, he and his wife begin another family, but these family units together are intended to be an extended part of the original family, always responsible for each other. That includes the responsibilities of providing a Christian education for the children and practical welfare for any members of the Family going through tough times. No Government assistance is involved with any of this. Church (a local organization) Families in a local area are to assemble and share their lives together as a wider Covenant Community of Faith (aka church) NOTE: Intentional, temporary relationships and communities of unrelated individuals are not Scriptural substitutes for Marriage, Family or Church. Civic Associations The primary function of the basic Spheres of Marriage and Family is to act as God's agent in His world, obeying God's mandate to fill and care for the Natural Environment (Creation) and continue God's work of cultivating it for the common good of all. (This is called the Cultural Mandate, an important neo-Calvinist concept) To this end, other Spheres will naturally arise- voluntary Associations for research & development, work, production and distribution of goods and services (Business and Commerce). Other Associations will arise for Education, Communication, the Arts and Recreation. None of these Spheres, which are extensions of the original Marriage and Family Spheres, are autonomous. They must cooperate with each other and function according to the laws of God, accountable to Him. Civil Government Each Creational social system has its own authority ("sphere sovereignty"), but none of them are absolute or autonomous. They cooperate and must not interfere with each other's responsibilities. Because all the individuals involved in the Spheres are sinners, there will be injustice- transgressions of God's Laws. As systems, the Spheres may well malfunction or fail in their respective responsibilities. The main function of Civil Government is to respect the Sphere Sovereignty but control or stop transgressions within or between Spheres wherever they may occur [Law and Order]. However, Civil Government is not to usurp or curtail the responsibilities of the other Spheres.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:58

## **THE LIMITS OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT**

### **Education of Children**

For example, Education begins at Home with the Parents. The education of children is the right and responsibility of their parents. The curriculum for this Education is primarily the Mosaic Law. Deut 6:24 And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. 25 And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.' Deut 11:18 "You shall therefore lay up these words of [the Law] in your heart and in your soul, and ... 19 You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

It follows that all other Education, even if it is provided by the State, must be built on this Foundation, not contradicting or negating it.

The State can never rightfully (in God's eyes) claim that children belong to it or that it is the State's right and duty to educate children against the will of their parents. Parents are not to acquiesce to this claim by the State or relinquish their privilege and duty to educate their children or to see to it that they are educated by the State in a way acceptable to them. Christian parents, at the very least, if they are not Home Schooling, are to be very involved in their local State school and overseeing what their children are being taught there. They must be involved on local school boards, in the selection of curriculum (subjects taught) and text books. This Biblical Duty should lead many Christians to become professional educators, who will promote and teach Biblical values in State (Public) schools, which most children will attend, for better or worse. This Doctrine of parental responsibility also supports Home Schooling, as well as Private and Parochial Schools and the use of Vouchers (tax money) for School Choice.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:55

## **THE LIMITS OF CIVIL GOVERNMENTS (continued)**

### **Work and Welfare**

Inasmuch as working is another God-given duty, a commandment, laid upon all to support themselves and their extended family, including the truly poor in it, the State must not interfere and care for those who refuse to do so. Responsibility for welfare and the care of the sick, the widowed and orphaned, the unemployed and the homeless

belongs to the Family and Faith Community (Church) and to the local civic community (in that order). Therefore, the State has no business usurping these God-given responsibilities or for taxing its citizens for programs that do. Biblical Christians oppose the concept and common practices of what is commonly known as the "Welfare State" and they are very suspicious of all entitlement programs and oppose the popular entitlement mentality.

#### Civic Associations

Voluntary Civic Associations are not to forego their independence and look to the Civil Government for support. These groups, whether for business or the arts, are extensions of the Family and Church. The State has no right to interfere with them in any way. In practice, this Doctrine leads to a rejection of many "tax breaks", as well as much government funding and most subsidies. In our Society, it means advocating for privatization of just about everything. Local Church The Faith Community or Church also has its God-given privileges and responsibilities which include public corporate worship and evangelism, as well as its ministries of charity. The Civil Government has no lawful right to abridge or interfere with the Church in these duties. Conversely, the Church has no business seeking to get the State to do the work of the Church, such as enforcing morality.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:49

### **SUMMARY Re BIBLICAL ROLE FOR CIVIL GOVERNMENT**

Government is not to determine or control the nature and purpose of Marriage, Family, Education, Church, Commerce and Culture. The only legitimate, God-given responsibility for Civil Government is enactment of Law (laws in harmony with the principles of Biblical Law), Law enforcement, Courts and a legal system guaranteeing due process- all to maintain peace and to protect citizens (and the Nation) from injustice, physical harm and danger from any quarter. The latter includes maintaining and using Armed Forces. Taxing the people for these services is not theft. It is the obligation of citizens to pay for them. This has been a simple (hopefully not simplistic) treatment of key concepts regarding Sphere Sovereignty and Public Policy, especially the Role of Civil Government that I believe is Biblical and offers a reasonable approach for Christians to use in trying to address the issues that consume our Nation.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:47

### **DOCTRINES ESSENTIAL TO BIBLICAL VIEW OF GOVERNMENT**

More fundamental than the Doctrine of Sphere Sovereignty, are other Biblical Doctrines which greatly influence our politics. Prime among them is the Total (or Radical) Depravity of Human Beings. Biblical Christians do not believe or trust in the innate goodness of human nature or its ability to change and "progress" through nurture and environment. This Doctrine leads to the emphasis on the negative role of Civil Government and our Constitution. That is usually understood to mean a focus on Civil Government's authority to use the sword (Romans 13:4) to administer penal justice. It also means there is a real reason for serious mistrust of all those in power in any particular administration, because people who rule are fallen sinners (like everyone else). Civil Government itself is good and essential, ordained by God. And undoubtedly men and women of great principles and intentions are (and always have been) active in our Civil Government. However, we take seriously Lord Acton's dictum, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." - or they may very well become bad men. Therefore, Biblical Christians are strong advocates of both the Rule of Law to which every one is subordinate and a clear division of governmental powers, wherein there will always be a system of checks and balances to inhibit the Government (i.e.-those who run it) from becoming or remaining an instrument of evil. I can not emphasize enough our apprehension of the latter possibility in this day and age of State Worship. It is a major factor in how I personally interpret what elected Leaders and other Authorities say and which Government actions I support. I tend to be seriously suspicious and skeptical about the promises and pronouncements of all Politicians, Left and Right. It is because I believe in Original Sin and the "Fall of Man". Finally, Scripture also teaches that there is a contract or covenant between the those who govern and those who are governed. This means government requires the consent of the governed and it means the right of the latter to rebel when the contract has been broken. The Biblical Christian is very much concerned with the possibility of tyrants and tyrannical rule or totalitarianism, in which the State becomes God and takes over total control of the minds and lives of its citizens. Thus, we are very much opposed to an ever growing government and in favor of an ever decreasing government presence in our Nation. This, of course, flies against the current trends and practices of Civil Government in the United States and the apparent desire and beliefs of many of our politicians and citizens today, especially the so-called Progressives and Left-leaning Liberals among us and those citizens, including millions of Christians, who demand cradle to grave provision and security from their Government. Scripture puts all of us on notice that such Government is not the will of God.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:44

## **BIBLICAL HUMAN RIGHTS**

Biblical commands apply to marriage, family, property, work, money, care of the poor, care of animals and the environment, criminal justice and civil government. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys God's Commands in all such matters. The Civil Government that is good preserves and enforces these universal Laws. It does not change or over-ride them. It is to pass and enforce legislation and laws specific to our Society to that end. In general, the Civil Government is to pass and support laws that guarantee the following God-given Human Rights-1. The Right to Worship the Triune God and honor and respect His Name and Day [This is not the "establishment" of a specific organized Religion]2. The Right to live. No person has the right to deprive another person of life or of anything essential to living. Conversely, every person has the responsibility to live 3. The Right to work and to periodically rest from work. Everyone has the responsibility to work, i.e.- to work for the development, procurement and equitable distribution of the necessities needed to sustain life, for self and for others4. All men and women have the right to marry and produce children. Husbands and wives have a right to the mutual fidelity of their spouses. NOTE: the use of "men and women" here is based on the Biblical definition of Marriage which is the prerequisite for procreation. By that definition (Gen. 2:18-24, Matt. 19:4-6), homosexuals do not have a God-given "right" to Marry. 5. Parents have the right to be honored, respected and obeyed by their children. Children have the right to provision, protection and education from their parents while they live under their authority. Extended family members have the right to receive shelter and support from other family members in times of disaster or extreme hardship. 6. Property owners have a right to their property7. Neighbors have a right to their privacy8. People have a right to a fair and honest trial These are the most fundamental Human Rights and Responsibilities. They are "inalienable". In order to have a realistic opportunity to actualize them, there is a logical, concomitant Essential: Freedom. All human beings must have political and economic and social freedom, opportunity and security to enable them to exercise these rights and responsibilities. It is the responsibility of Civil Government to see to it that they do have that freedom.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:42

## **BIBLICAL ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES (a Summary)**

There are also four fundamental principles from Creation [Genesis 1-2] that apply specifically to Economics: Stewardship, Sharing, Work and Growth.

Stewardship is the dominant Biblical economic concept. God, as Creator, is ultimately owner of all created things. Any claim to ownership ("private property") by human beings collectively or individually, is conditional- never absolute. God, as Creator, has given responsibility for the management (stewardship) of His created world (the environment, our ecosystem, including all living creatures and natural resources), to human beings. They are to care, cultivate, preserve and use all of it for Him or as He directs. See Psalm 24:1 and 115:16 and 8:3-8.

Sharing, by all for all, is essential. Life is paramount! All creation is intended by God for the sustenance of all living creatures. All natural resources are to be available to all by all. All end products of economic processes are to be available to all and shared by all. All people have the right and responsibility to work, to be engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services. This is the "fill and subdue" commandment. The fourth Biblical economic principle is growth. This is the "be fruitful and multiply" commandment. Growth in population (be fruitful) requires growth in economic production (multiply). This is to be desired and expected. Such growth of population and production will result in both scarcity and surplus of goods and services. This, in turn, leads to exchange and trade, governed by supply and demand. Stewardship, Sharing, Work and Growth are all good things, sanctioned and mandated by the Bible, by God himself. Biblical Christians believe in these Values and Churches should teach and promote them as part of living the Christian life. And it is the responsibility of Civil Government to guarantee freedom for its citizens to live by these fundamental, universal principles. The Church is to remind Civil Government that its duty is to serve God and that it is not autonomous or absolute. It labors under God's Law and is accountable to Him.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:38

Saturday, July 2, 2011

## **TRUE FREEDOM**

July 4th is a day when Americans love to extol "Freedom". Our Revolutionary War was about freedom from Tyranny. The Civil War was about Freedom (Emancipation). We praise those who have served our Nation in the Military through the years as those who have secured and preserved our freedom from foreign enemies. Supposedly, all the currently demonstrating masses in Egypt and other Middle East Countries want freedom from oppression. Libertarians and the "Tea Party" active in American politics today demand freedom from Big Government. American Christians love to quote Galatians 5:1 Christ has set us free and tie that text in with the freedoms American enjoy, especially those in the Bill of Rights. But Christians who know the Bible know Christ did not die for freedom of speech or assembly. He did not die to secure free trade or a free Market. He died to free sinners from their sin and from their bondage to Mosaic Law as a means to secure forgiveness of those sins. Such Christians must also know that freedom in Christ is not freedom to do our own thing, to live our lives however we want. Biblical Christians can not be libertarians. We have not been freed to pursue individualism or autonomy. We have been set free in order to be slaves of God. We have been set free from the Law of God for Salvation in order to be slaves to that Law, the Word of God, in living our daily lives. 1 Peter 2:16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as slaves of God. Romans 6:7 [We have] been set free from sin. 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 22 ... now that you have been set free from sin [you] have become slaves of God ...While we rightly celebrate all our social, political and economic freedoms as Americans, they all come to naught, indeed, they are undermined and destroyed, if we Americans do not know the freedom that Christ alone gives and the reason for it! The former are built on the latter.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:04

Saturday, June 11. 2011

## **REMEMBERING DAVE WILKERSON AND TOM SKINNER**

Seventeen years ago next week, Tom Skinner, a great Black Evangelist went to Glory after a 30 year ministry that broke all kinds of barriers in the Black and White churches across the nation. He was 52 and died of Leukemia. Bill Pannell was an early associate. Both wrote very influential books in the early 60's ("Black and Free" and "My Friend the Enemy") that were bombshells that woke up apathetic white Evangelicals, including me, about the realities faced by Blacks in America and the need for White Christians to get involved in the social issues of the times. He helped John Perkins and many others begin their Ministries and was very active in the Civil Rights Movement. I mention this because I was reminiscing about those days upon hearing of the death this week of David Wilkerson in a car accident at age 78. Mr Wilkerson was a small town Pentecostal Pastor who felt called by God to a ministry with street gangs in NY City in 1958 and founded Teen Challenge. When I was a Freshman at Drew University in Madison New Jersey in the late 50's, some of us Christian students often took a commuter train into Manhattan to attend Rallies held by Wilkerson on Times Square (years later he began a church there). We would get fired up and witness on the streets and on the train on the way back to campus. (In that year I also did street evangelism with the Salvation Army in Madison and preached at Youth for Christ Rallies in the area). Wilkerson's book, "The Cross and The Switchblade" (1963) was also influential on my life and the movie version has been seen by millions around the world. During the mid-60's, I met Tom Skinner and was with him at his first evangelistic meeting which was in the old Boston Garden. We had breakfast together. He did a radio interview and later we prayed together behind the stage before the Meeting began. I was a young Pastor and that one day with Tom Skinner was very inspiring to my own evangelistic ministry. I thank God for him and his Ministry. If you have never heard of Dave Wilkerson, Tom Skinner, Bill Pannell or John Perkins I urge you to learn about these wonderful Servants of the Lord in days gone by but who's work goes on.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:30

Thursday, June 9, 2011

## **WHAT SIN REALLY IS**

Here are excerpts from a column by David Brooks [see below]"... the whole baby-boomer theology .... many graduates are told to: Follow your passion, chart your own course, march to the beat of your own drummer, follow your dreams and find yourself. This is the litany of expressive individualism, which is still the dominant note in American culture."

"Today's grads enter a cultural climate that preaches the self as the center of a life. [emphasis added] Most of us are egotistical and most are self-concerned most of the time..."Mr Brooks had described here what is meant by "Total Depravity". He has described what Sin actually is. This "baby-boomer theology" is the true root of Evil.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:05

## **GRADUATES: LIFE IS NOT ABOUT YOU!**

Here are excerpts from a column by David Brooks filled with wisdom for graduating Seniors in response to the speeches many of them have recently heard"Worst of all, they are sent off into this world with the whole baby-boomer theology ringing in their ears. If you sample some of the commencement addresses being broadcast on C-Span these days, you see that many graduates are told to: Follow your passion, chart your own course, march to the beat of your own drummer, follow your dreams and find yourself. This is the litany of expressive individualism, which is still the dominant note in American culture." "Today's grads enter a cultural climate that preaches the self as the center of a life. But, of course, as they age, they'll discover that the tasks of a life are at the center. Fulfillment is a byproduct of how people engage their tasks, and can't be pursued directly. Most of us are egotistical and most are self-concerned most of the time, but it's nonetheless true that life comes to a point only in those moments when the self dissolves into some task. The purpose in life is not to find yourself. It's to lose yourself."

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/31/opinion/31brooks.html?\\_r=1&src=me&ref=general](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/31/opinion/31brooks.html?_r=1&src=me&ref=general)This is a spot-on, excellent critique but for one serious omission. The purpose in life is not simply to lose yourself, it is to lose your self for God and His Kingdom.

Mark 8:35 Jesus said, "whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:48

Wednesday, May 18, 2011

## **BEWARE- WE, TOO, CAN BE TERMINATED**

The Schwarzenegger scandal now in the media is another reminder that humans are not primarily rational creatures. We like to think so, even while many of us enjoy watching burly behemoths chest bumping or thumping or dancers hip grinding. The reality is that our minds are often controlled by our bodies, as well as by our hearts or emotions. Some of us believe that what makes us "human" is our mind and the ability to perform abstract thought. Wrong. Being human also includes being physical and emotional and spiritual. That is why Salvation must and include all of these faculties or levels of being and we are to seek the sanctification of them all. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) The reality is that many of us, including solid Christians, can become enslaved to many passions that destroy us. The Bible warns about becoming slaves of Money (Matt 6:24), the Law, ie- Legalism (Rom 7:6), gods of the world, eg- power (Gal 4:8-9), as well as the appetites of the body (Romans 16:18, Titus 3:3). All who throw stones at the "Terminator" must be aware that we, too, can be terminated by such bondage to sin- whoever we are. (Gal 6:1) That is why Jesus taught all of us to pray for our Deliverance from Evil Powers every day! (Matt 6:1)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:51

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

## **BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP ILLUSTRATED**

Here is a great example of Biblical Stewardship. The Principles this couple are living by should be used as an example for all people, especially Christians. "Earlier this month, the Cummingses became the first people in Massachusetts to sign the Giving Pledge, promising to donate at least half of their fortune to charity. The pledge was established last year by Buffett and the Gateses to encourage the super-rich to share their wealth. Indeed, the decision was in keeping with the couple's history of giving. Their Cummings Foundation, created in 1986, has grown to be one of the largest philanthropic foundations in the state. "They've almost behaved as if the money really wasn't theirs from the very beginning," said Lawrence Bacow, president of Tufts University, whose institution has benefited from their generosity. "They've been stewards for it." "Their goal for the last 25 years has been to see how much money they can make to give away to the causes they care about." "There's a point at which it doesn't make any difference to earn more money. We are much more interested in doing things in the community," said Bill Cummings. "It's very satisfying to do good things with what you have." Source:

[http://articles.boston.com/2011-05-10/business/29528833\\_1\\_billionaires-winchester-couple-](http://articles.boston.com/2011-05-10/business/29528833_1_billionaires-winchester-couple-)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:55

Monday, May 9, 2011

## **WORKING FOR THE WELFARE OF THE CITY**

Scripture tells us to work for the welfare of the City or Town in which we are living. (Jer 29:7) I have wondered how I can do that for Springfield. The most frequent, popular answer to helping the City seems to always be- "Get Government Funding"! The City, of course, has an economy and government. People work here. There are all kinds of companies who do business here. There are Schools and the Courts and Medical Centers. There are local, state and federal government offices here along with firefighters, police officers and trash collectors. There is a Department of Public Works which maintains parks, trees, thousands of buildings and hundreds of miles of roads. There are newspapers and TV stations. It is a City! How am I supposed to work for the City's welfare when I am not involved in any of these specific organizations, activities or places? As a Christian I can obey all the laws, pay my taxes, vote, recycle, drive safe and commit no crimes. I will not use illegal drugs or produce illegitimate children. As a parent I can be involved with my kids and do my best to raise them to be responsible children who do well in school and become law-abiding, non-violent productive Christian adults like I am. I can be a good neighbor to those who live around me, quiet, respectful of the privacy and property of others and keeping up my house and yard. I can volunteer my help and use my money in all kinds of humanitarian or charitable activities. If the tens of thousands of Christians who live and work here do all this, the welfare of the City will be improved and maintained. Churches can do their part by teaching Biblical personal and social Morals and Ethics and by encouraging members to live as good neighbors. They can teach their members what the Bible says about money and work and how to do business in Christian ways. They can teach their members what it means to live in a "community" and work for the "common good". In these ways, Christians who become Judges, Lawyers, Police Officers and Fire Fighters, Teachers and Medical Workers, as well as office and government workers, business owners and employers, sanitation, maintenance and construction workers will all conduct their work in moral and principled ways. Thus we will be fulfilling God's Command to "work for the peace and prosperity of the city.... Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare." (NLT of Jeremiah 29:7)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:14

Sunday, May 8, 2011

## **PRAYER FOR FAMILIES**

"Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who places solitary persons in families: We commend to your continual care the homes in which your people dwell. Put far from them, we beseech you, every root of bitterness, the desire of vainglory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, and godliness. Knit together in constant affection those who, in marriage, have been made one flesh. Turn the hearts of the parents to the children, and the hearts of the children to the parents; and so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we may evermore be kindly one to another; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." -from the BCP

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:44

Tuesday, May 3, 2011

## **THE WARFARE WE MUST ENGAGE IN**

"One of al Qaeda's leading religious authorities, Abu Yahya al-Libi emphasized ...the jihadist battle "is not waged solely at the military and economic level, but is waged first and foremost at the level of doctrine." He also said that his followers are in a war against an enemy that "targets all strongholds of Islam and invades the minds and ideas in the same way it invades lands and dares to destroy beliefs and meddle with the sacred things in the same way it dares to spill blood."Read more: Al Qaeda and the Tale of Two Battlespaces | STRATFOR

[http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20081001\\_al\\_qaeda\\_and\\_tale\\_two\\_battlespaces](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20081001_al_qaeda_and_tale_two_battlespaces)This kind of warfare is exactly what Christians are commanded to engage in-2 Cor 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,But this warfare includes more than conflict with global jihadism. In fact, this text calls first for submission by Believers to the commands of the Apostle Paul! Our conflict is against all Isms that contradict Biblical Truth, beginning with error in the minds of Believers. In all cases, our target is the mind of and our weapons in such conflict are not assault rifles or airborne drones and the like. They are Prayer and Proclamation (words). NOTE: By "our" I mean Christians, not the Nation.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:30

Wednesday, April 20, 2011

## **RESURRECTION OF THE CIVIC BODY**

Neo-Calvinists believe in the Redemption of Culture and Civilization: what sin has deformed, we must seek, in Christ, to reform! Evangelicals believe in the redemption of the physical body, both Christ's and ours. The Apostle Paul tells us of the necessity to use our physical bodies as instruments of righteousness. The entire Bible says that all things are to be done to the glory of God. It necessarily follows from all this, that our Culture and Civilization, our civic body, can and must be redeemed as well and made to glorify God. Both Culture and Civilization were commanded by God when He gave the Stewardship Mandate to the first men and women. They were to multiply and fill the earth, representing Him everywhere as Cities and Civilization. Human beings are put all their God-given faculties to work in the effort. It could be said that building cities and the rest are the very work of God. He is the City-builder (Heb 11:10) The Biblical Story began in a Garden, but it ends in a City. Of course, the fallen sinful nature of Human beings is clearly evident in their Culture, Cities and Civilization. That does not cancel the Mandate, but it required the work of Christ on the original Easter Event Weekend. It is ultimately the regenerated People of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and guided by Scripture as a rough blue-print, that will need to do the heavy lifting to reclaim and redirect Culture, Cities and Civilization back to what God intends. Of course, they will not succeed completely, that is not the point. The Church can make a difference and make real progress toward that end over time, but success is not the goal; faithfulness is. Our efforts are the witness that God will use to glorify Himself.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:02

## **BOSTON MARATHON AND A TEST OF MORALITY**

Conservatives, religious or not, tend to think in black and white, all or nothing, absolute terms, especially in matters of morals [rights and wrongs] Stealing is wrong, murder is murder, adultery is sin, etc. They usually decry "situational ethics" or the pragmatism that allows for context and ameliorating circumstances. They are more interested in the impersonal Law than in Justice, which involves what is best for the person. The latest Boston Marathon is a good case to test these approaches. The winner unofficially set a world record, but the Official Authority that recognizes world Marathon records will not give him credit. Technically, no one can set a world record in Boston because the course itself does not meet two requirements that supposedly are necessary to make the race fair for all contestants. Almost all world class Marathoners consider Boston to be the most difficult in the world and believe the person who sets the world record for a Marathon while running it should be recognized regardless of the technicalities. It is a test of whether the Judges are pragmatic ethicists or rigid moralists. It is also a cautionary tale for all of us Christians who are so dead set on what is "right" or "wrong".

[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/editorials/articles/2011/04/20/mutais\\_win\\_is\\_a\\_world\\_record\\_and\\_should\\_be\\_in\\_the\\_books/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/editorials/articles/2011/04/20/mutais_win_is_a_world_record_and_should_be_in_the_books/)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:12

Monday, April 18. 2011

## **WHAT IN THE WORLD DOES GOD WANT US TO DO?**

I have newspapers articles piling up next to my computer, waiting for my perspicacious pondering. Everyday there are reports of social calamities and natural disasters. There are distressing stories of pervasive greed and corruption from curbstone dealers to corporate boardrooms. There is wide spread waste in government spending and there are kids killing kids over turf wars, as well as unmarried teenage girls becoming mothers increasing the number of "single parent families" needing welfare. There are daily accounts of school drop-outs, people without jobs and the rise of "pain at the pumps". And of course, on page 2, there are the daily reports of wars and revolutions from the Middle East.

Where is God in all of this? Both above it and directly in the middle of it. What does He want us to do about any of it? Has He no Word, no direction in these matters? Of course He has! I have been writing about this for years (some of what I have written is posted here and on my website (see CalvinFox.com) Most Evangelicals I know have their heads in the sand. They are usually only interested (and they believe God is only interested) in their personal Salvation and personal lives. The rest they just let go by, come what may. At best, they are pragmatic and follow what they think is the world's best advice.

There has to be, there must be, there is a Word from God (actually a lot of words) about Law, Justice, Human Rights, Government, Politics, Economics, Money and Work, War and Poverty; about Education, Health, Marriage and Family; about Cities and Urban Development; even about all the Arts as well as about the Environment and Climate Change. This Word is in the Scripture, beginning in Genesis, in the Torah and on through the Prophets and finally in the New Testament- all of it is God-sourced and very profitable to teach us how God wants People, especially His people, to live their everyday lives (2 Tim 3:16f). We must get into this Word and discover and then apply God's Norms for living!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:46

Monday, April 11. 2011

## **REVIEW OF A BOOK about Technology and you**

Here is an important read-

Tim Challies. *The Next Story: Life and Faith After The Digital Explosion*. Zondervan, 2011. 208 pages.

"I have that feeling to look over my shoulder, yet I know there's nothing lurking behind me, because I know right where it is. It's in my pocket, in my car, in my office, and on my desk. It's at my local coffeehouse and even in the air at the park where I take my girls in the afternoon. The world we live has been forever changed by digital technologies. Though we live in a digital culture, technology is nothing new. So why a sense of mounting pressure, strain and stress? Shouldn't this reality make our lives easier? In *The Next Story*, author and bloggers Tim Challies explains how and why our society has become reliant on digital technology, what it means for our lives, and how it affects the Christian faith."

from <http://tgcreviews.com/reviews/the-next-story/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:43

Monday, March 28, 2011

## **THE LOSS OF A CHRISTIAN HERITAGE AND MISSION IN LOCAL COLLEGES**

"American International College was founded on July 18, 1885. It was chartered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on September 18, 1885 with the purpose of educating international immigrants who were coming to America through New York. That's where our commitment to diversity, flexibility, and understanding began. They came to America to pursue a dream and AIC was founded to ensure their success."

The above description of the beginning of a local college, American International College (AIC) is very misleading to say the least. The School was begun out of alarm about the rapid influx into this area of French Roman Catholic Canadians. The Protestant Clergy feared these immigrants were a threat to our Christian (Protestant) Country. Warfare terminology was used. Therefore the Clergy and local Community Leaders began a serious attempt to evangelize the French immigrants with the Gospel to convert them to the Protestant Faith and away from allegiance to a foreign power (the Vatican). They also wanted to be sure they were educated in English and learn the skills necessary to make them productive citizens. All this was the stated purpose of what is now AIC. Its original name was "The French Protestant College". The students were evangelized, taught the Bible and attended daily chapel as well as took liberal arts studies. For a very extensive description of the founding and early years read this book by the second President of the school.

<http://www.archive.org/stream/yourheritageorne00amaruoft#page/n7/mode/2up>

Nothing is said about any of this history on the website of American International College. The website and recent articles in the local news put the focus on its growing number of international students. This, the website states, is in keeping with the Heritage of the School. Supposedly, the school at the beginning was, and remains, open to students from around the world and it is proud of that international emphasis. It offers, they say, a good, secular liberal arts curriculum to its growing multi-national, multi-ethnic student body. It also enrolls a large number of minority students from this area.

**SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE**The same false spin is put on the history of another leading private college in the area, Springfield College, which was founded with the purpose of training leaders for the Young Men's Christian Association. The YMCA at the time was an evangelical, Protestant organization and the College was solidly Christian. That is no longer true."For more than a century, Springfield College has been a leader in providing a broad and balanced educational experience. Humanics, the philosophy that has inspired Springfield College from its beginning, calls for educating the whole person—spirit, mind, and body—for leadership in service to others" -from school website The official names of the School tell the story-1885 School for Christian Workers1890 YMCA Training School1891 International YMCA Training School1912 International YMCA College1954 Springfield College

"In September, 1887, Luther Halsey Gulick while completing his medical degree at New York University, was appointed to the faculty at the School for Christian Workers as head of the Physical Department. David Allen Reed's venture in education was realized only two years prior to Dr. Gulick's appointment, January 28, 1885, with the founding of The School for Christian Workers. Reed envisioned a Christian school to prepare young men for Christian service in the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Sunday schools, and other missionary activities of the church. In realizing this vision, the curriculum was primarily focused upon religious education (Doggett, 1943)."

[http://www.spfldcol.edu/homepage/library.nsf/D1D9DB19099D655D8525766A004FCDF4/\\$File](http://www.spfldcol.edu/homepage/library.nsf/D1D9DB19099D655D8525766A004FCDF4/$File)

A very interesting Scriptural explanation of what the YMCA Logo was about in 1894 can be found here-  
<http://www.spfldcol.edu/homepage/library.nsf/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:35

Tuesday, March 22. 2011

## **HOW ARE CHRISTIANS TO LIVE?**

First, the Foundation (the givens) which are essential to Christian living-1. Regeneration, faith in Christ's work of Redemption, union with Christ and the indwelling of His Spirit<sup>2</sup>. Participation in a local fellowship (a church) of like-minded Believers<sup>3</sup>. Complete commitment to the entire canonical Bible as the inerrant, infallible written Word of God

(I interpret Scripture using the historical- grammatical method and according to Catholic (Creedal), classic Protestant and Reformed Doctrine.)

I am convinced that the following should characterize Christians who have this Foundation under their lives. Trying to live this life without this Foundation is futile<sup>1</sup>. Worship of the Triune God (which includes keeping the Sabbath) We seek His glory in all things

2. Valuing the "Person" (as the Image of God). We value our mental, creative, moral and communal, relational faculties and seek to develop each of them. We also value our bodies and seek to live healthy

3. Valuing the Kingdom of God, i.e.- Culture & Civilization organized according to the Law of God (His will done on earth)

4. Commitment to obeying the Cultural Mandate, i.e.- acting as God's stewards over His Creation (cultivating and caring for the Natural World and all that is in it ) as well as promoting His Kingdom

5. Valuing Justice, which especially means seeking to apply the Biblical Norms of God (derived from General and Special Revelation) in all our economic activity and in the actions of our civil government  
In practice, this means-

We are Pro-Life which includes being opposed to Abortion, Euthanasia and Eugenics

We believe in Traditional Marriage, having children, living in extended Families & Community We are "Humanists who value learning and a Liberal Arts education, including the Humanities and Arts We support the Sciences and Technology- developing the knowledge and tools needed to carry out the Cultural Mandate (#4 above) We believe in constitutional civil government and republican Democracy under the Law of God We believe in the Free Market, Private Property and Profit We advocate for Biblically based Human Rights and against economic, social and political oppression As to the issue of Poverty, we advocate- 1. Vocational Education for all, that all might be gainfully employed 2. Equal Opportunity for all in the economic process (production, distribution & consumption of goods) 3. Responsibility of parents and extended families to provide materially for relatives as needed 4. Responsibility of local churches to provide practical help to all members in need 5. Responsibility of civil government to defend the economic rights of all its citizens We recognize that solutions to much of the Poverty in America also require solutions for the mental and physical problems which cause or keep many people to be unemployable.

\_\_\_\_\_ All of the above answer the Question, "How are we to live as Christians?"

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:29

## **A MORNING PRAYER**

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. -BCP

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:57

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

### **A PRAYER TO USE IN THE MORNING FOR THE DAY AT HAND**

Morning Family Prayer from the 1928 BCP ends with these words-"...we implore thy grace and protection for the ensuing day. Keep us temperate in all things, and diligent in our several callings. Grant us patience under our afflictions. Give us grace to be just and upright in all our dealings; quiet and peaceable; full of compassion; and ready to do good to all men, according to our abilities and opportunities. Direct us in all our ways. Defend us from all dangers and adversities; and be graciously pleased to take us, and all who are dear to us, under thy fatherly care and protection. These things, and whatever else thou shalt see to be necessary and convenient to us, we humbly beg, through the merits and mediation of thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen."

[http://www.commonprayer.org/offices/family\\_n.cfm](http://www.commonprayer.org/offices/family_n.cfm)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:04

Tuesday, March 15. 2011

### **PRAYER FOR THE NIGHT**

Here is the concluding part of "Family Prayer" from the 1928 BCP Prayer for God's Protection through the Night following.... we beseech thee to continue thy gracious protection to us this night. Defend us from all dangers and mischiefs, and from the fear of them; that we may enjoy such refreshing sleep as may fit us for the duties of the coming day. And grant us grace always to live in such a state that we may never be afraid to die; so that, living and dying, we may be thine, through the merits and satisfaction of thy Son Christ Jesus, in whose Name we offer up these our imperfect prayers. Amen. THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 22:42

Monday, March 14. 2011

## **THOUGHTS AFTER THE TSUNAMI**

I have 12 books in my personal library written by Christians dealing with tragic suffering and death, most of them with loved ones. Here are their titles, which, in themselves, say a lot.  
An Overwhelming Interference  
Learning to Walk Alone  
Lament for a Son  
When God Does Not Make Sense  
Making Sense Out of Suffering  
Learning to Live with Evil  
The Problem of Pain  
A Grief Observed  
Where is God When it Hurts?  
A Letter of Consolation  
Living with Death  
When a Child Dies  
That last story was written by Joseph Bayly about his son. His last chapter is called, 'The Severity and Goodness of God'. That is a quote of the Apostle Paul (Rom 11:22). Paul goes on to say, "severity toward (some) but God's goodness to (others). Paul has been discussing the Doctrine of Election in which God acts mysteriously in people's lives, often in opposite ways, to achieve His purposes. If we question or argue with God rather than submit to His will [as CS Lewis did], Paul asks "Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for [one purpose and another for a different purpose]? Ours is not to understand what or why God does what He does, but to exercise the faith that says, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21)  
Paul finishes his 11th chapter with a Doxology, 33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. None of the writers of these books had any answer as to why their loved one had to suffer and die. Each of them had to relinquish that loved one into the Hands of God who alone has the answer and in doing so found peace and the strength to carry on.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:21

## **NEW ON MY WEBSITE: BECOMING FULLY ALIVE**

Omnia ad majorem Dei gloriam ("Everything for the greater glory of God.") We mortal human beings cannot make God greater; all we can do is work to burnish the image and likeness of God in the human person (Genesis 1:27). Irenaeus, a second-century Christian theologian, once wrote that 'the glory of God is the human being fully alive' "- Patrick Ryan, S.J. I concur with Irenaeus! But I must take issue with Fr. Ryan. He goes on to explain how to enable human beings to be fully alive. It is the goal, he says, of a good humanistic education in the Jesuit Tradition at Fordham University (quoted on the school website). I strongly disagree! In truth, the way to becoming "fully alive" first requires a human being to die in Christ and to come alive in union with the Risen Lord (Rom 6:4,6; Gal 2:20, 5:24; Col 3:3). Learn more here- [http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view](http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:19

Saturday, March 5, 2011

## **NEW: HOW ARE WE TO ACTUALLY LIVE?**

For years I have been trying to learn how God wants His People to live their daily lives. I have been an Evangelist, Church Planter and Pastor. This subject has nagged at me and won't let me go. I am a convinced 5 point Calvinist. I am thankful for the salvation of my soul. But I want to know how I am supposed to live my life as a Christian. I am not talking here about Salvation. I am not talking about saving the World or changing Society. I will say it again. I am concerned with how Christians are to live as Christians. As a Calvinist, I place great importance on the Doctrine of God's Sovereignty. What does God's Word reveal His sovereign will to be about Life itself, about the care and use of the Natural World (the environment), about Marriage and Family, about Economics and about Civil Government. That covers the basics. We say Christ Jesus is Lord of "all". He is and that means He must be Lord of these matters or He is not Lord of "all"!

I have just posted a 4-part Essay on my website: "How are we to actually live?"Part 1- The failure of EvangelismPart 2- The main goal of EvangelismPart 3- Saved to ServePart 4- What the Law of God Teaches (about how we are to actually live our lives)Read it all here <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:23

Tuesday, March 1. 2011

### **WHAT WARS CAN CHRISTIANS SUPPORT?**

Compare the argument for a "Just War" posted below on 2/23 with this argument against fighting any land war in Asia  
<http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110228-never-fight-land-war-asia?>  
And this argument against the American Revolution made by the Loyalists  
<http://www.booksandculture.com/articles/>  
Which arguments are "Just" or Biblical?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:00

Saturday, February 12, 2011

## **CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

Critical Thinking is a skill set that we can all learn. Identify what you already know and then apply explorative questions to discover what was not initially obvious. In 1956, Benjamin Bloom led a group of educational psychologists in a study on intellectual behavior used by learners. The result is known as Bloom's Taxonomy. According to his original research, learners move up through six levels of critical thinking skills: 1) Knowledge 2) Comprehension 3) Application 4) Analysis 5) Synthesis 6) Evaluation. In the 1990's, Lorin Anderson, a cognitive psychologist, changed the terms and order, demonstrating that multiple viewpoints exist on how we learn and how we view learning. Having said that, the following adheres to Bloom's original taxonomy as I see it. The above is written by Kevin Fox, my son, a professional Writer and Teacher. The rest of this very helpful, practical article can be found on his website. I highly recommend it. <http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/archives/39-Expressing-Critical-Thinking-Skills.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:27

Friday, February 4, 2011

### **Best Movies of 2010**

Most Redeeming Films of 2010 selected by Christianity Today

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/movies/>

CT has a good Entertainment Blog with reviews of films, TV and Music

<http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctentertainment/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 21:34

Tuesday, February 1. 2011

## **COLLEGE STUDENTS AND STRESS**

Survey of 200,00 first year college students reveals interesting insights on their emotional health and this article offers good suggestions to help them.

<http://blog.emergingscholars.org/2011/02/freshmen-stress-spirituality>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:46

Saturday, January 29. 2011

### **FOREIGN MISSION FIELD AT HOME**

Perhaps the most effective and economical place for reaching foreign nationals for Christ is right here in America. There are 4000 Egyptians in Massachusetts, mostly in Boston. When Brazil had national elections recently, we read that are some 60,000 Brazilian citizens living here. Then there are the Vietnamese, the Ghanaians and Sudanese, East Indians, Chinese etc. -all right here. These include University students and many educated professionals- a field white unto harvest for the Lord.

<http://www.boston.com/news/world/africa/articles>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:45

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

### **GREAT RESOURCES FOR CAMPUS MINISTRY**

I recommend this website and urge you to follow the links if you are interested in reaching college campuses for Christ, especially about the effective ministry of Christian faculty or about the subject of the interface of academia and faith. Very helpful articles. From InterVarsity Christian Fellowship  
<http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:32

Saturday, January 22, 2011

### **BILLY GRAHAM ON AGING**

Here is very good advice to those of us who are getting older and to our children from Billy Graham  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/januaryweb-only/qabillygraham.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:42

Saturday, December 25, 2010

### **A CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR YOU TO ENJOY**

I pray you are enjoying the Holiday Season of giving and receiving presents along with sharing love and laughter with family and friends. I pray you also have been enjoying the Christmas Season, the celebration of the Birth of our Lord, the coming of our Savior.

I thought you might enjoy something that can enrich both Seasons. Here is Biola Magazine's List of 31 Best Contemporary Worship Songs.

[31-worship-songs-to-download/](#)

And here is Christianity Today's a list of 12 of the best CD's of Sacred and Choral Music for your pleasure

[notablesacred10.html?start=1](#)

Enjoy! May these coming Days of Christmas (until Epiphany) be a time when your faith, vision and commitment is anointed and renewed for the year ahead. God bless you. Lord willing, I will post again after the First.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:42

Friday, December 24. 2010

## **A SHORT HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS**

"Puritans forbade Christmas, considering it too pagan. Governor Bradford actually threatened New Englanders with work, jail or fines if they were caught observing Christmas. In 1843, in Victorian England, Charles Dickens published his novelette "A Christmas Carol." It became one of the most popular short works of fiction ever penned. Although the book is more a work of sentiment than of Christianity, it captures something of the Christmas spirit. The tightfisted grump, Ebenezer Scrooge, who exclaimed "humbug!" at the mention of Christmas, is contrasted with generous merry-makers such as his nephew, Fred and with the struggling poor, symbolized by Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim. The book's appeal to good works and charitable contributions virtually defines Christmas in English-speaking lands. Whatever the ins and outs of Christmas, we are still unwrapping the gift of God's Son--and what an incentive to generosity and joy that gift is!" Read the entire article <http://www.christianity.com/ChurchHistory/11629658/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:03

Tuesday, December 21, 2010

### **VENITE, EXULTEMUS DOMINO**

Whom do you see when looking at the "baby" in the manger? O COME, let us sing unto the LORD; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving; and show ourselves glad in him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God; and a great King above all gods. In his hand are all the corners of the earth; and the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands prepared the dry land. O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the LORD our Maker. For he is the Lord our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; let the whole earth stand in awe of him. What do you expect the "baby" in the manger, now King, will do next? For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; \* and with righteousness to judge the world, and the peoples with his truth.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:05

Tuesday, December 14, 2010

## **CHRISTMAS CRIMES**

Christmas Crimes is not about the how Christmas is mistreated in our culture. It is the title of a new mystery novel written by our son, Kevin, about crimes committed around Christmas time in a small town. It is an excellent read, geared to teenagers; but this old timer enjoyed it. It has a good plot with lots of twists and intrigue; unusual crimes and good detective work, interesting well developed characters and relationships; lots of Remote Control car racing and snowmobiling and a surprise ending. Some of the characters are Christians and it is all set in and around Newport VT in the Winter. I highly recommend the book as a present to young people you may know. It is available at <http://www.kudospress.com/index.php?/pages/bookstore.html> You can also find there the book written by our son, Loren, entitled "Engaging the Adventure" of Cross-cultural Missions- also highly recommended!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:21

Wednesday, December 8, 2010

## **NEW ARTICLE ON WEBSITE**

Why do so many children of Believers not become Believers? See my new posting

<http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php>

We know many solid Christians, including Pastors, where this seems to be the case. I pray for at least 10 such families and their children everyday. I have been rethinking how this can be. I know this situation disturbs such parents very much, but most of them seem to have accepted it and do not "make a case of it". They have simply settled for praying for their children and for putting a good word for the Lord into their conversation with the children every now and then. And of course, that is good. These parents fear "pushing" their children away, hoping that someday they will yet come around- mostly by the witness of how they are now living their own lives, even though the children are grown up and out of the house. Are Christian parents to blame when their children have turned out this way spiritually? They often have a lot of guilt over this. It is a touchy, sore subject to get into with them. I absolutely do not want to lay more guilt on these parents; there is always hope, but normally, in my experience with many families, what these parents are doing now is ineffectual and does not usually lead to saving faith. (Read the whole article)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:52

Wednesday, September 22, 2010

## **2 GOOD BOOKS ABOUT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

A helpful website is that of "The Gospel Coalition". They provide a frequent review of books, aptly named "TGC Reviews" to which I subscribe.

This week it contained reviews of 2 book about the 10 Commandments. Mark F. Rooker. The Ten Commandments: Ethics for the Twenty-First Century (B&H Academic, 2010), 234 pages. Philip Graham Ryken. Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis (P&R Publishing, 2010), 240 pages. I was delighted to read these comments by the reviewer- We live in lawless times. We are not surprised that the unbelieving world has no time for God's holy Law. But it's extremely troubling when so many professing Christians have neither interest in nor love for God's law. Thankfully Mark Rooker and Phil Ryken have written books that communicate a deep love for God and his law, and a real passion to see God's law restored to its rightful place in society, as well as in the church and the Christian life. To which I say, AMEN, AMEN

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:04

## **LOVING THE LAW OF GOD (as in Psalm 119)**

What does a Christian's life involve? Sanctification (This is what Justification leads to) What is the core of Sanctification? Commitment to live according to the Law of God. What does it meant to follow Jesus or to become like him? It means to obey God as he did, even unto death. What does obedience to God involve? Obedience to His Law. Yet very few Evangelicals see this. Many reject it outright, saying "we are not under the Law!" The way they live demonstrates that. One of the greatest needs of the Church today is to seek God's Norms for all of life and to live accordingly.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:01

Tuesday, September 7, 2010

### **KUDOS TO YOU: GOOD CONVERSATIONS**

I am enjoying a Blog by a Christian writer who is seeking to engage people in conversations on very diverse topics. He puts his own considered thoughts on dozens of subjects of all kinds (good stuff) and invites you to respond with your thoughts- a conversation. Visit the site for yourself and see what it offers.

<http://kudospress.com/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:55

### **STIMULATING READS**

Here are two excellent and intellectual Christian [those are not oxymoronic categories] resources that analyze and comment on the interface of Christianity and today's American Culture

<http://booksandculture.com/>

<http://wunderkammermag.com/about>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:31

### **GOOD ADVICE TO CHRISTIAN COLLEGE STUDENTS**

"First, love Jesus Christ more than anyone or anything else. Four years of college fly by faster than you might imagine. And there are so many things you could give yourself to — so many things that can fill up your time. That's why all your decisions need to be made in light of your relationship with Jesus. Is getting straight A's your greatest goal? Or are friendships your primary concern? What about extra-curricular sports or clubs? Or again, overwhelmed by all the choices, will you attempt to become a "Renaissance person," dabbling in a little bit of everything, a jack-of-all-trades while a master of none?"

Read more of this excellent article [/making-most-of-college](#)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:32

Friday, September 3, 2010

## **LEARNING TO LIVE GOD'S WAY**

"Learning to Live God's Way" is our goal, but what is God's way? My answer to that question changed a few years ago, as I rediscovered the Book of Genesis. I marveled again at God's Creation- both as noun and verb. I was also impressed with the importance of the "Cultural Mandate", given by God to all human beings. This Mandate has never been negated by God. Far from it- it remains the main purpose for our lives- for all of us. Every person is to be fully engaged in enjoying, developing and maintaining all that God has made. This includes more than simply being caretakers of the environment and earth- far more than Stewardship (Conservation). Developing and maintaining and enjoying the Creation involves, by extension, creatively developing Cities, Culture and Civilization. This is all part of being fully human. That means realizing our potential as "persons" made in the Image of God. And that is possible "in Christ", by the power of the Holy Spirit, as we live God's way.

"God's way" is revealed in Scripture- all Scripture, including the Law (Torah). The motto of my work is "Seeking God's Norms in All Things." Chose a subject, any subject: architecture (urban renewal), aesthetics (painting and music), government (public and social policy), education (schools), economics, technology, cosmology, psychology (therapy), etc. All are built on assumptions and world views. They all require some foundational faith or ideology. We need to probe and discover what all that may be. Concurrently, we search for material in the Bible relevant to these subjects. We must analyze assumptions, foundational faith, ideologies. World Views and all "isms" in light of the Word of God. We seek God's Norms in all things. Literally.

Seeking the Kingdom (the Realm) of God Comparing what we find, we seek to re/form [or redirect] the subject according to God's Norms and thus, learn to live God's way. This what it means to be a disciple of Christ. (a student and follower of His Word) What we are talking about here is far more radical and inclusive than simply getting involved with few select social causes now popular. Seeking the extension of the Kingdom (Realm) of God involves far more than than changing hearts. It involves changing the systems and structures that control how people live. The object of this work is to help people live all of life according to the will of God to His Glory. The Vision My purpose is to help extend the Kingdom (Realm) through scholarship and teaching. Ideally, scholars in "secular" specialties and scholars in Bible and Theology should work together. I am neither; I am simply an educated layman committed to trying to think Biblically about "secular" subjects, such as Economics and Government. I am well aware of my limitations and the problems involved, but I know where to look for help. I want to inspire others, particularly college students and other educated laypeople, to do more of this work as an offering to the Lord. I am convinced that Christians must do this kind of integrative, interdisciplinary study for the extension of the Kingdom (the Realm) of God in this (His) world.

The "Great Commandment" is the motive for doing this: Love for God and People.  
The "Great Commission" is about persuading people to adopt the Cultural Mandate  
The Gospel itself is what makes all of this possible. [Realm of God requires Reign]  
The Lordship of Christ requires it. [Every square inch of Creation belongs to Him]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:06

Thursday, September 2, 2010

### **FISCAL FOLLY and THE BIBLE**

Here is another helpful description of our Nation's economic situation with good analysis of why. Among other topics it mentions deficit spending. The Bible says to avoid debt, i.e.- we must live within our means. Do not buy something if you do not have the means to pay for it. Very basic, very simple. This is a Bible Principle that every Christian should know and practice. Much of our Nation's (and our personal woes) can be attributed to the failure of Christians to do just that. Many of us are materialists, living way beyond our means. My point here is that our Government must operate according to this same God-given Principle. Short term gains do not justify long term troubles. And we must not be willing (let alone expect) our Government to pursue such folly!

[http://www.thestreet.com/story/10848614/1/obamanomics-failing-to-create-jobs.html#disqus\\_thread](http://www.thestreet.com/story/10848614/1/obamanomics-failing-to-create-jobs.html#disqus_thread)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:54

Wednesday, September 1, 2010

### **ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS- OUR WAR IS NOT OVER**

I get very upset every day by listening to and reading the "News". The temptation is to ignore it and let it go, without thought or action. But I am a Christian and I (we) can not do that! This is my Father' world. Satan and sin and sinful people are messing it up (and have been since The Fall). BUT, it is still my (our) Father's world. He has not given up on it and we must not either. Christ came to redeem sinners and to redeem and reclaim control over this world and make it as God created it to be. (As the Lord taught us to pray: "Thy will be done on earth").

We are called by Him to fight the good fight. We are not given leave by our Heavenly Commander-in-Chief to be absent from this war!

After catching up on the "News" (usually more of the "same old") I go into my Quiet Time. Thank God for Scripture and the privilege of prayer. The War continues -but with peace in my heart, driven by the power of the Holy Spirit and under the guidance of His Word. The War goes on, but the victory is and shall be His!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:22

Monday, August 16, 2010

## **WHY ARE CONSERVATIVES CONSERVATIVE?**

It has been known for a long time that people chose churches where they are comfortable (and, conversely, avoid ones where they are not) They attend churches that confirm or support their personal view of themselves and the world. This is true for people who lean Left as well as Right. Those of us who have what are considered conservative Christian social, political and economic views and values want to believe we derive them from God (the Bible) and unbiased Reason. That, we think, is why we hold these values. Here are some results of a study done a few years ago that challenges that belief. My experience confirms that there is a degree of truth to the findings of this Study which should make us question why we hold to all our conservative positions, not only the political ones. We must come up with good answers. Researchers help define what makes a political conservative By Kathleen Maclay, Media Relations | 22 July 2003 (revised 7/25/03) Four researchers who culled through 50 years of research literature about the psychology of conservatism report that at the core of political conservatism is the resistance to change and a tolerance for inequality, and that some of the common psychological factors linked to political conservatism include:

Fear and aggression

Dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity

Uncertainty avoidance

Need for cognitive closure

Terror management

"From our perspective, these psychological factors are capable of contributing to the adoption of conservative ideological contents, either independently or in combination," the researchers wrote in an article, "Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition," recently published in the American Psychological Association's Psychological Bulletin. Assistant Professor Jack Glaser of the University of California, Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy and Visiting Professor Frank Sulloway of UC Berkeley joined lead author, Associate Professor John Jost of Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, and Professor Arie Kruglanski of the University of Maryland at College Park, to analyze the literature on conservatism. The psychologists sought patterns among 88 samples, involving 22,818 participants, taken from journal articles, books and conference papers. The material originating from 12 countries included speeches and interviews given by politicians, opinions and verdicts rendered by judges, as well as experimental, field and survey studies. Ten meta-analytic calculations performed on the material - which included various types of literature and approaches from different countries and groups - yielded consistent, common threads, Glaser said. The avoidance of uncertainty, for example, as well as the striving for certainty, are particularly tied to one key dimension of conservative thought - the resistance to change or hanging onto the status quo, they said. The terror management feature of conservatism can be seen in post-Sept. 11 America, where many people appear to shun and even punish outsiders and those who threaten the status of cherished world views, they wrote. Concerns with fear and threat, likewise, can be linked to a second key dimension of conservatism - an endorsement of inequality, a view reflected in...segregationist politics. Disparate conservatives share a resistance to change and acceptance of inequality, the authors said. Hitler, Mussolini, and former President Ronald Reagan were individuals, but all were right-wing conservatives because they preached a return to an idealized past and condoned inequality in some form. Talk host Rush Limbaugh can be described the same way, the authors commented ... This research marks the first synthesis of a vast amount of information about conservatism, and the result is an "elegant and unifying explanation" for political conservatism under the rubric of motivated social cognition, said Sulloway. That entails the tendency of people's attitudinal preferences on policy matters to be explained by individual needs based on personality, social interests or existential needs. The researchers' analytical methods allowed them to determine the effects for each class of factors and revealed "more pluralistic and nuanced understanding of the source of conservatism," Sulloway said. While most people resist change, Glaser said, liberals appear to have a higher tolerance for change than conservatives do. As for conservatives' penchant for accepting inequality, he said, one contemporary example is liberals' general endorsement of extending rights and liberties to disadvantaged minorities such as gays and lesbians, compared to conservatives' opposing position. The researchers said that conservative ideologies, like virtually all belief systems, develop in part because they satisfy some psychological needs, but that "does not mean that conservatism is pathological or that conservative beliefs are necessarily false, irrational, or unprincipled." They also stressed that their findings are not judgmental. "In many cases, including mass politics, 'liberal' traits may be liabilities, and being intolerant of ambiguity, high on the need for closure, or low in cognitive complexity might be associated with such generally valued characteristics as personal commitment and unwavering loyalty," the researchers wrote. This intolerance of ambiguity can lead people to cling to the familiar, to arrive at premature conclusions, and to impose simplistic cliches and stereotypes, the researchers advised. "For a variety of psychological reasons, then, right-wing populism may have more consistent appeal than left-wing populism, especially in times of potential crisis and instability," he said. Glaser acknowledged that the team's exclusive assessment

of the psychological motivations of political conservatism might be viewed as a partisan exercise. The researchers conceded cases of left-wing ideologues, such as Stalin, Khrushchev or Castro, who, once in power, steadfastly resisted change, allegedly in the name of egalitarianism. Yet, they noted that some of these figures might be considered politically conservative in the context of the systems that they defended. The researchers noted that Stalin, for example, was concerned about defending and preserving the existing Soviet system. Although they concluded that conservatives are less "integratively complex" than others are, Glaser said, "it doesn't mean that they're simple-minded." Conservatives don't feel the need to jump through complex, intellectual hoops in order to understand or justify some of their positions, he said. "They are more comfortable seeing and stating things in black and white in ways that would make liberals squirm," Glaser said. He pointed as an example to President George W. Bush who was asked to explain himself. The Republican president told assembled world leaders, "I know what I believe and I believe what I believe is right."

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:02

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

## **WHAT DOES NEO-CALVINISM MEAN?**

Retired from the Pastorate, I am now a lay-theologian in the Reformed, Covenant and Neo-Calvinist Tradition. The Principles of Neo-Calvinism are outlined below. I am convinced that they are Scriptural. Historically, "Neo Calvinism" or Neo Kuyperianism has origins in Holland (hence "Dutch Treat"). Much of what I write comes from this Perspective as I understand it. (Others understand Neo-Calvinism differently, and many Calvinists have problems with it, but this is a fair consensus of what its Principles are.)**ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF NEO-CALVINISM**  
Creation, Fall and Redemption

The Gospel Story begins in Genesis. God's Creation is good. It has been radically corrupted by the Fall. Redemption includes restoration of that Creation in Christ  
Rejection of Dualism.

Dualism is common in much Christian thinking. The most notable dualism is between Nature and Grace. Neo-Calvinists maintain that Grace restores Nature (and that the Church, as Salt and Light, is the instrument God uses to transform Culture.

Jesus is Lord over all of Creation.

Jesus' Lordship extends through every area and aspect of life-it is not restricted to the sphere of church or of personal piety.

All of life is to be Redeemed.

The work of Jesus on the cross was intended to defeat Evil in all areas of life. The resurrection of Jesus is meant to lead to the renewal of all life, beginning with the Church Cultural Mandate

Genesis 1:26-28 is the mandate from God to Humanity to care for and cultivate all of Creation, including Culture and Civilization, to God's glory  
The Role of Law.

Law is more than the Decalogue. It is the Torah (Five Books of Moses) and begins with the creation ordinances (Norms) established by God as His will for the living of life in all Spheres  
Sphere sovereignty.

The Spheres are God-given Institutions: Marriage, Family, Church, Civic Community (by extension) and Civil Government. Each of these Institutions has boundaries that mark off its sphere of responsibility and influence. All are responsible to God. In relation to each other, they are autonomous (sovereign), but cooperative. The sovereignty of each must be recognized and respected by the others.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:58

## **ACCIDENTAL MISSIONARIES?**

Jon A. Shields has written a helpful review of Ziad Munson's "The Making of Pro-Life Activist". Munson's book has lessons for those of us who pray that many more Christians will become involved in world-wide missions. The review has the spot-on title The Accidental Activists and therein is the major lesson.

"Munson conducted 82 life histories of pro-life activists seeking to learn who becomes a pro-life activist and why? One might suppose that those with strong pro-life sentiments simply join the movement. Yet Munson found that only 13 percent of the activists in his sample were "self starters"—citizens whose strong moral convictions led them to initiate contact with a pro-life organization. In addition, approximately half of the activists in Munson's sample were still ambivalent about abortion or even pro-choice prior to their participation in the pro-life movement. For these activists, pro-life sentiment was a consequence rather than the cause of participation in the right-to-life movement".

See <http://www.booksandculture.com/>

Most pro-life activists got to be that way because of their association with others who are pro-life activists and because of something that happened in their life that got them interested. (e.g.-A man I know became interested in being a fire fighter when he was about 35 when a neighbor's barn burned down.)Munson concludes "activism emerged not because they consciously sought it out to express their beliefs but as an unintended result of their ordinary lives." "Social contacts and networks are more important than preconceived attitudes," Munson shows. "Activism is as much about building community as about mobilizing individuals." That is the way the firefighter's life-long activism was sustained. Could these conclusions be the key to turning ordinary, pew warming Christians into pro-missions activists?

**Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>**

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 03:46

Tuesday, May 11. 2010

## **ON NOT TRANSFORMING CULTURE**

There is an interesting review by Andy Crouch of James D. Hunter's book, "To Change the World".  
<http://www.booksandculture.com/>

Hunter, he writes, does not believe we should (or can) change the world. Nor should we be 'redeeming the culture,' 'advancing the kingdom,' 'building the kingdom,' 'transforming the world,' 'reclaiming the culture,' [or] 'reforming the culture.' According to Hunter, the strategies Christians have pursued are, by themselves, woefully incapable of changing the world. The premise is that once the hearts and minds of ordinary people are properly revived and informed, the culture will change. "This account," Hunter says flatly, "is almost wholly mistaken." "It is mistaken", Crouch summarizes, "because of its individualism: it ignores the central role of institutions in transmitting culture. It is mistaken because it is not just institutions that matter, but institutions at the cultural "center" rather than the "periphery". It is mistaken, perhaps most of all, in its egalitarian assumption that the hearts and minds of ordinary people matter—in fact, cultural change is almost always driven by change among a small élite who occupy powerful positions in those culturally central institutions".

There are books such as "Under the Influence, How Christianity Transformed Civilization" by Alvin Schmidt, which document evidence to the contrary. There is some truth in what Dr Hunter says and important lessons for Christians activists to learn from that truth.

I agree that changing culture as such is not a mandate for Christians. That is not our mission, never has been. We are called to be faithful as God's Covenant People, living for His glory in all and what ever we do in the culture around us. We are to live according to His Law. When we do this, our lives shall be a witness to the world.

God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, is acting in the world. That is what He does. It is not our mandate or mission to build or advance God's work or Kingdom. He is doing that. By definition, the Kingdom is His, not ours. But when we are obedient to Him in our lives, He will use us, as His instruments or agents, to achieve His Purposes wherever we are. That will have an impact on people and institutions and in that way the culture (s) of the world around us will be changed.

That which God formed and Sin deformed, Christ will reform.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:27

Tuesday, April 20. 2010

## **CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

An essential that all of us need to have and many of us sorely lack is the ability to do critical thinking. Critical Thinking Skills involve looking for alternative reasons and better explanations. According to Bloom's Taxonomy, there are six escalating levels: 1. Knowledge 2. Comprehension 3. Application 4. Analysis 5. Synthesis 6. Evaluation To learn much, much more on this subject and for help in developing critical thinking skills I strongly, highly recommend this website

<http://fox4editing.wordpress.com/critical-thinking-skills/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:01

Tuesday, April 13. 2010

## **RESOURCES FOR PRAYER AND STUDY**

For serious Bible Study, I recommend these resources. They contain many helpful tools that can help anyone to get into the original languages of Scripture

<http://net.bible.org/bible.php>

<http://biblos.com/>

To enable comparison between various Bible English Translations, I find this site very helpful. I am currently appreciating the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-versions/>For my Morning and Evening Devotions I am currently trying, and being blessed by, this website.

[http://www.scotland.anglican.org/media/liturgy/liturgy/daily\\_prayer\\_short\\_form\\_1988.pdf](http://www.scotland.anglican.org/media/liturgy/liturgy/daily_prayer_short_form_1988.pdf)For reading through the Bible, This Lectionary using the English Standard Version (ESV) is very helpful

<http://www.gnpccb.org/esv/devotions/bcp/?date=2010-04-12>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:56

Tuesday, April 6, 2010

## **ENGAGING THE ADVENTURE**

Here is a new, very well-written, practical book introducing cross-cultural missions today, complete with Study Questions for personal use or for small groups, as well as a Devotional Prayer Guide. Real life application of principles for sharing the Gospel across cultures in today's world. Written by an experienced missionary who shares stories from the ministry he and his wife have had in the Far East. The book can be ordered direct from Kudos Press.

<http://www.kudospress.com/kudos-press-engaging-the-adventure-cover.html>

I am proud, happy and thankful to God that our son, Loren is the missionary-author and our son, Kevin, is the Publisher. To God be the Glory!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:41

Saturday, April 3, 2010

### **CHRISTUS VICTOR!**

May your Celebration of Christ's Victory over Death, Sin, Satan and the Spiritual Powers of Darkness be filled with joy and thanksgiving.

May the realization of that Victory be yours daily

May the assurance of your own physical Resurrection and Eternal Life give you hope for tomorrow. Because He lives, we know who holds the future. Because He lives, our future is filled with Promise!

AMEN!!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:04

Wednesday, March 24, 2010

## **CONSERVATIVE OR BIBLICAL?**

The columnists I quote in the posts below reflect the secular Conservative perspective. There should be no question that they also reflect a Biblical perspective. Somehow, tragically, incredibly, Evangelicals who claim that the Bible is their ultimate authority for the doctrines of their Faith and for the Principles by which they want to live, fail to see that Idolatry is the major evil condemned by that Bible and that worship of the State is Idolatry and utter foolishness. When is the State an Idol? When it takes the place of God in the life of a Nation and its citizens. When is the State worshiped? When people trust it, yea, demand it, take care of them and provide for all their needs from cradle to grave. This idolatrous worship is increasingly evident in America, even as it was in ancient Israel, culminating in its downfall. Evangelicals forget the Bible's warnings about Totalitarianism. That is a major theme of the Book of Revelation. They also seem to forget their World History which gives ample reason to beware Tyrants and golden tongued demagogues who seduce the masses with rhetoric and promises. Evangelicals also seem to want material, physical and social security more than anything else as demonstrated by their support of politicians and government programs and policies that promise to provide these things. There is not much evidence that there is a real place in their value system for a life of the spirit, faith, cross-bearing, self-denying and discipleship. They do not seem to be committed to living in obedience to the demands of Jesus or the Commands of God. Lord have Mercy! Evangelicals share a lot of values and principles with secular conservatives. We differ greatly over the values that are most dear to Conservatives: social and economic Freedom and political Liberty. We were set free from our sin by Christ in order to live in bondage to Him. We agree to having a king, but we want no king but Jesus. Our entire lives are to be lived in His service and by his Law, not by our laws nor our desires and certainly not for the pursuit of our personal happiness.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:46

Monday, March 1, 2010

### **LOOKING FOR THE GOOD STUFF**

The portion of Scripture read at Church yesterday that really "spoke" to me was Psalm 27:17. The Psalmist ponders "What if I had not believed that I should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living?!" It struck me how jaded, cynical and pessimistic I am often prone to be. I realized that I often do not expect to see the goodness of God in the world around me. That is terrible. I do not want to be stuck in that gear while I drive around today. The Lord used this verse to encourage me to lift my eyes higher and look for Him at work. When I leave the house I will be on the watch for the goodness of the Lord.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:27

### **CAPTURE AND CHERISH THE MOMENT**

My brother is a professional Artist. The slogan on his website <http://wafoxpaw.com/> is "capture and cherish the moment". One way to do that is by having a portrait of a loved one painted. However, we chose to do it, this is good advice for all of us in this fast paced world

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:18

### **CAPTURING VISION and GIVING KUDOS**

One of our sons, Kevin, has begun a publishing company- Kudos Press. It's first book comes off the press this month. The company motto is "Giving and facilitating kudos where kudos are due." /kudospress  
Another business he maintains is <http://www.fox4editing.com/> Its motto is "Capture your Vision"  
1 WANT TO PUT THESE MOTTOES HIGH ON MY 2DO LIST

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 07:58

Tuesday, January 26. 2010

### **THEONOMY- LIVING BY THE LAW OF GOD**

Today, I have posted a NEW ESSAY on the front page of my website explaining what I understand by THEONOMY, written in response to an Essay by Dr Mike Horton about "The Two Kingdoms Theory" which is currently a hot topic in some circles. I hope it explains what I am trying to do with my personal studies and why I call my website "Re/Formed Living"

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:19

Tuesday, January 19, 2010

### **COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS (Author Unknown)**

PSALM 23The Lord is my Shepherd ----- that's a Relationship! I shall not want ----- that's Supply! He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ----that's Rest! He leadeth me beside the still waters -----that's Refreshment! He restoreth my soul ----- that's Healing! He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness --that's Guidance! For His name sake ----- that's Purpose! Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death--that's Testing! I will fear no evil ----- that's Protection! For Thou art with me ----- that's Faithfulness! Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me -----that's Discipline! Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies-----that's Hope! Thou annointest my head with oil ----- that's Consecration! My cup runneth over ----- that's Abundance! Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life----that's Comfort! And I will dwell in the house of the Lord -----that's Security! Forever ----- that's Eternity!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:03

Tuesday, January 12. 2010

## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VISION AND SIGHT**

Many of us make much of the importance of absolute truth-- and our confidence that we possess it! My wife and I recently watched a movie ("At First Sight") based on the fascinating experiences of a man who lost his sight as a very young child and regained it in middle age (from a story by Oliver Sacks, "To see or not to see"). The blind man regained vision but he could not see. He could not make any sense of what his eyes were now telling him. Though now sighted, he had to learn to see and that was a long, confusing, scary process. His brain had to learn to differentiate distances and shapes. His brain had to learn perspective and communicate that to his mind. He was always running into things or unable to reach and grasp objects, even though he had perfect vision.

This was a cautionary tale for those of us who are so sure we see what really is. Truth may not be what it appears to be.

Another lesson learned was that, when blind, the man saw more than most sighted people. He had learned over the years to "see" with his other senses and was in many ways far more wise and knowledgeable and alive in the moment than many of us who are sighted. Jesus came to bring Light into the Darkness. He came to give sight to the blind. Which kind of Light and Sight do we, literally, have in mind?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:26

Wednesday, January 6, 2010

## **BRIT HUME, TIGER WOODS AND JESUS**

Brit Hume's TV comments over the weekend saying that Tiger Wood can, and needs to, find forgiveness and redemption in the Christian Faith have stirred up the predictable backlash. In a discussion about his comment the next day, Hume made it even more clear- Tiger Woods needs Jesus Christ!

[brit-hume-tiger-woods-advice-not-proselytizing.html](#)

Hume's many critics call him a bigot. I was called a bigot for the first time in the hallway of a church years ago by a very prominent member because I had preached that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes to (God) but by Him. I was to be fired from another Church years later for saying the the same thing. Face it, Christian friends, if "bigot" is defined as "a person who is intolerant of any ideas other than his or her own, esp on religion..." or "One who is strongly partial to one's own group, religion, race, or politics and is intolerant of those who differ." and "intolerant" is defined as not "showing respect for the ... opinions of others" or "narrow-minded" then we are bigoted. Jesus is the one and only way to God. He is God and there is no other. But the name "Bigot" is used in a pejorative (negative, bad) sense. It especially comes across as "not loving and illiberal". Well, what Jesus said is illiberal to other views. There absolutely are no other ways to find God; but saying that is not unloving. Just the contrary! If someone you love is going out on a pond thinking the thin ice will hold him, that he is safe, when you know he is in danger, it is illiberal to yell to him to stop and insist he must come back, but it is not unloving. It would be unloving to respect his false belief about his safety and do nothing. If he falls through and you manage to throw this person a rope and you yell to [him] and demand [he] grab it so [he] can be saved from drowning, that would be illberal, but not unloving. Not to tell him to grab the rope would be unloving.

The unbelievers who are slamming Mr Hume and vilifying all of us who agree with what he said about Jesus are, in fact, the bigoted, intolerant, illiberal and unloving ones. The Editorial about Mr Hume's comments, in this morning's Boston Globe, takes a different tack, writing, "Yes, but commitment to Christianity couldn't prevent Bill Clinton from dallying with an intern, Senator David Vitter from contracting with prostitutes, and Senator Larry Craig from being arrested for solicitation in a men's room, amid thousands of other examples. Christianity and other major religions provide solid ethical frameworks, but that's not enough. Whether one is Christian, Muslim, or Zoroastrian, staying faithful to one's spouse is a test of character, not faith."

[christians\\_can\\_be\\_adulterers\\_too/](#)We all could add others who have claimed to be born again evangelical Christians to the list of those who sin. In fact, my name could be one the list- and yours, too. Our witness to lost sinners is not to the Christian Religion. Our witness is to Jesus Christ and what Biblical Christianity teaches about Him. We never claim to be perfect, He is. We do not claim we do not sin, but that we are forgiven of our sins because we repent and trust in Him to be our Savior. The Bible is clear that true Christians do sin, but they do not habitually live in sin. It is not characteristic of their lives as a whole. 1 John 1:5-2:2 We sin on the occasions when we take our eyes off Jesus and ignore who He is and who we are in Him, when we quench His Spirit in us, when we give into the desire to put Self first above others. But the Lord won't let us get away with that. When it happens, He is all over us, convicting and leading us to confess and seek forgiveness, cleansing and a fresh start. He puts us back on track. All of this is part of the Christian Faith. The Globe Editor does not seem to know any of this. I wonder what [he] does when [his] character fails a test? Apparently, for the Editor, Jesus is of no help with that. Sad

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:12

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

### **PIG KEEPERS IN THE CHURCH?**

Someone recently mentioned that the English word, "Steward" originally meant "pig keeper". Now it is a fact that the English word "steward" comes from two other words "(pig) sty" and "ward". A steward in old England was someone responsible for the protection and maintenance of the fenced in area (ward) in which pigs were kept (a sty). Hence, sty-ward or steward. The speaker was using the word in a talk about Church Stewardship. Clever (funny?) but it would have been far better if he had used the Greek words translated as "steward" in our New Testament. One Greek word means simply "guardian" and is used only once. The other word means "overseer of a household, particularly of its finances". (We get our word "economics" from that Greek word.) Far from being "keeper of the pigs", it means keeper of the books, ie- business manager or treasurer. That is what all Christians are to be: good, responsible managers of the time, talent and treasure that God has given them.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:08

Thursday, October 15, 2009

## **THE SINS CHRISTIANS TOLERATE**

Many of us become upset, even outraged, when we observe or experience sin and evil in the world around us. It is more rare and far more useful if we see the sins within ourselves. Problem is that many of those are hidden from view- or we do see them, but excuse them as acceptable.

I recently read a very helpful book that opened my eyes to sins in my life. I was convicted through reading a book by Jerry Bridges (Navpress) titled, "Respectable Sins" and I thank the person who gave it to me. In turn, I highly recommend it. It is very readable, but it is not a fast read. Full of wisdom, Mr Bridges' definitions and explanations of these respectable sins, using many verses from the Bible, require serious reflection. It is a book to underline and think about carefully. But we are all the better for that exercise. These sins have probably sunk more ships than the outrageous, over the top sins we normally get worked up about. Many churches and marriages would be far healthier if these sins were faced, repented of, forgiven and removed. The "respectable" sins include anxiety, frustration, discontent, unthankfulness, several kinds of pride, selfishness, lack of self-control in several areas, temper and anger, impatience and irritability, judgmentalism, envy and jealousy, slander, lying, sarcasm and ridicule and several types of worldiness. Mr Bridges wrote another book called "The Pursuit of Holiness". That pursuit includes zeroing in on these very common sins within and uprooting them.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:51

Friday, October 9, 2009

## **LOOKING FOR THE RISEN CHRIST IN THE WORLD?**

Looking for Jesus? All the following developments are signs of the Risen Christ in the world. They are consequences of His Presence- the work of His Spirit I. The Advance of the Gospel: Redemption (Conversions and Growth of the Church) II. Life: promotion and preservation of the dignity and value (the health and well being) of all people and the human community III. Responsible Stewardship of the Environment and Natural Resources for the common good. IV. Marriage (understood as life long partnerships of husbands (men) and wives (women) along with the extended and multigenerational Family V. Economic Development: freedom to have and enjoy work, profit and private property VI. Constitutional Civil Government with Law and Justice being preserved equally for all with political freedoms and due process for all  
These are signs of Christ at work in the world. What are we to do with our lives?  
Join Him in His work!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:57

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

## **BIBLICAL HEALTH CARE**

I am spending a lot of time lately seeking Biblical guidance in the debate over "Health Care Reform". An Essay will be forthcoming on my website. Meanwhile, here are some of the Biblical principles for Health Care-

- be responsible for one's behavior and personal well-being
- be responsible for one's family- health care begins at home
- accept responsibility for paying your fair share of personal health care costs
- live a healthy life, combining work, recreation, diet and weight control
- live a spiritual, simple, safe, fatigue and stress-free life
- value safety and protection
- live a righteous (10 Commandments) life, free from guilt, worry, fear, envy, frustration, anger and violence
- be out going, loving, giving and serving others
- accept responsibility to show compassion to others who are in dire straits, sharing their pain ("com-passion") and helping to pay for their health care
- accept mortality, prepare gracefully for old age and infirmity
- make realistic and faith-full end-of-life arrangements now (in writing)

Nothing really new here, but all essential common sense and Biblical principles that will greatly improve our personal health and effect our health care in years to come. This is how Christians are to live their lives. Seriously! We can't complain about Government Plans if we don't take care of ourselves. And we want a Government that will allow us freedom to do so.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:45

Thursday, September 17, 2009

## **SPORTS AND CHARACTER**

One of the major, enduring myths in America is that sports build character. This myth endures despite plenty of evidence that many athletes, coaches and teams often have displayed, shall we say, less than good sportsmanship, both during games and off the field. A person has character, integrity, humbleness, honesty, a sense of fairness and fair play, as well as good morals. Such character begins in childhood, and is built by family and church and association with good role models and mentors. An athlete may or may not be a person of good character. A person of good character who plays sports will be an athlete with character. Playing sports may help strengthen and demonstrate the character [he] brings into the sport. But sports itself will not build a good character in a person without one. In fact, playing sports with a bad character, especially being successful at it, will often make that bad character worse.

A good example of this is seen by comparing Michael Jordan with David Robinson. That comparison is well made in this article about the speech each athlete gave at the recent Basketball Hall of Fame Enshrinement Ceremony [http://www.voddiebaucham.org/vbm/Blog/Entries/2009/9/16\\_Be\\_Like\\_David...\\_Not\\_Like\\_Mike..html](http://www.voddiebaucham.org/vbm/Blog/Entries/2009/9/16_Be_Like_David..._Not_Like_Mike..html)

Also read-

[http://www.masslive.com/basketball-hall-of-fame/index.ssf/2009/09/jordans\\_takingshots\\_hall\\_of\\_fa.html](http://www.masslive.com/basketball-hall-of-fame/index.ssf/2009/09/jordans_takingshots_hall_of_fa.html)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:28

Thursday, September 10, 2009

## **DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW**

I am a 5-Point (T.U.L.I.P.) Calvinist. Many are and that is good. But I would prefer to be known as a Reformed Christian, not simply a Calvinist. Many Calvinists these days are not Reformed. A Reformed Christian believes in Covenant Theology (which I explain in a several Essays on my website), not Dispensationalism and not popular Evangelicalism (which is usually not Calvinist either). But even more than Covenant Theology, a Reformed Christian believes in a certain Worldview. The latter derives from the fact that the iconic or hallmark Reformed Doctrine is the Sovereignty of God (not Predestination). This means Christ is Lord over all, everything! Now Christ and His Word are inseparable. If He is Sovereign, so is His Word. The Scripture is that Word written. The Reformed Worldview involves establishing God's (Christ's) written Word as the prime authority in all areas of thought and living. That is the foundation and rational for a Reformed or Biblical Worldview. My Website, [reformedliving.org](http://reformedliving.org) seeks to develop that Worldview.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:06

## **RE/FORMED INSTITUTE ARTICLES**

Essays in these Categories are available on my website under Re/formed Institute

Philosophy of Mathematics (1 Article) Cultural Mandate (6 Articles) Philosophy of Education (3 Articles) Introduction to Logic (1 Article) Philosophy of Science (1 Article) Civil Government & Politics (2 Articles) Law (2 Articles) Justice (3 Articles) Economics (11 Articles) The Arts (1 Article)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:55

Tuesday, September 1, 2009

## **HOSPITAL CHAPLAINS**

The headline say, "Hospitals expanding duties of Chaplains" and the very article explains the increasing involvement of Chaplains in the care of patients in large Boston Hospitals. Staff have noted and documented how much of a positive effect a Chaplain can have, especially in the care of the terminally ill or with families making end of life decisions. ARTICLE HERE There is nothing new here as far as "duties" go. Clergy have been serving people with their presence, prayers (and Sacraments) and counsel for ages. What is new, the "expanded" part of the headline is the intentional use of Chaplains by Hospital Staff. Many more are being hired by the Hospitals in the survey and deliberately used by the Staff as their eyes and ears to determine patient treatment. The Chaplains are increasingly considered to be a part of the Team delivering medical care. That is new and is a welcome change. They apparently join doctors on their rounds and in the operating room and at meetings to make treatment Plans- all as Chaplains. Patients are increasingly requesting this Service. I remember an experiment with this arrangement 35 years ago in a local hospital near a church I pastored. It fell apart, due mostly to scheduling problems and problems with communication as various members of the Team came and went on their business, apart from the other members. In other words, it was not practical. An additional problem was that not all the doctors agreed to the need. We agreed in theory about a holistic approach to patient care, but some doctors (nurses and other hospital staff) did not really buy into it and in practice, there was no time for it. Apparently, attitudes have changed on the part of at least some hospitals and staff (I am skeptical about this or about the motives behind it). My experience was as a Pastor. Most of us have had clinical training in Seminary, but still we were Pastors, not Chaplains. This new expanded role is really suited to the latter, who are employed by a Hospital and who are actually "on duty" at the Hospital and not simply on call in a Parish somewhere, perhaps many miles away. This leads to my main concern. These Hospital Chaplains are not the patient's Pastor. It is the latter who should be the primary "spiritual" care giver, not a Hospital employee. But for that to work, Pastors and Parishoners need to be "close" and working out life and death issues before a crisis arises or at least at the beginning stages of serious medical treatment. In addition, Chaplains come from a variety of Religious Traditions, from Unitarian to evangelical Protestant, Roman Catholic to Muslim. The Hospital assumption seems to be that they are interchangeable in providing comfort and counsel on end of life issues and decisions. Chaplains have all received basic training in appropriate counseling, as well as in legal issues so they can provide a helpful service. However, my conviction and concern, in ministering to seriously ill or dying persons is to prepare them to meet God as best as possible. That begins with seeking assurance of Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The temptation is to say words that will comfort the patient without regard to their true relationship with God. If the person is alienated from God, comforting words to them are superficial. The only real and true comfort comes from assurance that one is going to be with the Lord because they are trusting in Him for Eternal Life. That is my first concern for everyone and particularly for a patient facing the end of life on earth. That is what I would want to talk with them and their family about, but that is not what the Hospital Chaplain is free or, in many cases, able, to do. No one is really prepared for a "good death" without that assurance.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:12

Saturday, August 29, 2009

## **AVOIDING PERSONAL ATTACKS**

I shocked a conservative friend when I said I admired President Carter, the only Democrat I have voted for. I gave him my vote because he was an evangelical Baptist and I thought I could trust him to "do the right thing" for his country. Over the years I came to disagree with his policies, but I still admire the man. He has Christian ideals and has tried to pursue them, as unrealistic and wrongheaded he may have been and still is in my opinion, about how he has pursued some of them. We can strongly disagree with a man of good will and intentions about his methods, without denigrating or slandering him personally. This applies to comments about Sen Kennedy, too

I have stopped reading the comments on most Blogs about anything, because so many of them attack the writers and not their positions. I do not want to sink into mudslinging and name calling. That is not civil or intelligent discourse and is counter productive. Personal attacks and vilification serve no good purpose and demean the people who engage in it as well, on either side of any discussion.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 22:09

Saturday, August 8, 2009

## **WHEN A CHRISTIAN COMMITS SUICIDE- A Funeral Sermon**

Let us begin with the comfort of Rev 14:13 I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." When a Christian dies, he or she is "blessed" The "blessing" is rest from labor- rest from hard, demanding work or rest from a hard, painful life or rest from suffering. For "their deeds will follow them"-----what does this mean? The report of the good that Believers have done during their lives follows them to Heaven. When we get there we will be welcomed and celebrated. We will hear the Lord's greeting, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Parable of the Talents- Matt 25) But what if our loved one died at their own hand? What about those who commit suicide? We sometimes hear that they could not have been saved or if they were, they are now lost. The answer is in 1 Corinthians 3 [When it comes to salvation] 11 no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. SALVATION IS BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH CHRIST ALONE BY FAITH ALONE If our loved one had confessed faith in Christ as his or her personal Savior, and we had seen evidence of that faith in their life, we ought to believe they were saved. Rev 14:13 applies to them. "Blessed are those who die in the Lord" Since salvation is by faith, SALVATION IS NOT LOST BY A TERRIBLE SIN or BY A SINGULAR MAJOR ERROR IN JUDGMENT If it were, that would mean salvation is not by faith alone. But it is! SALVATION IS BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH CHRIST ALONE BY FAITH ALONE and God promises that no one, and no terrible experience, can separate us from Christ and the grace that keeps us saved. [When it comes to salvation] 11 no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. -----Now this verse goes on to say 12 [a] man builds on this foundation, using gold, silver, costly stones, ----- (or) wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. 15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. Romans 14:7 none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 You, then, why do you judge your brother [for the way in which he died]? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 12..., each of us will give an account of himself to God. God alone is Judge--not us--we must trust Him to do to do what is right when we each appear before Him--no matter what we went through to get there. Life can be very hard. We all know depression. Some of us know how severe depression can be and how hopeless life can seem

It is a terrible thing to get to that place where we are so overwhelmed by our problems and failures or by the loss, or the threat of the loss, of all that matters to us --health, loved ones, freedom- that we become convinced that there is no solution--all hope is gone- and we come to believe the only way out is to take one's own life WE DO NOT WANT TO GET TO THAT STATE OF MIND! We need to reaffirm now, before we are tempted to go there, that, with God, there is always hope! -there is always a way out--and that way is never suicide 1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation [the word means a TRIAL that will lead us into committing sin] has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be [TRIED] beyond what you can bear. But when you are [TRIED], he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. Christians live by hope. Each of us, all of us, we must have hope! Where does our hope come from? From God and His Word The hope that sustains us is in God and His promises Romans 5:5 [this] hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out [the assurance of] his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Our hope is grounded in our assurance that God loves us. This confidence must be ours before we enter into dark thoughts and feelings that can overwhelm us Romans 8:31 If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? 34 Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 I am convinced [Beloved, we must be convinced, convinced at the very core of our being] that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is this assurance of His love that gives us the hope that does not disappoint When all seems hopeless- when you are tempted to give up on life there is hope--hope for today. hope for tomorrow, hope for Eternity Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 24 in this hope we were saved.

We agonize because our loved one, though a Christian, somehow lost sight of that hope 1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers [and Sisters], we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have

no hope.

People of the world have no hope. We Christians do not need to be like them. WE have HOPE and it will not disappoint us! Now if we have hope that we will overcome the grave, that we will be resurrected and go Home to glory

If we have hope that God can give us victory over sin and death and the grace

then we can have hope that God can and help us overcome whatever our troubles are today Those who take their own lives have not held on to this hope and our hearts grieve deeply for them and those they leave behind But those who are left behind must not do the same. They must hold on to this hope that is grounded in the Word of God We can have assurance that whatever we are facing, with God our situation is not hopeless. By God's grace, we can make it. We shall get through our heartache and trouble. We shall overcome HERE IS PRACTICAL ADVICE FROM SCRIPTURE TO THOSE WHO WANT TO HELP THE BEREAVED Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Share yourself with those who are hurting. Spend time with them--you do not have to talk: LISTEN  
Mourn with those who mourn. Allow them to cry and cry with them  
Practice hospitality- don't wait for them to call or ask you: initiate and do for them

Our benediction is from Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:11

Tuesday, July 21. 2009

## **WHAT IS A "GOOD DEATH"?**

A friend wrote and asked me a good and important question: "What does it mean to 'die well' ?" Here is my answer to him-

To die well (or have a good death) does not refer to the manner in which one dies (quietly or horribly). It is about being well prepared for the eventuality. For Christians it means to be ready to meet God and that should include having peace about it, no guilt or fear. Of course, if there is time, a Christian might actually look forward to it with prayers and hymns; but many of us do not have that opportunity. Being ready includes expressing desires for the Funeral itself and what may follow. For everyone, Believer and non-Believer, dying well means without unfinished business but with everything that needs to be done in life actually done. Since that often is not possible, dying well includes being realistic and coming to terms with, accepting, what actually is. Probably the most common emotion, both while dying and at a Funeral, is regret and people kicking themselves with "If only I..." Dying well is having our all affairs in order, including a will and insurance- seeing to it that everything possible has been taken care of for those being left behind. A good death is possible when accounts have been settled, not only financially, but with others- Confessions made, things that never were said, but should have been, being said at last (and listened to at last, as well.) No guilt or burdens (including debts) should be laid on those we are leaving and no impossible promises extracted from them, either. Dying prepared is dying well. Hope this is helpful and I pray we will both have a good death, dear Brother.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:53

Thursday, July 2, 2009

## **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**

The Spiritual Formation Movement is growing as is interest in the Spiritual Disciplines and the books by Dallas Willard. I have just posted my review of his book, "The Spirit of The Disciplines" on my website. [HERE](#)  
I encourage you to read it if you want to know more about these topics. There are other new Essays as well.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:59

Tuesday, June 16. 2009

## **DOCTRINE MATTERS!**

"Baptism is accepted and practiced, and always has been, by just about every group in whatever place that has called itself Christian. Thus, it is somewhat ironic that a specific Christian group would emerge that would come to be identified as "Baptists." The issue of baptism—who should be baptized and by what method—would become important enough to them that they would endure persecution, social ostracization, even death, if necessary, to maintain their convictions."The first Baptist church was established 400 years ago (some radical Baptists hold that the first Baptist church began at Pentecost and is the true New Testament Church with a history that has extended from 33 AD to the Present. Other groups make the same claim.), Read a brief but good History of the Baptist churches [HERE](#)

My point here is that these Baptist Christians would endure persecution, social ostracization, even death, if necessary, to maintain their convictions. Their convictions were Doctrines that they believe the Bible teaches, not only about Baptism but about the Nature of the Church itself. They would endure persecution, social ostracization, even death, if necessary, to maintain their Doctrines, even though today almost no one would do that. I love the Lord as do many others. What I am very vexed about is the way so many "Evangelicals" denigrate and dismiss Doctrine Some Christians today claim they would die for Christ if necessary, but certainly not for Doctrine like the Baptists of old did. These (usually young) "Evangelicals" say that Doctrine is divisive and we should be all about love, reconciliation and unity. Let's just love the Lord and others. I'm sorry, but this concept is naive, ignorant and impossible. Who is "the Lord"? What did he do? What does he stand for? What did he accomplish? Why do I love Him? Why should anyone else love him? Christ can not be separated from Doctrine, the answers to questions like these. According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, "Doctrine" is

1. something taught; teachings2. something taught as the principles or creed of a religion, ...belief; dogmaAny statement of who Christ was and is and what he preached and stood for and what he himself died for is a Statement of Doctrine(s). To die for Christ is to die for Doctrine about Christ. Dr Bill Baird, friend and associate of murdered abortionist Dr Tiller and "Father" of the Pro-Choice (read, pro-abortion) Movement was quoted in our local paper today as saying he considers his life to be in danger, but he is willing to die for the cause of "freedom". "Freedom"? He, too, like the Baptists of old, is willing to die for Doctrine. In his case the Doctrine of a Woman's Right to Chose to determinate her pregnancy. Dr Baird and Dr Tiller and all the others who advocate for "Choice" do not believe in the Doctrine that from conception, the embryo/fetus is a human being and that herefro, abortion is killing an innocent child. Many of us, on the other hand, are willing to take a stand against "Pro Choice" because we do believe that Doctrine. Those who support "Marriage" for homosexuals believe in a different Doctrine about Marriage than those of us who believe that Marriage is only for heterosexuals. Likewise, those who believe in the extension of State Government authority and control over more and more aspects of our daily lives, including Marriage, Health, Welfare, Education (schools) and Business (the Economy) believe in a different Doctrine than those of us who believe the Doctrine that less civil government is better, confined strictly to law and order for the restrain of evil and the preservation of political and economic freedom. Actually, they believe in different doctrines for all of these subjects than, for example, I do. I chose to be a Christian and then a Baptist and then an Independent, a Congregationalist and now an Episcopalian all for doctrinal reasons. If I leave the latter, it will be for doctrinal reasons. How I live my daily life is determined greatly by the Doctrines I believe about many things. Doctrine Matters!! What people believe in their heads and hearts to be true and right matters!!

For help in how to interpret the Bible, see my website [HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:53

Tuesday, June 2, 2009

### **"DO IT ANYWAY"**

I was discouraged last week and was seeking a word of encouragement. God used this to give it to me. Check out the whole list and Mother Teresa's version of it, too.

[http://prayerfoundation.org/mother\\_teresa\\_do\\_it\\_anyway.htm](http://prayerfoundation.org/mother_teresa_do_it_anyway.htm)The Paradoxical Commandments by Dr. Kent M. Keith

1. People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. Love them anyway.
2. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.
3. If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.
4. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:52

Friday, May 29, 2009

## **ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS!**

Many people object to the Hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers". It is, they say, too militaristic and violates the message of love that Jesus preached and lived. I came across a Blogger who agrees with that sentiment and he posted this link connecting images of soldiers with Scripture. That Blogger was offended by what he saw. Personally, I was blessed by the photos. I do not agree that the verses were intended to go with the war in Iraq as such. But the metaphor of warfare is very common in Scripture and we Christians are called to be soldiers waging battle against evil; but Paul makes clear that we individual Believers, in distinction from our Nation) war against spiritual forces of evil, not flesh and blood, and that our weapons are not bombs and bullets, but Preaching (the Gospel and Truth) and Prayer. That understood, I found these photos very appropriate and challenging to my Christian life and ministry.

<http://men.style.com/gq/features/topsecret>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:21

Monday, May 18, 2009

## **WHO CARES ABOUT THE WORLD?**

In the daily news there are stories of bloody civil wars as in Sri Lanka, of suicide bombers and terrorism, torture and cruelty in many countries, of drug cartels, gang violence, over crowded prisons, widespread and devastating white collar crime and the now common-place stories of business failings and bankruptcies, political graft and corruption and the ever present reality of extreme poverty. As with the disciples in their boat being tossed about by storm driven waves, we cry out to Jesus, "Lord, don't you care if we drown?" (Mark 4:38) Care? of course Christ cares! God cares when the people He created good, act evil and destroy each other. He cared enough to put into place a Plan to redeem them. There is a way out of this mess. It goes through the cross and the tomb and on to the Throne above and into the Kingdom back here on earth. The real question is, do the people of Christ care? Do they care that the world drowns in sin and evil? Do they care enough to intentionally, persistently share the Message of Redemption in their home town and work place as well as around the globe and to put the Message into action in their lives? Well, thankfully, many do! If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, we know there is Light in the Darkness and many are at work carrying that Light around the world. There are those who serve the Risen Christ through Evangelism, planting churches and making disciples. There are those who work for the dignity and well-being of all persons; there are those who demonstrate and teach the young about marriage and family; there are those who provide education, training and employment for all, including the "least among us"; and there are those who actively pursue and seek to preserve economic and political freedom for all everywhere. Thank God for the Light and those who are spreading it today, many under great duress. Christ cares and all these people share His care. Their reward will be great in Heaven! And we all can have hope, not despair, when we read the daily news.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:02

Sunday, May 10, 2009

## **HONORING PARENTS**

The Law of God says, "Honor your father and mother" Exo 20:12 Some churches struggle with Mothers and Fathers Day observances because there are singles and couples who do not have children and may feel left out; BUT, these special days are not about children. The focus here is on parents. We all have parents. No one is left out of that. I know many people have had a stressful relationship with their parents, usually one or the other. These are the folks who will be uncomfortable on Mother's Day, not the folks who have not been parents themselves.

Being a good parent requires a lot of time and effort, a lot of listening and knowledge, a lot of wisdom and patience, a lot of courage and strength, a lot of forgiveness- a lot of love and faith. Such parents we should and can honor. It can be very hard to honor those who lacked these things. Nevertheless, the Lord commands us to honor our parents. We are, best as we are able, to show them appreciation, respect and either obedience when we are young or care-giving when they are old. We can live in a way that will make them proud of us, proud of being our parents. We can live by their principles and values and carry on their traditions and heritage. If that is not possible, we can at least not denigrate what they thought valuable and worthwhile. We can work at being understanding of what they have gone through- their stories. At the very least, we can be thankful that they brought us into the world and helped make it possible for us to become who we are.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:19

Monday, April 27, 2009

### **CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW...**

I haven't posted much here lately because I continue to struggle as a Christian with my reactions to what I read and hear everyday in the national and local news. I do not want to sink to the very counter productive and embarrassing caustic criticism I read on so many blogs (including Church and other Christian ones).

Clearly, many Christians are not reading the Bible the way I do and I have spent my whole life studying it seriously. Among other matters, Idolatry is the greatest evil. Worship of the State and believing it can save us from all our woes is idolatrous. Totalitarianism is a terrible danger. At the very least, far from welcoming increasing State control over our lives, Christians should be extremely wary of Civil Government intervention in our personal affairs. Christians should know from their Bibles, that Life and Health, Welfare, Marriage, Family, Church, Education, Business and even the development of Natural Resources are to be free from the involuntary control and manipulation of Civil Government. Christians should know from their Bibles that the sole purpose of Civil Government is Law and Order and that as defined by God Himself in His Word.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:38

Thursday, April 9, 2009

## **LAMBS AND RABBITS**

My Mother always enjoyed hiding eggs at Easter for us children to find. Later we joined in decorating the eggs to be hidden and found. It was a fun childhood game. It is a tradition, apparently beginning in Germany in the 16th century and introduced in America by German settlers in the 18th. The customary rabbits and eggs (gifts for good children) have nothing to do with Easter. Rabbits and eggs are symbols of reproduction, fertility, new life and Spring. Lambs however are very much involved in the Easter Story because that Story is rooted in the Passover Story and sacrificial lambs are very important to both. What happens at the Passover Meal (Seder) is explained well in this article [http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2009/04/08/which\\_son\\_are\\_you\\_caleb/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/04/08/which_son_are_you_caleb/)

And the origin of "Easter" as a Christian Holy-day is explained well here. It is not Pagan <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/bytopic/holidays/easterborrowedholiday.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:19

Thursday, March 26, 2009

## **THE SHACK MIDWEEK DISCUSSION**

Last night's discussion of *The Shack* was the best yet. The book raises all kinds of theological questions as well as stimulates debate about how God works in our lives. In our small table groups, we shared and discussed serious issues in our childhood and marriages and about faith and our relationship with the Lord. Doing this has probably been the best part of this series. We read and discussed at least 5 portions of Scripture (one per chapter we had read before hand) and folks asked many good questions. The frustrating part, again, is that there was no time to try to really answer the questions. In 45 minutes we merely scratched the surface. This book should be studied page by page for as long as it takes and time should be given to digging into Scripture on each topic the book raises (and it is full of unorthodox teaching that needs to be challenged) -also for as long as that takes. So the question now is what to do for follow-up? A good one is needed and whatever that might be should be done while interest is high.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:57

Monday, March 16, 2009

**DISCIPLESHIP PRAYER (used in the Church in Zimbabwe)**

Lord, I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am your disciple. I won't look back, let up, bow down, back away, or be still. I am finished with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of despair, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, or let up until I have stored up, prayed up and preached up for the cause of Christ. Amen

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:55

Thursday, March 12, 2009

### **THE SHACK DISCUSSION GROUP**

Last night was the second meeting of the group at our church which is discussing *The Shack*. There were again about 35 men and women and the fellowship was very good. The book is an excellent conversation starter and the first four chapters, with the murder of the main character's 6 year old daughter, grabbed everyone's attention. In small groups, we began discussing how a Christian can deal with the grief and anger and guilt that the protagonist was dealing with. It obviously was a subject close to home and meaningful to all present. The Pastor had passed out a sheet with questions and appropriate Scripture passages. He did not teach, but guided us in discussing what was on the handout. We shared and prayed together. It was a worthwhile hour and a good beginning to the series.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:31

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

## **WHY I DO NOT DO ASHES**

My wife and I enjoyed pancakes and a good time with friends at our church last night, but we will not be attending the Ash Wednesday Service tonight. We do observe Lent and part of that of course is remembering our sins and our mortality. That is what is behind the use of ashes- we were created from the earth. When we are buried we return to the earth. Clergy say "Ashes to ashes" and sprinkle dirt on our caskets at the grave. Remembering that, ashes are smudged on the foreheads of worshipers during the Ash Wednesday Services. This is the symbolic beginning of a period of Lent which includes fasting, self denial and spiritual discipline in preparation for Good Friday. All of that is beneficial (it is like Advent before Christmas). The ritual is not a Sacrament or Ordinance. It dates back to maybe the 8th Century. The use of ashes as a sign of sorrow or repentance, however, is found in Scripture.

Isaiah 58:4-6 (New International Version) 4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? 6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?"

Receiving ashes is a tradition in Catholic type churches. We have known innumerable Roman Catholics who go to get their ashes sometime during the day and then wear them at work. To us, this has always seemed like a ritual done by people as, at best, just something that they do out of religious custom or obligation. Knowing these co-workers, the act never seemed to be evidence of contrition or repentance of sin or awareness of mortality, let alone the beginning of a period of self-denial. Of course, I could be quite mistaken about that. I'm sure there must be exceptions. But it is enough to dissuade me from participating. But the clincher is the fact that the Gospel reading for the Service every year includes these words of Jesus-

16 'whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matt 6:16-18

What matters is what is in the heart and mind of the worshiper, not what is on the forehead. The latter can never be a substitute for the former.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 22:35

Wednesday, February 4, 2009

### **FILLING OUR POTHOLES**

Our local DPW has a hard time keeping our streets clear after snow and ice storms. They always do the main roads first and leave the side roads till later- much later, if ever. Seem like most of us have the main roads of our lives clear and passable most of the time. Our troubles come on the side streets we take and the pot holes that we do not deal with till later- if ever.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:07

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

## **NEW ARTICLE ON MY WEBSITE: THE SABBATH**

We previously posted an article about the Tithe and sought to answer the question: Is tithing for Christians? I have now posted an article about the Sabbath on my website, [Reformedliving.org](http://Reformedliving.org). What is the Sabbath? What does observing it involve? Does God expect Christians to observe the Sabbath? Why?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:28

## **I SALUTE YOU!**

We constantly hear in the media stories that are supposed to make us sorry for people who are having a terrible go of it in these "tough economic times". To be frank, I do not really feel bad for most of them. Some, sure; they are genuine victims; but I have no particular sympathy for people who over extended and spent or bought irresponsibly. I do feel sorry for the multitudes who have always played the Game by the Rules and who will have to pay for the sins and foolishness of others. I especially feel sorry for our children and grandchildren who will be adversely effected by the egregious behavior of others (including our Government) for years to come. I salute all those who work hard, save, manage their money well, stay out of unnecessary debt, live frugal and simple lives, are honest and trustworthy (the way Christians are supposed to do). God bless and keep you. Actually, I know He will. Stay the course, don't cave in to fear or despair. Stick to your guns and Biblical principles.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:55

## **"SEPARATE BUT EQUAL" RACIAL RECONCILIATION?**

I am confused. An IVCF staffer wrote recently about a renewed effort to promote Racial Reconciliation among staff and campus chapters. I agree that breaking down barriers between ethnic and so-called racial groups is important and that Christians should seek to be one in Christ. And yet at the same time, IVCF is renewing efforts to have Black only Ministry on campus, separate but equal.

She wrote, " why does IVCF start "ethnic-specific" groups? (e.g. Why should we have a black fellowship on campus, and an Asian-American group, instead of just one big multi-ethnic group?) The answer that our new Black Campus Ministry Director, Virginia Ward, gives for starting BCM chapters is, "to reach the black lost on your campus." The cultural barriers are huge for an ethnic minority non-believer to come into a predominantly white Christian group and try to connect with God. If he or she could be invited to a group of people who look and sound familiar, it is easier to hear the Good News and respond to it. During "Black History Month" would you join me in praying for ministries to black students in New England?" I am confused. Don't we often hear that Sunday mornings are the most segregated hours of the week (in churches)? And that observation is meant to criticize, even condemn, that phenomenon. Don't we hear about the importance of churches becoming multi-ethnic, multi-cultural? Intervarsity Press has published books on the subject. So I am confused to read, "cultural barriers are huge for an ethnic minority non-believer to come into a predominantly white Christian group and try to connect with God. If he or she could be invited to a group of people who look and sound familiar, it is easier to hear the Good News and respond to it." Is this really true? Or are there other factors here that should be revealed and explored? (maybe reverse racism? I wonder where the real barriers are and who erected them. And what can bring those barriers down. I thought experience has taught us that separation does not do that. The reality is, We all need to learn to live in a multi-cultural world. What better place to learn then in college? Will someone who comes to Christ in an all black group eventually be open to assimilation and become part of a multi-cultural church after graduation? The reverse is also true. When and where will white Christian students learn to appreciate and love, worship and serve the Lord together with non-white students? How will black and white Christians model Racial Reconciliation in Christ on campus when IVCF maintains separate but equal chapters? I'm confused.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:47

Monday, February 2, 2009

## **RE-FOCUSED**

“One desire is the ruling passion of my life. One high motive has acted like a spur upon my mind and soul. God’s holy ordinances must be established again in the home, in the school and in the public and civic lives of Believers for the good of the Nation; to carve as it were into the conscience of all Christians the ordinances of the Lord, to which the Bible and Creation bear witness, until the Church thus pays homage again to God in our Nation.” I have amended the words of Abraham Kuyper to fit me. God has a Word for our times. Please read the articles I have written and posted on my website, [Reformedliving.org](http://Reformedliving.org). The link is on your right at the top of the column. You will find there some of my attempts to explain the Norms for living which God has revealed. Norms for marriage, family, work, economics and government. They are not Democratic, Republican, Liberal or Conservative. They are Biblical and what I will now focus on here.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:45

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

### **NEW ARTICLES ON MY WEBSITE**

I just posted some new essays on my Re/formed living website. Three are related to education: The Antithesis, Two Methods of Learning and Christian Education. The third asks if there is a Christian Culture and Civilization. Answer? Absolutely! I hope you will visit and study them. Thanks!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:39

Saturday, January 3. 2009

## **PREREQUISITES TO PROSPERITY**

Deuteronomy 30:1-10[If you...] return to the Lord your God, and you and your children obey him with all your heart and with all your soul, just as I am commanding you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, ... he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. Moreover, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live. ...Then you shall again obey the Lord, observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, and the Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your soil. For the Lord will again take delight in prospering you, just as he delighted in prospering your ancestors, when you obey the Lord your God by observing his commandments and decrees that are written in this book of the law, because you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. The key to the blessing of the Lord upon our families and lives is two fold- regenerated and obedient hearts. The latter requires the former and both are absolutely essential! Ignoring these essentials, people will fill churches tomorrow asking God, in vain, to help them in "these tough economic times".

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:38

## **FRICTOPHOBIA**

"Frictophobia" was the name of a Blog maintained by Theo Plantinga, a professor of Philosophy at Redeemer College (Canada) until he passed away recently (at 61 from Prostate cancer)<http://plantinga.ca/f/faq.htm>It means "fear of friction" or avoiding disagreement, conflict or offense at all costs. Frictophobia is especially common in these days of political correctness and harassment law suits. One of Professor Plantinga's objectives in his classes was to help his students not to fear stress and learn to confront conflict creatively and resolve it. If they did not and always sought to run from it, they could become miserable personally and issues that needed to be addressed, and could be resolved, would not be. We all need what Dr Plantinga tried to teach in our marriages, families and churches. Obviously compromise and learning to live with differences is not always possible. Sometimes the differences are too great or the disagreement too serious or the cost of settling is too steep. Then it may be necessary to part ways. Peace at any price is too great a price. None of us should have to live with constant conflict or with frictophobia.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:06

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

### **THE GOOD WORD FOR THE DAY**

Jeremiah 17:7-8 Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit. 8

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:04

Saturday, December 6, 2008

### **NEVER MIND SANTA CLAUS, TRY St NICHOLAS**

The Church today commemorates Saint Nicholas. Here is an interesting and fun website that you and your children might enjoy {thanks, Mindy}<http://www.stnicholascenter.org/Brix?pageID=38>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:25

### **LET NOT YOUR HEART BE FAINT**

In my devotions this morning, using Oremus, two verses from Isaiah 7 stood out to me and I want to share them with you as a Word from the Lord today-Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 07:45

Friday, December 5, 2008

## **CAN'T GIVE UP!**

In a recent post (below) I wrote of the basis principle of Biblical Economics: if you want to eat, you must work. I realize that many believe who in this principle are having a hard time finding that work to do. There are circumstances that ship wreck the best of plans and there are set backs and hard times in our lives; that does not cancel out the principle and you will keep looking. The media exaggerates. We have heard over and over about "these tough economic times". "The sky has been falling" according to many; but as I look out my window, the sky is still there. Sure, if you are out of work you can be having a very hard time right now. I do not minimize that in the least. I am not unsympathetic at all. The principle remains: if you want to eat you must work. You'll find work. You must. You'll relocate and/or retrain for a new job; but you will find one because you believe in the Biblical Principle. You won't give up because more than everything else, you believe in the goodness of your God. You have proven His promises to be true many times and ways before. He is not quitting on you and you won't quit on Him. You won't give up because you have faith, faith in your self, but most of all faith in your God's faithfulness. He is on the Throne and He will provide for His own! My earlier post was not directed at you, but at that segment of the population that seems to believe they are entitled to be taken care of by Society or the Government without working, as though the world owed them a living without them having to stay in school and acquire the skills necessary to hold a good job and support themselves and their families.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:20

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

## **THE HALLMARK- DON'T GO PUBLIC WITHOUT IT**

The hallmark of Evangelicalism is the acceptance of all Scripture (the entire Book) as the ultimate authority for Faith and Practice. People can not claim to be Evangelical if this hallmark is missing in their epistemology (how they think). Many glibly agree, but when push comes to shove they disavow this Christian essential. Even if we value Tradition highly and know that Reason is very important, the latter are neither a substitute for Scripture nor its equal. Here are examples to demonstrate how crucial this hallmark is:

1. Creation. We can not be dogmatic that the Universe, matter and time and space, came into existence from nothing by Divine Fiat (God spoke and it was so) unless the Bible is our ultimate Authority. 2. Being Human. We can not be dogmatic about what it is to be human apart from the Bible. This concept is grounded in the belief that human beings are created in the image of God. We can only insist on that belief if the Bible is our authority. 3. The "Fall", Evil, Death and Sin are unexplainable apart from what the Bible teaches. The same is true about Redemption and the Gospel. 4. The Incarnation is an unbelievable myth unless the Bible is true and we believe what it says. 5. The same is true about the Resurrection. 6. That Jesus is the [not a] way and the life and that no one comes to the Father [God] without Him [Jesus] is true only if the Bible is true. We can not reject moral and religious pluralism and insist that the Christian Faith is the one and only true Faith except on the basis of the authority of Scripture. The list goes on. We know we must accept the authority of the Bible on all of these matters. We can have no assurance of any of them without that authority. We confidently hold these beliefs because we do. (If you don't, you must deny any claim to being Evangelical.) My plea here is that Evangelicals must be consistent on the following issues as well. They, too, require the authority of the Word of God. 1. Abortion. We can not be dogmatic that Abortion is murder or homicide if we can not know that the fetus, at whatever stage, is a human being, a real baby. To know that it is requires the Bible as our ultimate authority. The same applies to eugenics, embryonic stem cell research and ultimately the same argument applies to Euthanasia. 2. "Gay Marriage". We can not be dogmatic apart from the ultimate authority of Scripture, that Marriage requires one man and one woman and that, whatever the union may be called, it can not be called "Marriage" if both partners are of the same gender. 3. Capital Punishment. We can not endorse the use of capital punishment apart from the authority of Scripture or agree to abolishing it altogether, if Scripture is our ultimate Authority. 4. Human Rights. We can not be dogmatic about "human rights" and what they are apart from the Bible. Our rights as humans are defined and guaranteed by the Law of God. 5. Poverty. We can not be dogmatic both about what constitutes "Poverty" or how to help the Poor apart from what the Bible teaches on the subject. 6. Economics. We can not endorse Capitalism or Socialism as the best or most just unless we have the backing of God's Word on the subject. The same is true about our views of the Environment. This puts us all in a bind. It means that if we are to be Evangelical Christians and consistent about following the Bible we can not be pro-choice, anti-Capital punishment or pro "Gay Marriage" and we can not buy into every claim that something is a "human right" or an matter of Justice just because a lot of people are shouting that it is! Why is this so difficult for us? Why do we Evangelicals struggle with this consistency? Why do we waver? For one, we can hold the first set of beliefs privately and keep them within the personal realm. The second set of issues are public and involve other people, friends and neighbors, fellow students in school or colleagues. Belief about such matters can not be just private and personal. We are tempted to hide them, but can't! We who claim to be Evangelical must have the courage to be consistent. We must make the patient and careful effort to learn what the Bible says about any subject, private or public, and on that basis take a stand. Hopefully we shall find support in both Tradition and Reason, but whether we do or do not, we must be faithful to the Lord and His Word- or at drop the pretense of being "Evangelical"! But beware, if you do that about the second list of 6 Issues, you must realize you also give up the ground for believing in the first list of 6 Issues.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:09

Saturday, November 15, 2008

## **LIGHTING CANDLES**

This is the time of year when we all receive many requests from charitable organizations to donate money to their work. My wife and I contribute all year long, mostly on a monthly basis. (The money spent on all these annual slick and glossy promotions are not necessary to get money from us and could be spent better on something else.) In addition to our Church, we help support two seminaries and a church planting missionary agency. We also contribute to a local (old fashioned, Gospel preaching) Rescue Mission and to "Samaritan's Purse". The regular newsletters from both of the latter came in the mail this morning. What a blessing each month to read of the work God is doing through these organizations. I was especially touched today by the story of the work SP is doing in the Sudan. The old saying is, "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness". I tend to do a lot of "cursing", so I'm thankful there are Christians out there in the world doing the Lord's work in that darkness and we can help them by lighting a few candles.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:35

## **BUYING STUFF- SELLING OUR SOULS- KEEPING THE ECONOMY GROWING**

If 8% of workers in the Country are unemployed, doesn't that mean 92% have jobs? Let's see if I've got this straight. I feel pressure from a kind of blackmail. I must do my part to keep the economy going for its own sake. If I don't do this, I will be made to suffer. I must spend money I don't have or don't want to spend specifically so other people will not lose their jobs.

To help America and to keep our economy growing I'm supposed to go in debt, borrowing my own tax money from a bank who got it from the government which is in debt because the bank itself couldn't pay its own loans, to buy an American car I don't really want so that workers at the factory can make good money (more than I have ever made) so they can buy a house (bigger and more expensive than I have) so the house builders and realtors can get paid more than I am so that they can buy a lot of stuff at the Mall so the retailers can get paid so they can keep expanding their outlets to make more money off those construction workers and automakers who shop in them so they can buy tickets for expensive vacations to keep the tourist industry profitable so they can pay their vendors so they in turn can pay taxes to help pay for the Big Dig for the commuters in Boston so they can get to work to make money to buy expensive tickets to sports events so that the players can earn their millions to buy more of those new mansions so the contractors have money to buy new trucks so the auto dealers can expand or have enough to pay for an education for their kids so the colleges can afford to pay teachers so they can put money into retirement plans and help the stock brokers make profits so they can travel the world and keep the airlines in business so they can pay for fuel and make the oil companies richer so they can invest in Alaska drilling to help that State fund its entitlement programs so that its poor and elderly citizens can buy food and keep the family farms in business so they can pay the banks who loaned them money for feed and seed so they can give more loans to people who want to build even more houses and fill them with the latest electronics and entertainment centers so that Circuit City can stay in business and pay their employees so they can go out to eat and help restaurants to stay open and pay their staff so they can... Where does all this stop? Can it stop or is this the web we spiders are doomed to keep weaving all our lives and then pass it on to our offspring? Is this really what God intends for us? We are not meant to live to work and spend to keep an ever more demanding cycle of working and spending going for its own sake. No one can jump ship without jeopardizing every one else. We must all keep slavishly, mindlessly doing our part to keep this System going. Long live the System! Here I thought Jesus was Lord! (I put this post under the category of "Christian Living"!)

A major reason we willingly go along with this System is because we have been convinced that it is for our own good to do so. We can not imagine living without it. We have bought the lie that this is the way the world works- the only way it can work. We must keep with the program or suffer. (Check out Revelation 13) Our insatiable desire for things is doing us in. We are like addicts who must have an ever bigger fix of stuff. And the "Holiday" Season is upon us. Lord have mercy!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:25

Monday, October 20, 2008

## **PRESERVING OUR NATION'S HERITAGE AND FOUNDATION**

Deuteronomy 4:1-9 Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe... You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you. The Gospel and the Law are both in the Bible. When we call America "back to the Book" we must include both. Millions in our Country need to come to Christ and be saved. And the millions who have come to Christ and have been saved (justified) need to learn to keep the commandments of the Lord your God. These are the principles and norms of the Torah as advocated by the Prophets and interpreted and applied according to the Apostles and, yes, according to Jesus.

You must observe them diligently, this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who... will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!' We hear a lot about what other Nations say and think about our Nation. We rightly care about our reputation in the world. The reputation we should value the most should be for our wisdom and good judgment in how we conduct our business and affairs. We will have that wisdom and good judgment in proportion to how we as a People obey and apply the Principles and Norms of God's Law to our business and affairs. What other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? What other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today? Our Country's Heritage, our Foundation, is the God and Bible of our forefathers. We must not let the secular advocates of multiculturalism or religious and moral pluralism remove that Heritage from our national life or destroy that Foundation. They are what make us a unique and great Nation. It is God and His Law that make us exceptional among the nations of the world.

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; The current fiscal meltdown is not by any means our greatest crisis. Our greatest danger is not our wealth or materialism, nor is it Terrorism from within or without. Our greatest danger is forgetting God and His Word, both the Gospel and the Law. It makes no difference that most Americans say they believe in God and the majority of religious people claim to be Christians, if we are not grounded in the Word of God. Surveys again and again make clear that we do not really know our Bibles, let alone conform our lives to them. We have let the Word slip from our minds. We do not think or act Biblically about most of what we deal with everyday. Make them known to your children and your children's children. The most pressing and important responsibility we have as a Nation is the education of our children. Our future rides on that more than on anything else. I have supported public education for the good of the Country. Most children, by far, always will go to public schools. However, the Bible makes it clear that the ultimate responsibility for the education of children belongs to their parents. That is particularly and especially true for Christian parents. Our Children will not learn of our God and our Scripture in public schools (Ironically, they may very well learn of other gods and other scriptures there.) They most certainly will not learn of the Gospel and God's Law in public Schools. They will not learn to think Biblically about anything in public schools. That is not the business of Public Schools. It is our business as Christian parents. We must teach them personally the statutes and ordinances of our God. Only then will the Heritage and Foundation of this Nation be preserved.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:30

Sunday, October 19, 2008

**NEW ESSAYS at ReFORMED LIVING WEBSITE**

This past week I have posted Essays on my website at <http://www.reformedliving.org/> on the subjects of Money, Debt, Wealth and Work that I pray will be helpful to you. Thanks for visiting!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:42

Monday, October 13, 2008

## **IS DEBT EVIL? IS PROFIT MAKING BIBLICAL?**

Christian Financial Counselors often tell Christians that incurring debt is bad and unscriptural. Is this true? We also often here about greedy Capitalism. Is it wrong for Christians to seek to make profits? Check out my latest entry on my website: [Is Debt Evil? Is Profit making Biblical](#)Article link: [Is Debt Evil? Is Profit making Biblical](#)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:38

Tuesday, October 7, 2008

## **LIBERAL POLITICS AND EMERGING THEOLOGY**

"No observer of the emerging church was surprised to see leading voice Brian McLaren endorse Sen. Barack Obama for President. Liberal politics and emerging theology go hand in hand. But what is the connection? Must one lead to the other?"<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/octoberweb-only/141-11.0.html?start=1>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:26

## **Gospel Coalition**

Have you become familiar yet with this the new Gospel Coalition? It is a cooperative effort of first rate, younger Reformed pastors to engage today's culture with the Gospel. Check out their website and all its links- The Gospel Coalition

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:34

Friday, September 19, 2008

## **A LINK TO THE WORDS OF OLD HYMNS**

I chose a favorite Hymn for my QT Thots this morning. Many folks we know are struggling with things in their lives and the words of the song seemed very appropriate and helpful. The hymn, "Be Still My Soul", and many other classic, old time favorites can be found at <http://www.preciouslordtakemyhand.com/christianhymns>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 07:53

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

## **THE SUFFERING AND DEATH OF A 12 YEAR OLD**

The 12 year old daughter of friends of friends passed away yesterday, having struggled with Leukemia and its treatment for a long, long time. We had joined many other friends in praying for her healing. It has been up and down, but a few days ago, the family was encouraged- the bone marrow transplant had worked. But complications took over and took Lexi's earthly life away. Why didn't God heal her? Today's QT Time included Psalm 30, in which the dying Psalmist prayed for healing and it was granted. His earthly life was spared. He had argued with God saying he would not be able to serve Him from the grave. Being healed, he now would do just that. Perhaps there is a clue here about why Lexi passed away at 12.

Perhaps her work here was done. God's purposes for her were fulfilled. I don't really know, of course, but that is plausible. But what about all her many months of pain and suffering? And that of her family as well? Had that served some purpose, too? On Monday, the Pope spoke to sick people at Lourdes, France. It was an anti-euthanasia message. Life on earth must be allowed to continue to its natural end, we must not interfere for any reason to end that life. That begs the question about interfering to prolong that same life, long after it would have naturally ended. Such "heroic measures" to sustain life could be interpreted as being against the will of God as much as those efforts to end that life, if the single criteria is "let nature have its way". The Pope is quoted as saying the sick should pray to find "the grace to accept, without fear or bitterness, to leave this world at the hour chosen by God." But isn't this very thing what much medicine and medical treatment is about? To fight, not accept, the ravages of disease, to put off "the hour chosen by God" at all costs (literally)? Are we not mandated by God and Scripture to be pro life, pro living, and not to passively endure suffering? Where do we draw the line? Certainly we believe, don't we, that our life and days are in the Lord's hand (control). Theoretically, we believe that, too, about our conception and birth as well. Life is a gift from God. He gives and He takes. And we believe in Heaven- the very moment we draw our last breath here on earth we enter into the Glory of the Lord! Wonderful. Fighting like Hell to stay out of Heaven is not only contradictory, it is utter foolishness and for the loved ones of the ill person to encourage this could be utterly selfish. So we come down, at least in the matter of definite terminal illness, not to fighting death itself, but to the matter of suffering. Many who endure suffering are courageous, but I find nothing admirable in suffering itself. Maybe the issue is to do whatever it takes to eliminate or minimize suffering, while not artificially prolonging or ending life.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:25

Saturday, September 13, 2008

## **9/11, MUSLIMS and MISSIONS**

My sermons, back in the day, occasionally would provoke negative reaction- none more so than the one I preached after 9/11! It was nice to see the abundance of little American flags planted on people's lawns all around town. In my opinion, there was little reaction other wise. "Hey, we don't live in NYC or DC" I did not sense any great grief or anger on the part of most local folks, certainly nothing that lasted but a few days. For awhile, I was very disappointed that I was living in such a town and not in NYC or DC. I was living far from the part of the world where important things were happening. Then I realized I was where God had put me for that time. I had a work to do for Him there, not in some major metropolitan area. From the pulpit I challenged the congregation with the need for missions. The Terrorists, after all, were Muslims. The urgent need then, even more now, is missionary work in Muslim countries or, especially, among Muslim students in colleges throughout the USA. I laid out the need, in my mind, to increase our missionary outreach to Muslims and that a realistic way we could do that would be, among other things, to enlarge our Christian Education program to equip and prepare the children of our church to be witnesses to Muslims and others on the college campuses and cities where they would be living in the years ahead. Some folks were very upset with me over what they thought they were hearing me say that day. I still believe what I actually said is, and was, a capital idea! A far more effective response to the 9/11 attack than those little flags. How many families in your church are raising their children with a vision of becoming missionaries for Christ- anywhere?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:46

Monday, August 25, 2008

## **TRUTH or CONSEQUENCES**

I was reading a news story about the recent war between Russia and Georgia. No one is sure, apparently, how many were killed or by whom. The line that caught my attention was "Whether or not all these stories are true does not, in a way, matter. They are believed by the people who hear them, and they are becoming part of Georgia's history." How often this very concept is repeated on the subject of Religious belief. Thus, it doesn't matter whether or not the physical resurrection of Jesus is true, it is believed anyway and has become part of the history of Christianity. Likewise the virgin birth, the incarnation itself, and of course, the Creation Story. What difference whether it is really true or not? What is important, we are told, is that people believe it to be true.

This argument is wrong on many levels! It assumes that religion or faith does not depend on or need truth or facts. The truth or facts may even contradict the faith, but that wouldn't matter. Religion is a matter of sincere faith or convictions about something, right or wrong, not divorced from the mind and intellect as such, but from true Truth. A variation on this issue comes from those who work with those college age people who say a major reason why they reject Christianity is because the Faith is irrelevant or indifferent to social issues such as World Poverty or the Aids Epidemic or Racism or the Rights of Homosexuals. Besides being factually and historically untrue, such arguments are saying Christianity is a matter of Values or Morality. In the eyes of these young people, Christianity is deficient on such matters. Christians seeking to share Christ or the Gospel with such skeptical students, are convinced they must first address these issues, even work side by side with them in programs or movements seeking "social justice" to demonstrate that Christians do have acceptable morals and values (that is, acceptable to the non-Christian skeptics). This second argument is also based on the concept that whether Christianity is based on truth does not matter, what counts is having politically correct moral values. To people in these illustrations, Religion, and specifically Christianity, is based on Fables, Myths and "mega narratives" or on moral values or both- but, not on Truth. The latter does not matter to them in either case. The Myths may be groundless, vacuous traditions and the "morals" may be culturally determined and self-serving, but what matters is that they are meaningful and helpful to those who espouse them. Imagine spending your youth fighting for a cause that will become passé by the time middle age rolls around or, worse, that has harmful consequences for both self and society over time. Or imagine the tragedy of fighting and dying for a cause that was driven by ignorance and lies. Well, you see, Truth does matter!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:08

## **FLORIDA, EVOLUTION AND SUNDAY SCHOOL**

The State of Florida now mandates that all students will be taught Evolution (as a bone to critics, the phrase "the scientific theory of" was added to the mandate, but will be ignored in practice). Proper answers to exam questions about Evolution will now be required for a student to graduate from High School. Have Christian families or Churches prepared their children to deal with this? Creation of the natural world by God, by divine fiat' (by His Word), is an important and absolutely essential doctrine of the Christian Faith. That all things, including time, space, energy and matter, own their very existence to God and that He holds them all together 24-7 is essential Biblical Teaching. The belief that God is directly and immediately involved in the creation, preservation and governance of all that exists is not negotiable. It is the Doctrine of Providence. The concept of concurrence, in which God is said to act concurrently and cooperatively in all natural processes, is essential to a Biblical Philosophy of Science.

Do Christian children learn this at home or in Sunday School? Hopefully they will have learned of the weaknesses and fallacies of Darwinism before they go off to college. Hopefully, they will have been introduced to the arguments developed by Intelligent Design theorists by 12th grade. [I say all of this tongue in cheek because I know most of them have not. I have argued in vain for years to put the "school" in "Sunday School".] Most of all, Christian children must be prepared to take on the pseudo religion of Scientism and the false world view of Naturalism that lies behind most of the teaching of Evolution they will hear in public high school and college, as well as the really bogus argument that Science and Faith are two totally different ways of "knowing", that have nothing to do with each other and must be kept separate. Hearing people say that makes my blood boil!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:04

Friday, August 1, 2008

## **RANDY RAUSCH and WISDOM FOR LIVING**

There is no question Randy Rausch, former professor at Carnegie Mellon University, famously known for his "Last Lecture" was a very unique attractive person with many fine and admirable qualities as a man, husband, father, friend and professor. Many rightly grieve his early death from pancreatic cancer and rightly admire the way he spent his last months on earth. His Last Lecture is full of aphorisms. The man seemed to have an unlimited supply of wise, pithy, often poignant, often humorous, very touching and practical maxims and proverbs about life. However, none of Mr. Rausch's aphorisms that I have read or heard (I watched an hour TV interview and listened to parts of his famous lecture several times (it is readily available on YouTube and many other sites on the Internet) include the Biblical Proverb that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. He said his lecture (and the book based on it) was intended as a legacy for his 3 young children. He was 47 when he passed on last week. He gives them no advice about the Lord or living for Him.

The Westminster Catechism begins with the well know aphorism (and Truth) - the end of Man (the purpose of every human being, including Mr Rausch) is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Apparently, the Professor missed that wisdom completely and did not even attempt to meet that end. That is a shame. I am sure multitudes admire this Professor and are sure, if anyone goes to Heaven, it would be Randy Rausch and good people like him- people who try to live by his aphorisms. My concern here is that those who think this way are sorely mistaken and misled. People who live a totally secular life are atheists. An atheist is not simply some one who denies the existence of a God. An "a-theist" is literally anyone who lives without or apart from the Triune God who has revealed Himself in Scripture and preeminently in Christ. (Being "spiritual" is not a valid substitute for this.) They may have a lot of wisdom about living such a life and do very well at it, but nevertheless, they are atheists and atheists miss out on what life is really all about. Such people usually do not believe in Heaven anyway and are entirely focused on life here and now and living it to the fullest because it is all there is. But, a father does not prepare his children well if he does not help them prepare for Eternity. A father does not love his children well if he denies then knowledge of the best thing about life, the source of is real meaning, purpose and true joy and beauty all of which is God Himself who inhabits Eternity. There is something amiss when a man, any man, does not realize he is a sinner and has a sin problem. The very reason there is such a thing as death in the first place is because human beings have a sin problem and death is a consequence of it. There is something tragic when a man, any man, does not see his need for mercy and forgiveness from his Maker and an even greater tragedy when such a man does not turn to that maker and accept what He has does to make that mercy and forgiveness freely available to him. All the aphorisms about how to live well as a sinner in a fallen world without Christ are not, in the end, wise. Rather, they are foolish and so are the people who are led to believe they reveal the path of how best to live.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:19

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

### **TRYING TO REMAIN FAITHFUL**

I am increasingly discouraged with being an Episcopalian. Sometimes I can not imagine how I ever became one (long personal story). I struggle mightily to remain one. I have recently realized that my hope for our particular Parish to become a hymn singing, Bible preaching, evangelical (if not a classic Reformed Anglican) Parish (as it was only 10 years ago) is very unrealistic. We have fine, nice sincere members, good hardworking people, who love the parish and want to see it grow. These current members for the most part expect it to be a typical, mainline Episcopal parish. That is not what I am praying for. Today, the latest issue of Seed & Harvest came. It is the usually monthly magazine of Trinity School for Ministry, from which one of our sons graduated with his MDiv. He and the School are Reformed, Biblical and Evangelical as well as Anglican and Episcopal. They are beacons in the dark and major encouragements to me to hang in there at least a little longer. However, it is significant that they recently dropped the word "Episcopal" from their name. They now emphasize their Anglican identity instead- a harbinger of things to come.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:11

### **REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN COLLEGE?**

I frequently read articles that give anecdotal evidence that secular colleges (administration, faculty and students as a whole) are increasingly unfavorable (nice word) toward Christians and Christianity (usually the evangelical kind from whom the stories come). So it was with interest that the cover story of the July/August University of Rochester (NY) Review is entitled "A Campus of many Faiths". Reading many issues of this Review over the years since one of our sons graduated from UR, I know that this (once Baptist) University is very secular. What could this 8 page lead story mean? "Last December", the writer says, "a survey of 14,000 students at 136 universities found that most students believe that integrating spirituality into their lives is very important." Supposedly, many students are seeking to find "spiritual meaning", a richer and deeper faith. Notice, "spiritual" and "spirituality". Then there are interviews with a Muslim, a Hindu, a Jew, a Roman Catholic, a Pagan, a United Methodist and a Baptist of some kind. The last two were very undecided about what they personally believed. Also interviewed was the ordained UCC woman who is the Director of the campus Chapel and promoter of Interfaith Dialogue in which all participants come to appreciate and respect the validity and practices of all Faiths. She is especially concerned with promoting religious and moral pluralism and opposing "competing and exclusive truth claims by any religion", which of course is exactly what historic, Biblical, evangelical Christianity does. Plurality on campus is good. Spirituality on campus is good. Jesus who claimed to be "the way the truth and the life" and that no one comes to God but by him is not so good on the UR campus. Christian students: beware and prepare!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:35

Saturday, July 5, 2008

## **GOOD NEWS OR BAD NEWS FOR EVANGELISM?**

Some articles in the current issue of Christianity Today are unusually interesting to me. The news commentary section begins with an article trying to estimate the percentage of evangelicals that will vote for McCain and Obama. My concern is with the increasing number of "young" evangelicals who reportedly are supporting Mr. Obama because they perceive the Republican Party as not addressing issues such as world poverty and AIDS, the environment, global warming and the economy (again meaning care for the poor, e.g. - health insurance and services) and jobs (especially for the untrained or unemployable in today's economy). Young evangelicals allegedly see the Democratic Party as far more concerned about these matters, Obama more than McCain.

The Editorial section of CT begins with a discussion of a new Evangelical Manifesto, written by a committee of nine nationwide evangelical leaders and endorsed by 80 others. It focuses on the need for evangelicals across the country and from every quarter to reaffirm that the core of being evangelical, our very identity, is faith in Jesus and discipleship. Second we need to combat the "negative stereotypes that abound about" us. We are to do that by "reforming our lives and our churches". And third, we are to "create a culture of civility" and stop contributing to the "political and cultural polarization" of our Country. The Manifesto is a call to all evangelicals to focus on "a biblical, heartfelt, cross-centered faith" as well as to address today's social issues (which are the ones that the "young evangelicals above) are concerned about). This sounds like the theme of Jim Wallis' latest book. The major articles in this CT issue are about doing evangelism and apologetics in today's world, especially among young adults. As to evangelism, there is an interview with a divisional director of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship and a new witnessing tool he calls the "Four Circles". They represent four "points": Designed for good, Damaged by evil, Restored for better and Sent together to heal. The more common evangelistic tools, according to the IV Staffer, omitted the concept of the Kingdom, a life of discipleship which involves social justice ministries and focused instead on personal salvation in the afterlife. Evangelicals are pegged as intolerant, over political and homophobic. Personal evangelism begins by entering common ground with the no Christian. In the 1990s young adults were concerned with finding and knowing what is real. Today, supposedly, they are concerned overwhelmingly with finding and doing what is good. They see a world that is messed up and want to do something about it. They are activists or want to be. Evangelism starts with agreement on this. It is common ground. We all agree the world is a mess and we all long to make it better. Circles one and two. The next step is to say that before we can do that, we need Jesus in our lives. Circle three. They usually disagree- what does Jesus have to do with anything? Well, we are the main reason why the world is a mess and to change it we ourselves must first change. Jesus can do help us do that. We have failed to love others and Jesus can give us that love as we commit to being his disciples. As we follow him we will become change makers in the world and bring healing to it. It helps at this point to share our stories that confirm what we are talking about. The Staffer insists that this is "the same old Gospel" but in this version, Christians are eager to share it with their peers because it resonates with their concerns. Let me simply say this is not the same old Gospel. I have explained what that old Gospel is over and over in this Blog and it is not this. This actually is another version of the Genie in a Bottle story. In your good heartedness, filled with moral indignation and unselfish and well meaning love for others and the world, you realize you need help to carry out your idealist mission. Jesus exists to help you do that. Just rub the bottle, I mean just enter into a relationship with him, and off you go to change the world with him at your side. In contrast to this nice sounding scenario, the last articles for review are about Apologetics. Apparently this is the Golden Age for reasoning people into saving faith. Contrary to what everyone who works with young adults these days seems to say, they hunger for old time objective truth and value reason and logic to find it. Popular PoMo protestations against absolute Truth are just politically correct posturing. Actually, everyone wants and needs certainty, not only in science but in faith and morality as well. So say the many evangelical apologists quoted in the article and accordingly thousands of college age youth are showing up for lectures and debates- just like the old days just 30 years ago. Hard to believe, especially in light of what these first CT essays are saying. It is a mixed bag for sure, but my current experience in Western Mass gives the edge to the combo of slow pitch soft ball Gospel and social activism currently being offered on campuses and in churches with "civility".

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:19

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

## **ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD**

This is the time of year for many Denominations to have their national conventions. That does not mean what they accomplish is good. There was one here in our Civic center last weekend. It featured challenging messages about God and spreading His Word and carrying on the work of His Kingdom. There was much Bible study and prayer time. Thousands of Believers had wonderful fellowship. Sounds good, right? Many Christians would say Yes. With all this going on the convention had to be good. But these Believers were "Jehovah Witnesses" who are not, in any sense, evangelical Christians. Having a convention with preaching, prayer and Bible study does not make any convention of any Denomination good. Before evaluating these activities, we must evaluate the doctrines of the group that undergird the activities. What do the speakers and the "Believers" believe? Is what they say the Bible says really what the Bible says? The Theme for this particular convention was "Guided by God's Spirit." That sounds so good, it is the theme of many groups. It is a very popular motto (mantra) these days in church circles. "Come, let us listen to the Spirit. Let us listen to what the Spirit is telling us." This, too, sounds good doesn't it? But what "Spirit" is meant? And how does the Spirit speak? We must not be naïve. We must not make assumptions. In the case of the local JW convention the theme is not about the Holy Spirit at all. The "Jehovah Witnesses" are not Trinitarian. They do not believe in the person of the Holy Spirit. In fact, they deny the Trinity and to them the "Spirit" of God is simply the impersonal power or energy of God at work. The Spirit is the spirit (lower case). I don't know how an impersonal energy speaks or guides. The Holy Spirit speaks and guides through the Scripture (and I do not mean the so-called "New World Translation" of the Scripture!). Buyer beware! Everything that glitters like gold is not gold. This warning is appropriate for every church convention out there.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:45

Saturday, June 14, 2008

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DISCIPLE OF JESUS?**

I believe in God and I believe that God has revealed Himself and His will and that this Revelation or Word from God comes generally through His Works, i.e.- Creation and in a special way in the form of Scripture- all Scripture. I understand folks who just want to follow a part of the whole Bible and want to be known as New Testament Christians only. Others want to follow the first three Gospels or a part of them, often the Sermon on the Mount. A few specialize in the Gospel of John. Still others major in the Book of Acts and particularly what they believe it teaches about the Church. Some focus on the letters of the Apostle Paul. According to many these days, all we must do is listen to Jesus and follow him and live as he did. Never mind that we do not have a complete biography of him. We have material that covers maybe only 100 days of his 33 years and most of that material is about his last week on earth.

The entire Bible, all Scripture, is inspired by God. All of it is His Word, not just a few portions and certainly not just a few sentences that some versions print in red. All of it is Revelation from God and authoritative. Realizing this made a huge difference in my faith and life. I seek now to be a whole Bible Christian. Instead of asking "What would Jesus do?" or even, "What is the Christian thing to do?", it is far better to ask, "What is Biblical?" "What is the Biblical perspective?" Based on the entire Bible approach, here is the answer to the question: "How we are to live as a disciples of Christ?" To live as Christ did when he walked among us, means to live a life totally centered in God and in obedience to His revealed will in all areas of life, no matter what the price. That is what a Disciple of Jesus does. Nothing less. Briefly. I will repeat here again what I have often written on this Blog. There are seven Biblical Principles. All are essential and the order in which they are achieved is also essential. A Disciple of Christ's first passion and commitment is Evangelism. This means promoting and spreading the Gospel of Grace (as explained in the posts before this one.) This involves seeking, before all else, the Redemption of as many people as possible. It means seeking Biblical Conversions and the assimilation of those new Believers into the life of the Church. Second, the Disciple of Christ is committed to being Pro-Life and passionate about promoting and preserving the dignity and value (the health and well-being) of every human being, every Person, as well as the human community. Third, a Disciple of Christ is Pro-Environment and passionate about responsible stewardship and development of the natural world, the Creation of God. Fourth, a Disciple of Christ is Pro-Marriage and Family, promoting life-long partnerships of husbands (men) and wives (women) and the multigenerational, extended families. Fifth, the Disciple of Christ promotes Economic Development, meaning promoting opportunities for all to own and care for property, as well as developing private industry and business. Sixth, the Disciple of Christ is committed to constitutional civil government with Laws and Justice for all. Seventh. The Disciple of Christ will work to establish and protect the economic and political freedoms necessary for all of the above to be achieved. What does it mean to follow Christ? All of the above! But, in describing what a Disciple of Christ does, we must always keep in mind who a Disciple is. A Disciple of Christ is a sinner who has heard and personally experienced the Gospel of Grace and who is in love with the God of Grace. The well spring of his (or her) life of discipleship is worship and prayer. S/he is a person filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit and saturated with the Scripture. Discipleship is a life for others grounded and rooted in a deep spiritual life within. A Disciple will be motivated and energized in what s/he does by a heart for God and the heart for others that comes from that.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:02

Thursday, May 22, 2008

## **A REAL MEAL DEAL- Corpus Christi**

In the Church Calendar today is called "Corpus Christi", which is Latin for Body Of Christ. Anglicans call it "The Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion". I have written several times elsewhere on this Blog about the "Eucharist" and what I have come to believe about it [these posts can be found by using the search box in the column on the right]. Today, I simply join with others expressing my appreciation of it.

Most Baptist type Protestants call the "Lord's Supper" an ordinance and correctly see it as a ceremony that memorializes the Death of Christ and its benefits. They do it simply because the Lord commanded it (hence, the word "ordinance") By participating in the Supper, they acknowledge and remember that Jesus died for our sins. The piece of bread and the grape juice they hold in their hands are symbols of his body and his blood, distributed to remind them periodically of what Jesus did for our salvation. It is an occasion to be thankful for his sacrifice and reaffirm personal commitment to Him. Usually, the Lord's Supper is observed at the very end of the normal worship service of the local church once a month. Far from being central to that Service and Worship, it often seems rushed, tacked on as an extra. Some people leave before it begins because the Ceremony makes the Service "go overtime". I have come to appreciate the Lord's Supper as more than all the above. Yes, it is a time for thanksgiving (hence, the name "Eucharist"); but the thanksgiving is for more than the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. That is essential, but Jesus is alive. Anglicans shout, "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again". There is debate as to where Christ is during the Eucharist. Obviously, inasmuch as He rose from the grave and is ascended into Heaven, He is there. The "Corpus Christi" can not be on the Table, it is above. In Worship, properly done, Believers ascend in the Spirit to where Christ sits above. That is the Reformed Protestant conviction, which I share. When I go forward and stand at the Altar rail (itself an important aspect of the Ceremony), I try to imagine myself standing before the Risen Lord who died for me, seated on His Throne. I offer Him my adoration and renew my covenant with Him to be his faithful servant in the week ahead. To me, at that moment the Lord is truly and really present in a very special, spiritual way. I seek to be totally focused on Him in my mind and spirit. Doing this week after week, my faith in Christ is renewed and strengthened. Hence I consider the Eucharist as a means of grace, i.e.- a Sacrament. Of course, I can do this anywhere, anytime; but this particular Ceremony was given to us (instituted, commanded) by the Lord himself as the time and place and most effective way of doing it. I do not receive the Bread (a wafer) or the Wine in order to be saved, but because I am. Ideally, the minutes before the Table are a time of precious communion with my Savior. Hence, the other preferred name for the Supper is Holy Communion. Ironically, those Protestants who resist using the names Eucharist, Holy Communion and Sacrament because these names are too "Catholic", prefer the name "Lord's Supper" but do not believe they are in any way actually eating or feeding on the Lord. The Supper is not a real meal. It is basically something Christians are supposed to do and so they "do it". I have come to appreciate the Supper as a real Meal, during which I feed on the Lord (the Bread of Life) not with my teeth, but in my heart by faith with thanksgiving. I receive Him (not take) of Him. He nourishes me in this Meal. As an often hungry and faint Believer, I am very thankful for the nourishment the Lord gives to me. By it, my strength to "live the life" (walk the talk) is renewed week after week. It is an essential spiritual discipline which keeps me coming back to an Episcopal Church every Sunday. Ideally, every one in the congregation is having this same experience, inasmuch as this is a corporate (as well as very personal) event. Thus the entire Body of Christ (the Church) is built up. Bottom line: Corpus Christi sustains Corpus Christi. I am thankful for it!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:23

Monday, May 19, 2008

## **A GOSPEL LIFE STYLE?**

I read and hear frequently that Christians are to live a "Gospel lifestyle". Indeed, I am told, that is what being a Christian is. A related concept is that we Christians are to be disciples of Jesus and that is interpreted as living life like he did. Well, as much as I admire the sincerity and commitment of friends who think this way, if I understand them correctly, I believe such thinking is wrong.

I don't recognize the phrase "Gospel life style" from my study of the Bible. I understand the phrase means the Gospel is a way of life. Well, yes it can be if the Gospel is defined simply as the Good News that God values, affirms and cares for all people without restriction, especially the socially marginalized. Such a Message could indeed be a basis for a lifestyle manifesting this love of God for all; but, is this really the Gospel? I believe the Scriptural Gospel is good news to sinners of all kinds and types, be they rich and privileged or poor and homeless. The good news is that God loves them all and became incarnate as the Man, Jesus, to provide a sacrifice sufficient to atone for all sin. This means that forgiveness of sin and a life delivered from its guilt and power is available for all sinners who will repent and believe in this good news. God wants to save them and that has nothing to do with their social, religious, or political status. It has nothing to do with their race or gender. It has only to do with His will and purposes. That is what is meant by "grace" (unmerited favor). The good news is that sinners, rich and poor, alienated from God by their rebellious hearts and sinful living can be reconciled to God their Creator, regenerated and adopted into His Family and experience His Eternal Life here now and forever. This Gospel is not the same as the one meant in the phrase "Gospel lifestyle". But it is this Gospel by which anyone is saved. I understand that people who say we are called to live a our lives like Jesus did his, that is a life of loving and serving all people, especially the marginalized (the poor and powerless, the ostracized and oppressed). But does that describe how Jesus lived? In his actions, Jesus demonstrated the grace of the Gospel and the power of the Kingdom. But he did not live a life of serving the poor and oppressed. First, the writings called "Gospels" are not the Gospel. They are not biographies of Jesus, but were composed years after he lived and died, each with a unique theological purpose meaningful to the early churches for whom they were written. These "Gospels" do not cover the life of Jesus, but only to the last 3 years of that life. And most of the each "gospel's" material is devoted to only the last week of that period. The first 30 years of his life are barely mentioned. He lived with his family and worked in his small home town as a carpenter, providing for that family and serving his neighbors by the labor of his hands. That could serve as a model of how to live, but it is not what is meant by those who advocate living as Jesus did. The last 3 years of his public life were spent traveling around the country. He did not relocate from his small home town to the city of Jerusalem, let alone the inner city, live in "community" and work with the homeless or single mothers or street gangs and school drop-outs. He was primarily an itinerant Preacher or Teacher, constantly on the move, mostly from small town to small town or out in the rural areas, trying to avoid crowds. He was driven to literally spread the Word of God's kingdom to everyone everywhere. If we are to live our daily lives like Jesus did, this would be what we would do. Yes, he had power to heal and exorcize demons. When people who needed healing or exorcism came to him, he exercised his power on their behalf, but he kept on moving in order to keep on teaching, especially the first two years. The healing and exorcizing were not his primary mission, but they demonstrated the Kingdom (Power) of God in action. In the third year, He increasingly devoted his time with a select group of followers, teaching and training twelve of them to be his Apostles. They would become evangelistic missionaries and church planters. Having trained the Twelve, Jesus finished the primary mission for which he came. He gave his life a ransom for sinners. Thus he atoned for sin and, by his death and resurrection, he destroyed Death itself and rendered his arch enemy, Satan, powerless. This mission could have been undertaken and accomplished only by Jesus, God Himself incarnate. We are not called or expected to live and die as he did. We can not. We are called and expected by God to spread the good news of what Jesus alone accomplished, that sinners, hearing it, might be saved. Spreading this Gospel is the apostolic task of the Church everywhere, in the cities and in the villages of the world, among the rich and the poor, the privileged and the powerless- all to the glory of God. As to our actual, daily lifestyle- instead of Gospel lifestyle, it would be better to say, we are to live a Biblical Lifestyle. Particularly a life set apart for God's use (holy), a life of personal and social righteousness, a life that loves by living in harmony with the Law of God (the Torah) in relation to others and creation. That is a subject for other essays.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:59

Saturday, May 10, 2008

## **HONORING PARENTS**

The Law of God says, "Honor your father and mother" Exo 20:12 Some churches struggle with Mothers and Fathers Day observances because there are singles and couples who do not have children and may feel left out. These special days are not about children. The focus here is on our parents. We all have parents. No one is left out of that. I know many people have had a stressful relationship with their parents, usually one or the other. These are the folks who will be uncomfortable tomorrow on Mother's Day, not the folks who have not been parents themselves.

Honoring a parent who has been mean, hurtful or otherwise uncaring does not come easy. Being a good parent requires a lot of time and effort, a lot of listening and knowledge, a lot of wisdom and patience, a lot of courage and strength, a lot of forgiveness- a lot of love and faith. Such parents we should and can honor. It can be very hard to honor those who lacked these things. Nevertheless, the Lord commands us to honor our parents. We are, best as we are able, to show them appreciation, respect and either obedience when we are young or care when they are old. We can live in a way that will make them proud of us, proud of being our parents. We can live by their principles and values and carry on their traditions and heritage. If that is not possible, we can at least not denigrate what they thought valuable and worthwhile. We can work at being understanding of what they have gone through- their stories. At the very least, we can be thankful that they brought us into the world and helped us to become who we are (even if they did not intend it and we do not understand how).

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:39

Sunday, April 27, 2008

## **WONDERFUL WAY FOR CAL TO GO**

I was touched by the last three sentences of this article about the history of the Ranch to which many of the Mormon children were moved and its founder, Cal Farley. You will see why- "On February 19, 1967, Cal sat down in the back pew of the Boys Ranch Chapel. He greeted a boy sitting in front of him, sat back, and as the congregation sang "Glorious Is Thy Name," Cal closed his eyes and peacefully died. Mimi [his wife and life long partner] followed him in death exactly one month later." What a wonderful way to go!<http://www.calfarley.org/boysranch/Pages/BRHistory.aspx>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:59

Saturday, April 26, 2008

### **SPURGEON on SOUL WINNING**

The Soul Winner by C.H. Spurgeon was a major influence on me as a teenager and young Christian.

<http://www.spurgeon.org/misc/soulwinr.htm> CHS still is a great role model for all Preachers and his commentaries remain spiritual classics. There is one Scripture text that applies to soul winning that has stuck in my heart all these years and still applies today. It is Psalm 126. Here are Spurgeon's very wise and encouraging comments on vs. 5-6 v.5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. <http://www.spurgeon.org/treasury/ps126.htm>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:42

Friday, April 25, 2008

## **THE GREATEST NEGLECT IN MINISTRY TODAY**

I was ordained as a Baptist Pastor 47 years ago in Hartford, CT. I served 9 churches. There were 4 full time, 2 part time and 3 interim. This includes 3 new church plants, 2 of which were successful. I have also been an Evangelist (in many venues) and have had a ministry with college students through 3 different bookstores in college towns. How did all this begin? I am writing about it here because the answer addresses what I see as the greatest neglect in Christian Ministry today: Personal Evangelism. I accepted Christ Sept 5, 1955- at the beginning of my Senior year in HS. I had a passion for personal evangelism (soul winning) from the beginning. That year and all through college, I also did a lot of Preaching- in rescue missions, open air meetings, youth rallies and jails as well as in various churches. I worked in the summers with Child Evangelism Fellowship and Pocket Testament League in the housing projects of Hartford, CT. During college, I was also a youth pastor at a Baptist Church, an interim Pastor in another Baptist Church and helped plant a new Baptist Church in Bloomfield, CT. On campus, I was president and very active in IVCF- doing a lot of personal evangelism. Many made decisions for Christ- then and through the years.

Upon graduating, I was accepted at Gordon Seminary to prepare to become a Pastor. My friends said I was into soul-winning because I was going to be a Pastor. (Actually, many pastors do not even try to do soul winning) I said no. I was into witnessing and evangelizing because I was a Christian and all Christians have that privilege and responsibility- not just Pastors. I would prove that by going into some other work- that turned out to be inner city social work with the State Welfare Department, Division of Child Welfare in Hartford. A degree in Social Work was not required in those days (in the 1960s). A college degree with on the job training was enough to get started. I eventually had a case load of 91 teenage boys in the poor, inner city north end of Hartford- most of them were African American. As a big white guy, I was easy to spot as I spent a lot of time on the streets with kids in trouble, going to juvenile court with them, trying to help them stay in school or get jobs. Often they would end up in foster homes or Reform Schools. I loved the boys and enjoyed the work- although it was like trying to put out fires with squirt guns. Major surgery was needed and I only had band aids. I married and my wife and she and I, and eventually our sons, lived in an apartment building in the North End Neighborhood where I worked. I began preaching for a country church in rural town in CT, as well as working in Hartford. The work at that old church did not go well and lasted only a few months, but it started me thinking again about becoming a full-time Pastor. I became the organizing Pastor for new church in another town near Hartford, while I continued doing social work. The push into full-time pastoral work came from the boys. The State offered them many resources. Each one had a Team of experts: case workers, educators and counselors from the school system, even psychiatrists in some cases. Nothing seemed to make much of a difference. These kids needed Christ. I knew from much experience how Christ can change a person from the inside out. Big time. They had problems with family and school; but mostly they had a problem with sin- they needed all the State could offer, but they also needed to be saved. I began talking to them about that. And I began getting in trouble for doing that. I was ridiculed in our case management meetings when I said that the boys had a sin problem and needed Jesus. My Supervisor called me on the carpet several times for this. She reminded me that I worked for the State. I was told I could make referrals of the boys to clergy and churches, but most of them were not interested or too busy for my boys. I had to make a decision. The best thing I could do for these young inner city teens was to lead them to Christ. If I could not do that as a State employee, I would become a Pastor and do it that way. I resigned my State job, even though we were a young couple with babies to care for and we needed income. My wife has always supported me in ministry and followed me when we believed I was following Christ. She has been my active partner in much of this work. I thank God for her. Long story short, I eventually became an ordained Baptist Pastor and my first full-time church was an old, inner city church in Lowell, north of Boston- leading children and their families to Christ and into the Church. Our daughters were born there during that time. We have traveled a long way since then, but those were very good days. I have not been directly involved in child evangelism for many years now, as I became involved in the work of a church Pastor and then ministry with students in 3 different college towns. Personal Evangelism Defined I define personal evangelism as the presentation of the Gospel to individual sinners with the intentional effort to lead them to make a decision to accept Christ as personal Lord and Savior. If they do accept Him, they will know and have assurance then and there, based on Scripture, that they have been forgiven and accepted (justified) by God, saved for all eternity. If the evangelism is done well, the new Believers will get off their knees with a desire and commitment to follow and serve their new Lord and Savior the rest of their lives. (The key to that happening is their understanding that the Savior they are accepting is, first of all, the Lord of Lords.) If done properly, personal evangelism will result in public confession of faith by the new Believer and active participation in a church for worship, personal growth and outreach to others. I almost never hear any one talking about doing this kind of personal evangelism today. When Christians today talk about evangelism at all, it is usually in terms of helping people who have personal needs find God and through Him, find help

with those needs. That is not, by my definition, personal evangelism. Others will say they work and pray to help others find and enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus. That is good, too, but again, by my definition, that is not personal evangelism. That is not soul-winning. I hear a lot about short term mission trips and about all kinds of ministries of compassion and charity among hurting and marginalized people or for disaster victims. Those are important, but such ministry is not a substitute for personal evangelism. Christians and Churches have always been involved in such ministry and many secular groups do these good things as well. We should not neglect or ignore or deny the need for social justice and social activism; but who is regularly leading souls to Christ and ministering to the eternal, spiritual needs of lost sinners, rich as well as poor? Who is intentionally doing personal evangelism? None of the dozens of secular agencies and service organizations in this area are doing that! I am convinced this evangelistic ministry is needed now more than when I started doing it 50 years ago. It is the work being most neglected or ignored by Christians today. There are those who even deny its necessity. Jesus is still calling to us. He still says, "The fields are ripe for harvest." Who will go into them and reap souls for Christ?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:12

Saturday, April 19, 2008

## **ANOTHER MARTYR**

Alphege, Archbishop of Canterbury, Martyr, 1012  
In light of our recent discussion here as to whether Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a martyr or not, today's commemoration of Alphege is interesting. He, too, is remembered as a martyr. Having become a very effective and well-loved Bishop, he was captured by Pagans and held for a very exorbitant ransom. His people were very poor and such extortion was far more than they could afford. Alphege refused to allow the ransom to be paid and chose to die instead. He became known as a martyr, not for his faith as such; but for justice based on his faith- dying to prevent his people (his diocese) from being robbed blind. [resource for this story is Oremus]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:08

Sunday, April 13, 2008

## **AN OASIS IN THE DESERT**

Today was wonderful- one of the best days we have had in a long time! We were out of town to attend a reception for a favorite aunt and uncle (my wife's) celebrating their 60th Wedding Anniversary! It was so touching and special- 60 years together! The event included many photos on a large screen with high-lights from the family photo albums, enjoyed by many family and friends from near and far. Before arriving, we worshipped with an Episcopal Parish en route. It was perfect. Yes, a marvelous oasis in a parched desert. By the last hymn, I was overcome with emotions of thanksgiving and joy for what had transpired. We attended the 3rd Service of the morning. It was full. Walking in, we were warmly greeted by a number of people and given a very extensive Welcome Packet. It was a traditional Service, enjoyed by spirited worshippers of all ages and types. The large choir sang beautifully accompanied by a marvelous pipe organ. The Sermon was solid Biblical exposition, well delivered. The bulletin announced many good programs for education, fellowship and outreach for all ages throughout the week. The whole thing was great! Very exciting. The Nave and Sanctuary with stained glass windows are traditional (and reminded us of a larger version of St Barnabas here in Springfield)

The Bulletin included a statement that the parish combines evangelical, charismatic and catholic traditions; but made it clear that they believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that the Parish stands firm on classic orthodox doctrine. They even require a 2 year course of study before Confirmation and a 8 week course for children before allowing them take their "First Communion". The mission of the Parish is "to know Christ and to make Him known" and "to invite every person to enter into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ", Savior of the world. Wonderful, just wonderful. Thank you Lord for this light in the darkness, this faithful remnant in what is considered to be a liberal Diocese. After the 1½ hour Service we went to a nearby "authentic Chinese" Restaurant where we enjoyed well prepared food accompanied by classic Chinese music. Perfect. What a great day. Thank you, Lord!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:20

Thursday, April 10, 2008

### **CAN A MAN WHO PLANS VIOLENCE BE A MARTYR?**

Some assume that martyrs are non-violent victims, therefore anyone who takes part in a violent act and is killed for doing so should not be considered to be a martyr. Is this true? Only if the assumption is true. It is not. Standard dictionary definitions do not connect martyrdom with non-violence (even if some Christians do). The assumption is read into the definition and not required by it. Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of Martyr1: a person who voluntarily suffers death as the penalty of witnessing to and refusing to renounce a religion2: a person who sacrifices something of great value and especially life itself for the sake of principle The question is whether Bonhoeffer was killed for his faith (Definition #1 above. Definition #2 above would certainly apply to him and by it he was a martyr.) Further, knowing that Pastor Bonhoeffer wanted early on wanted to be a pacifist or non-violent, how did he come to change his mind and become involved in the assassination plot that led to his being hanged? The Randy Alcorn article (below) is very good on this subject. Most of us debating this are far removed from it and talk in theory. The reality of evil in our face demands action. Our Faith demands action. God demands action. The question is: what action?  
<http://randyalcorn.blogspot.com/2007/12/dietrich-bonhoeffer-final-thoughts-on.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:44

Wednesday, April 9, 2008

### **DIETRICH BONHOEFFER Pastor, Martyr, 1945**

A man who greatly influenced me through his books when I was a young Pastor was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I remember the day I found and purchased a paperback copy of his *Cost of Discipleship*. It had a great, life-changing impact on me. Today the Church commemorates him.

"When Hitler came to power in 1933, Bonhoeffer became a leading spokesman for the Confessing Church, the center of Protestant resistance to the Nazis. He organized and for a time led the underground seminary of the Confessing Church. His book *Life Together* describes the life of the Christian community in that seminary, and his book *The Cost Of Discipleship* attacks what he calls "cheap grace," meaning grace used as an excuse for moral laxity. Bonhoeffer had been taught not to "resist the powers that be," but he came to believe that to do so was sometimes the right choice. In 1939 his brother-in-law introduced him to a group planning the overthrow of Hitler, and he made significant contributions to their work. (He was at this time an employee of the Military Intelligence Department.) He was arrested in April 1943 and imprisoned in Berlin. After the failure of the attempt on Hitler's life in April 1944, he was sent first to Buchenwald and then to Schoenberg Prison. His life was spared, because he had a relative who stood high in the government; but then this relative was himself implicated in anti-Nazi plots. On Sunday 8 April 1945, he had just finished conducting a service of worship at Schoenberg, when two soldiers came in, saying, "Prisoner Bonhoeffer, make ready and come with us," the standard summons to a condemned prisoner. As he left, he said to another prisoner, "This is the end -- but for me, the beginning -- of life." He was hanged the next day, less than a week before the Allies reached the camp." [James Kiefer, abridged]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:14

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

### **THOUGHT FOR TODAY**

"What we do today and tomorrow can be limited only by our lack of faith and our smallness of vision" That was the original aphorism and it is a good one. A better one would be-"What we do today and tomorrow can be limited only by our lack of faith in God and the smallness of our vision of Him"

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 07:00

Friday, March 28. 2008

## **L'ABRI GOES POST MODERN**

Excerpts from an article by Molly Worthen found at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/march/36.60.html> L'Abri has become a community ambivalent about Schaeffer's legacy and ill at ease with mainstream evangelical culture. Half a century after L'Abri's founding and more than 20 years after Schaeffer's death, students come with very different questions. Between L'Abri's 1955 founding and the early 1970s, the ministry attracted European students schooled in modern philosophy and existentialism, as well as young Americans backpacking through Europe. ... young people trying to square the Bible with Sartre and Kierkegaard. Schaeffer wove thinkers as diverse as Leonardo da Vinci and Karl Barth into a confident narrative that sought to demolish modern secular philosophy and vindicate Christianity. When John Sandri's [a son-in-law on staff at L'Abri] studies in literature led him to reread the Bible through the lens of narrative theology, Schaeffer was appalled. "He wanted me to withdraw from a teaching role in the community," said Sandri, [who] had come to question everything from the Trinity to predestination, "but the one that broke the camel's back was [biblical] inerrancy. Schaeffer felt this was the issue of the day, where Christians have to dig into the trenches," Sandri said. "I'm not an inerrantist, but I'm not an 'errantist' either. Both are wrong. Man makes these opposing points of view. The modernist agenda is behind both." ... his unorthodox views are a telling expression of what L'Abri has become.... "authenticity." That idea is far more important to today's L'Abri students than winning debates with secular intellectuals ... current workers agree that, "the emphasis has shifted to personal issues, which people less readily see as related to ideas." "For a lot of people, [L'Abri] is more about personal spirituality, which makes sense—that's the way religion is branded in the U.S.," said Jasie Peltier. Peltier tutors mostly female students, and though she'd prefer to talk about philosophy and theology, she usually ends up talking about boys. "No one has a clue what 'authenticity' is," she said. "They think it's spilling your guts, purging. They think, I'm going to be real here, and being real means sharing, over-sharing." ... students explore their faith (or lack of it—the occasional atheist finds his way here) by means very different from the apologetics of Francis Schaeffer. Those few students who have read any of his books consider him largely obsolete. The modernist philosophy that he targeted in most of his writings, the bogeyman of existentialism, is passé. "Now the question is, 'Is there truth at all?'" said worker Thomas Rauchenstein. "Postmodernism's critique of truth is more of a factor in students' thinking." ... students and workers today have no use for Schaeffer's presuppositionalist apologetics, which he adapted from Cornelius Van Til. Van Til's aim "was to show the non-Christian that his worldview in toto and in all its parts must logically lead back to full irrationalism, and then to show him that the Christian system provides the universal which gives a valid explanation of the universe.... Students today have the despair of having lost that certainty. The postmodern critique of objectivity has saturated them.... when students say they seek authenticity, what they really want is certainty, an inner knowing. Convinced that they won't find it intellectually, many pursue that feeling of conviction through experience: in the communal life and worship at L'Abri; in the books by emerging church authors that are popular with many students, and in the charismatic worship style, that ... is no longer taboo here.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:27

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

## **I WON'T GO TO THAT CHURCH: THEY PREACH THE LAW!**

I heard recently of a person who no longer goes to a certain church because all they preach is "Law". Knowing that Church and its Pastor, I find this hard to believe. The Law of God is part of the inspired Scripture and is not only to be preached, but studied and obeyed by all Believers. The Law includes the first Five Books of the Bible (known as the Torah), which includes the 10 Commandments. Most evangelical Preachers do not spend much time these days in the 10 Commandments or the Law.

I would guess that the person complaining meant the Preacher or the Church is legalistic. This is different. A legalistic church is one that has a lot of man-made Rules or boundaries to circumscribe or define Christian behavior. A legalistic Church might insist that a true Christian will not drink, dance, smoke, cuss or tell off-color stories or look at pornographic pictures. They must attend Services at least twice a week and give a full Tithe to the Church. Perhaps they might be strict about clothing styles or the kinds of music that are not acceptable. Well, most of these things are not in the Law and all are debatable. There are usually good reasons behind such rules, but they certainly are not popular today and it is an unusual church today that is legalistic. The critic went on to say that the church in question would do better to preach Grace. This is a false dichotomy. The Law itself is a gift from God. Grace, the word, means gift or unmerited favor or help from God. The Law, i.e.- the Torah is all of that. Pity the child that grows up without guidance, directions and boundaries and good advice about how to avoid pitfalls and temptations out in the world. If that child was deprived of all this, we would question whether the child was loved- whether the parent cared. Certainly we would agree the parent was irresponsible and negligent and was doing the child harm. God is our loving Father. He would not treat us this way. Thus He has given us His Law. It is good and worth more than gold and we should be very glad to have a Pastor that preaches the Law for our benefit. Perhaps the Pastor's critic suffers from a guilty conscience. Perhaps he or she has transgressed the Law and doesn't want to repent and confess that. Perhaps she or he has stolen, has lied or been a false witness or has coveted something belonging to a neighbor. Should the Pastor really overlook such behavior in the name of grace? The truly grace-filled and loving thing to do is for the Pastor to use the Law as a search light to expose such behavior that the convicted sinner would change their destructive ways. I know all of us need encouragement and we do not want to be beaten down every week by a sermon that condemns us. Of course not! A good Pastor will be affirming and encouraging, but there is still a necessity to preach the Law of God (not man-made Rules) both for correction and for instruction in righteousness and to equip us for every good work. Read 2 Timothy 3:16!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:48

Friday, March 7, 2008

## **WHERE IS WALDO?**

Where is Waldo? where is the Risen Christ in History. You may know how hard it is to spot a tiny Waldo in a large picture full of details. It is much easier to find Christ at work in the world today. Here is what to look for-Advance of the (Classic) Gospel: Conversions to Christ and the growth of the Church by those conversions. Where this is happening anywhere in the world, the Spirit of Christ is at work. (We see Him doing this most obviously these days in the Global South). Preaching the Gospel and Prayer are absolutely the primary and most essential instruments for the expansion of Christ's Kingdom. Going back to Genesis and the Cultural mandate, we also can see that the Kingdom includes the following-

Advance of the Pro-Life Movement: Wherever there is the promotion and preservation of the dignity and value (health and well-being) of human beings in the image of God there is the Spirit of Christ at work and the extension of His Kingdom. Advance of the Pro-Environment Movement. Wherever there is responsible stewardship and development of the natural world there is the Kingdom. Advance of Biblical Marriage and extended Family (understood as life-long partnerships of husbands (men) and wives (women) and children. Where this is found, Christ is at work. Economic Development. Where there is respect and protection of private property, market capitalism and opportunity for all to work and be self-supporting there is the Kingdom. Constitutional Government providing Law and Justice equally for all is also a sign of the Kingdom. The Mission of God includes all of the above. If Christians will focus on all this and participate with God in extending this Kingdom, then they truly will be missional in the best sense of that word.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:50

Saturday, March 1, 2008

## **TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL?**

Should Christians pull their children out of Public Schools? Here is a proposal to do just that. What is most interesting to me are the many comments that follow the proposal. Some strong feelings and good arguments here, pro and con. A very important topic. [http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2008/02/too\\_cool\\_for\\_sc.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2008/02/too_cool_for_sc.html)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:11

Friday, February 8, 2008

## **ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF NEO-CALVINISM**

Creation, Fall and Redemption. God's good creation has been disrupted by the Fall. Redemption is a restoration of Creation. A rejection of Dualism. Dualism has been rife in Christian thinking. The most notable dualism is between nature and grace. Neo-Calvinists maintain that grace restores nature. Jesus is Lord over all of creation. Jesus' lordship extends through every area and aspect of life-it is not restricted to the sphere of church or of personal spiritual life. All of life is to be redeemed. The work of Jesus on the cross extends over all of life-no area is exempt. Cultural Mandate Genesis 1:26-28 has been described as a cultural mandate. It is the mandate to cultivate and develop the Creation and this involves Culture and Civilization. The role of Law. Law is more than the Decalogue. It is the Torah and includes the creation ordinances established by God. These laws provide the norms for living in God's world. Sphere sovereignty. God-given social boundaries should be affirmed and respected. This list is taken from Wikipedia and appears on my Website. I develop and apply these basic concepts in my Essays on that site and in posts on my Blog. The portal to both is found here- <http://www.calvinfox.com/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:27

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

## **THINGS IN OUR LIVES WE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH- THANK GOD**

I am grateful for the two people who have indicated they read my Essay below entitled "Two Most Important Men in History". Bless them, Lord. I am disappointed, if that means no one else has read it. I know it is long- but I think the content is important! The Topic of Election is included in the Essay. Many people just recoil at the idea that something like Salvation is not determined by free will alone. We are so intent on keeping that concept. Have you ever thought about how many other things in our lives are not determined by free will alone? Every decision we make is influenced by someone or something. Yes, you say, but at least we had the last or final word in making the decision and are responsible for it. OK, how about that the fact that you were born in the first place? And the matter of to whom and when and where and in what order? And the matter of your race and gender? And your first language? And the matter of your genetic and physical make-up? Even your Religion was predetermined along with all of these other matters. No choice at all. Now is it not possible that God had something to do with every one of these details? Yes, it is. And Salvation is, too. Thank God! I should add, what we do with all these "givens", what we make of them, how we fulfill or use them does depend a great deal on our "free will". May God give us grace to make the most of everything else He has given us and use them all to His Glory.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:46

Monday, January 21, 2008

## **PRAISING THE LORD WITH STRINGS AND FOR THOSE PLAYING THEM**

We listened today to a full CD of classical music, including many classic Hymns, performed by the String Orchestra of Whitinsville Christian School in Whitinsville, MA. It was recorded in Mechanics Hall, Worcester, MA this past year. Listening to this lush, very professional sounding music was a deeply moving experience, made even more special by knowing that these musicians are Christian teenagers, including one of our granddaughters. It does this old heart of mine good to not only hear such a performance, but to know that this kind of music continues on in the lives of these young people. I see many ragtag youth on my daily walks and hear the very different kind of music many of them are playing on their radios and I despair for the future of what I think is a great music tradition. I can't tell you how touching, inspirational and encouraging it is to see and hear these Whitinsville teens.

Likewise, we were privileged to attend and enjoy a concert, last Saturday evening, also at Mechanics Hall, of the best high school musicians from 62 High Schools in Central Massachusetts. We especially enjoyed the District Orchestra and the District Chorus, each with some 100 teenagers who gave a really professional quality performance- absolutely excellent! Again our granddaughter, and several others from Whitinsville Christian School, were included. Another great encouragement for the future of many teenagers and for what we consider to be a very important musical heritage. Bravo!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 17:04

Thursday, January 10, 2008

## **EVANGELISTIC WEBSITES**

The favorite evangelistic websites of evangelist Luis Palau- very helpful!  
[http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2008/01/the\\_list\\_evange.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2008/01/the_list_evange.html)  
Need Him <http://www.needhim.org/> Answers common questions about faith for people in every walk of life. Jesus Central <http://jesuscentral.com/> Credible, powerful, and educational. This impressive website helps people from all cultural and spiritual backgrounds study Jesus of Nazareth, the person. God Speaks <http://godspeaks.com/intro.asp> Presents the Good News of Jesus Christ through stories, testimonies, audio messages, and clearly answered questions about faith. Lee Strobel <http://www.leestrobel.com/> Find answers to your faith questions from more than a dozen top Christian speakers, authors, evangelists, and professors. The Good News [http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2008/01/the\\_list\\_evange.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2008/01/the_list_evange.html)...uses the Four Spiritual Laws to walk its visitors through the Good News.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:08

Monday, December 17, 2007

## **LAST POST FOR THE YEAR**

My wife and I enjoyed a "Hallmark" kind of movie last week: "Shenandoah" with Jimmy Stewart. Very good film about a widower raising his family of 8 during the Civil War. They were hard working farmers. They owned no slaves and did not want to fight a war so others could. They were actually libertarians and just wanted to be left alone. They were doing well, thanks to no one, especially the government. The War was no business of theirs, even though it raged within miles on all sides of their farm. The plot, of course, is how they did get pulled into the War when they finally had no choice. Then they suffered much, but survived. (Well, it is a movie)I could not help but think that this was a metaphor of the many Christians we know, who just do not want to get into the war raging in the world around them today. They have nice, comfortable lives, which they do indeed work hard to maintain. The international war against Terrorism, as well as the battles against Poverty, Crime, Disease and a variety of dysfunctional or corrupt systems being fought in the Cities of our Country are not their problem.- no business of theirs. And then there are the booming cannons of Atheism (Secularism, Naturalism, Humanism), as well as the constant sniper shots by Satan's minions, aimed at Truth everywhere. These Believers are turning a deaf ear to the sounds of warfare getting closer all the time to their bucolic or suburban homesteads. The culture of this Country is changing rapidly and drastically for the worse, all around us, and we can not be oblivious to that. We believe in Christ and His ultimate Victory over Evil and the Coming of His Kingdom. That does not warrant our being either apathetic or pollyannaish. We all must enter the fray! I hope, in the new year coming, to arouse and help enable Christian soldiers to fight.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:56

Saturday, December 8, 2007

#### **FOUR, MUST HAVE, GIFTS FOR CHRISTMAS**

Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.- Psalm 85  
We must have all four: Truth without mercy can be cruel. Mercy without Truth can be very misdirected. Lasting Peace is impossible without righteousness and righteousness without lasting peace is not genuine.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:23

Thursday, December 6, 2007

## **SERMON AFTER A SUICIDE**

A YOUNG MAN MY WIFE AND I KNEW AND LOVED COMMITTED SUICIDE LAST WEEKEND. WE HAD SPENT A LOT OF TIME WITH HIM AND HIS WIFE AND THEIR TWO SMALL CHILDREN, INCLUDING ONE CHRISTMAS. WE HAVEN'T SEEN THEM SINCE WE MOVED FROM VERMONT, BUT TALKED ON THE PHONE FOR AWHILE, AT THE BEGINNING. WE DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED, BUT OUR HEARTS AND PRAYERS GO OUT TO HIS FAMILY. TODAY WAS HIS FUNERAL (THE FIRST OF TWO). I WENT INTO MY FILES AND GOT OUT THE SERMON I PREACHED AFTER THE SUICIDE OF ANOTHER MAN WE KNEW IN VERMONT. I SEE NOW THAT SERMON NEEDED A LOT OF EDITING AND SO I HAVE TRIED TO IMPROVE IT AND OFFER THIS VERSION FOR TODAY.

REV 14:13 GIVES US COMFORT I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN SAY, "WRITE: BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHO DIE IN THE LORD FROM NOW ON." "YES," SAYS THE SPIRIT, "THEY WILL REST FROM THEIR LABOR, FOR THEIR DEEDS WILL FOLLOW THEM." WHEN A CHRISTIAN DIES, HE OR SHE IS "BLESSED" THE "BLESSING" IS REST FROM LABOR = REST FROM HARD, DEMANDING WORK OR A HARD, PAINFUL LIFE; REST FROM SUFFERING "THEIR DEEDS WILL FOLLOW THEM"-----WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? THE REPORT OF THE GOOD BELIEVERS HAVE DONE DURING THEIR LIVES FOLLOWS THEM TO HEAVEN. WHEN WE GET THERE WE WILL BE WELCOMED AND CELEBRATED. WE WILL HEAR THE LORD'S GREETING, "WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!" (PARABLE OF THE TALENTS- MATT 25) BUT WHAT IF OUR LOVED ONE DIED AT THEIR OWN HAND? WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO COMMIT SUICIDE? WE SOMETIMES HEAR THAT THEY COULD NOT HAVE BEEN SAVED OR IF THEY WERE, THEY ARE NOW LOST. THE ANSWER IS IN 1 CORINTHIANS 3 [WHEN IT COMES TO SALVATION] 11 NO ONE CAN LAY ANY FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE ALREADY LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. SALVATION IS BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH CHRIST ALONE BY FAITH ALONE IF OUR LOVED ONE HAD CONFESSED FAITH IN CHRIST AS HIS OR HER PERSONAL SAVIOR, AND WE HAD SEEN EVIDENCE OF THAT FAITH IN THEIR LIFE, WE OUGHT TO BELIEVE THEY WERE SAVED. REV 14:13 APPLIES TO THEM. "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO DIE IN THE LORD" SINCE SALVATION IS BY FAITH, SALVATION IS NOT LOST BY A TERRIBLE SIN OR BY A SINGULAR MAJOR ERROR IN JUDGMENT IF IT WERE, THAT WOULD MEAN SALVATION IS NOT BY FAITH ALONE. BUT IT IS! SALVATION IS BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH CHRIST ALONE BY FAITH ALONE AND GOD PROMISES THAT NO ONE, AND NO TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE, CAN SEPARATE US FROM CHRIST AND THE GRACE THAT KEEPS US SAVED. [WHEN IT COMES TO SALVATION] 11 NO ONE CAN LAY ANY FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE ALREADY LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. -----NOW THIS VERSE GOES ON TO SAY 12 [A] MAN BUILDS ON THIS FOUNDATION, USING GOLD, SILVER, COSTLY STONES, ----- (OR) WOOD, HAY OR STRAW, 13 HIS WORK WILL BE SHOWN FOR WHAT IT IS, BECAUSE THE DAY WILL BRING IT TO LIGHT. IT WILL BE REVEALED WITH FIRE, AND THE FIRE WILL TEST THE QUALITY OF EACH MAN'S WORK. 14 IF WHAT HE HAS BUILT SURVIVES, HE WILL RECEIVE HIS REWARD. 15 IF IT IS BURNED UP, HE WILL SUFFER LOSS; HE HIMSELF WILL BE SAVED, BUT ONLY AS ONE ESCAPING THROUGH THE FLAMES. ROMANS 14:7 NONE OF US LIVES TO HIMSELF ALONE AND NONE OF US DIES TO HIMSELF ALONE. 8 IF WE LIVE, WE LIVE TO THE LORD; AND IF WE DIE, WE DIE TO THE LORD. SO, WHETHER WE LIVE OR DIE, WE BELONG TO THE LORD. 9 FOR THIS VERY REASON, CHRIST DIED AND RETURNED TO LIFE SO THAT HE MIGHT BE THE LORD OF BOTH THE DEAD AND THE LIVING. 10 YOU, THEN, WHY DO YOU JUDGE YOUR BROTHER [WHAT EVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR PASSING]? OR WHY DO YOU LOOK DOWN ON YOUR BROTHER? FOR WE WILL ALL STAND BEFORE GOD'S JUDGMENT SEAT. 12...., EACH OF US WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD. GOD ALONE IS JUDGE---NOT US---WE MUST TRUST HIM TO DO RIGHT WHEN WE EACH APPEAR BEFORE HIM---NO MATTER WHAT WE WENT THROUGH TO GET THERE LIFE CAN BE VERY HARD-----WE ALL KNOW DEPRESSION. SOME OF US KNOW HOW SEVERE DEPRESSION CAN BE AND HOW HOPELESS LIFE CAN SEEM IT IS A TERRIBLE THING TO GET TO THAT PLACE WHERE WE ARE SO OVERWHELMED BY OUR PROBLEMS & FAILURES OR BY THE LOSS, OR THE THREAT OF THE LOSS, OF ALL THAT MATTERS TO US -HEALTH, LOVED ONES, FREEDOM- THAT WE BECOME CONVINCED THAT THERE IS NO SOLUTION-----ALL HOPE IS GONE-----AND WE COME TO BELIEVE THE ONLY WAY OUT IS TO TAKE ONE'S OWN LIFE WE DO NOT WANT TO GET TO THAT STATE OF MIND! WE NEED TO REAFFIRM NOW, BEFORE WE ARE TEMPTED TO GO THERE, THAT ----WITH GOD---THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE-----THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY OUT----AND THAT WAY IS NEVER SUICIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 NO TEMPTATION [THE WORD MEANS A TRIAL THAT WILL LEAD US INTO COMMITTING SIN] HAS SEIZED YOU EXCEPT WHAT IS COMMON TO MAN. AND GOD IS FAITHFUL; HE WILL NOT LET YOU BE [TRIED] BEYOND

WHAT YOU CAN BEAR. BUT WHEN YOU ARE [TRIED], HE WILL ALSO PROVIDE A WAY OUT SO THAT YOU CAN STAND UP UNDER IT. CHRISTIANS LIVE BY HOPE: EACH OF US---ALL OF US---WE MUST HAVE HOPEWHERE DOES OUR HOPE COME FROM? FROM GOD AND HIS WORDTHE HOPE THAT SUSTAINS US IS IN GOD AND HIS PROMISES ROMANS 5:5 [THIS] HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT US, BECAUSE GOD HAS Poured OUT [THE ASSURANCE OF] HIS LOVE INTO OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHOM HE HAS GIVEN US. OUR HOPE IS GROUNDED IN OUR ASSURANCE THAT GOD LOVES US. THIS CONFIDENCE MUST BE OURS BEFORE WE ENTER INTO DARK THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS THAT CAN OVERWHELM USROMANS 8:31 IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US? 32 HE WHO DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON, BUT GAVE HIM UP FOR US ALL--HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO, ALONG WITH HIM, GRACIOUSLY GIVE US ALL THINGS? 33 WHO WILL BRING ANY CHARGE AGAINST THOSE WHOM GOD HAS CHOSEN? 34 WHO IS HE THAT CONDEMNS? CHRIST JESUS, WHO DIED--MORE THAN THAT, WHO WAS RAISED TO LIFE--IS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD INTERCEDING FOR US. 35 WHO SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? SHALL TROUBLE OR HARSHIP OR PERSECUTION OR FAMINE OR NAKEDNESS OR DANGER OR SWORD? 37 NO, IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US. 38 I AM CONVINCED [BELOVED, WE MUST BE CONVINCED, CONVINCED AT THE VERY CORE OF OUR BEING] THAT NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE, NEITHER ANGELS NOR DEMONS, NEITHER THE PRESENT NOR THE FUTURE, NOR ANY POWERS, 39 NOR ANYTHING ELSE IN ALL CREATION, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. IT IS THIS ASSURANCE OF HIS LOVE THAT GIVES US THE HOPE THAT DOES NOT DISAPPOINTWHEN ALL SEEMS HOPELESS- WHEN YOU ARE TEMPTED TO GIVE UP ON LIFE THERE IS HOPE HOPE FOR TODAY----FOR TOMORROW--- FOR ETERNITYWE AGONIZE BECAUSE OUR LOVED ONE SOMEHOW LOST SITE OF THAT HOPEROMANS 8:18 I CONSIDER THAT OUR PRESENT SUFFERINGS ARE NOT WORTH COMPARING WITH THE GLORY THAT WILL BE REVEALED IN US. 24 IN THIS HOPE WE WERE SAVED. 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13 BROTHERS [AND SISTERS], WE DO NOT WANT YOU TO BE IGNORANT ABOUT THOSE WHO FALL ASLEEP, OR TO GRIEVE LIKE THE REST OF MEN, WHO HAVE NO HOPE. PEOPLE OF THE WORLD HAVE NO HOPE----- WE CHRISTIANS DO NOT NEED TO BE LIKE THEM. WE HAVE HOPE AND IT WILL NOT DISAPPOINT USNOW IF WE HAVE HOPE THAT WE WILL OVERCOME THE GRAVE, THAT WE WILL BE RESURRECTED AND GO HOME TO GLORYIF WE HAVE HOPE THAT GOD CAN GIVE US VICTORY OVER SIN AND DEATH AND THE GRAVE, THAN WE CAN HAVE HOPE THAT GOD CAN HELP US OVERCOME WHATEVER OUR TROUBLES ARE NOWTHOSE WHO TAKE THEIR OWN LIVES HAVE NOT HELD ON TO THIS HOPE AND OUR HEARTS GRIEVE DEEPLY FOR THEM AND THOSE THEY LEAVE BEHINDBUT THOSE WHO ARE LEFT BEHIND MUST NOT DO THE SAME. THEY MUST HOLD ON TO THIS HOPE THAT IS GROUNDED IN THE WORD OF GODWE CAN HAVE ASSURANCE THAT WHATEVER WE ARE FACING, WITH GOD OUR SITUATION IS NOT HOPELESS. BY GOD'S GRACE, WE CAN MAKE IT. WE SHALL GET THROUGH OUR HEARTACHE AND TROUBLE. WE SHALL OVERCOMETURN NOW TO ROMANS 1212 BE JOYFUL IN HOPE, PATIENT IN AFFLICTION, FAITHFUL IN PRAYER. 13 SHARE WITH GOD'S PEOPLE WHO ARE IN NEED. PRACTICE HOSPITALITY. 14 BLESS THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU; BLESS AND DO NOT CURSE. 15 REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE; MOURN WITH THOSE WHO MOURN. HERE IS GOOD ADVICE TO THOSE WHO SUFFER:BE JOYFUL IN HOPE, THE AMAZING THING IS THAT IN THAT HOPE WE CAN ALSO HAVE JOY AND PEACE - FOR OURSELVES AND FOR THE LOVED ONE WE HAVE LOSTTHERE IS SOMETHING THAT NON-CHRISTIANS DO NOT UNDERSTAND ABOUT US CHRISTIANS: WE CAN GO THROUGH TERRIBLE CRISIS AND SUFFERING BECAUSE WE HAVE HOPE THAT GOD GIVES FOR TODAY & TOMORROW PATIENT IN AFFLICTIONWE NEED TO UNDERSTAND TIME DOES NOT HEAL US, BUT HEALING REQUIRES TIME-----LOTS OF TIMEPATIENCE, WE MUST BE PATIENT IN OUR AFFLICTIONWORKING OUR WAY THROUGH AFFLICTION & GRIEF IS A PROCESS: SHOCK ----ANGER [BLAME] -----DENIAL-----ACCEPTANCEFAITHFUL IN PRAYER.GOD HAS SUFFERED-----UNDERSTANDS SUFFERING-----HEALS OUR SUFFERINGWORK THROUGH IT WITH HIM---- TALK TO HIM ---HE IS OUR ROCK & REFUGEGOOD ADVICE TO THE FRIENDS OF THOSE WHO SUFFER:SHARE WITH GOD'S PEOPLE WHO ARE IN NEED. SHARE: SPEND TIME--LISTENPRACTICE HOSPITALITY- DON'T WAITFOR THEM TO ASK: DO FOR THEM. MOURN WITH THOSE WHO MOURN. ALLOW THEM TO CRY AND CRY WITH THEMWE CLOSE WITH THIS BENEDICTION FROM ROMANS 15:13 MAY THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY AND PEACE AS YOU TRUST IN HIM, SO THAT YOU MAY OVERFLOW WITH HOPE BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:43

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

### **LIVE WITH IT or DEAL WITH IT! WHICH?**

Occasionally, I express my frustration with some church matter and have been told to "live with it!". That can be wise advice about some things, especially about those things we have no control over and can do nothing about. Yes, we all need to learn to accept such things and live with them. But then there are those things that must not be tolerated and can be changed. There are matters which we must not cave in on and the advice to just "live with it" is terrible. Of course, wisdom is needed to tell the difference; but God help those of us who know what is right and do not do it (or at least put up a good fight).

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:26

Monday, November 26, 2007

## **CYBER MONDAY**

Yesterday in the Church Calendar was Christ the King Day. For many, if observed at all, it is a throw away day, a mere marker of the end of the Church Year, which begins again next week with Advent. That would be a mistake. The Day should be an occasion for remembering another (often forgotten) day: Ascension Day. The latter celebrates and commemorates the great event in history when the crucified and resurrected Christ received from his Father, all power in heaven and earth, and began reigning over the world as its Sovereign. Christ the King Day does not commemorate that event, but simply the fact that Jesus is Sovereign. He is Prophet, Priest and King (that is what the title "Christ" indicates. When we accept Jesus we are accepting God's Prophet (Revelation, Word, Teacher); we are accepting God's Priest (who both made the all sufficient sacrifice for our sins, and was himself that Sacrifice and who now has a ministry of intercession before the Father on our behalf); and we are accepting God's King (who now rules on His behalf over all the world). I realize many never have all this explained to them when they are urged to accept Jesus as their Savior.

Multitudes call Jesus "Lord", often in songs and prayers. He has a problem with that because they often do not do what He tells them to do. That is because "Lord" has become for many simply a name for Jesus, indicating that He is God, but not indicating that He is their King. We are Americans. We value freedom. We have a President and if we don't like him we say so and work to undermine him and even to get rid of him. As Christians, we are subjects of a Kingdom and bound to give our loyalty and obedience to our Sovereign. Today is called "Cyber Monday" by those who are shopping on-line for special bargains being offered there by retailers. It is an extension of last week's, made-up to make money, commercial holiday called "Black Friday" by retailers and the media who hype it. Who needs Holy Days when we have Huckster Days? I know we want to be sharp shoppers, but somehow it all comes across to me mostly as a greedy money grubbing ploy by retailers and manufacturers preying on gullible consumers looking for bargains (or the thrill of the hunt. Actually, today is also the beginning of Deer Hunting Season in many places. Can people find them on eBay today, too?). Video images of manic Mallers rushing through doors to get at sale stuff make me think of lemmings rushing into the sea, only to be drowned (but in water, instead of debt)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:53

Friday, November 16, 2007

## **WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD FUNERAL?**

There were two Funerals this week. A Baptist type for a cousin of mine and a Catholic type for a friend. These set me to thinking again about Funerals in general and in particular what I would like at my own someday. Don't roll your eyes- everyone should plan ahead and be prepared spiritually and practically. Every single one of us without exception will have a Funeral of some kind. In theory, a Funeral should be an occasion for Worship. We are there as Believers offering God praise and thanksgiving for His mercy and for the life of our deceased loved one. We are there as a Community of Faith gathered with the Family of the one who has passed on, along with his or her body in the midst of them. We are there for each other, sharing the grief but also sharing the special grace that God gives in such a time- especially through the Word preached and through its Sacrament (Holy Communion). That grace will enable everyone to get through and get on. The Word and Sacrament assure us that Christ has died, Christ has risen and, by faith, so shall we. Ideally, such a Funeral meets a very real need and can be very meaningful and helpful.

The Funerals that have actually been very meaningful and helpful to me through the years have been ones where hymns of personal faith and hope - as well as hymns of Praise- were vigorously or meaningfully sung. They were Funerals where testimonies were given about the departed loved one (or at least a good Eulogy) and personal prayers were offered from the heart, especially for the family. And they were Services where a good Gospel message was brought, declaring in certain terms the Gospel and the grounds of our hope. Churches that have such Funerals do not include Communion- they have been Baptist type Services. Where Funerals of this kind often go wrong is that the Service becomes centered on the departed and is not God-directed at all- not worshipful. Conversely, in my experience, Churches that have Funerals that are liturgical and include the Eucharist do not have these Baptist (evangelical) elements. They are intended to be Christ-centered and worshipful with their Liturgy, but they actually come across as formal, perfunctory, very impersonal and not helpful. As a former Baptist and now an Episcopalian, I earnestly hope there can be a way to combine the best of both.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:01

Tuesday, November 6, 2007

### **"INSANITY AND SPIRITUAL SONGS IN THE SOUL OF A SAINT"**

The Quiet Times Thots that I emailed to many on Monday featured a Hymn by William Cowper. A friend responded, asking me if I had heard or read a message by John Piper about this Christian Brother, close friend of John Newton, who had suffered a life time of misery and mental anguish, while trusting in the grace of God. You may find Dr Piper's account of Mr Cowper's life and struggles here. It is well worth reading, with some important lessons for all of us. [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1463\\_Insanity\\_and\\_Spiritual\\_Songs\\_in\\_the\\_Soul\\_of\\_a\\_Saint/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Biographies/1463_Insanity_and_Spiritual_Songs_in_the_Soul_of_a_Saint/)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:35

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

## **BIBLICAL FAITH REQUIRES ACTION ON HEALTH INSURANCE**

I realize that in applying the Biblical Principles (as understood by neo-Calvinists) to public policy, there is a wide gap between theory and practice. Much needs to be explored on this topic of SCHIP and health Insurance [which is what I have hoped to do in seminars in my proposed Institute]. It is one thing to say that health care is a family matter and not a matter for Civil Government and another to work out ways that will enable families to provide. One of the reasons that many children of families whose income is 400% or more above the official Poverty level want or need insurance provided by the government is that, although their parents are employed, increasing numbers of employers (especially in small companies) are decreasing what they provide for health insurance, or requiring larger premiums for what they provide. The latter leads employees to opt out and most of them go without. Many companies are shifting to Health Insurance Accounts (HIA), trying to work out ways that employees contribute more to their insurance coverage. These and other plans have caps on both company inputs and government tax breaks. That is necessary but also a drawback for many. [http://www.ebri.org/pdf/PR\\_776\\_17Sept07.pdf](http://www.ebri.org/pdf/PR_776_17Sept07.pdf)

There is also an increasing drive to institute Consumer Driven Health Care (CDHC) which is intended to motivate employees to be more responsible for their personal health care and they receive financial incentives for that. That may well be the future and a way to enable families to provide for themselves. <http://money.cnn.com/news/newsfeeds/articles/prnewswire/AQW12312092007-1.htm> <http://www.workforce.com/section/02/feature/25/11/36/251140.html> One weakness of CDHC is that it seems to overlook that many health problems are not caused by consumer neglect or abuse of their bodies. There will always be the diseases and injuries that no one could have avoided from birth defects to terrorism and natural disasters. Whatever the payment plan, health care costs themselves must still be contained and come down before many people can afford them. If Christians want to provide for their own health care (as well as enable others to do like wise) and move away from subsidized or socialized Medicine, they must confront and take action on factors that contribute to the high costs of health care: constant new technologies, demand for their increasing use by consumers, labor, pharmaceuticals (prescription drugs), entitlement programs and dominant vested and competing interests (particularly from) academic medical centers and errors and mismanagement within health care delivery systems. Our Faith requires attention to all such issues. Certainly being pro-life and pro-family does.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:20

Saturday, September 29, 2007

## **CHICAGO SEMESTER**

Many college students spend a semester studying abroad. Some go to Chicago. This Program there is informed by the following Neo-Calvinist Principles: "Rooted in the Reformed Christian tradition, we believe that the world exists as God's great handiwork. The world is not therefore merely a commodity, but has ultimate and intrinsic value in and of itself. As God's creation, the world is a living, breathing organism. It is a world that manifests itself in diversity which reflects the "multifaceted wisdom of God," unfathomable and present everywhere." "We believe in the concept of "common grace," that all people possess the image and likeness of the wisdom of God, and, regardless of one's faith perspective, each person has the capacity and obligation to contribute to the well-being of our society and the ecosystem." "We believe in a cultural mandate: that it is our job and calling to penetrate all aspects of life, including human institutions, to bring hope to the hopeless, to include the excluded, and to do our part in working for the redemption of the whole of society. Just as it is our duty as adult learners and as Christians to develop our own personal faith and to cultivate a high character as individuals, it is also our obligation to pursue social justice and to seek ways to counter and alleviate the world's pain as our pain. As one of the prophets said, we are called to seek the peace of the city, because our peace, security and prosperity in the city are bound up with the peace of others. We are all interconnected and linked with each other." "The colleges that sponsor Chicago Semester include Calvin College, Central College (Iowa), Dordt College, Northwestern College (Iowa), Hope College, and Trinity Christian College, which is also the program's administrative and fiscal agent. These colleges are joined by Aquinas College, Briar Cliff University, Cornerstone University, Luther College and Spring Arbor University." <http://www.chicagosemester.org/ask/director.htm>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:18

Friday, September 21, 2007

## **MY BI-WEEKLY DEVOTIONALS (QT THOTS)**

I am thankful to receive positive email feed back about my devotional QT Thots, which I write and email twice a week to many people. I am very thankful to the Lord that He is blessing this ministry and that many apparently are being blessed by reading the QT Thots as well as passing them on to many others. They come from my own daily quiet time in the morning, as I mediate on the Scripture of the day- usually a Psalm. The one I sent out this morning follows this paragraph. I send these QT Thots only to those who ask for them, but gladly to those who do. If you are not receiving them now, but would like to receive my QT Thots yourself, please email your request to me at [cfoxinstitute@verizon.net](mailto:cfoxinstitute@verizon.net) I would love to hear from you about that, as well as about the posts on this Blog. Thank you and God bless!

Psalm 89:1-9,11-14,18-21, 24-29, 52 [adapted]Your love, O Lord, for ever will I sing; from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.Our never ending privilege and responsibility is to witness and testify to the love and faithfulness of God (singing is one way to do that). There is a difference between witness and testify: to witness is to share what you have experienced personally of that love and faithfulness. No one can deny what you experience.To testify is to tell what you know in your head (or at least believe) to be true. This truth may be disputed, but hopefully you have done your home work and can defend what you say. Our subjective experiences come and go. It is good that we can see the work of the Lord in our lives. There are days when we do not. Thus, it is even better to have a sure objective knowledge upon which to base our faith. We do and it has a two-fold foundation. There are two basic sources for reasons we can be sure God loves us and He is faithful- Creation and Scripture [General and Special Revelation]-CREATION: It assures us of God's existence, of his wisdom and powerI am persuaded that your love is established for ever; [because] you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens. The heavens bear witness to your wonders, O Lord, and to your faithfulness. O mighty Lord, your faithfulness is all around you. You rule the raging of the sea and still the surging of its waves. Yours are the heavens; the earth also is yours; you laid the foundations of the world and all that is in it. You have made the north and the south; Tabor and Hermon (mountains) rejoice in your name.SCRIPTURE: It goes deeper and reveals God's plans and the purposes of our lives'I [God] have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn an oath...' Righteousness and justice are the foundations of your throne; love and truth go before your face. ...You spoke and said to your faithful people: 'My hand will hold (you) fast and my arm will make (you) strong. 'My faithfulness and love shall be with (you), and (you) shall be victorious through my name ... 'I will keep my love for (you) for ever, and my covenant will stand firm .Surrounded by His Creation and with His Word and promises hidden in our hearts, we can go forth today saying,Blessèd be the Lord for evermore! Amen, I say, Amen.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:36

## **STANDING IN THE GAP- REALLY?**

The list of economic and social problems in our Country and Society are well known, being repeated continually in the media and especially by local and national political candidates. I do not despair over them. Christ is still King. I am still glad to be an American and I see and appreciate multiple blessings every where around me and in my life and Country.Among things about which I do despair are people, who call themselves Evangelicals, living lives that are idolatrous (Idolatry being the most serious sin in the Bible) Our Country is awash in Materialism, Consumerism and Greed- the never ending addiction to wanting and then needing more and more money and things. This is behind much of what troubles our Nation. Seriously! Evangelicals are very much caught up in this, as much as pagan unbelievers. And they pass on these "values" to their children, even while they take them to Sunday School and "Acquire the Fire" Rallies or send them on "Mission Trips" for a week. Christian men are being urged to attend another mass demonstration in the Nation's Capital next month to witness to their Faith and publicly renew their commitment to be the men, husbands and fathers God want them to be. Certainly, these are worthwhile goals. Many will find this a wonderful experience. BUT- Will their commitment include repentance and a turning away from these false gods, these idols? I confess I am cynically dubious. Yet, if one of the goals of the Rally is to change America (let alone the lives of the men and their families), this rejection of Materialism, Consumerism and Greed is absolutely necessary. Without it, there will be a huge "gap" in the event. I made that commitment many, many years ago. I do pray other men will do so, whether they go to the DC Rally or not.<http://www.standinthegap2007.org/pages/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:04

Tuesday, September 18, 2007

### **GOD IN A TOOL BOX?**

Here is an arresting comment taken from a review of the latest CD from the rock band TOOL "The Holy Spirit is the giver of all gifts. If someone elects to use those gifts in the service of God, good. But those gifts are not rendered dormant or defunct by virtue of our intent. An artist who explicitly rejects God, as many have done, nevertheless remains a "sub-creator," as Tolkien said, a creator in the Creator's image. We should be suspicious of our tendency to insist that God only shows up in the right places. Sometimes, pagan sources can most accurately reflect back to Christians the power and lasting impact of genuine witness. You never know when and where God might reveal himself."  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2007/005/12.34.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:14

Thursday, September 13, 2007

## **GETTING PSYCHED AT COLLEGE**

A Christian father we know is concerned about his child majoring in psychology in a "secular" college. Other subjects and majors are apparently "safe" and won't mislead his child. I appreciate his concern, however I wonder why concern only about Psychology and not all the rest of the Social Sciences and all the Humanities. The reasons for concern about the one apply also to the others. No subject is neutral. Parents should be very wary of all of them. Every single field of study is based on assumptions and presuppositions. They are all religious. They are all grounded in some Faith, including Philosophical Naturalism and its cousin, Scientism. [This is why I put quotes around the word secular.] None of them, in so-called "secular" schools and in many so-called Christian schools, are grounded in a Biblical Epistemology, which begins with God and His General and Special Revelation [See my website article on this Subject. <http://www.calvinfox.com/web/epistem.html> I asked a recent math major grad from a prestigious private college if she had a Christian Philosophy of Mathematics. She had never heard of any Philosophy of Math. See my Article on that, too [http://www.calvinfox.com/web/philos\\_math.html](http://www.calvinfox.com/web/philos_math.html)]

This is the argument for Reformed Christian Schools; however the reality is that most students, millions of children, are never going to attend such schools but will be attending the "secular" ones. This means that these state school children must get a Christ-centered education in all subjects (including all the Social Sciences and Humanities) at home and church. Christian Teachers in State schools must find creative ways to present Biblical truths and not teach material that is unbiblical. A very difficult assignment. We must pray for such teachers and support Education which is truly Biblical wherever it can be found. My Institute is here to help. There are many other resources.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:46

Friday, September 7, 2007

## **SHOULD CHRISTIANS USE A LABYRINTH?**

A certain church we know is planning to make a Labyrinth on the lawn behind its building. A Maze has many paths. A Maze requires decisions: how to get out of it. There are many possibilities, it is a Left Brain exercise. Observation, analysis and reason are required. Walking a Maze can be frustrating and one can become lost in it. A Labyrinth is not a maze. It is a unicursal path. The only decision needed with a Labyrinth is to enter. Once that first step is taken, the path takes you to the center and back out again. That is part of its power. It is a Right Brain activity, appealing to the imagination, a non-rational, spiritual experience. Hence it is used to produce a state of inner peace. Devotees say it aids in achieving inner "resonance or entrainment" (harmony, unity) by the very process of walking back and forth on the turning path. You can't get lost or turn into a wrong path. There is only one and it always leads everyone to the same place. In the Middle Ages walking the path was seen as a pilgrimage.

Labyrinths are found in many religions and are considered to be sacred and a very effective spiritual exercise to achieve a mystical experience and inner healing. "We are all on the path... exactly where we need to be. The labyrinth is a model of that path. A labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The Labyrinth represents a journey to our own center and back again out into the world. Labyrinths have long been used as meditation and prayer tools. "A labyrinth is an archetype with which we can have a direct experience. We can walk it. It is a metaphor for life's journey. It is a symbol that creates a sacred space and place and takes us out of our ego to 'That Which Is Within.'" "A passive, receptive mindset is needed. At its most basic level the labyrinth is a metaphor for the journey to the center of your deepest self and back out into the world with a broadened understanding of who you are."

<http://www.lessons4living.com/labyrinth.htm><http://www.labyrinthguild.org/whatisalabyrinth.htm>The Church I mentioned above considers its new Labyrinth as "just a way to quiet the mind and heart". "It will be available to all who want to pray and meditate as they walk the path." Yes, the Labyrinth can be simply that, but that understanding is naive and misleading. There are many websites giving the history of the Labyrinth and how it is to be used and how to experience its mystical powers. There are many testimonies to how it has changed the lives of those who walk its path. One of the major Resources for better understanding is the website of Grace Cathedral, an Episcopal Church in San Francisco. Here is an excerpt from that site-"Walking the Labyrinths at Grace CathedralThe Labyrinth is an archetype, a divine imprint, found in all religious traditions in various forms around the world. By walking a replica of the Chartres labyrinth, laid in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France around 1220, we are rediscovering a long-forgotten mystical tradition that is insisting to be reborn. The labyrinth has only one path so there are no tricks to it and no dead ends. The path winds throughout and becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives. It touches our sorrows and releases our joys. Walk it with an open mind and an open heart. There are three stages of the walk: Purgation (Releasing) ~ A releasing, a letting go of the details of your life. This is the act of shedding thoughts and distractions. A time to open the heart and quiet the mind. Illumination (Receiving) ~ When you reach the center, stay there as long as you like. It is a place of meditation and prayer. Receive what is there for you to receive. Union (Returning) ~ As you leave, following the same path out of the center as you came in, you enter the third stage, which is joining God, your Higher Power, or the healing forces at work in the world. Each time you walk the labyrinth you become more empowered to find and do the work you feel your soul reaching for. "<http://www.gracecathedral.org/labyrinth/Read> that last paragraph again. This is "New Age" Spirituality. In fact, it predates Christianity and is found in many pagan cultures around the world. It is for everyone. Faith in Christ is not required. There is absolutely nothing Christian or Biblical about a Labyrinth. In fact, what you have just read contradicts the Bible. It promotes false teaching. An interesting critique of the use by churches of the Labyrinth, by an Anglican, can be found here [http://www3.telus.net/st\\_simons/arm08.htm](http://www3.telus.net/st_simons/arm08.htm) A good examination, by a Reformed Christian, can be found here. Read the entire piece. <http://www.challies.com/archives/articles/experience-the.php> A disturbing revelation in this last link is that two evangelical ministries are trying to Christianize the Labyrinth: Group Publishing and Word of Life. I was shocked. [http://store.grouppublishing.com/OA\\_HTML/ibeCCtPltmDspRte.jsp?item=14191](http://store.grouppublishing.com/OA_HTML/ibeCCtPltmDspRte.jsp?item=14191) <http://www.yfc.co.uk/labyrinth/online.html> This is wrong headed and irresponsible. They are letting the camel of pagan mysticism get its nose under the tent. The rest of the animal will seek to get in. The Church has always been good at this. Where is the spiritual discernment of these two "evangelical" organizations? I am sad to say I question the same of the Church I mentioned in this area that is about to do the same.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:05

Tuesday, September 4, 2007

## **PICKING UP THE TRASH**

Some people really take care and pride in their property. Their yards are well maintained, shrubs trimmed and colorful flowers abound. What I admire are those homeowners who do this when their immediate neighbors have let their yards run down. They do not let the unsightly mess, often a junk filled or trashed yard, next door discourage them from keeping up their place. It is, after all, their place. More often than not, the owners of the dumpier places do not live there and the tenants do not take responsibility. "Hey, its not my place. I just live here.", they will say. Exactly, they just live there. That should be reason enough to take care of the place. They live there. I should note the City is seriously cracking down on homeowners who neglect their property and violate City ordinances. Why should they have to do that? It is not primarily or usually about money. Self-respect should be enough. Wanting a healthy and safe environment, especially for children, should be enough. A neglected and dilapidated house and yard reveals a lot about the people who occupy the place. So does a well-maintained one. All of this can be a metaphor for our Christian lives.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:24

## **LIVE YOUR LIFE**

"Live your life, forget your age"- Norman Vincent Peale That all of us must die sometime is because we are mortals. We are mortals because of Adam and his disobedience in the Garden of Eden (The Fall). Exactly when and how we die is normally out of our hands; but the when and how is not the result of being mortal, nor of our fallen nature (although it may be because of our sins or the sins of others, which are the result of the Fall) That all of us will live beyond our mortality, beyond the grave, is because of the will of God. He intends for all of us to be resurrected and stand before Him to be judged- some to enter Heaven, while others go into Hell. This means we all exist for the same amount of time, forever, even though our life on earth as mortals is of different length for each of us. What is important is to redeem our limited time here and prepare for our time beyond. Since the latter is forever, which is most important? Is what we are doing today a reflection of that?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:28

Monday, August 27, 2007

## **FINDING GOD'S WILL**

Ephesians 1:3-10 Blessed are you, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You have made known to us... your will,...your purpose, [your] plan for the fullness of time, To unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. Folks struggle with finding God's will for their lives or for specific decisions. The best place to begin the search is with His will for everything: unity [not union] with Christ. It could not be more clear: this is God's will, purpose and plan for all things over time. It is in that context we find our answers. It is the wise person who aligns his priorities with God's priorities. When we do this, we know we will not be living for a losing cause. From that perspective, we go on to see how our plans measure up. God's will in our particular situation will be in harmony with His larger will for all. If decision A facilitates the preeminence of Christ, we can go for it. Otherwise, we take a pass (as Jesus said: seek the Kingdom first and then...).

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:34

Monday, August 20, 2007

## **PREPARING FOR TRAGEDY, DYING AND DEATH**

This is a repeat of an article I wrote after the VT Massacre last April- "Death" is a reality- for everyone. I never cease to be amazed that most people seem surprised by it, certainly unprepared for it. First, we all live for the same amount of time, which is forever. It is only the time spent on earth that differs for each of us. The focus in the Bible is on where we will spend our time, after we leave terra firma. We are on solid ground in dealing with Death only when we get that straight. Those who know they are going to Heaven do not grieve in the same manner as those who do not have that assurance. It is settled for us. The very moment this earthly life is over, whether from illness or a madman's bullet or a drunken driver's car, we know we are present with the One who died and is now alive forevermore in Heaven. That is a far better place. We have not been cheated. We will be more fully alive then, than now. This is the case for all the Christian Virginia Tech students and staff that were murdered this week.

2 Corinthians 5:1 Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 We live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 17 ...we will be with the Lord forever. 18. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1 Corinthians 15:50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, ... 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: ...we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54..., then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." 55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. It was this assurance of Eternal Life that enabled King David to accept the death of a son and move on with his own life. 2 Samuel 12:23 [King David had fasted and prayed that his sick infant son would live] But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me." Second, having said all of this, there remains, for most of us, a real sting caused by the reality of dying, that the assurance of Eternal Life in Heaven simply does not assuage. Death and dying are connected, but are different and must be faced separately. Many of us have come to terms with Death, it is the dying we have a hard time with. (Some dying is peaceful and welcomed by all) The word "bereavement" means to be robbed- to have something precious ripped away from us. "Sorry for your loss" is now a common, customary cliché. But "loss" is exactly what we are suffering when a loved one passes on. The greater the loss, the greater the pain. They will be fine, but will we? Having someone we know and care about die can be extremely painful for the most committed Christian or person of faith, especially if the loss was forced upon us by violence or cruelty or "human error". Death itself is inevitable for all of us, but death under such circumstances is not. That pains us and we need grace to handle it, above and beyond the assurance of eternal life for our loved one or friend. Consider how David handled the loss of his adult son Absalom, killed in war 2 Samuel 18:33 The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!" 19:1 Joab was told, "The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom." 2 And for the whole army the victory that day was turned into mourning, because on that day the troops heard it said, "The king is grieving for his son." 4 The king covered his face and cried aloud, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" And consider how the Apostle Paul felt about his companion, Epaphroditus, a Believer, who was very sick-Philippians 2:27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow [i.e.- if he had died] Third, comfort in loss, especially under tragic circumstances, comes from another Doctrine. Usually, I say the Sovereignty of God; but perhaps its corollary is more helpful- the Providence of God. We are not fatalists ("whatever will be, will be") and we do not agree that "everything has a purpose", meaning nothing is without reason and good come out of everything. That is not really much comfort in many cases, even if it often seems true. We definitely do not believe "time heals all things". Time does nothing. What is missing from each of these platitudes or bromides is God [that is what makes them false]. The Doctrine of Providence means the living, loving, all-knowing, all mighty and holy God is directly, personally, purposely, intentionally involved in our lives and "stuff that happens". He is more than sovereign, He is provident. That word literally means He looks ahead [pro-vido] and knows what is coming. He does not obliterate Evil [yet] or deny people their choices or take away their responsibilities. That truth is very important. We must acknowledge that. Often in our pain, we do not. Provident also means, seeing what is coming, God provides, i.e.- He sees to it that we will have the help and necessities we need. 1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation [better: trial] has seized you except what

is common to man [certainly that includes tragedy, suffering, pain] And God is faithful; [How is He faithful? He can be depended upon to] not let [as Sovereign, all-powerful, He is in control] let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. [which means He knows what we are enduring and exactly how much we can handle, before we are truly overcome and broken] But when you are tempted, [It happens. God does allow terrible trials to happen. Trust Him on this. He has His own reasons. Faith means we do not have to know what they are and we are out of line to demand that he explain Himself to us. Rom 9:20 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'] Faith says, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Praise be the name of the Lord." Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.1 Corinthians 10:13 continues- He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. That is what we can depend on a provident God to do: provide for our deepest needs in our trials, in our loss, our pain. What He provides will enable us to stand up under our trial; in this case, our bereavement and sorrow. Our world has taken a serious blow and it will be very different; but the blow will not destroy us, if we accept and use the help the Lord provides. This verse does not say what that help shall be. It is personal and different for each of us because we are different. But the provision of the Lord in our distress will suite us exactly. Count on it. When slings and arrows assail us, the Lord is our Rock and Refuge- a very present help in our need! Look to Him for it. I pray everyone involved and touched by the Virginia Tech tragedy will!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:54

Friday, August 17, 2007

## **THE DANGERS OF MORALISM**

In 1994, Peter Leithart wrote an article for a now defunct magazine, reviewing a book, *The Rise of Moralism*, written in 1966 by C. FitzSimmons Allison. Some of their ideas influenced parts of this essay. Definitions "Morals" are principles for behavior that is considered good or right "Morality" is defined as that behavior. Moral Principles or Virtues, for the Christian, are God-given absolutes, derived from the Bible, beginning with the First Five Books of Moses (The Law). Examples would be respect for all human life, for chastity, for monogamous heterosexual marriage, for parents, for private property, for work and for honesty in everything. These are more than "Values". Today's society favors "Values" over Morals. The latter word is increasing rare, while the use of "values" is increasing. They must be distinguished. Values are here defined as things considered important, worthwhile (valuable) or desirable. Values are socially or culturally determined and are matters of personal preference. Unlike Morals, Values are not absolutes and are changeable and always changing. Actually, values are considered moral free, i.e. - not morally good or bad, but positive or useful.

Practical Outcomes Replace Biblical Principles as Moral Standard September 10, 2001 ... a new survey by the Barna Research Group suggests that a major share of the struggle [about morality in America] pertains to the basis on which people make moral choices. When asked the basis on which they form their moral choices, nearly half of all adults (44%) cited their desire to do whatever will bring them the most pleasing or satisfying results. Roughly one-sixth of the adult public (17%) bases its moral decisions on what they believe will make other people happy or minimize interpersonal conflict. The same percentage (17%) credits the values they were taught by their family as the dominant influence on their moral considerations. About one out of four adults (24%) lean primarily upon religious principles and teaching or Bible content when making moral decisions. While many religious leaders propose that the Bible should be the basis of people's morality, the survey showed that only four out of every ten born again adults relies upon the Bible or church teachings as their primary source of moral guidance....the study suggests that the very notion of what Americans consider "legal" is being significantly redefined. "Notice that in several instances there is a large gap between what people say is morally acceptable and what they say should be legal. This reflects the shift away from biblical principles and Christian values as the basis of modern law. Increasingly, Americans are looking for the law to reflect their personal preferences and desires rather than a universal set of absolutes based on God's dictates. Barna stated that religious institutions have failed to present a compelling case for a biblical basis for moral truth. "Most people do not believe that there is any source of absolute moral truth. Even born again individuals are abandoning the notion of law based on scriptural principles. ... busy people, regardless of their faith affiliation, wing it when it comes to moral decisions. Main Thesis of this Essay Conduct by citizens conforming to Biblical moral principles (virtues, not values) is essential to making a society work well, politically, economically and socially. Sin (conduct not conforming to Biblical morality, e.g.-greed) is what spoils efforts for real change and makes lasting social justice impossible. Many Christians are content with being able to give a cup of water to a thirsty child. They will settle for lighting one candle in the dark. Many are doing just that. In fact, social activism has become almost a fad- everyone seems to be getting into it. Secular and religious organizations everywhere seem to be getting on the band wagon to help The Poor, relieve disaster victims, stop the spread of AIDS or prevent Global Warming. People think such projects are matters of morality. They are not. These are Causes that our Society values at the moment. It also values abortion on demand, "gay marriage", universal health care, a higher minimum wage and affirmative action. Euthanasia and Eugenics are also becoming more popular. It is very debatable whether these are matters of Biblical morality. But, working for social change without promoting personal morality is futile in the long term. Here and there, work that is valued will be done, no question. Some cases of injustice will be addressed. Some of the hungry will get a meal. An abused woman will be rescued. Some sick people will find healing. Some houses destroyed by floods will be rebuilt. Some crimes will decrease in some areas. While worthwhile, this is far from enough. This is putting band aides on gaping wounds that require major corrective surgery. All these evils and many more will continue and increase over time because people themselves are not becoming moral, ie- living lives that conform with Biblical Morals. Unless that happens, no true, really radical changes will be made in society over the long term. If that is what we are after, not more water for squirt guns to put out fires, but the elimination of the causes of those fires in the first place, than sinners must practice moral living.

The Danger of Moralism The danger here is the substitution of "Moralism" for Morality. Moralism is the promotion of Morality in Society apart from the Regeneration of human hearts. Moralism comes in three versions. "Old Time" Evangelical Moralism preaches Morality, but what it often means by that is really Victorian-age mores and values (most centered around traditional American gender roles in Marriage and Family and separation from what is considered worldly (immoral) conduct and entertainment. Moralism, in another form, advocates Morality, but defines that as "living a simple life like

Jesus” and serving The Poor; again, apart from Regeneration. This Moralism is on the increase among Left-leaning, so-called radical or progressive Christians. A third Moralism staunchly advocates obedience by everyone to the truly Biblical moral absolutes; but, it too, does this apart from seeking the regeneration of the sinners who are expected to obey. Moralism unintentionally teaches that Salvation requires one or the other of these Moralities, saying things like- “If you want to find help with your problems or meaning for your life, do this ...” or “If you are a true Christian you will...” or “If you do not practice..., how can you call yourself a true Christian? Advocates of Moralism, for all their passion to live moral Christian lives themselves and to encourage others to do likewise, do not personally seem to know the Gospel of Grace. The Gospel of Grace teaches full salvation by grace alone through faith alone in the complete work of Christ alone for the glory of God alone. I do not see how anyone can promote Moralism if they know this Gospel. Many who consider themselves to be evangelical Christians have abandoned the doctrine that human beings are “Fallen”, hopelessly enslaved to Sin and sinning in need of regeneration. They increasingly accept the popular concept that people are basically good (“Christ lives in everyone“- an erroneous belief derived from a very faulty understanding of Matthew 25). People, they say, all have the potential to love and do moral good. The corollary is that human beings also have the ability to do that. They are free to choose moral conduct. The key to motivate and enable them to do this, many wrongly believe, is appropriate education and a positive environment (both the responsibility of civil government).

The Need for Personal Regeneration Reformed Christianity insists, with Jeremiah and Jesus and Paul, personal Regeneration is essential to enable sinful people to have moral conduct. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit freeing the human will from its bondage to the Sin Nature, which controls every person born (this is the Reformed Doctrine of Total Depravity). After regeneration, that will is free and the sinner can accept Christ as Lord and commit to obeying Him. Regenerate sinners, committed to Christ, are motivated and empowered by the same Holy Spirit to live a righteous or moral life. This is impossible for the unregenerate. It is normal and expected of the regenerate. If critics are seeing people who claim to be Christian or “Born Again” but are not passionate for righteousness (conduct that is right or moral) they are seeing professors not possessors! So how do people become regenerate? The Gospel is essential to Regeneration. Sinners must hear it in order for the Holy Spirit to change their hearts. This means that Evangelism (sharing the Gospel) is also essential to Regeneration, Morality and a healthy Society. Such Evangelism is increasingly being neglected, if not rejected, by today’s Evangelicals (ironic, considering their name), particularly by those who are into Moralism. If we want to see truly radical and long lasting changes in our troubled Society, the Gospel of Grace is what can lead to it. Moralism can not. It maintains the status quo.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:22

Friday, August 10, 2007

## **DISAGREEING WITH THE MANAGING EDITOR OF CT**

On Not Transforming the World We have better and harder things to do than that. By Mark Galli, Sr Managing Editor of Christianity Today This is my review and response to Mr Galli's article "Hardly a day goes by that a book or an email doesn't arrive telling me how to "transform the culture" or "change the world." I have on my desk a book subtitled "The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches," and the subtitle for one chapter says that missional churches "expect to change the world." It leads with a quote from a well-known futurist, who says, "It is still God's policy to work through the embarrassingly insignificant to change his world and create his future." ? The book points to one Southern California church and says, "The ultimate criteria for determining its effectiveness is the transformation of Los Angeles." Are they ever in for a big disappointment. On top of that, I'm now worried for Los Angeles. I hesitate to cheer for cultural transformation, though not because I like the world just the way it is. Hardly. I read the paper this morning. I hesitate, though not because I don't believe that the church impacts the world. It has impacted the world and will continue to do so. I hesitate because I think the goal of transforming our city, our culture, or our world can lead to little good. All of Mr Galli's remarks [above] sound like a repudiation of what I am committed to doing through my Re/formation Institute. It sounds like he does not share the neo-Calvinist motto: God formed the world, Sin de-formed it, Christ re-forms it. He also does not seem to begin with Genesis and take a neo-Calvinist whole Bible approach to the Gospel: Creation, Fall, Redemption. The Cultural Mandate is missing in Mr Galli's remarks, as is a Biblical world and life view. And it sounds to me as though he does not see God working in the world and history to extend the Lordship of Christ and His Kingdom nor the Church's role in that extension. And it would seem Mr Galli does not agree with the point of view and mission of Ruth DeBorst, presented elsewhere in the same issue of CT

The church is rightly embarrassed by well-lit displays of the Crusades, the Inquisition, murderously Reformed Geneva, and the Salem witch trials in history's hall of shame. What do all these events have in common? They were motivated by a desire to transform the culture, if not the world, into a kingdom of God. When we get on that kick, history has repeatedly shown that even Christians will destroy a village to save it. This is a common, but bogus, unfair, simplistic overgeneralization. It is biased and historically inaccurate. For starters, which Church and what Christians? Definitions, please! The events mentioned are far more complex and many more positive, praiseworthy achievements by some branches of the Church and many Christians of different types over 2000 years. To be sure, Christians ought to care about the sad plight of the culture and the world. Absolutely! And we ought to recognize that we are at least partly responsible for the mess. At least? Does Mr Galli suggest the "Church" and "Christians" (from the West, no doubt) are more than partly responsible "for the mess", maybe most of it? Incredible. Then we should recognize that God wants us [meaning the Church and Christians?] to work against injustice and evil. Yes, I agree and this sounds to me like "changing the world". That sounds to me like the "goal of transforming our city, our culture". But why should we work toward that goal if "it can lead to little good"? Now what exactly is involved in the "work against injustice and evil" that Mr Galli agrees God wants the Church and Christians to do? Such work, and it will require an informed, intentional and sustained effort, certainly will transform our cities and culture. There is plenty in Scripture about doing justice and loving mercy and feeding the hungry and caring for the widow and orphan. But I find little or nothing about us having the task of transforming the culture. I'm confused as to how Mr Galli can not see that "doing justice and loving mercy and feeding the hungry and caring for the widow and orphan" does not transform culture. He must have a very different understanding about "changing the world" or "transforming culture". We fall into this rhetoric because we know the problems we face are huge and we feel so small. We worry that if we don't boldly proclaim that we can "change the world," everybody will give up before we even begin. We all face the common temptation of Adam and Eve. We want to feel significant. We want to feel like we're players. We want to make a difference in the world. And only by imagining that we can change the world do we think our actions have any meaning. Interesting, but unwarranted psychoanalysis of the motives of other Christians. How does he know such conjecture and severe, negative and disparaging judgment of the motives of other Believers is true? This, of course, runs in the opposite direction of Jesus' ethic, which is about service. Servants aren't about world-changing initiatives as much as about washing the dirty feet of the travelers sitting at their kitchen table. Jesus never tells us to do anything because it will transform the culture. Surprisingly, he didn't seem interested in transforming the Roman Empire, one of the most oppressive and unjust cultures in history. He seemed rather to think that society would always have economic disparity, and that not only should changing Rome not be a priority, but also we should not even object to underwriting it with our taxes. To be sure, he says we can be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." As such, we can indeed give the world a glimpse of kingdom life so that many will give glory to God (Matt. 5:12-14). But there's nothing there about the world being transformed. What Jesus wants us to do primarily, it seems, is to love those right in front of our noses. I remain puzzled as to why we're so bored with the very things Jesus asks us to do, like picking that foreigner up out of the ditch, giving away our goods to the poor, going to

court with a young man who's being railroaded by the system, taking an orphan into our home, going the extra mile with the oppressive and manipulative, forgiving the offender, baptizing, and witnessing. I find these things really, really hard to do. I fail all the time. If I can't even do these things well, why would I believe that I could transform my culture, let alone change the world? Perhaps here we have the crux of Mr Galli' argument. Apparently, with many others, he believes the important thing for Christians to do with their lives as Christians is to follow the ethic of Jesus and this ethic is "Service"- primarily, acts of charity and practical helpfulness to people in need. That is it. He is puzzled by why any of us are "bored" with doing these things asked of us by Jesus. Ascribing boredom to the rest of us is another unfair judgment by Mr Galli. First, the actions of Jesus, and asked of us by him, are in themselves a challenge to the traditions, social customs and mores of his culture. His eating and caring and socializing with prostitutes, lepers and tax collectors, as well as with women and children all broke taboos. His working on the Sabbath and talking with hated Samaritans did the same. His practice of personal non-violence and call for forgiveness of enemies and treating them well, along with no retaliation for injuries received at their hand, is certainly revolutionary. I am "puzzled" as to why Mr Galli misses or omits all this. Jesus was about far more than simple or random acts of kindness. He was very much into intentionally transforming his culture (even though he, agreed, never used that phrase- so what?) Many Christians have done likewise, not out of boredom or a desire to be "players" and just do something to give their lives some meaning, but rather out of a passion to follow Jesus and obey his example and, yes, his "ethic". There is no end to a list of their names and stories to be found, even, in CT's sister magazine, Christian History & Biography. And then there is the far larger and greater context of Jesus ethic that must be considered. What Jesus taught and did during his 3 year ministry on earth must be seen and interpreted as a part of the story and message of the entire Bible, beginning with Genesis and certainly including the Prophets, as well as the letters (and doctrine) of Paul. Jesus is not simply a peripatetic Teacher of an "Ethic". Certainly, Mr Galli knows that. Jesus is God the Incarnate, now reigning in Heaven and working to extend his Reign now, in history, among all Nations. It is the privilege and responsibility, yes, the mission, of the Church and all Christians to intentionally seek to be a part of that extension: our Goal! Just because Jesus doesn't ask us to change the world doesn't mean, of course, that it's not going to eventually be transformed. Even the apostles knew they were incapable of making a heavenly kingdom out of this mess we call history: "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom?" While rightly anxious to see the world transformed, they knew who was responsible for transforming it. In the meantime, we have our little jobs to do. And as Jesus put it, "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Mt. 6:34). Mr. Galli is correct when he cautions Christians that this goal will not be accomplished by our human efforts alone and will not be completed in our life time. It is, after all, the Kingdom of Christ we are talking about, not ours. It will come about through the work of His Spirit in conjunction with His Word as it is spread and obeyed and then finally fulfilled or consummated in His own time. Meanwhile we do each "have our little jobs to do" in academia, in the public square, in the court rooms and legislatures, in the marketplace and business world and in the world of communication and the arts- everywhere, as we seek to "change the world" for Christ! 2 Corinthians  
10:3-5 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/augustweb-only/132-42.0.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:51

Wednesday, August 8, 2007

## **THE WHOLE GOSPEL INCLUDES THE WHOLE WORLD**

"Ruth Padilla DeBorst's familiar name. The eldest daughter of eminent theologian and missiologist René Padilla is a theologian and church leader in her own right. For many years, Padilla DeBorst worked with the growing Christian student movements of Latin America under the umbrella of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES); now she is president of the Latin American Theological Fellowship (whose Spanish initials are FTL), director of IFES's Spanish-speaking publishing house Ediciones Certeza Unida, and team leader of Christian Reformed World Mission's work in El Salvador." The following is from an interview of her in the current CT, which I found very challenging. It shows the influence of neo-calvinism. "While I've been here in North America, I've been struck by how fragmented our reading of the Bible is. It's a kind of Sunday school version of the Bible: all these isolated little Bible stories, taught out of their context. What we need to reclaim is the big story, the big picture. "In the beginning God ..."—that's where we need to begin. In the end, we find the new Jerusalem and all people bowing before the Lord of all nations. The story between that beginning and that end is not divorced from human history. Rather, it is a picture of God's involvement in history. It's the story of a people wandering closer and further away from his call and claim on their lives to serve as a light to the nations, an example of how people can relate to God and to one another in right and healthy ways. It's also the story of God calling his people back through the prophets, to the point of sending Jesus himself to say, I am serious about this world; I love this world; I'm willing to suffer and die for this world." <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/august/12.30.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:50

Monday, August 6, 2007

## **DOES GOD SPEAK WITH A BLUE TOOTH?**

Often we hear Christians say that we need to listen more to the Holy Spirit. That is very true. Where do we begin? Where can we hear Him speak? Every Sunday, many Christians recite the Nicene Creed. We say, "We believe in the Holy Spirit...who has spoken through the Prophets", i.e.- the Scripture. The place to begin hearing the Spirit speak is in the written Word. I look forward to doing that every morning during Quiet Time as I read carefully, prayerfully the Scripture of the day. Almost always, the Word comes off the page and "speaks" to an issue in my heart or life. I anticipate this happening and have learned to wait on the Word until it does. Other times, during the day and in the middle of circumstances, the same thing happens. I don't hear "voices", but the Spirit speaks through the Scripture that I have learned and hidden in my heart for moments like that. I am not reading it then, I am remembering it. Better, the Spirit is bringing it to my mind then. Every where, people seem to need to keep connected to each other with their technology. I don't see the need for that at all. But I do see the absolute need to keep connected to the Spirit, listening for Him, not through a Blue Tooth or cell phone or the internet, but through the written Word hidden in the heart. That, of course, requires spending time in the written Word itself and a much simpler, slower, more quiet life than most Christians live these days.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:49

Saturday, July 28, 2007

## **FEAR NOT!**

Luke 8:22-25 One day [Jesus] got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side of the lake.' So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A gale swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. They went to him and woke him up, shouting, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, 'Where is your faith?'

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:22

Friday, July 27, 2007

## **MY VISION RESTATED: 2 Corinthians 3:5**

Many folks do not yet seem to understand what I am about these days. Allow me to try again to clarify my Mission and the work of the Re/formation Institute. I do not see myself as retired from Ministry, only the Pastorate. Scriptural Basis: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NRSV [amplified by me] The context of our daily living is conflict: spiritual warfare. That warfare is between Christ and spiritual Powers of Evil or Darkness. Followers of Christ are in between, under attack by these enemies of Christ, even as they are His Soldiers in the Battles to be fought. This is the context and language of this passage in 2 Corinthians. "The picture seems to be that of a military operation in enemy territory that seeks to thwart every single hostile plan of battle, so that there will be universal allegiance to Christ." -Expositor's Commentary v.3 Indeed, we live as human beings, [eating, sleeping, working, planning, making changes, playing, consuming] but we do not wage war [against Evil] according to human standards [using normal "secular", pragmatic methods "to get the job done"] v.4 [Rather] the weapons of our [spiritual] warfare [are spiritual: [Prayer and Preaching, both grounded in Truth] ... [They] have divine power to destroy strongholds [fortresses in which evil spiritual powers are established]] [Using these weapons] we [intentionally seek to] destroy arguments [all the isms and ologies, i.e.- wisdom of this Age -1 Cor 3:19] and every proud obstacle [false knowledge -2 Cor 2:8] raised up against the knowledge of God, v.5 And [then] we seek to take every thought [not every single thought that men have, but the mindset people have, their world and life views] captive to Christ

The focus of my work is Re/formation: What God has formed, Sin has de/formed and Grace re/forms. That is why I call my work the Re/formation Institute. I seek to help Christians to extend the Sovereignty of Christ and His Word over all areas of their life (even as I seek to do the same in mine). Specifically, I seek to help them take every thought captive to Christ- not every single thought that people have, but the mindset people have, their world and life view- teaching them to think Biblically, rebuilding their philosophies and world views around Christ. I realize many Believers do not see the necessity for this work. They are activists. They "do" for Christ more than they "think" for Christ. They simply are very busy living day to day. They do not realize the weaknesses, contradictions and inadequacies of the work-a-day beliefs and values which they have adopted from the "secular" world (culture) around them and which shape and drive much of what they "do". These are the strongholds of the Enemy. The spiritual warfare is not optional. It is not being fought somewhere else by some one else. Being a soldier in the Lord's army is not optional. Enlistment is not voluntary. Engaging the Enemy is. But, if we refuse to engage, we assist and support the Enemy. That is called treason. Being AWOL, leaving the battlefield, sitting the war out somewhere else, is not even possible. Neutrality is not possible. We are either for Christ or against Him in this conflict! The conflict is not over politics or economics. The evil is not poverty or wealth, violence, oppression, carbon emissions or urban sprawl. The battle is not won with elections, legislation, court decisions, budgets or programs. The conflict is (literally) with the spiritual enemies of Christ and the battlefield is in the Mind- Spiritual warfare is about mental (spiritual) Deception and overcoming it with Truth. My concern is with professed Believers in Christ. These studies are not for Evangelism- winning the minds of unbelievers. These studies are designed for those who have been saved by grace alone through faith in Christ. How, then, are they to live? These are the primary war zones (Areas to be Studied) 1. "Life" and the meaning of being "Human" 2. Marriage and Family 3. Environment 4. Economic Development 5. Government, Law and Justice The approach is based on the whole Bible, starting in the beginning with Genesis and the Pentateuch (the Five Books of Moses, known as Torah), interpreted and applied in light of the Prophets and the Apostles (including their writing about Jesus). This approach is essential and leads to very different conclusions than those who start with what they believe is the "Life and Message of Jesus" or with Paul and the Book of Romans. I welcome Comments by email: [cfoxinstitute@verizon.net](mailto:cfoxinstitute@verizon.net)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:32

## **DR JOHN STOTT'S LAST PUBLIC MESSAGE**

The Rev. Dr. John Stott concluded his final public engagement this past week, asking evangelical Christians in England, "What is God's purpose for his people?" [He said-] "I want to share with you where my mind has come to rest as I approach the end of my pilgrimage on earth. "God wants His people to become like Christ," "Christ-likeness is the will of God for the people of God." "if we claim to be a Christian, we must be Christ-like." "Christians should seek to imitate Christ."

What does Dr Stott mean by all this? Becoming like Christ is, indeed, the ultimate goal for all Christians. Dr Stott built his sermon on three texts – Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 John 3:2 – The first and last text quoted anticipate the resurrection, which will give us a glorified body the same as Christ has. That is one meaning of Christ-likeness. But

it is not a meaning Stott has in mind. The middle verse referenced, 2 Cor. 3:28, is about the gradual process of sanctification- the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, making us holy like Christ is holy. The reporter then quotes Dr. Stott as saying "We are to be like Christ in his Incarnation," ... in the self-humbling which lies behind the Incarnation." This is a third meaning to Christ-likeness. We are to become self-humbling as Christ was during His incarnation, ie- during His life here on earth. Christ laid aside his power and privilege and became a servant among men. The reporter goes on to quote Dr Stott, as he gives yet another meaning to Christ-likeness. he says "enter other people's worlds .... [a]s Christ had entered our world." "This entering into other people's worlds is exactly what we mean by incarnational evangelism. All authentic mission is incarnational mission," he said. There is yet another meaning of Christ likeness in these quotes from Stott's message: "We don't look like the Christ we are proclaiming." "The most effective preaching comes from those who embody the things they are saying," "They are their message. Christians need to look like what they are talking about." "It is people who communicate primarily, not words or ideas. Deep down inside people, what communicates now is basically personal authenticity." What does "looking like Christ" mean? Stott quoted a Hindu professor in India ... "If you Christians lived like Jesus Christ, India would be at your feet tomorrow" Really? What does the Hindu think living like Christ means? And a former Arab Muslim, is quoted: "If all Christians were Christians - that is, Christ-like - there would be no more Islam today." What in the world does these quotes mean? Stott asked the question: "Is Christ-likeness attainable?" He answered: "In our own strength it is clearly not attainable but God has given us his Holy Spirit to dwell within us, to change us from within ... God's way to make us like Christ is to fill us with His Spirit." Now we are back to 2 Cor 3:28 and Christ-likeness as being sanctified. John Stott is known for clear, lucid, logical presentation. This last message, as reported, is none of that. I will wait to read the actual message, because this report doesn't sound like him at all. It will be on John Stott Ministries.com Or, after a life time expositing Scripture and teaching sound Theology. John Stott has decided, at the end of his life here, that the Gospel comes down to what my liberal, Left, Progressive friends insist that it does: The Gospel is about Love, about suffering servant hood, that Jesus and his cross embodied such Love and Service and we are to be like Him and do likewise. This, in the end, is all that really matters. Is it?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:26

## **WHAT DOES "BECOMING LIKE CHRIST" MEAN?**

What is the Scriptural definition and process of "Becoming like Christ"? We must begin at the beginning. We learn in the Book of Genesis [see my Notes elsewhere], that we human beings are animals and have bodies and physical needs. However, unlike all other creatures, human beings are created in the image of God. This is what gives us our unique dignity and value. It means that we are like God and reflect our Creator. Being like God, we humans are "Persons". That means we have the capacity and need for rationality, creativity, morality and communality. Together, these attributes are known as "soul". No other animal is a Person or has a soul. We also, as human persons, have the need and capacity for communion with God. That makes us, like Him, spiritual beings. All that we are as Persons was negatively affected by "the Fall"- the Image has been fractured. Redemption in Christ involves the redemption of the Human (body and soul). In Christ, there is a new creation. The work of Christ is to restore the Image of God in us to what God intended (and more) before the Fall happened. The work of Christ is to redeem our rationality, creativity, morality and communality. It is to restore our spirituality- our communion with God. And it restores our bodies, as well (in this life and ultimately at the Resurrection) .

Gal 4:19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! What does that mean? It involves formation of the fully Human. Jesus is the Image of God incarnate. To be like Jesus, is to be like (to image) God. Becoming like Christ, involves becoming fully Human. The audacious claim, and amazing promise of the Christian Faith, is this: To be fully Human requires becoming a mature Christian. Becoming a mature Christian results in becoming fully Human. The mark of a mature Christian (and thus, of being a fully human person) is Christ-like rationality, Christ-like creativity, Christ-like morality, Christ-like communality and Christ-like spirituality. If the Bible talks about "Spiritual Formation" it is achieving all this. Ephesians 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 ... for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain ... to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, Colossians 1:28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ Christ-like rationality- having the mind of Christ, thinking "Christianly" (Scripturally) about all things Christ-like creativity- making and developing original works of beauty [in all fields] in harmony with the Creator of all good things Christ-like morality- living by the same Kingdom values and principles as he did Christ-like communality- living in relationships with others as he did Christ-like spirituality- praising God, waiting on Him (in prayer), trusting and obeying God the Father as he did (to the death if need be) This is what being a mature Christian is like. This is what it means to be fully Human. This is what it means to be "like Christ". This is what it means to have Christ "formed in you."

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:19

Thursday, July 26, 2007

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOTAL CHILD**

"From Academics and Leadership Opportunities to Extra-Curricular Activities and Athletic programs, [this private school's] Focus is... Development of the Total Child" "The purpose of [this private] School is to promote the development of the total child," said Headmaster [Dr. Anonymous]." I read this statement, and those quotes that follow here, on the website of a prestigious private K-12 school. I want to look at them more closely in this article. Biblically, a child is made in the image of God. That means a child has faculties for rationality, creativity, morality, communality and, above all, spirituality. The child also has physical faculties. All of these faculties together would be the "Total Child". The development of these faculties requires that the child personally and progressively, starting at the earliest age, know the Triune God of the Bible.. Only in relationship with God can anyone know who they are. There can be no self-understanding, let alone growth in true and total potential, apart from that relationship. The Image must know the Original after which it is patterned. This is fundamental to a Christian Philosophy of Education.

"Academically through a balanced college-preparatory program; socially through leadership opportunities, extra-curricular activities, and community service; and physically through complete physical education and athletic programs." These are all good and worthwhile activities. But no matter how excellent they may be at this School, they do not develop the Total Child as defined here. Moreover, a truly balanced academic program must be grounded in Scripture and a Biblical World and Life View. Apart from this base, all academics are actually unbalanced. They do not correspond with Reality (i.e.- with Truth) "The school recognizes the responsibility it shares with the home in the development of ethical and moral values." "This goal is commendable, but also very inadequate. Ethical and moral values must be sourced and grounded in Scripture, in Faith and in the life and tradition of the Church. Other wise they are "secular" and pragmatic. "Values", or better- ethics and moral principles, must also be an essential part of Academic subjects and not separated from "facts" or confined (compartmentalized) to the personal and private. If none of this is actually the case in this private school or in the homes of its students, the development of the Total Child is not happening. "Over the past 30 years, [this Private School's] graduates have excelled in their chosen fields and have made positive impacts in their communities across the country," [the head Master] said. Again, this is good, but notice that the goal of "Development of Total Child" (even as the School defines this concept) seems to have shifted into "successful and productive citizen". Why didn't the head Master conclude his remarks by saying, "Over the past 30 years, [this Private School's] graduates have excelled in their development as Total Persons", if that is, in fact, the purpose of the School? Is a successful and productive citizen the same as a fully developed person? In any case, this School 's definition of a Total Child is inadequate and therefore, so is its understanding of a fully developed person. The purpose of Christian Education and a Christian School is the total development of a human being in the Image of God and this is possible only as we have explained above.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:05

Monday, July 16, 2007

### **MAD ABOUT HARRY**

Here is a good discussion about the Harry Potter books. It recommends them to Christians and explains why they are not to be denounced but valued.<http://www.serioustimes.com/blog.asp>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:34

Tuesday, July 10. 2007

## **Part 1- SERIES ON NEO-CALVINISM: INTRODUCTION**

My dear Christian relatives and friends are all “evangelicals” of various kinds and range from Anabaptist, Episcopalian, Fundamentalist, “Main Line“, Emerging and Contemporary and Charismatic. A few are Calvinists, less than a few are Reformed and none are Neo-Calvinists. Seeking a “place“, a spiritual home, I have found I am most comfortable with Episcopal (Anglican) worship, Reformed Theology and the Neo-Calvinist world view- generally speaking. The most strange or foreign, apparently, to my evangelical relatives and friends is the last topic: Neo-Calvinism. I shall try to explain it again here. I am not speaking for other Neo-Calvinists or defending everything that they may teach (or, for that matter, other Calvinists and what they teach). Conservative Calvinists (who can be found in many denominations) commonly see the Reformed Faith as basically a confessional movement (the historic Confessions of Faith are extremely important, almost equal to the Bible) with the emphasis on Soteriology (Doctrine of Salvation), in particular the Five Doctrines of Grace (T.U.L.I.P.) The Dutch Reformed Christian Abraham Kuyper (died 1920) saw the Reformed Faith as an all-encompassing world and life view. The key concept of Calvinism is the sovereignty of God. Intentionally seeking to extend that sovereignty (the “crown rights of the King“) over all of Society is the single concept that best summarizes Neo-Calvinism. Many conservative Calvinists insist that it represents ideas and teachings that are not found in the original, classic 16th and 17th Century Calvinism. Some critics believe Neo-Calvinism is the “Great Derailment” of true Calvinism. I have taken those criticisms seriously, but my main concern is whether the concepts of Neo-Calvinism are grounded in Scripture or not.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:51

## **Part 2- ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF NEO-CALVINISM**

Creation, Fall and Redemption. God's good Creation has been disrupted by the Fall. The work of Christ includes the Redemption of all Creation, not only human beings. The Plan of Salvation, the Gospel, should begin and end with Creation. The Bible ends with a description of a New Earth! “All of Life Redeemed” - neo-Calvinist motto. Rejection of Dualism. Dualism has been rife in Christian thinking. The most notable dualism is between nature and grace (dividing all of life into so-called Secular & Sacred) Neo-Calvinists maintain grace restores nature. “What God has formed, Sin deformed and Grace reforms” - motto. Antithesis As a consequence of the Fall, all human beings are born with rebellion and enmity toward God in their hearts. Common Grace “Grace” usually is understood as Special (Saving) Grace, experienced only by the Elect. There is also Common Grace. It includes all the natural gifts God bestows upon the people and world He has created. Common Grace is shared by all people for the common good of all. Christ is Lord over all of Creation. The lordship of Christ is meant to extend through every area and aspect of life- it is not to be restricted to church or personal piety. “The Cultural Mandate” Genesis 1:26-28 is the Cultural Mandate (in a nutshell). It is the mandate to all people to develop the Creation to be as God intended. This involves all aspects of Culture and Civilization.

I first came to these basic beliefs by reading my Bible from the beginning, i.e.- from Genesis. Starting there, rather than in the Gospel of John or Paul's letter to the Romans, made a major difference in my thinking. Later, I read authors who are Neo-Calvinist and found myself agreeing with them. Soft Calvinism and a very modified Neo-Calvinism seem to be growing in popularity in some circles, especially among younger evangelicals. I am skeptical about both and what this new development means and do not want to be identified with it. Actually, I would like to drop the adjectives Neo-Calvinist, Reformed and Episcopalian. There are so many versions of each. The name, Evangelical, as well as Christian, is also problematic for the same reason. All these labels are confusing. I do not want to spend energy defending any of them. I am what I am, to be read for what I write and not read into according to adjectival labels.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:46

## **Part 3- BEING HUMAN**

All that God created “in the beginning” was and still is “good”. He loves it and it (as created) glories Him. He created human beings to be both like Him and to represent Him in the enjoyment, development and care of the natural world He created. But as a result of the Fall involving Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, all the descendants of the First Couple are born separated from God (spiritually dead). They know he exists and they should worship and serve Him;

but, they do not. More than that, they have inherited a rebellious, inimical disposition toward God. They not only do not worship and serve God, they are determined not to. They will not and they literally can not. They hate Him at the core of their being. Hence, they organize their entire lives apart from Him and contrary to what their consciences tell them God expects of them. Understanding and accepting this condition is essential to explaining why people do what they do. This condition determines how humans interpret and use all that they know (This is a problem of Epistemology. Almost every issue in Theology and Philosophy is a problem of Knowledge: how we know what we know and why.) In spite of this condition or "Antithesis", all human beings remain human. They still have the characteristics which image God, whether they acknowledge Him or not. They have the faculties for reasoning (doing abstract thinking), being creative, being moral and spiritual and the ability and need to live in relationship with other humans (communality). All humans further live in the good Creation, having access to all the natural resources God has made. All these gifts from God to all people are called, collectively, Common Grace. This is distinction from Special or Saving Grace which is given to the Elect for their eternal salvation. Common Grace is a bridge between the saved and unsaved. It does not remove or negate the Antithesis, but Common Grace provides common ground for the two groups to function together in the care and nurture and enjoyment of their environment and the natural world for the common good. Understanding this has made a big and positive difference to my spiritual and personal life. As human beings, Believers are to value, develop, use and enjoy Common Grace.

Many Christians have a negative or at least suspicious view of "the care and nurture and enjoyment of their environment and the natural world for the common good". This is "worldly" and many conservative Christians have been taught to live separate from "the world" (meaning primarily the institutions and organizations that develop and maintain civic and social society, culture and civilization) Actually, they live dual lives. Many Christians do get very involved with the world, but keep that involvement separate from their spiritual or Christian lives. They do not know how to think or act Christianly (Biblically) in business, the arts, academia, civic and public affairs or government, etc) This "Dualism" is not Scriptural. The Sovereignty of God and His Word require that the Crown Rights of the King be extended in all these areas- that all of life be approached and lived for Christ and according to His Norms. Many Christians likewise have a negative and suspicious view of humanity itself particularly of what it means to be "human" (Humanism). We confine the work of redemption and sanctification to our inner lives, our souls. This is another example of Dualism. In truth, union with Christ is meant to lead to the redemption and sanctification of all we are as human beings: our inner and outer lives, our spiritual, emotional, mental, intellectual, social and physical selves. Why stop there? Redemption and sanctification applies to our culture and the world around us. Critics see this positive view of culture and the world as dangerous. They fear it will lead to the end of separation, to worldliness and to secularization of the Church, its Message and work. This fear is valid. All that can happen and has, among some; but, that is not justification for disobeying the Scripture and refusal to press Christ's claim to be King over all.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:43

#### **Part 4- CULTURAL MANDATE**

Conservative Christians see the mission of the Church to be primarily about the corporate Worship of God and the salvation of souls, winning sinners to Christ (locally and abroad: evangelism, home and foreign missions) and preparing them for life in eternity. This is done by preaching the Gospel of Grace, administering the Sacraments and using Church Discipline. Sinners who come to saving faith are to become like Christ and grow in personal righteousness. They are to love their neighbor as they are able and have opportunity. As they walk the talk, their lives will naturally effect the world positively. But the idea that the mission of the Church includes seeking to redeem culture and society, pursuing social justice as well as intentionally cultivating and caring for the natural world, is alien at best, unscriptural at worse. These are not matters for the Church, they say, certainly not its Mission. But it is. The Mission of the Church is to fulfill the Cultural Mandate. That is the name given to the command recorded in Genesis 1:28. It is addressed to all human beings before the Fall. Because of the Antithesis after the Fall, unsaved humanity rejects the Mandate. It will cultivate and exploit and ultimately destroy the earth and all that is in it. It does not see the earth (the Cosmos) as made by God, belonging to God and existing for the glory of God. Current popular "environmentalism" is ungodly (a-theistic) At best, popular motivation to be "green" is survival (of the entire planet or various species living on it), period. At worse, it is exploiting "the cause" for personal and corporate gain and political power. It is not about being God's stewards of His Creation for His sake. This is where the antithesis comes in. The unregenerate can go only so far in obeying the Cultural Mandate. Their spiritual blindness and ignorance of God and His Word seriously limits or perverts what they do and restricts all co-operation with the Regenerate. Common Grace and common ground for the common good only goes so far. It can go a lot farther than many Christians think, but there is a limit. For the Mandate to really be fulfilled, the People who do know the Lord and His Word must do it. It is the Mission of the Church, for which they are well equipped.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:40

## **Part 5- MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

The Mission of the Church is not primarily about winning people to Christ, about personal salvation. That common view is inadequate and not Scriptural at all. The Mission of the Church is extending the Kingdom of God on earth as per our Lord's prayer. The Kingdom of God as "reign" is God's work in us by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, Sacraments and Discipline (all administered by the institutional Church) The Kingdom of God as "realm" is organizing all of our lives according to His Word (which begins with the Creation Ordinances in the Torah). Our work as the organic Church (the People of God) is intentionally seeking to extend this Realm throughout Society, our Nation and World. "Great Commission", is about persuading people to adopt the Cultural Mandate. First, the Church (the Apostles) were commissioned to preach the Gospel to the "whole Creation". See Mark 16:15 (ktisis is often translated as "Creation" rather than "creature") They are to preach the good news that Christ has acted to redeem, not only sinners, but the entire natural order. See Romans 8:19-25 Second, the Church is commissioned to make disciples of those who believe the Good News. This is to be done by baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that (God) has commanded. That would most definitely include the Cultural Mandate. Why not? It has not been repealed or annulled any more than the Decalogue has. This is not about personal salvation. This is not preaching salvation by works or by obeying some Law. I fully affirm the Gospel of Grace. This is about making disciples out of Believers who have been saved by Grace. This is about teaching Believers how they are to live. The Great Commission is about persuading and equipping Believers to obey the Cultural Mandate. All-in-all, this is about teaching Believers to have an all encompassing Biblical world and life view. This is about teaching Believers to spend their lives seeking to extend the Kingdom of their Lord over all. "Great Commandment" is the motive: Love for God and People. The Gospel [the redeeming work of Christ] is what makes this possible. The Lordship of Christ is what requires it. The concept of the Lordship of Jesus is very popular. It usually comes down to meaning the lordship of a life style of love and servant hood based on the 3 year public life of Jesus (as a model of "radical", against the religious and political power structure, non-violent suffering service, especially to the poor and marginalized) and exemplified in his death interpreted, most definitely not as penal substitutionary atonement for the sins of the world, but as the ultimate act of sacrificial love for others, particularly the unlovable. His resurrection is often interpreted as that act by which God demonstrated his approval of Jesus love and lifestyle or as evidence that this Suffering Servant overcame the establishment and powers that be and still lives in the world, leading and empowering others to do as he did (whether they are Christians or not). This is not at all what I believe, nor is it what Neo-Calvinism or the Lordship of Jesus is about.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:35

## **Part 6- THE TORAH: GOD'S NORMS FOR LIVING**

Earlier (above) I said that the fear of secularizing the Gospel and the mission of the Church is warranted. I see this happening among many evangelicals who think they are becoming "Neo-Calvinists" and among even more who have never heard that name, but are adopting social action as the sum and total of "what being a Christian is all about" I hear this dictum often among Christians on the "Left" and in the "Emerging" and "Missional" churches and communities. I increasingly hear of it among contemporary (mainstream) evangelicals who are discovering the homeless, poverty, world hunger, the Aids/HIV epidemic and Global Warming. These are very legitimate concerns, but I have very serious problems with this trend. Sharing Common Grace for the Common good is not enough by a long shot. That is not our mission. Social Justice is not our Mission. That is not what the Cultural Mandate is about. The mandate involves the Economy and Government. It involves Academics (Education) and Culture. It involves all aspects of civilization. Homelessness and poverty and public health are only small parts of the overall Mandate. To really make headway with the Cultural Mandate, people must be motivated by the love of God, not just love of people or Creation. Seeking God's glory must be what drives the Mission. We can not overlook or ignore the Antithesis. We share common grace with the unsaved, but all Human beings are fallen sinners. That must be acknowledged and dealt with. Fallen sinners need Special Grace. They need regeneration. Only the regenerate will truly seek to fulfill the Cultural Mandate. It is, after all, an attempt to extend the Kingdom of God over all the earth and throughout society and culture. And Regeneration requires the Gospel of Grace, Evangelism, Conversion and Disciple making. This is not a secular enterprise. It is also most definitely not limited to ministering to the "Poor" or Homeless. It is not about disaster relief. The Cultural Mandate involves nothing less than applying the Norms of God (Creational Ordinances and universal Principles) to all aspects of Society. The Norms of God and these Principles are grounded in the Torah. Most evangelicals who are into social action, including those who consider themselves Neo-Calvinists, ignore or reject the Law of God. They insist that we are saved by grace, not Law, therefore the Torah has no authority even though it is an Article of Faith that the Scripture, which includes the Torah, is

the absolute and final authority in Faith and Practice. Yes, we are saved by grace, but how are we to live our daily lives? Christians typically say we are to live lives of Christ-like character and virtue and follow the ethical teaching of the New Testament, especially the command to Love. The following is a typical description taken from a church website[Our] Social ministry involves everything we do as the people of God to reach out compassionately to folks in need. It also involves our efforts to promote peace and justice. In other words, social ministry is our calling to serve, following the example of Christ who commands us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, etc. (Matthew 25:36 ff.). That is good, but very inadequate. What I am taking about is far more inclusive. All Scripture (meaning the Old Testament) is profitable (actually essential) for instruction in right living for every Christian. See 2 Tim 3:16-17 In the Torah, interpreted and applied by the Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles we have specific God-given norms and principles that apply to human rights, sexual relations, marriage, procreation, parenting, work, money management, worship, idolatry, charity (care of the destitute), private property and land use, civic responsibility, public health and safety, criminal justice, government, warfare and science. The Torah explains how God wants us to “promote peace and justice... feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick” and it is far more than “following the example of Christ”, whatever that means (and Matthew 25:36 ff has nothing to do with it).

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:32

## **Part 7- SPHERE SOVEREIGNTY and CONCLUSION**

The Cultural Mandate involves individuals, but also confronting and redeeming systems and structures. Classic Neo-Calvinism includes a concept of “Sphere Sovereignty”. Many people claiming to be neo-Calvinist seem to know nothing of this basic Neo-Calvinist concept. The following is from an article I posted on this Blog in April of this year. Many of the Psalms record intense personal (spiritual, social, physical) struggles of the Believer. They reveal a very personal relationship with God- an individual relationship. The 16th Century Protestant Reformation was a major source of today’s strong belief in the “Individual”, especially, in the individual’s right to freedom of conscience and choice. However, basic aspects of today’s Western, American understanding of the “Individual” are not Scriptural or Reformed. Biblically, every individual person is created in the image of God and therefore, has infinite worth. Although the individual has infinite worth, God [his] creator declared it is not good for the individual to be alone. We are each created with the ability and the need to live with others, in covenant (committed) community. The Creator (in His Law) directs us to what these communities are to be. First, men and women are meant to live together as husband and wife, i.e.- in the Community of Marriage. These individuals are, in fact, to become and live as “one flesh”. Next, married individuals are to be fruitful- have children, and live together as families. When the sons marry, he and his wife begin another family; but these family units live as one extended, inter-generational Community. Next, these extended families assemble and live together as a Community of Faith (the Church) The Spheres of Marriage, Family, extended natural Family and Church have God-given or “creational” norms or boundaries. Each Sphere has its own authority (known as “sovereignty” to neocalvinists) and while they cooperate, they must not usurp or interfere with each others, i.e.- they must respect each other’s sovereignty, but none of the Spheres is absolute nor autonomous from the other or from God. The primary function of each Sphere, of all Spheres, is to act as God’s agent in the world, obeying God’s mandate to fill the earth, care for it and continue His work of cultivating it for the common good of all who inhabit it. To this end of fulfilling the “Cultural Mandate”, other Spheres will naturally arise- voluntary social associations of individuals, for work and the production and distribution of goods and services. Even more voluntary associations will naturally arise for Education, Communications, the Arts and Recreation. None of these Spheres, extensions of the original Marriage, Family and Church Spheres, are autonomous either, but cooperate with each other and function according to the Law of God, accountable to Him. There is one other Sphere: Civil Government. It is not to usurp or interfere with any of these other Spheres. It is not to fulfill the purposes assigned by God to Marriages, Families or the Church or any of the extended Associations. Its function is to see to it that “everyone plays by the rules” (God’s rules). It is to facilitate cooperation, and work out disagreements, between all the Spheres. It is to pass and enforce legislation and laws to that

end. [The Concept of Sphere Sovereignty is crucial to Neo-Calvinist Political Science]This has been a cursory overview of basic concepts that I am enthused about and want to study more and to which I want to introduce others. These concepts may be described as the essentials of Neo-Calvinism. The VisionMy "Vision" is to help the Kingdom come through scholarship and teaching. I am a retired Pastor, now simply an educated layman, committed to trying to think Biblically about everything. I hope to inspire and help others, particularly college students and educated laypeople, to do more of this work as an offering to the Lord. I am convinced that Christians must do integrative, interdisciplinary study to discover God's Norms for how we are to live in today's world. To that end, my vision includes vision of the "Re/formation Institute". See my website at <http://www.calvinfox.com/web/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:21

Saturday, June 16, 2007

## **LOVE? WHAT LOVE?**

Again, last week, the Sermon was about Love. That word is shouted and whispered constantly. We watched an interesting movie recently- "Marvin's Room". A daughter devoted the last 20 years of her life to caring for her bedridden father (Marvin) and his very eccentric spinster sister. The main "message" of this drama about painful family relationships is simple. This daughter was fulfilled and content because she had someone to love, i.e.- someone totally dependent on her whom she could care for. A second daughter refused to help and left home in search of someone to love her. She never found him and was not fulfilled or content. Give and you will receive. Is this message realistic? Is it healthy? Is it love? Is this a model for how we are to live?

According to Scripture, yes, love is directed outward, toward others. The verse about loving others as you love yourself does not mean we love ourselves and then, also love others likewise. It means we love others as though they were ourselves. And this love is not a feeling or emotion. It does not even involve "liking" others. Scripturally, love is a verb indicating action. Love means doing for others. And this action for others is a matter of obedience- it is a command, a duty to others. But what kind of doing? What action for others does the Scripture have in mind? Love is not passive action. Love does not include accepting abuse from others, being used and exploited by others. Love is active, but Love does not mean catering to every whim of others, doing whatever they ask. It does not mean becoming a co-dependent, supporting and enabling others in their self-destructive behavior. Love does not mean condoning or excusing or overlooking sinful or selfish behavior. Love does not do things to spoil or manipulate or control others. Many have all these misunderstandings of love and ruin their own lives, as well as others, in giving this so-called "love". Many actually believe that all or some of the above is what Christian love is all about. No, no. This is not only not Biblical, it is toxic love! How do we know what God means when He commands us to love our neighbor? True love of neighbor is spelled out in the Torah. In summary, I am loving others when I work and am responsible for my life and affairs so that I am not a burden or drain upon the resources of others. I am loving my parents when I honor and respect their values and ways and obey them (the latter if I am living in their home, under their authority). I am loving others when I respect their right to live and support themselves. I am loving those who are destitute due to no fault of their own and can not support themselves when I help them to survive. I am loving my spouse when I honor and keep my marriage vows and I love others who are married when I respect their marriage vows, too. I am loving others when I respect the private property of others and do not steal or ruin it. I am loving others when I do not slander them or unjustly accuse them of wrongdoing. I am loving others when I respect their privacy and do not meddle in their business. These are what the Scripture means when it speaks of love.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:45

Tuesday, May 29, 2007

## **WRONG REASONS TO STUDY THEOLOGY**

The following quote is an excerpt from a CBD review of *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* by Robert Reymond. Robert Reymond deserves hearty thanks and congratulations from every Christian for this, his magnum opus, a 1210 page wonder of the theological world. This might well be a solid and useful text, but the title is incorrect, if the next sentence is true- Unabashedly Reformed in perspective, ... For the title to be accurate, one must equate "The Christian Faith" with "Reformed". I am Reformed, but I do not believe this is equation is valid. Reymond attacks each problem from historical, biblical, and systematic viewpoints, providing descriptions of the major positions and then unrelentingly demonstrating the superiority of his position. To a large extent he succeeds.

The reviewer values and seeks a "superior position" over alternatives. I believe this is wrong-headed. The purpose of studying Theology is not to unrelentingly demonstrate the superiority of one's position. The purpose of studying Theology is to understand God, His nature and works, as best as possible considering our limitations as sinful human beings. There is no room here for spiritual or academic hubris, let alone arrogance, especially in a Calvinist! There is enough ammo here to win any theological battle in which you might find yourself engaged. With Reymond on your side, you can easily proof text your opponent into oblivion! Is this what the study of God is about? What kind of Christian attitude is this? Using proof texts for any purpose is suspect. It is the worst kind of fundamentalism. The aim in theological study, again, is to know God, not to amass ammo for a battle in which to blow your opponent into oblivion- sounds more like a violent video game. This reviewer's point of view disturbs me. The reason I am writing this article is that I read such sentiments frequently on Reformed websites and Blogs. That is not good and a major reason I do not recommend many Reformed sites to Christians seeking to learn about the Reformed Faith. Learning of God properly leads to humility, brokenness and worship. That, in turn, leads to the pursuit of personal holiness. It does not lead to a sense of spiritual superiority or an Inquisition- a search and destroy mission, against those who do not share the Faith.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:39

## **WHERE IS GOD?**

Psalm 139 Lord, you have searched me out and known me; you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You trace my journeys and my resting-places and are acquainted with all my ways. Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, but you, O Lord, know it altogether. You press upon me behind and before and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; This is marvelous mystery- good news; but, here is Job's different take on it- Job 23 Job said: He [God] is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does. For he will complete what he appoints for me, ... such things are in his mind. Therefore I am terrified at his presence; when I consider, I am in dread of him. God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me

Psalm 139- Where can I go then from your Spirit? where can I flee from your presence? If I climb up to heaven, you are there; if I make the grave my bed, you are there also. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there your hand will lead me and your right hand hold me fast. This is a wonderful statement of faith by the Psalmist; but again, Job has a different take- Job 23 Job said: Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! ... "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; on the left hand ... I do not behold him; ... to the right hand, but I do not see him. But he knows the way that I take; The Psalmist's experience is very different from Job's. Both are Believers, men of faith. How can that be? Is one of them wrong? Is God with us everywhere we go? How come the Psalmist sees Him, but Job does not? Neither of these men are describing God (although most of us are glad to agree with the Psalmist) Each man is describing himself, his personal experience with God at the time. Isn't it true and fair to say, when we are being honest, that we are like both men, at various times in our lives? The question is "Why?" If it is objectively and absolutely true that God is with us everywhere (and it is) why do we know that experientially only sometimes? Often we feel like Job, but are afraid to admit it and, instead, say what we think is expected of us as a Christian. We usually think it is only non Christians who say things like Job confesses here. That is a mistake. Like Job, we Believers sometimes have the same experience. When we do, we must honestly face our fears, confess our doubts, express our dismay and confusion- to the Lord we trust. "Lord I believe, help my unbelief!" That honesty is the beginning of change. It makes it possible for God to reveal Himself to us. He will make it clear what is blinding us. Usually, we already know, deep down; other times we have no clue. Job learned what had come between him and the Lord. [read the book] He surrendered to what God was doing in his difficult life. Job 42:1 Then Job replied to the LORD : 2 "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be

thwarted. 3 You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand things too wonderful for me to know. 4 "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak... 5 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Instead of this making Job happy, he responds to this new awareness of God with shame. 6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." BUT-10 After Job had prayed ..., the LORD made him prosperous again... 12 The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. Be encouraged, friend, when you struggle like Job did. May the Lord grant that we know and see Him at work in our lives today!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:42

Monday, April 9, 2007

## **GOD-GIVEN HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES Part 1**

Responsibility to Worship and obey God (Jehovah)1. Allegiance to God above all else. 2. Honor and respect to what belongs to God, especially His Name and His Day. Responsibility to obey the Cultural Mandate, specifically1. Cultivate and Care for the natural world: Stewardship of the Environment2. Help develop Civilization and Culture: All that is essential to humane Society3. To Work and care for essential personal health and developmentResponsibility to marry and have a healthy Marriage and Family4. Life-long honor, respect and obedience [while living at home] toward parents 5. Fidelity and good behavior to one's spouse. 6. The care, support and education of children and help to support widows and orphans [the destitute] in the extended family Responsibility for others in my Neighborhood 7. Respect the life of others, contributing to their welfare as wanted and needed (using Biblical guidelines) 8. Staying out of other people's private affairs Responsibility to maintain a civil community, to be a good citizen9. Respect for the "property" of others [including capital and intellectual] 10. To be honest with others and never to slander, steal or attack them11. Respect and support of civil government These Principles should be modeled and taught by every Family to its members and by every Church to its members and by every School to its students. It remains, of course, to work out definitions and details involved with the application of each. Christians must do that work as part of their commitment to Christ as their Sovereign. They will develop these universal Norms in specific Christian, Biblical terms. Their object is not to force others into obeying such Norms, but for them to do so for their own guidance in how to organize their lives, as the Covenant people of God, in a world of non-Covenant Peoples.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:57

## **LIVING IN COMMUNITIES ("Spheres") Part 2**

These are the Rights and Responsibilities of every individual. However, we are not intended by our Creator to live as individuals. Therefore, there is a prior Right and Responsibility: to live in Communities. We become the persons we are meant to be living in relationships with others. This is the absolute prerequisite context for all of the above individual Rights and Responsibilities. They are only understood and reasonable within this framework. When it is lost, the rest are misused or lost. However, the Communities and Relationships are not of our own choosing or design. All individuals are intended and made to live within social systems or relationships, intended and designed by God, as part of His Creation. These Creational "Spheres" [as they are designated in neo-calvinist social thought] are not an aggregate of individuals, who voluntarily associate in ways and times in order to meet their individual needs and separate when they do not. Each Sphere has a God-given or creational purpose, which the members work together to fulfill, with each fulfilling various functions or roles according to God-given or "creational" norms or boundaries. These Spheres are specific, committed communities: Marriage Family Church [the Institution] Associations [organizations required to fulfill the Cultural Mandate] Civil Government Note: All 5 of these Spheres are creational and permanent as Classes. They are generic and, as such, they are intended by God to always be present in Society. However, specific forms are not permanent and members change.

The Creator (in His Law, the Torah) directs us to what these communities are to be. First, men and women are meant to live together as husband and wife, i.e.- in the Community of Marriage. These individuals are, in fact, to become and live as "one flesh". Next, married individuals are to be fruitful- have children, and live together as families. When the sons marry, he and his wife begin another family; but these family units are intended to live as one extended, inter-generational Community. Next, these extended families assemble and live in proximity as a Community of Faith, the Church. The solitary, autonomous, self-determined "individual" (that we value in popular American culture) is not in this picture. He was never intended by God to exist; nor are these social units, known to neocalvinists as "Spheres", intended to be an aggregate of individuals, who voluntarily associate in ways and times in order to meet their individual needs and separate when they do not. Voluntary and temporary relationships and communities of unrelated individuals are absolutely not valid substitutes for Marriage or Family or Church. The primary function of each Sphere, and of all the Spheres, is to act as God's agent in the world, obeying God's mandate to fill the earth, care for it and continue His work

of cultivating it for the common good of all who inhabit it. To this end of fulfilling the "Cultural Mandate", other Spheres will naturally arise- these are voluntary social Associations of individuals, for work and the production and distribution of goods and services. Even more voluntary associations will naturally arise for Health, Education, Communications, the Arts and Recreation. None of these Spheres, ad hoc extensions of the original Marriage, Family and Church Spheres, are autonomous either, but cooperate with each other and function according to the Law of God, accountable to Him. There is one more Sphere: Civil Government. It is not to usurp or interfere with any of these other Spheres. It is not to fulfill the purposes assigned by God to Marriages, Families or the Church or any of the extended Associations. It's function is to see to it that "everyone plays by the rules" (God's rules). It is to facilitate cooperation, and work out disagreements, between all the Spheres. It is to pass and enforce legislation and laws to that end. Because all the individuals involved in the Spheres are sinners, there will be injustice- transgression of God's Law and oppression. Civil Government is to stop such injustice, wherever it may occur in any of the Spheres. They are systems and may very well malfunction or fail. One of the functions of the Church is to remind the Civil Government of its proper responsibilities and that it, too, is not autonomous or absolute. It, too, is a servant of God and must serve under His Law. We find our individuality, our life, when we lose it for the sake of the Spheres: Marriage, Family, extended natural Family and Church, Associations and Civil Government. Each Sphere has its own authority (known as "sovereignty" to neocalvinists) and while they cooperate, they must not usurp or interfere with each others, i.e.- they must respect the respective authority of each. None of the Spheres is absolute nor autonomous from each other or God. The civil government and the Associations must respect the Church. The Church must respect the extended Family, the extended family must respect the "primary" family and it must respect the Marriage at the heart of it all. All of the above is a simple sketch of an Ideal. Obviously, the real world does not function this way. Nevertheless, it is a Biblical Ideal and one Christians should get serious about. I find it revolutionary. The challenge we have as Christians is to work to redeem the real world situation, working as change agents to redirect the train that is running on the wrong track.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:37

## **SUBJECTS CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE STUDYING**

First Amendment: Establishment Clause, Freedom of Conscience, Pluralism, Sabbath Observance/Ideologies (Idolatry)\_\_\_\_Right to Life: Conception, Abortion (beginning of Life issues), Eugenics, Euthanasia, Biomedical Technology and Ethics, What is "Human?", Speciesism, EnvironmentalismMarriage; definition and purpose, the importance of, saving itFamily: definition and purpose, procreation, fathers/mothers, relationships, saving it\_\_\_\_EconomicsCapitalismPoverty, Welfare State, Entitlements, etc\_\_\_\_Justice: human rights, legal system (constitution, laws, courts and due process) criminal system Natural Law\_\_\_\_Church: nature, purpose Theology\_\_\_\_Associations: Education and Academics, Sciences, Public Health, Business, the Arts, etcCivil Government: "democracy", citizenship, political science, public policy, foreign policy\_\_\_\_American History, Intellectual History, Social History

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:40

## **BECOME AN ICONOCAST!**

Psalm 97 Are employment and housing and consumer goods and health the summum bonum by which everything in life is measured? Seems like it, to many. Some Christians are given to criticizing, even condemning the well-off for their pursuit and enjoyment of "goods", inasmuch as there is so much poverty in the world. These critics do not seem to realize that they agree being well-off is the summum bonum by their very advocacy for the Poor. That is simply the flip side. They insist the Poor have the Right to be well-off, too. In both cases, Mammon is the measure. The haves and the have-nots are both measured by the things that typical Americans value most. I agree that having a place to live in is better than being out on the street, but this misses the point. A person can be rich or destitute- both are sinners and both are equally lost, if they do not know Christ. The point is, that is what is most important and social economic status is irrelevant to it. So many go to Haiti or Mississippi and are deeply moved by the devastation or poverty they see there. They feel badly because the folks they see do not have the material goods that they enjoy back home. That's understandable. That's also missing the point. Do these same "mission" teams have their hearts broken because the folks they see may not be saved? How about the well-off neighbors back home? Are they disturbed and upset and get busy doing something to bring Christ to any of these people?The Lord is king; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad. Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne. The summum bonum, "the supreme good from which all others are derived" [dictionary] is actually the glory of God. It is not riches or poverty. Our mission as Christians is not to care for the homeless or street people or to help the rich become richer. Neither were these the goals of Jesus. What are we called to do? All of us are called to live lives that glorify God. Rich or poor, everyone is to seek God and His Glory. That is the one message for the people in the streets and for the people in corporate offices. This Psalm declares, righteousness and justice are the foundations of his

throne. If you want the specific way to glorify God, seek God's righteousness and His justice. Seek them for His sake! And do not make the mistake of assuming that God's righteousness and justice are synonyms for the American style good life or that the means of achieving them are either libertarianism or the legislation and money of the Welfare State. The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. Confounded be all who worship carved images and delight in false gods! The fundamental cause of the world's woes is Idolatry. Indeed, the Biblical cause of true poverty is oppression. And the source of oppression is the commitment of people with power to their idols. Want to attack Poverty and all the other ills afflicting the world? Become an iconoclast, a smasher of the idols of both the Left and of the Right. Bow down before him, all you gods.... For you are the Lord: most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods. The Lord loves those who hate evil; ... Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:29

Monday, March 26, 2007

## **DEFINING LOVE BY THE LAW**

Here are two current illustrations why we need the Law of God (TORAH) to show us how to live as Christians. 1. There have been a number of stories in the news lately about the increasing numbers of foreclosures on housing, all across the country. They are stories of people who are in way over their heads and can no longer pay their mortgages. To my mind, they made some really stupid, or at least very ill-informed, decisions and showed very poor, unrealistic judgment in what is required to purchase and maintain a house. They also showed grandiose expectations of "the good life" and extreme cases of conspicuous consumption (that can be a serious "disease"). But, they could not have gotten into this mess alone. Here is where the Law comes in. Many of the stories involve unscrupulous money-lenders who took advantage of these people's ignorance and unrealistic goals, persuading and helping them sign on for loans that would cripple them- all in the gamble that the money-lender would make a profit off of them. These Lenders are guilty of greed and exploitation. How do we "love" our neighbors? The Law tells us clearly: by treating them honestly and not by taking advantage of them financially. This is where all those verses about usury apply today, and those about fraud, exploitation, harassment and stealing. Just telling people to "love" doesn't cut it. The Law explicitly details what "love" entails. 2. The Episcopal Priest in Amherst, Ma [whom I wrote about recently] has had a lot of attention and criticism for his plan to put a moratorium on heterosexual weddings in his Church, because he is not currently being allowed by his denomination to perform weddings for same-sex couples. On the defensive, he insists, in a news release, that he is only doing what he must as a Christian. We are called to love our neighbors and they include folks who are homosexuals. To love them, he says, especially as members of the Church, is to offer them all the Sacraments and blessings and support he offers to heterosexual members and neighbors. He says the Gospel requires this. A disciple of Christ can not do otherwise. The Law would set him straight. Often to "love" someone is to seek to prevent them from self-injurious behavior, even if they demand the "right" to do it. To "love" them is not to support them in doing something unnatural or immoral. Again, the Law is explicit about the meaning of "love". It does not mean blessing same-sex unions. Exactly the opposite.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:07

Monday, March 12. 2007

## **SPIRITUAL UNDISCIPLINE**

Interest in "Spiritual Formation" continues to increase. [I have written about SF elsewhere on this Blog. Use the Search box in the column to the right, to find my posts] An announcement came today from Gordon Conwell Seminary, announcing a 2 day, 3 evenings Conference on the subject, which they are hosting in May. Three National Speakers and leaders for 9 workshops will be present. The appeal seems to be to Christians who do not feel they have a deep, meaningful experience with the Lord and want to learn methods ("disciplines") to rectify that. They apparently want to learn how to practice meditation and learn to listen for God in new or deeper ways. They want to become more like Christ, more spiritual, experiencing more of His peace and love within. Sounds worthwhile. Plenary addresses are about "Contemplative Spirituality", "Spiritual Direction", "Connecting with God", "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality", Learning to "Be Still", et al. My guess is that the Christians who are most interested in all of this are mostly middleclass or affluent, ambitious, upwardly mobile, mostly white Baby Boomers (or their college age children) who live fast track, busy lives with normally little time for God in the daily schedule of 2 careers and suburban mania. There, might be the real issue that should be addressed: this way of living. One of the so-called Spiritual Disciplines is fasting. Perhaps what would go a long way to help folks with this life style is to fast from it, as such, particularly from materialism and consumerism (having it all, especially for their children) and the worship of Success, even Power. If what I am saying is close to the mark for any, a 3 day conference (at \$115 each plus meals and motel- this alone tells a lot about who will be attracted to the Conference and its Theme) will not do much for them, if they simply pick up where they left off, upon returning home.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:20

## **PRAISING GOD WITH STRINGS**

Quoting the Psalmist about praising God with strings, opening and closing with a prayer to that end, The Whitinsville Christian School (CRC) offered a concert last week of string music to the glory of God. Needless to say, it was wonderful and a real blessing to our hearts. There are 124 musicians, from grades 1 through 12 in the program (and 2 from Kindergarten) They are all taught using the Suzuki method and the entire concert was done by memory. How wonderful to hear beautiful, "secular" classical music (Bach, Handel, Saint-Saens, Schumann, etc), being played with excellence, by Christian children and teens [one of whom is our granddaughter, Caitlin], to the glory of God!! The auditorium was filled with family and friends who, obviously, value and support this ministry. That, too, is impressive in this day and age.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:02

Thursday, March 8, 2007

## **WITNESSING IN THE WORKPLACE**

Bible studies at Sears and at retail stores and corporate headquarters across the country. Nothing new, but a growing phenomena. Here is a story of a man planning to be a missionary and realized he already was in the mission field, surrounded by 5000 people every day where he was employed. He became a "missional" Christian, focusing on ministry with all those people in his workplace. Read about him and many others like him. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/march/33.62.html> Included in the article are answers to questions about legal rights Christian employees and managers should know. The field is white and ready to harvest.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:57

Wednesday, February 21, 2007

## **ASH WEDNESDAY**

I spend time in prayer and meditating on Scripture every day and am daily mindful of my sin and shortcomings and daily thankful for God's mercy and grace; I do a lot of soul-searching and reflection daily on my life and living (probably far too much). So the idea of having 40 days to do more of the same is not particularly special to me. In other words, I live Lent all year long. The emphasis in some circles on self-flagellation can also be depressing and unhealthy. Many of us beat up on ourselves far too much. We are often burdened with far too much guilt, much of it needless and unwarranted (we have allowed others to lay guilt on us for no good reason) Lent is not about going there. Through Christ, we have forgiveness of true sin and of the true guilt we feel about that sin. It is gone- "washed in the Blood". It is always good and essential to examine our lives in the light of God's Word. There is always the need to make adjustment and mid-course corrections. There are always transgressions we need to confess and be done with. We always need a spiritual bath and a cleansing of the crud that clings on our minds and hearts. Lent is just a way the Church uses for reminding us of all this and giving us a push or prod (a discipline) to follow through on this stuff. Actually, we should enjoy Lent, even though we are not supposed to say "Hallelujah" again until Easter Sunday. Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness; according to the abundance of your compassion blot out my offences. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my faults and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, 5 So that you are justified in your sentence and righteous in your judgment. 6 Cast me not away from your presence and take not your holy spirit from me. 7 Give me again the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your gracious spirit; 8 Then shall I teach your ways to the wicked and sinners shall return to you. 9 Deliver me from my guilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness. Psalm 51.1-5, 12-15

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:18

Saturday, February 17, 2007

## **THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND?**

Nominated for an Academy Award this year is Forest Whitaker for his performance as Idi Amin, murderous Dictator of Uganda in the 70's, who sometimes wore kilts and called himself "The Last King of Scotland" The Church calendar today commemorates the Martyrs of Uganda, including Christians murdered by Amin. I do not want to see the movie. I do want to honor the witness of these Brothers in the Lord commemorated today, as well as others like them. I stand in awe and respect for their faithfulness to the true King of Scotland and the world. Read their story here-<http://www.oremus.org/oremus.cgi?f>Read the rest of the story about Festo Kivengere, the Billy Graham of Africa, here-[http://www.dacb.org/stories/uganda/kivengere\\_festo.html](http://www.dacb.org/stories/uganda/kivengere_festo.html)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:36

Sunday, February 4, 2007

## **LEARNING TO LIVE GOD'S WAY**

Iraq, Federal Budget, Social Security, Health Care, Immigration, Global Warming. Every day, we are inundated with news about these and other pressing issues. Here in Springfield, along with stories and examples of renewal and optimism for the future of the City and area [and there are many of them!] are the stories about record percentages of school drop outs, teen pregnancies, drugs and violence and the increase of the homeless and poverty. What is a Christian to think about all of these things? What is a Christian to do about them? I want to know! Many Christians stick their heads in the sand, many adopt a dualism that keeps their faith (and Jesus) separate from these matters. When they do engage them, they turn [not to the Bible, but] to Liberal or Conservative columnists and writers for their point of view, information and arguments. Ultimately, they think and act according to how these subjects impact their personal, daily lives, using some reasoning and a lot of "Gut" reaction. They decide and act according to what best serves their personal interest. I understand that. We live on Social Security and a small State Pension; therefore, for example, we are particularly concerned about any proposals affecting them. This is not good enough. Could it really be true that the Lord has no opinion about these things, no Word at all? How can that be, if He is Lord of all? If I believe in the sovereignty of God, and if I do, then I must believe He has a will and directive in all these matters! What could that be? Where do we find it? I want to know! I'm set on my salvation. I am rooted solid in classic orthodox Reformed Doctrines. I stand sure-footed on the "old time" Gospel that I have preached all my life. That is not enough to help me sort out these subjects in the news and to know what God's will is about most any of them. Being saved and sure does not, in itself, help me in sorting out bioethical issues. It does not guide me in dealing with Racism or deciding about Affirmative Action programs or affordable housing or universal health insurance, let alone carbon emissions. What am I to do about these things as a Christian? What is the mind of Christ on these matters? I want to know! We all need to know! The Studies I am publishing on my Website are part of my attempt to get answers to these questions. God does have a Word about how He wants us to live all aspects of our lives. <http://www.calvinfox.com/web/index.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:00

Tuesday, January 23, 2007

### **AN INSPIRING, ENCOURAGING HYMN**

HYMN Words: William Cowper, 1779 Sometimes a light surprisethe Christian while he sings;it is the Lord who riseswith healing in his wings:when comforts are declining,he grants the soul againa season of clear shining,to cheer it after rain.In holy contemplationwe sweetly then pursuethe theme of God's salvation,and find it ever new;set free from present sorrow,we cheerfully can say,let the unknown tomorrowbring with it what it may,It can bring with it nothingbut he will bear us through:who gives the lilies clothingwill clothe his people, too:beneath the spreading heavensno creature but is fed;and he who feeds the ravenswill give his children bread.Though vine nor fig tree neithertheir wonted fruit should bear,though all the fields should wither,nor flocks nor herds be there;yet, God the same abiding,his praise shall tune my voice;for, while in him confiding,I cannot but rejoice.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:14

Saturday, January 20, 2007

## **BEWARE THE MEMES**

My QT Thots passage, yesterday, was based on a part of Romans 12. We are told there not to conform to this age (world). As I think how very much conformed we all are, I wonder that we make any progress at all in being transformed, learning and doing the will of God. Off hand, I'd say there are at least 7 memes of our times or age that greatly affect (or infect) Christians and how we read our Bibles. [Meme (rhymes with gene): "A unit of cultural information, such as a cultural practice or idea, that is transmitted verbally or by repeated action from one mind to another"]INTERCHANGEABLENESS OF WOMEN (WITH MEN)PRIORITY OF RELATIONSHIPS esp. COMMUNITYREJECTION OF PUNISHMENTIMPORTANCE OF FREEDOM OF CHOICEREJECTION OF AUTHORITYSUSPICION OF WORDS AND REASONIMPORTANCE OF ENTITLEMENT Obviously, all of these concepts and current cultural values need to be defined and explained. They are very influential, in play everywhere. They are indispensable in understanding American culture. They are all seriously problematic to Christians seeking to not conform to this Age.

They certainly effect how we interpret Scripture, because we come to that task under the influence of these memes. For example, if we reject the concept of capital punishment, considering it to be cruel, dehumanizing and oppressive (unchristian), we will then reject outright the doctrine that the death of Jesus was a just punishment for the sins of the world, a penal substitution of an innocent person for the guilty ("His blood was shed for me" Horrible!) If we value freedom of choice, when we read the Bible we will not find doctrine of the bondage of the will to Sin within nor the doctrine that all are lost unless God Himself chooses to set them free from that bondage. Indeed, we will find in the Bible texts that teach a God who is open, responsive and controlled by our freedom of will, conforming His to ours. He will not be a God who is Sovereign over all and who predestines anything. (He, too, values our freedom over His own)You see where I'm going here? If we are not to conform to this Age, we must not act under the influence of the memes of this Age. If we are to find God's will in the Bible, we must not only not read it in terms of Enlightenment, Modernist presuppositions; but also not with the conceit and self-deception that we have no presuppositions of current coinage. We do and they must be recognized.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 17:07

Sunday, January 7, 2007

## **IS THERE A CHRISTIAN CULTURE?**

In the right hand column of this page, there is a box that says "Quick Search". You may use it to find articles about topics of interest that I have posted on this Blog. One year ago, I posted the following one about Christian Culture. I had asked if there is such a thing. Saturday, January 14, 2006 ... the answer depends on how we define the word "culture". I will repeat here, what I said about this in posts last August...In defining Christian culture [I am greatly simplifying here], it is essential to distinguish it from "Civilization". The latter involves government and economics and such subjects as the arts, literature, philosophy, the sciences and history. It is also very important to distinguish between Core Culture and Peripheral Culture. The former has to do with those core beliefs, morals and values that bind a group together. The latter has to do with preferences and tastes in manners, food, clothing, decorative arts, customs and traditions such as Rites of Passage (coming of age rituals, weddings, anniversaries, birthdays). There is, and should be, a lot of diversity in all of these peripheral cultural matters. When I say that there a Christian Culture, I refer to core beliefs, morals and values which are Biblical and essential. Core Christian Culture (CCC) ideally includes the following: Life- CCC highly values and honors creation and life. It is very pro-life in every sense. Marriage- CCC honors marriage, defined as a life-long, committed relationship between a man and a woman. Divorce is generally considered a sin. Virginity and Chastity are greatly valued. Sexual intercourse [between anyone] outside of marriage is a sin. Unwed mothers are unheard of and single parents are those who have lost their lawful spouse to death. Family- In CCC, children are desired and valued; extended, cross generational families are the norm; honor (respect) of parents by their children, and of the elderly, by everyone, is expected. Work- CCC places a very high value on work: everyone who is able works throughout life, for the welfare of the family and community. [Social, Economic, Political] Freedom to do this is highly valued. Welfare- People who become poor (particularly widows and orphans) in the CCC are the responsibility-first, of the extended family and then, of the church [and local community] Individual Responsibility- CCC holds individual persons accountable and responsible for their decisions and actions Religion- CCC, above all, is religious. It is centered on the worship and service of the God who has revealed Himself in Creation, Scripture and, particularly, in Jesus Christ. CCC is Christian. People who share CCC see themselves as the Covenant People of God. This is their primary identity, no matter what their ethnic origin [language or nationality] may be. [To repeat, Core Christian Culture is different than Christian Civilization. The latter includes Education, Civil Government and an Economic System, the former being based on Biblical Epistemology and the latter organized along Biblical principles.]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 21:03

Friday, January 5, 2007

## **TESTING A TEENAGER'S DECISION**

Many Denominations are embroiled in debates which come down to the issue of Authority, especially the authority of the Bible. Many conservative Christians also argue about issues and they, too, come down to the authority of the Bible. The next major decision I made as a teenager, after coming to saving faith in Jesus, was to accept and live by the authority of the Bible. I was a new Christian being buffeted by non-Christian professors my Freshman year at Drew University (one Philosophy teacher in particular). Walking around campus one day, I made that decision and have kept it (by the grace of God) to this day. It has been greatly tested through the years. In recent years, the test has come from within Evangelical circles. What difference does holding to the authority of the Bible make? I have made the following list of beliefs I have (among many). I hold them ultimately because I believe they are authorized by the Scripture:

The existence of God and the reality of the supernatural; the reality of Absolutes Creation by divine fiat, as well as ex nihilo; the original goodness of that Creation and the universal Mandate to care and cultivate it as intended by God Human Beings as created and bearing the Image of God- the sacred value of the human Person An actual, historic "Fall" involving Adam and Eve and the consequent Original Sin and Curse: the Total Depravity of Human Beings. The absolute need of Regeneration by every human being and that it is necessary before righteousness is possible. The necessity of Civil Government as the servant of God to maintain Law and Order, according to His Word (including the use of Capital Punishment); rejection of the State as God (i.e.- the totalitarian State, Left or Right) Marriage as a life-long covenant between a man and a woman and God. The sin of fornication Conception as the beginning of human life; therefore, the evil of abortion The Decalogue as summary of God's Law and of God-given universal human rights and responsibilities Justice as the establishment of those God-given Rights and Responsibilities in Society; the rejection of the ideology of Multiculturalism The reality of Judgment, Eternal Heaven and Hell The Orthodox, Catholic and Reformed Christian Faith is the one true Religion, in which alone is Salvation. The True Church as that which embodies and preserves True Religion; the deficiency of all other churches and religions; the rejection of the ideology of religious Pluralism; rejection of the identification of the Church with America or modern Israel The historical events of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension as well as the ancient, classic meaning and purpose attributed to those events by the Church; the Gospel as that which encompasses and traditions these events and meanings; rejection of the reduction of the Gospel to the "Example or Teachings of Jesus". I hold these beliefs or convictions primarily because I hold to the authority of the Bible. That is how essential that authority is. This begs a question: what about those who hold different views of any or all of the above and insist that their authority is also the Bible? Many who consider themselves to be evangelicals, even Reformed, make this claim. How can this be? My decision as a teenager, I later learned, was to accept the entire Bible as Special, Propositional Revelation: the God-breathed, written, verbal Word of God. As such, it was inerrant and infallible- totally reliable in all it taught. This is why it must be the highest authority, among several, in faith and practice. As such, it must trump all contemporary, social, cultural influences and considerations. This is a watershed. Many who claim the authority of Scripture hold a different view of what the Book is. That leads to different conclusions. As such, this Book (or collection of 66 "Books", accepted by the ancient Church as canonical) is, I believe, to be read and interpreted according to normal grammatical rules, ie- by common sense, seeking the original intent and meaning of the writers. That intent and meaning, thus derived, is authoritative today. Here is another dividing line. Many who claim the Bible as their authority use other rules for interpreting it or they do not seek "original intent". (All this reminds me of how the Constitution of our Country is interpreted. Conservatives seek "original intent". What did its Articles mean to the Founders? Liberals see the Document as "Living"; thus, what do we see its meaning to be for us in our times? The difference in these two approaches has had enormous impact on the course of our history as a Nation. Likewise, these two approaches to the Bible greatly effect the use of the Bible among us.) I realize, original intent and meaning can sometimes be difficult to determine, even while we all claim the illumination of the Spirit within and among us. Thus, it is imperative to me, to consult Churchmen, Theologians and Scholars of years past, as well as those of today. What has been the Tradition, the Wisdom, of the Church throughout its entire history? Here is another divide. There is a growing interest, currently, in the Church of the first 5 Centuries. Others give great importance to the Reformers of the 16th and 17th Centuries. Still others, are enamored with the Anabaptists or "Radicals" of the same period. The latter, while avowing commitment to the Bible, give particular importance to the Sermon on the Mount and the history of the very first Christians in the early part of the Book of Acts. This leads them to a strong interest in "community" and "social activism". Some passages from the Prophets are used to bolster this interest, especially verses about the "Poor". Contemporary evangelicals, on the other hand, tend to be ahistorical. They give particular importance to select verses they consider to be a "Plan of Salvation", as well as other verses selected to give assurance of that salvation and to help them in their "personal relationship" with Jesus. Contemporary Charismatic and Pentecostals also

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consider authoritative those verses that are about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the “sign” or miraculous ones. I hereby reaffirm that decision I made as a teenager, more than 50 years ago.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:37

Thursday, January 4, 2007

## **WALKING A TIGHTROPE**

We must recognize in today's society, that there is a real distinction made by many between Faith, which is private and subjective and Fact, which is public, objective, verifiable by scientific method and Value, such as the decision by the new Congress to take money from oil production and put it into development of alternative fuels and Ethics, such as the handling of various scandals involving members in that same Congress. We see these distinctions played out daily everywhere. What is the Reformed Christian to make of this? For us, Christ is Sovereign. All we do must be united and in harmony with His Word and with each other. The bifurcation of our lives into two, let alone four, parts is not acceptable. Granted this is difficult in the real world; but our Faith and Values and Ethics can not be separated or pitted against each other. None of them are private. All are public and interrelated. And Facts, no matter how "hard" or scientific they may claim to be, are not neutral. They are selected and used according to Faith, Values and Ethics. Witness, for example, the current debate about stem cell research.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/03/AR2007010301857.html?referrer=emailhttp://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/03/AR2007010300778.html?referrer=email>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:05

Tuesday, December 26, 2006

## **HOW DO YOU ADDRESS GOD?**

The writer of an article in the current Books and Culture magazine ponders what Name to use in talking to God, when she prays. What Name do you most frequently use? Obviously there are several available: Father, Jesus, Lord, God are probably most popular. Her theory is that the name we use most reflects more about ourselves than it does about God. I think the name reveals the dominant way we image God in our minds and our belief about who He is. She says, she most often addresses God as "Lord", when she prays to Him. I usually open my prayer with "Almighty God, Heavenly Father" I guess I am most influenced by Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying, "Our Father". But, what do we mean by "Father"? For many, that is not the most positive name; but, it can have many negative, as well as positive associations. I see the Person to whom I pray, first of all, as God- the God who is all mighty, omnipotent. Thus, He is Creator and Judge of all; but, I am thankful, that, through Jesus my Lord and because of Jesus my Savior, I see and know this almighty God as my Father- not just any father or a faulty father or a human, earthly father who is almighty. Rather, I see the Almighty God (Creator and Judge) as my Father who is in Heaven. Yes, when I pray, my hearts and words go to "Almighty God, Heavenly Father". My next words are, "Thank you for your mercy and grace." And, gracefully, mercifully, He hears me. What Name do you most frequently use?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:42

Wednesday, December 13, 2006

### **WOULD YOU BE FOUND GUILTY?**

If you were on trial, charged with being a Christian, would there be enough evidence for the Jury to find you guilty without a reasonable doubt?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:24

Thursday, December 7, 2006

## **THE COMFORTING CONVICTION OF A CONFIRMED CALVINIST**

Sovereign Ruler of the skies, Ever gracious, ever wise; All my times are in thy hand, All events at Thy command. His decree who form'd the earth Fix'd my first and second birth; Parents, native place, and time, All appointed were by him. He who formed me in the womb, He will guide me to the tomb. All my times shall ever be Ordered by His wise decree. Times of sickness; times of health; Times of penury and wealth; Times of trial and of grief; Times of triumph and relief; Times the tempter's power to prove; Times to taste the Savior's love All must come, and last, and end, As shall please my heavenly Friend. Plagues and deaths around me fly, Till He bids, I shall not die; Not a single shaft can hit, Till the love of God sees fit. Written by John Ryland Jr., a Calvinist (1753-1825) All of this is true and I believe it, and yet, I also believe we are accountable and responsible for decisions we make every day. This paradox is Scriptural. The young father, who recently died in the snow, as he went for help in the wilderness to save his family left in their car, that had become stuck in mire, is responsible for two decisions he made: to turn on to that road and to leave the car when they became stranded and no help seemed forthcoming. Prior to that, he and his wife made the decision to go on this particular trip. So we seek to make the most wise and thoughtful decisions possible; and, trust in the Truth expressed in this poem. The latter is our comfort and strength to go on through our trials and anguish. It also gives us confidence to get up in the morning and tackle the day with hope.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:44

## **TODAY'S HYMN FROM OREMUS**

Wondrous birth! O wondrous child of the Virgin undefiled! Though by all the world disowned, still to be in heaven enthroned. From the Father forth he came and returneth to the same, captive leading death and hell high the song of triumph swell! Thou, the Father's only Son, hast over sin the victory won. boundless shall thy kingdom be; when shall we its glories see? Brightly doth thy manger shine, glorious is its light divine. Let not sin overcloud this light; ever be our faith thus bright. The remarkable thing about this Hymn to me is its provenance: Words [Latin]: Ambrose of Milan, circa 397; paraphrased [German] by Martin Luther, 1523; trans. [English] William Morton Reynolds, 1851. And now posted on the Internet, in English, 2006 The Light that came into the world, in one small place, has grown ever brighter through two millennia and has spread around the world and now shines on us today!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:02

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

### **The Church Calendar today commemorates St Nicholas**

Far-shining names from age to age  
Enrich the Church's heritage,  
The loyal liegemen of the Lord,  
Who found in thee their great reward.  
One name from that immortal throng  
Inspires to-day our festal song:  
In loving memory we hold  
The bishop and the saint of old,  
Who, far away in eastern land,  
With gentle heart and open hand  
Loved all things living, shared his store  
With homeless men who sought his door.  
Friend of the poor, no less was he  
The guardian saint of those at sea;  
O'er wave-swept rock and sheltered bay  
God's churches bear his name to-day.  
And his the skill, the tender art  
That wins the trustful, child-like heart:  
His dearest title to the end  
'Saint Nicolas, the children's friend.'  
Words: William H Savile (1859-1925)

from Oremus "Nicholas was a native of the western part of what is now Asiatic Turkey. He became Bishop of Myra in the fourth century, and there are many stories of his love for God and for his neighbor. The best-known story involves a man with three unmarried daughters, and not enough money to provide them with suitable dowries. This meant that they could not marry, and were likely to end up as prostitutes. Nicholas walked by the man's house on three successive nights, and each time threw a bag of gold in through a window (or, when the story came to be told in colder climates, down the chimney). Thus, the daughters were saved from a life of shame, and all got married and lived happily ever after. Because of this and similar stories, Nicholas became a symbol of anonymous gift-giving." [James Kiefer, abridged]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:07

Tuesday, December 5, 2006

## **THE ANGELS GOT IT RIGHT**

"A multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest'".-Luke 2:14  
Desiring God is the title of a book by John Piper [the Preacher in the video posted below] He nails it perfectly when he says "God is uppermost in his own affections: The chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy himself forever." "God's ultimate goal in all He does...is God's own glory. In everything He does, His purpose is to preserve and display that glory. ...He puts a greater value on it than on anything else. He delights in His glory above all things." "His infinite and awesome greatness and worth is His glory." pp. 1, 32,33  
Hear what the Apostle Paul says in his letter to the Ephesian Church-1:5 he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ,... 6 to the praise of his glorious grace 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined ...12 so that we ... might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel ..., and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ...to the praise of his glory. Everything is about the glory of God. That is what the Gospel is about. That is what evangelism is about. That is what the Christian life is about. That is what worship is about. That is what ministry is about. "The chief end of man is to glorify God BY enjoying Him forever" (p.226) Pastor Piper gives a much needed survey of the entire Bible, entitled "The Goal of God in Redemptive History" (Appendix I) He looks at texts that mention the glory of God or the Name of God, which are interchangeable. All that God does, from creating the Universe and Humankind, to choosing Israel to be His Covenant People, to setting them free from slavery in Egypt, to saving specific sinners - it has all been for His Name's sake, for His glory. And we thought it was for our sake. That is the Gospel. Promoting the Glory of God is our Mission!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:03

## **WHY LOVING GOD MUST COME FIRST**

We have it backward. To listen to many today, Jesus said the great Commandment is to love our Neighbor and the second Commandment is to love God. Worse than that, increasingly we hear, never mind God, (We can't agree about Him, We get bogged down in Theology and Religion. These are obstacles.) The only thing that really matters is to love our neighbor. And "neighbor", these days, is understood to be the poor and homeless. What really matters is loving the marginalized, meaning providing for their perceived needs. This is what Jesus was all about. This is what the Gospel is all about. This is what being a true Christian is all about. No, no, no! Let's get the correct order. Jesus said the first commandment is to love God and to do that with all our heart, soul and mind. The second commandment is to love our neighbors as though they were ourselves. God first. Neighbors second. And "neighbor" here is not defined as the poor and homeless, but anyone who, literally in Old English, nearby dwells (or, simply, the people around us) They might be poor or rich. Much is made today about the need for Christians to become true disciples of Jesus. That is often intended to mean someone who serves the poor. A "disciple" is, by Jesus' definition, a Believer who learns to obey all his commandments. (Matt 28:19-20) A Disciple of Christ is a Believer in Christ who obeys the first Commandment to love God with all heart, soul and mind. And, secondarily, a Believer who goes on to love other human beings. Both are essential and the order is essential.

We can only know who we are as human beings vis-à-vis (face to face, in relation to) God. We Image Him. That is what makes us human. If we do not know Him, we can not know ourselves, our Humanity. We will always wonder, "Who am I?" "What am I?" and be unable to answer truth-fully. We can only know the meaning and purpose of our lives vis-à-vis God. We can only know Truth vis-à-vis God We can only know what ethics and morality are supposed to be vis-avis God We can only know how to live vis-à-vis God We can only have the ability to live vis-à-vis God. This is why the Commandment to love God is, and must remain, first. We can not truly love others (including ourselves) if it is not first. I become greatly saddened when I see well-meaning, professed Believers in Christ gradually become completely secularized in the name of following Jesus and serving the poor. We must first, and always, be God-centered and saturated people, loving Him with our whole mind and heart. And that includes loving Truth and Doctrine that comes from Him. It is the knowledge we get from our relationship with God that informs us as how we can best love our neighbors. And that love for neighbors will always include introducing them, in turn, to the love of God. Failing that, we fail to truly love them, even if we give them shelter and clothes.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:23

Saturday, December 2, 2006

## **DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT A CHRISTIAN IS AND DOES**

Help at a food kitchen, volunteer as a tutor or to visit shut-ins, be a good student, stay out of trouble, be sexually pure, don't drink alcohol or do drugs, use clean language, be honest and go to Church, pray and read the Bible. Is this what a Christian is? No, it is not! A person may do all of these things and not be a Christian at all. These are all things that Christians do. They are not what a Christian is. I did all these things, but one day I realized that I did not know Jesus. When I was 17, I came to understand I was doing things I thought Jesus wanted me to do, but on my own, without Jesus. I believed he died for me on the cross, but somehow I had missed the part where I confess my sinfulness (my wanting to live my life on my terms) to him, ask his forgiveness and invite him to take over control of my life because of who he is. Not only did he pay the penalty for my sins and sinfulness, he rose from the dead and lives now to be my King and everyone else's, too. So one night, I confessed my sin and my faith and asked him into my heart and life, to be my Lord and Savior. That is the way I became a Christian. A Christian is someone in whom Christ lives as Lord, by invitation. All the other stuff, the behaviors, follow and come out of this relationship. They confirm it, but are absolutely not a substitute for it. If you have not invited Jesus to live in your heart, there is no better time to do that than now!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:21

## **ADVENT, CHRIST MASS and the HOLIDAYS**

May this new Advent Season find new hope, peace and joy coming to you. Most of the Scripture we will hear read in Church over the next 4 Sundays of Advent will be prophecies about the Second Advent or coming of Christ. The anticipation of that Event is what makes this a Season for reflection, repentance and renewed commitment to be living for Jesus, that He will find us ready when He arrives this second time Christ Mass (Christmas) at the end of Advent, is a Celebration of the Incarnation: God coming to live among us as a human being, the Birth of Jesus who is Immanuel. This Christmas Celebration actually lasts for an additional Twelve Days. Concurrently, this is also the time for the American Holidays of great generosity and great greed, of giving and getting, of flashing lights and feasting. Some stores, like Walmart, are going back to allowing their staff to wish customers, "Merry Christmas", instead of "Happy Holidays". Actually, there are both and we know the difference, keep them separate and can enjoy the best of each.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:39

Friday, December 1, 2006

### **Charles de Foucauld, Hermit in the Sahara, 1916**

A biography that greatly influenced me as a younger man, was the life of Charles de Foucauld. He is commemorated in the Church Calendar today. (A few weeks ago it was the story of another one of my heroes, Father Damien, Pastor of the leper colony on Molokai. Rose Hawthorne, daughter of the famous author, who ran a hospice for the poor dying from cancer in NYC, was another hero to me). Charles de Foucauld was born into a wealthy French family and was well into a career in the Military when he was converted to Christ. He believed he was called to imitate Christ by living in poverty and ministering to the most poor people he could find. He renounced his family wealth and military career and eventually lived among the Tauregs, a nomadic tribe in the Sahara Desert near Algeria. He devoted his life to sharing Christ with them. He was a "Hermit" only because he could not persuade anyone to join him in this ministry. He was killed in his hut during a tribal war, by one of the nomads. His work is continued by "The Little Brothers of Jesus", a monastic type order of men, inspired by de Foucauld's example, who live among the poor in cities around the world.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:14

Saturday, November 11. 2006

## **FOR GOD AND COUNTRY**

Today the Church commemorates Martin, Bishop of Tours (330-397). The son of a military officer, he became on himself. During his career, he came to faith in Christ [it is an interesting Damascus Road experience. You can read of it at the Link below] and upon finishing his latest tour of duty, he resigned, saying, "Hitherto I have faithfully served Caesar. Let me now serve Christ." He went on to do battle for the Lord as a Bishop, ultimately, in the Church of the day. I appreciate what he is said to have said. I assume he meant, "Ok, I have had my military career and now I want to go into the Church for my new career". However, if he was saying that people in the military do not serve Christ and that the only way to do that is as a member of the Clergy, Martin was very mistaken. Civil Government was instituted by God to serve Him [see the Article on my website] God gave the "sword" to Civil Government for the purpose of securing and preserving Law and Order or Justice. The military helps to wield that sword and thus serves God. Service in the Military and in the Civil Government is service of God and Christians should not eschew either.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:30

## **HORSES ON A LEASH**

There was a photo in today's paper of a lady and her pets: two miniature horses on leashes! I was appalled. Among the appeal of horses are their large size and amd majestic bearing, their beautifully sculpted, muscular bodies and their strong and untamed, although disciplined, spirit. They are athletes, meant to run and be free. And here is this Lady parading these animals, reduced to looking like domesticated house pets that exist only for her pleasure in showing them off. I'm sure she sees them differently than I do; but, I took umbrage on behalf of the horses. But worse, this photo struck me as a metaphor of what many people attempt to do with God: tame Him and turn the Almighty Creator of heaven and Earth into a pet on on leash to give His human "owner" pleasure.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:50

Friday, November 10, 2006

### **STORY OF AMAZING GRACE**

My wife and I were blessed and deeply touched today by reading this testimony of Lynette Hoppe and her husband, as they faced her terminal cancer, while missionaries in Albania and with two small children. It is a story, very well written by her (in diary entries) and later by her husband, of their journey through suffering with Christ. It is beautiful, even while it brings tears to your eyes, touching your heart. Great testimony to the work of God's grace in their lives. Amazing story and photographs, too.<http://prayforlynette.org/diary/news01.htm>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:15

Monday, November 6, 2006

### **A GOOD REPORT ON A BAD SITUATION**

I appreciate this report and the comments made by and about Ted Haggard. It is also of interest how much emphasis is made by these Arminians (Pentecostals) about the Sovereignty of God. And what they say is true: God is still on the Throne. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/novemberweb-only/144-58.0.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:08

Wednesday, November 1, 2006

## **TODAY IS ALL SAINTS DAY**

The Church has its heroes and martyrs. These, the Catholic tradition calls Saints. The following is a hymn remembering them, posted on Oremus today, but written in 1783. The number of Saints swells to include all Believers who have passed on. As I read the words, I have in mind particular ones special to me. Lo! round the throne, a glorious band, the saints in countless myriads stand, of every tongue redeemed to God, arrayed in garments washed in blood. Through tribulation great they came; they bore the cross, despised the shame; from all their labors now they rest, in God's eternal glory blest. They see their Savior face to face, and sing the triumphs of his grace; him day and night they ceaseless praise, to him the loud thanksgiving raise: "Worthy the Lamb, for sinners slain, through endless years to live and reign; thou hast redeemed us by thy blood, and made us kings and priests to God." O may we tread the sacred road that saints and holy martyrs trod; wage to the end the glorious strife, and win, like them, a crown of life.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:45

Monday, October 30, 2006

## **SERIOUS TIMES**

My wife and I help support Gordon Seminary, near Boston (and Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, near Pittsburgh PA and the Institute for Christian Studies, in Toronto) Gordon has just installed its new President, Rev Dr. James E. White, Pastor and Professor. He has written many books and articles and has maintained a website loaded with excellent resources for Christian Thinking and Living in today's world. I have just read the one entitled Serious Times (also the name of his website). <http://www.serious-times.com/> It is short (160 pages), well written and an easy read. The first half covers the usual analysis of contemporary culture, ala David Wells. The second half contains White's prescription for becoming a serious Christian living in these serious times. I really appreciate his urgency and his concerns resonate with my own. Chapters cover spiritual formation (deepening the soul) and developing our minds to think Christianly (actually he focuses on learning how to read) For this subject, I recommend Habits of the Mind by James Sire. Then Dr White develops the subject of Vocation and finally, "aligning with the church" (pointing out that another major Theologian who has greatly impacted me, Carl Henry, wrote his magnum opus, God, Revelation and Authority (6 vols) without any mention of this subject) What struck me immediately, was Dr White's constant and copious use of movie references and popular musical lyrics, science fiction and fantasy to make or illustrate his points. He is in his late 40's, a true child of his own time.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:46

## **MOVING BEYOND THE ABC'S**

A meditation on Hebrews 5- 11 About this [deeper Truth] we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13 for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. AMEN! AMEN! Enough with fill in the blanks "Bible Studies". Enough with "Questions for Group Discussion". Enough with the breaking up into small groups for 20 minutes of sharing thoughts off the top of our heads or on the spur of the moment. These things have their value for beginners in the Faith. But most of us reading this Blog (and most of the Believers I know) have done all these things, what, hundreds of times over a number of years? It is time to move on from the ABC's, the basics of the Faith. It is time to go deeper.

We should be able to digest "the Meat" of the Word by now. Skilled and trained by constant study, we should now be able to be Teachers. But many of us are not. Why is that? The Text says all these introductory, simple studies have made us dull. Living on the Milk of the Word has made us spiritually soft. We have been handicapped by too many of these simple exercises. The common practice of "proof texting" and "word studies" (and the over use of Bible Study software) has become an albatross around many spiritual necks. I am amazed and dismayed by how poor a grasp so many Believers have on the Basics. I hear or read people, who should know better, discussing, criticizing, even rejecting, certain Doctrines. I find they often have misunderstood those Doctrines or are attacking "straw men". They have not been taught well. This, to me is a sad commentary and an indictment on much Preaching and, especially, the Christian Education program of the Church. When, O when, will some one put School back in Sunday School? Where to start? For starters, all Scripture is profitable for Doctrine. We are not to confine ourselves to certain sections, a passage here or there in the Prophets or in the Gospels or in some of the Letters. All Scripture, starting in Genesis, is profitable. But, the Bible is not systematic. Verbally inspired by One Spirit, there are dozens of human writers and 66 "books" between the covers. The material must be organized. Serious, extended effort must be made to learn, not only the content of the Bible, in the context of Ancient History, but a System for putting its content all together. That has been done by many able Theologians over centuries. We must read them! And we must at least be familiar with the 2000 year History of the Church that gives such study its context. For that matter, we must learn Theology in light of World and American History, as well. Actually, the study of Philosophy and the History of Ideas is also invaluable. In fact the latter is indispensable if we are to engage our culture for Christ. The System that I am convinced puts it all together best is the Reformed Faith, known popularly as Calvinism [It is man-made and not perfect nor is my knowledge of it]. Calvinism, in turn, is expressed most effectively in several Creeds of the Ancient Church, as well as in historic Confessions of Faith from the 16 and 17th Centuries. All Believers should be familiar with these, as well as with classic

books written by "Spiritual Giants." Currently popular is Jonathan Edwards and his best known modern interpreter, John Piper. The theological ABC's of Calvinism are Radical Corruption (Total Depravity), Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and the Perseverance of the Believer. The ABC's of the Classic Protestant Gospel are expressed by the four "Solus" (Latin for "Only"): We are saved by grace only, through faith only, in Christ only, to the Glory of God only. The authority for all these ABC's is the Scripture only. The ABC's of Salvation from a human perspective is #1 hearing and believing what the Law says about our lost condition as human beings, #2 hearing and believing who Jesus is (thus being regenerated), #3 repenting of our sinful ways, #4 hearing and believing the Gospel of the finished work of Christ (his death and resurrection, atoning for sin and defeating Death and the grave, making eternal salvation possible), #5 confessing our repentance and faith before God and witnesses, #6 being assured that we are now adopted by God and justified in His sight (forgiven and declared righteous), #7 experiencing union with Christ and the indwelling power and witness of His Spirit. The latter is the beginning of Sanctification, the process of growth into the person God wants us to be (this is the expected and necessary consequence of the previous steps) and finally, #8 entering into Glory in the presence of God, in Eternity. These are the ABCDEFGH's of Salvation- the fundamentals. Most of this is from the Book of Romans It simply will not do to settle for being folks who "just" want to be "Red Letter" Christians ("just" want to live by the Sermon on the Mount or select teachings of Jesus, often printed in red letters in Bibles) or folks who "just" want a "personal relationship with Jesus" or "just" want to be "pumped up" spiritually or "just" want God to empower them to be all they can be (a successful woman, a successful business person or athlete or have a successful marriage, etc) None of this is being a mature, solid Christian. There is more- so much more!! When we have mastered the fundamentals (when will that be?), then we must 6:1 ... leave the elementary doctrine ... and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation ... Yes, yes, yes! This is what I have done. This is what I would like to help others to do. All the fundamentals need unpacking, especially in this day of "suspicion" and post modern deconstruction and the denial of any kind of supernarratives and Foundationalism and culturally constructed reality. They need unpacking and to be put into terms that will communicate to post moderns, especially to alienated and skeptical youth seeking authentic experience and relationships in a technological, digital, simulated, virtual world. We need to move on to thinking Christianly, Biblically, about everything: developing a viable World View which will compete or confront alternative world views and ideologies that are proliferating today. The Church needs to be spiritually and intellectually equipped to engage and transform the Cultures (plural) in which we live, for Christ the King. For me, this means moving way beyond the Fundamentalism of my Christian youth, from the mainstream evangelicalism of contemporary churches, as well as beyond mere Reformed Thought and basic Calvinism to Reformational Thought and Neocalvinism. Thus, my website and Institute. 3 And this we will do if God permits. AMEN

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:53

Saturday, October 21, 2006

## **PLUSH BATHROOMS**

We hear constantly about US casualties in Iraq. There seem to be 5 or 6 military funerals in this southern New England area every week. Each of these deaths is terrible and full of sorrow. Cries of "Bring the troops home" are constant. People chant, "Stop the killing!" What would this generation have said during WWII? The new Clint Eastwood movie very graphically portrays the battle on Iwo Jima. There 6,821 Americans and 18,000 Japanese were killed. In 39 days! Would Americans today support that War or intentionally put themselves in harm's way to suffer and die for any cause? Not go to a concert or give money or adopt a baby or go on a 5 day "mission" or on a 5 mile walk, but suffer and die. Rich celebrities, owners of several mansions, tell the rest of us to give a little money or cut back on using oil, while they jet around the world in their private, fuel guzzling planes. The segments on the morning TV show, after the piece about Iwo Jima and all those gory casualties, were about cosmetic surgery and very fancy bathrooms. Maybe the real issue is we do not believe there are any causes worth our true and total sacrifice. For Christians, is spreading the Gospel a cause worth suffering and dying for? God have mercy if, instead, we decide to spend our lives luxuriating in plush bathrooms or sitting in plush pews.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:36

Friday, October 20, 2006

## **GRAPPLING WITH GOD**

I missed sending out my QT Thots this morning. So, here is a typical article by Philip Yancey that will challenge your faith and prayer life—"The church I attend reserves a brief time in which people in the pews can voice aloud their prayers. Over the years, I have heard hundreds of these prayers, and with very few exceptions, the word polite applies. One, however, stands out in my memory because of its raw emotion." Read the rest of the story-  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/october/45.100.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:01

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

## **HEAVENLY MUSIC**

If you appreciate Sacred Choral Music with great harmonies, usually a cappella, try this website. I imagine this is what it sounds like in Heaven. Give it a chance, it is not what you are used to. <http://ancientfaithradio.com/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:26

## **ANOTHER FUNERAL**

Tomorrow we will be attending the Wake and Service for the father of another close friend of our son-in-law, Norm, from Hall St [that is 2 in a week]. In less than 2 years, we have attended 16 Wakes and/or Funerals for family or friends. Distance prevented us attending 5 others. Makes one really reflect on the reality of death and the importance of appreciating, while we may, the loved ones and friends in our lives. Of course, the Daily News always contains stories of tragic deaths, as well as the Obituary, which we read every morning. Death is common and universal and certain for all. Some of it seems especially terrible for many, while welcomed for others. But Death is not natural. It was never meant to be. When God created human beings, their bodies were not meant to die. The experience of "death", in its many dimensions, is a consequence of the Fall [that is not at all to say every dying is a punishment or consequent of wrong doing or deserved] The point is, Death was never intended, therefore, it is not part of the creational order of things. It is an enemy, a despoiler, and interloper. The Good News is that Christ has conquered Death. We still must suffer it, but through Christ, we overcome it and can have an abundant life, both now and on the other side of the grave, in which we all someday will lie.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:59

Friday, October 13, 2006

## **ENCOURAGEMENT FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS**

Will Graham, 33, is conducting his first evangelistic crusade in the United States, this week. [He has already done several in India and Canada] He is a grandson of Billy Graham, son of Franklin. How he came to this ministry is not only interesting, but includes good lessons for all seeking to know God's call on their life. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/octoberweb-only/141-42.0.html#graham1>In reading about him, I found this website (below) that has short biographies of the 5 Graham children, as well as information about some of their children. Here is a family of great faith and huge influence for Christ which has also experienced heartache and pain, doubt, serious teen rebellion, drug abuse, broken marriages and illegitimate pregnancies. They have overcome and found mercy and grace as a family and each of them seems to have found the life and place God intends for them. Reading just a little of the Graham Family Story has been surprising, as well as very encouraging and inspiring. Check out these sites and go to others. <http://www.unctv.org/ruthandbillygraham/family/billyg.html><http://home.hamptonroads.com/stories/story.cfm?story=111541&ran=247289>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:02

Thursday, October 12, 2006

## **ANOTHER RESOURCE FOR QUIET TIME**

I have been trying another website for my morning Quiet Time. The new one is <http://daily.commonworship.com/daily>. It's selections, and the order of them, seem to be more worshipful (it is based on an ancient Anglican/Catholic Breviary or Daily Prayer Book); but I miss the hymns and stories of significant Christians that are on Oremus (that is the Latin word for "let us pray") [www.oremus.org](http://www.oremus.org)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:53

## **TWO-HANDED MISSIONS**

The Church Calendar today commemorates Wilfred, Bishop and Missionary in the last half of the 7th Century in Great Britain. The following quote is from Oremus—"Wilfrid was banished from Northumbria. He went to Sussex, the last center of Anglo-Saxon paganism in England, and preached there. When he arrived, there had been no rain for many months, the crops were ruined, and the people were starving. Wilfrid showed them how to construct fishnets for ocean fishing, and so saved the lives of many. They listened to his preaching with favorable presuppositions, and soon a large number of them were ready for baptism. On the day that he baptized them, it rained. He remained in Sussex for five years, preaching with great success." This missionary used, then modern, technology to help the group he was seeking to reach. They were starving farmers and he taught them how to make fishnets. Having done that, the pagans, who were then healthy fisher folk, were interested in hearing the Gospel. I am guessing that "presuppositions" in the paragraph above means "predispositions". The hand that taught the people to fish led to the hand that taught them about salvation.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:22

Saturday, September 30, 2006

### **THE END OF 'MAN-MADE" DIVSIONS**

The teaching in the previous post is considered by Dispensationalists to be both unscriptural and anti-Semitic [anti-Israel] Not so! I am convinced that it is Scriptural. As to Semitism [anti-Jew], and Racism, as well, it is time Christians set aside these categories, once for all. God so loved the world: Jew and Gentile, Caucasian and non-Caucasian. Whosoever, Jew or Gentile, Caucasian or non-Caucasian, may become a Christian, saved by grace through Christ. And all who are saved by grace, Jew or Gentile, Caucasian or non-Caucasian, are brothers and sisters in Christ: ONE Body. We are called to be blind to all these man-made divisions. The only consideration: am I loving my neighbor-Jew or Gentile, Caucasian or non-Caucasian? Am I loving my Brother or Sister in Christ, Jew or Gentile, Caucasian or non-Caucasian. Period!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:22

Thursday, September 28, 2006

### **NEW ARTICLE ON MY WEBSITE: BIBLICAL ECONOMICS**

God has a plan for how we Christians are to live our daily lives. Most of us are dualists. We have our salvation in Christ. We try to regularly enjoy corporate Worship and fellowship (maybe a "Bible Study" or Prayer Group) The rest of our lives is lived pretty much like everyone else in our social and economic circles. For many of us that means "conservative Republican politics" and the good life of middle class Americans. A few of us, who are not satisfied with this, are looking elsewhere and think we have found the answer in being so-called "Progressive" or "Radical" Christians on the Evangelical Left. Others think they have found the better way in what is called the "Emerging Church Movement". I believe that the answer is neither Right nor Left nor "Emerging". These are all still dualistic and, in my judgment, seriously deficient. I have found an alternative to them in Neocalvinism and its holistic approach to Christianity. We seek nothing less than the redemption of all life. My new perspective began with a study of Genesis a few years ago. Starting at the "beginning of the Book" has made a big difference in how I understand what Christianity is all about. This holistic approach incorporates Calvinism with a belief in Common Grace and a much greater appreciation of Creation and General Revelation and a commitment to the Cultural Mandate. It puts more emphasis on the classic Reformed 3rd Use of the Law, but expands the definition of "Law" to include the Torah (not just the Decalogue) and Natural Law. Now I have probably really confused some of you. Please don't give up- try reading my Articles. Use the Link on your right. Thanks. There are more coming. There is a lot of work to be done. Maybe my vision for an "Institute" will actually materialize.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:12

Tuesday, September 26, 2006

### **WHEN CHRISTIANS DO ART**

Very interesting discussion going on about a new Christian movie, made entirely by a local church (amateurs) on a very low budget. They explain and defend their effort as a valid way of reaching out to unsaved youth (it's a football movie). They think some Christians have criticized them for this. But one critic is on to something far more important. Dick Staub does not take Christians to task for using an art form (film making) for evangelism. He takes them to task when they produce bad art. In his column, he makes an excellent case (a neocalvinist case) for valuing and enjoying the Arts for Christ. Compare these articles-[http://www.dickstaub.com/culturewatch.php?record\\_id=1028](http://www.dickstaub.com/culturewatch.php?record_id=1028)<http://www.christianitytoday.com/workplace/articles/interviews/michaelcatt.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:56

Saturday, September 16, 2006

### **A PRAYER**

Grant, O God, that in all time of our testing we may know your Presence and obey your will; that we may with integrity and courage accomplish what you give us to do, and endure what you give us to bear; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. AMEN

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:32

Thursday, September 7, 2006

## **ALL OF LIFE REDEEMED**

The content of the Articles on my website is very different than what many of my family and friends are used to. Most Evangelicals do not read much about Epistemology or the Philosophy of Mathematics. They appreciate mainstream evangelical teaching, but are not familiar or comfortable with "Neocalvinism" or "Kuyperism". I realize most are not even comfortable with "Calvinism" and all this "Reformed" stuff and certainly not with "Reformational" stuff. They were not brought up with any of this, do not hear about it at their Churches, and to them it all may sound strange, even unscriptural. Some may wonder if I have left the Faith, gone Liberal or gotten into some kind of cult. Be assured, I have not. Perhaps one of the first things that sounds unfamiliar and suspect to Evangelicals (besides "Five Point" Calvinism) is the Neocalvinist motto: "All Life Redeemed". As a child, I learned the Hymn, "This is my Father's World." Later, in a Fundamental Baptist Church, I learned the chorus, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin through..." What changed? The "Plan of Salvation" I learned at that Baptist church followed the "Roman Road" (it uses select verses from Paul's letter to the Romans) and began with "All have sinned and fallen short..." and "the wages of sin is death". It began with the Problem of Sin and proceeded to God's Solution to that Problem. That solution was "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus" ("dying for me") and the forgiveness of my sins and the gift of Eternal Life, if I would only "accept" Jesus as my personal Savior. In recent years, I have come to understand the "Plan of Salvation" (if you will) begins with the Book of Genesis and "In the beginning, God created..." and all that He made "is good". That includes all human beings, whom God created to be His Image bearers, like Him in many ways, representing Him on the earth He had created, to cultivate and care for it to His glory and for the good of all. I never heard of this Cultural Mandate in my Baptist days. Then comes the Fall, Curse and Antithesis. And finally, Redemption in Christ, in that context: Redemption in Christ of an Elect, Covenant People who would seek to fulfill the original Cultural Mandate. They would, by Grace and in the power of the Spirit, seek to extend the Sovereignty of Christ and His Word over all spheres of life. They would seek to see all life redeemed to the Glory of God. The work of Christ makes all of this possible- His life, death, resurrection and ascension to the Throne from which He actively reigns as King, Sovereign of all. This, too sounds strange to Evangelicals who focus on the Atonement for sins and personal, spiritual redemption. The Kingdom of Christ, short of the Rapture or Second Coming, is purely spiritual and within Believers. A key concept here in this vision of all of life redeemed, is that what is good in Creation is the structure of it. Everything created is good as created, including human beings. Our faculties for rationality, creativity, morality, communality and spirituality are "Good". These are the five characteristics by which we image God. Every human being has them [in varying degrees] and the Fall did not change that. This is what we all have in common. This is "common grace". God not only sees to it that the rain and sun bless everyone (the common understanding of "common grace"), He also gifts everyone with these innate faculties. We share them. We share the Image and the responsibility to use these faculties to fulfill the Cultural Mandate. Of course, the Fall fractured the Image and makes true fulfillment of the Mandate impossible. In fact, because of the animosity within us, as fallen creatures, toward our Creator, we refuse to fulfill the Mandate and work against it. Our fallen ("unregenerate") nature makes us take the good Creation, into directions not intended by God for it, e.g. sexuality. The world is still His, but we are literally hell-bent on destroying it. This includes misuse and abuse of our rationality, creativity, morality, communality and spirituality. Nothing is exempt for the effects of the Fall. This is "Radical Corruption" (otherwise known as Total Depravity) Redemption in Christ involves regeneration (a new "heart", indwelt by the Holy Spirit, which now wants to love and serve our Creator) and that leads to the redirection, by the Elect, of our still essentially good faculties as human beings and the effort to redirect our Father's world (at the very least, our place in it), in keeping with the Norms He established for it at Creation. Those creational Norms are included in the Law of God, the Torah, e.g. the "Institution" of Marriage being a covenant between a man and a woman. They are as much part of the Word of God as the Decalogue and the synoptic Gospels and the letters of Paul. Redirection, also known as Re/formation, involves the sanctification (the development and use, for the glory of God) of our rationality, creativity, morality, communality and spirituality. It means seeking to sanctify every sphere of our daily lives, particularly our marriages and families, our education and scholarship, our work and recreation, and our involvement in the world (not only civitas, but civilization itself) around us, cultivating and enjoying Creation. Redemption means being all we can be as human beings for the glory of God!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:00

## **MY GOD, HOW WONDERFUL THOU ART**

Hymn from Oremus today-My God, how wonderful thou art,thy majesty how bright,how beautiful thy mercy seat, in depths of burning light!How wonderful, how beautiful, the sight of thee must be,thine endless wisdom, boundless power, and awful purity!O how I fear thee, living God, with deepest, tenderest fears,and worship thee with trembling hope and penitential tears!Yet I may love thee too, O Lord, almighty as thou art...Father of Jesus, love's reward, what rapture it will be,prostrate before thy throne to lie, and gaze and gaze on thee! Frederick William Faber, 1849

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:33

Monday, September 4, 2006

## **THE THIRD USE OF THE LAW: HOW TO LOVE**

The previous posts (below) have been about the use of Reformed Confessions of Faith. There are many of them and all have value. <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html> I assume Calvinism. I assume the "Doctrines of Grace". I assume the Five Solas of the Gospel of Grace. I am not here to defend them. I am not primarily interested here in Soteriology (Doctrines of Salvation). I am not interested here in Ecclesiology (Doctrines about Church, including Sacraments) I will discuss these matters occasionally, but that is not what this Blog or my website are about. My website makes it very clear that I am concerned with how the Elect are to live their lives. If you prefer, I am talking about the "Third Use of the Law". A very Reformed concept. The Law is not only to bring sinners to repentance and saving faith. It is not only about containing sin in the world- an instrument to teach men's conscience right from wrong. The Law teaches the Elect how to live righteous lives. It teaches us how we can love God and love our neighbors. See Article XIX of the Westminster Confession- "...the Law...is of great use to the (Elect)...in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly;... Section 6 Reformed Christians I know seem to be unaware of this Reformed Doctrine and agree, instead, with Evangelicals, saying we are free from the Law and are to live by grace alone. As a Neocalvinist, I understand the Law to be more than the Decalogue. It includes the entire 5 Books of Moses- the Torah. The Law includes the universal, creational Laws or Norms laid out in the first few chapters of Genesis. See my website page laying out the Essentials of Neocalvinism. It is Election season. What Biblical Principles of Civil Government guide our voting next month? What candidates best support the Biblical mandates for Civil Government? To know that, we must also know what the Biblical Norms are for Government in Marriage and Family, as well as the Biblical Norms for the Government of the Church. These are separate spheres. The Norms for each are laid out in the Torah. I have introduced some of these concepts in a simple way in my article about Government on my website. The link to it is in the column on the righthand side of this Blog.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:29

## **ARE PICTURES OF JESUS UNSCRIPTURAL -Part 2**

What the Second Commandment forbids and what the Reformers rightly warned about was Idolatry. Ironically, tragically, Reformed Christians who insist on the traditional interpretation of this Command allow and support the very practice they are trying to prevent. By trivializing the Command to be about something like a painting of Jesus (condemning the work of Reformed painter Rembrandt in the process) the giant Idols of our time march on in triumph, unquestioned and not forbidden. What Idols? I see a lot of awe and devotion given to the one called "The Market"- I know many Reformed Christians who worship the Bear and do everything possible to satisfy its every demand. They believe that the only way to solve the world's problems is feeding the appetites of corporate and multinational Business. Other Reformed Christians I know give blind allegiance and unquestioning loyalty to the Image they have engraved on their minds about what "America" is. Certainly, they devote much time to reading every word written by certain conservative Prophets and Pundits and contribute the Lord's money to support their programs. Then there are the reformed Christians who worship Science and Technology- the true saviors of our world. Some Reformed Christians worship their Confessions of Faith and substitute them for the Word of God. Others are totally devoted to their Reformed Traditions (in the name of the Regulative Principle) and their favorite Theologians. All that, too, can be Idolatry. The Confessions are man-made standards, grids through which we interpret, organize and apply the Word. They themselves are not that Word and are in fact, subject to that Word. WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH Chapter XX Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also. And this, from the Anglican Articles of Religion-VI. Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:17

## **ARE PICTURES OF JESUS UNSCRIPTURAL? -Part 1**

A reader questioned the use of a picture of Jesus on my website, inasmuch as I claim to be Reformed and the Reformed Confessions all interpret the Second Commandment as forbidding the making and use of any graven images depicting God (which would, presumably, include using doves to symbolize God the Spirit- something the Bible itself does). This is a good question. It raises many important issues I shall now try to address. The Second Commandment is concerned with idolatry. I have often written about this subject- Idolatry is the greatest evil mentioned in the Bible, against which the Prophets constantly railed and because of which Israel was devastated. Idolatry is rejection of God and the substitution of other so-called gods (idols) in His place, giving them the worship and service due to Him alone. The 16th and 17th Century Reformers especially saw the worship of Idols in the Romans Catholic Mass and in popular forms of devotion to Statues. Thus we read in the Westminster Confession, this commentary on the Second Commandment-"Q. 109. What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment? A. The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counseling, commanding, using, and anywise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion; the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, [Note: I find this warning interesting in light of the rich images of Christ portrayed by the Scripture itself in, for example, the Book of Revelation that are intended to be contemplated inwardly in our mind] or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshipping of it, or God in it or by it; the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them, all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, ..." Taken on face value, literally, this comment on the Commandment could be used to forbid art- drawing or painting or sculpting of any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever. That is nonsense and not what Moses or the Prophets are concerned about. It also contradicts the Lord's own command to create such works of art for His Holy House, both Tabernacle and Temple. (eg- Exo 25: 17-22) What is forbidden is making any kind of sculpture or image to be worshipped- an Idol. What is forbidden is the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them. Absolutely! Of course! The Salsman's "Head of Christ" that has been hanging on some wall in every apartment and house we have lived in for more than 40 years is not a object of worship, neither are the drawings of Jesus by Frances Hook in our children's Bibles or the various paintings of Jesus in various settings (Gethsemane or Upper Room or on the cross) that hang on the walls of this office- neither is the picture on my website. I do not believe the Campus Crusade movie "Jesus" or Gibson's "The Passion of Christ" are idolatrous and forbidden by the Second Commandment.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:20

Sunday, September 3, 2006

## **REFORMED WORSHIP [repeat from March 14,2006]**

Several principles inform John Calvin's [the Reformed] approach to worship. 1] Centrality of the Word, i.e.- the careful exposition of Scripture [thus the centrality of the Pulpit] 2] Simplicity. This meant for Calvin the absence of distractions such as elaborate decoration and showiness. It should be rather a focusing on God in simplicity. 3] Part of the reason the Reformed wanted simple places of worship [think of the colonial New England Meeting House] was to prevent our thinking of them as temples and thus becoming unduly attached to the place in which we worship. Calvin, in the Reformed tradition, knew that the real place in which we worship is Heaven. We see this Heavenly Jerusalem not with our eyes but by faith, and it is to this Zion that we lift up our hearts to meet with God in worship. We don't recreate a temple here on earth, because our privilege as children of the New Covenant is to worship in the Heavenly temple with Christ. 4] Fourthly, Calvin was very concerned about reverence. Psalm 2, "Serve [worship] the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" These thoughts are taken from an article on the Banner of Truth website [http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article\\_detail.php?428](http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article_detail.php?428) "the real place in which we worship is Heaven"- this concept has been on my mind lately. We Protestants do not believe that Christ himself is literally, corporately in the Elements served during Holy Communion. We say, "The Body/Blood of Christ"; but they can not actually be that. Why? Because of the bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. That is where He is today- at this very moment. He does not come down to us in our Worship, let alone in the Supper. Rather, we ascend to Him in our hearts by faith. We approach the Throne and worship Him there, in the heavenlies, in the Spirit within our spirit. Col 3:1; Heb 6:19-20 + 7:25,10:19-22; Eph 2:18, 3:12 I have concluded through the years, that many substitute a man-made edifice for the God-made Temple above. People with the weakest interior life often have the most elaborate external Worship Services in the most elaborate buildings. That does not mean that people who worship in plain, simple buildings necessarily have a deep, rich interior spiritual life. By no means. In all cases, the Reformed view is the most Scriptural. I have always enjoyed entering into the sacred space of Cathedral type churches (naves) for the sense of the Holy that they affect in me. It is very conducive to meditation for me. But, I appreciate, more than ever, the need to have a "holy", sacred space within my heart and to enter into that, or, better, as in Lewis' Wardrobe, to go, through my heart, into the Presence of Aslan in His Land above, even though I never leave my chair.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:11

Wednesday, August 23, 2006

## **WHO IS THIS BLOG FOR?**

With great help from my webmaster, Norm, my new website is making progress. You have yet to see it. Please come back- it will be up soon. Part of the challenge is trying to fine tune what the content should be and for whom it is intended. That applies to this Blog as well. I am a 5-point Calvinist. There are many websites and Blogs by and for Calvinists. I am not adding to them. My efforts assume Reformed Theology. That is not what I am after here. Rather, I am seeking to teach and promote key concepts of Neocalvinism- also known as Kuyperism- the essentials of the Dutch Reformed Faith. "Dutch Treat" and the Re/formation Institute website are about a world and life view, both a philosophy and a program for all of life. That is what I find lacking in both Evangelicalism and the usual Calvinism. How are we, the Elect, to actually live? I think evangelicals and reformed Christians, generally, believe or assume that conservative, American middleclass values and life style, including a lot of church related activity, is "how we are to live". What I have in mind is very different than that. Belief in the Authority of Christ and His Word demands extending that authority over everything. That is the Kingdom. That is the work Christ is about [see my study of the Book of Revelation on the website] I am not talking here about "making a difference" or becoming politically active to legislate some moral changes. Every area of life, every academic subject, everything has a "faith basis" (nothing is neutral) All human endeavor is based on assumptions and presuppositions. All of life is "religious". The challenge is to reveal, evaluate and re-form as necessary, what ever those undergirdings might be, in the light of Scripture- bringing that area under the authority of Christ. I know very, very few Evangelicals and Reformed Christians who are concerned about this, let alone are attempting to do it. This Blog and the new website, Norm and I are working on, is dedicated to encouraging and helping Believers to do this work. I hope you will visit, read and give the ideas here your serious consideration. Thanks. Pro Rege!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:33

Friday, August 18, 2006

## **WoW**

I wonder how many Christians are hooked, not on "phonics", but on serious computer and video games? <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/17/AR2006081700625.html>In three churches we have been to lately, the Scripture Lessons have included Romans 12:1-3 "Be not conformed to this world" The verse is rarely exegeted. The meaning is assumed to be understood by those present. Usually, that means the verse is understood in terms of how the congregants define "world". I wonder how many Christians kids (and therefore, their parents) are conforming to what their subculture world, their peers, think is fashionable in clothing, music and tech gadgets as they buy their "stuff" for the new school year? I wonder how many Christian college students (and their parents) are choosing their Majors this year by what the world at large thinks will lead to lucrative or viable careers (rather than what God has called and gifted them to be and do in His Kingdom) God forbid that any Christians are among the millions addicted to MMO's, especially WoW. That is a "world" no Christian should conform to!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:18

Tuesday, August 15, 2006

## **WHAT IS NEOCALVINISM?**

I have been writing about Neocalvinism. Here is a website article that might help you better understand what that is. I am putting this under the category of Christian Living. That is what I am most interested in and Neocalvinism, or the Dutch Reformed Faith, is a world and life view- a way of living that I am convinced is Biblical and desperately needed today, especially among so-called evangelical Christians.[http://jollyblogger.typepad.com/jollyblogger/2006/06/defining\\_neocal.html#more](http://jollyblogger.typepad.com/jollyblogger/2006/06/defining_neocal.html#more)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:15

Tuesday, August 1, 2006

### **THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE**

The Reformed Protestants in France in the 16th century (the Huguenots) were fiercely persecuted by the Roman Catholics. They often fought military battles. When they did, the Huguenots would sing Psalm 118 as their battle hymn: "This is the day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it". Others, when being hanged or beheaded for their faith, as they stood waiting, would sing "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it". And others, lying on their death bed, having battled some disease, would sing "This is the day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it." These are examples, not only of singing the Psalms, but of robust Reformed faith in the Sovereignty of God.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:19

Saturday, July 15. 2006

## **The Authority of the Bible**

The US Senate is scheduled to vote next week (?) on legislation that would allow scientists to use federal funds to conduct research on embryonic stem cells, which is controversial because human embryos must be destroyed to obtain them. The bill would override rules put in place by President Bush five years ago aimed at protecting human embryos. Experts, pro and con, are marshaled against each other. What is at stake is not only medical research [do not be naively misled here] but also billions of dollars for the researchers, their institutions, auxiliary businesses and the local economy in general. Certainly biomedical and social ethical issues are involved. My concern here is that this illustrates another case that tests our commitment to the Bible as our rule of faith and practice. If we really are committed to the authority of the Bible, it makes no difference at all what the scientific, medical and ethical experts, pro or con, have to say on the subject of embryonic stem cell research. I am opposed to embryonic stem cell research. My position is based solely upon the Bible and what it says about the beginnings of human life. If we are convinced on Scriptural grounds that human life begins at conception, then the embryo is a human being and to destroy it for any reason is not acceptable. Period. Every Christian who insists that the Bible is their authority for faith and practice, ie- every fundamentalist or evangelical, should agree with this. The problem is that they do not. That, in turn, reveals that interpretation of Scripture, not our doctrinal statement about Scripture, is really what governs us. [If I could be persuaded that Scripture does not teach that human life begins at conception, I would change my position] It also reveals that in this matter, as in many others, we are greatly influenced by secular, rationalistic, pragmatic and "scientific" arguments- perhaps more than "what the Bible says". It also reveals how dualist we often are. Many Bible believers actually limit the authority of the Bible to matters of Salvation and Church (and those are defined within narrow limits).

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:44

Thursday, July 13, 2006

### **Mountains shall move- someday**

God is king of all the earth; God reigns over the nations; God sits upon his holy throne.--Psalm 47It is he who makes war to cease in all the world; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear and burns the shields with fire.Are these words true? What I read in the news every day contradicts what the Psalmist is saying. In other words, my experience, the experience of most people in the world, does not correspond to the Scripture in these matters.We walk by faith, not sight (not experience)'Be still, then, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.' -Ps 46

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:41

Wednesday, July 12, 2006

### **Question about Monday's QT Thots**

A Christian friend responded to my last QT Thots, asking [in effect] if I was saying we are to disassociate ourselves from all non-Christians. How can we witness, if we separate from unbelievers? I did not mean that at all. This is what I said to him in my email response- "... if you will reread my comments [in Today's QT Thots] about what David said, I think his decision ["I have not...I will not..."] is about a particular danger of which he has spoken before (eg- Psalm 1) I must be careful about whom I spend my time with, whom I let influence me, whom I look to as my "inner circle" of friends. I must not allow worldly or ungodly people, people that drag me down or away from the Lord, to be close to me. Proverbs and the Apostle Paul warn about the influence of "bad companions". Many times I have seen marriages break up and teenagers get into trouble because of the negative influence of others- people who should have been avoided (run away from, like Potiphar's wife)..."It was a good question. Hope this answers it.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:55

Friday, July 7, 2006

## **Is Patriotism Christian?**

The Apostles Creed recognizes the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. It grounds Jesus in a time and place. Paul makes much of his rights as a Roman citizen. That is the context in of which he lived his life. Among many other particulars that shape and govern my life is the reality of being born, and growing up, in America. This is the given, historical context of my life. Therefore, it is true, honest and realistic to acknowledge that I am an American. Yes, I am a Christian. I am also a man. Does saying that make me less a Christian? Of course not. Being a Christian is supposed to influence what kind of man I am. So, saying I am an American does not take away from being a Christian. Being a Christian is supposed to influence what I am as an American. This is where God in His Providence has seen fit to put me. It is right and proper that I express gratitude and thanksgiving for this Providence. To denigrate America as a Nation, is to express ingratitude to God for what he has done in my life: "God, how could you do this to me? What were you thinking? This is a Nation full of greedy, selfish capitalists. It oppresses minorities and the Poor. It is a war mongering, imperialistic Nation that oppresses other countries. It is a Land full of violence, with more people in prison than any other. How dare you place me here?" Even if any of this were true, which I dispute, I am still an American and to say I am thankful for God's providence placing me here is being both Christian and patriotic.

Many are rightfully concerned about the welfare of the city in which they live. This is a Biblical and Christian thing to do. For all the same reasons, we must be concerned about the welfare of the country in which we live. This also is Biblical and Christian. In fact, the Bible commands Christians to honor and pray for their Rulers, pay taxes and be obedient citizens. All of that is what Patriotism means. This last argument could apply to Believers in whatever country God has placed them to live. But whatever obligations we have to other countries, our first obligation is to our native land. This is the same as saying that, although we are to love all our neighbors, we must begin with our own families. This is very Biblical. It would be very unbiblical and foolish to put someone else's wife or children ahead of my own. What does not apply to ever other country is our history and heritage as Americans. I think this is the real rub for many nay sayers. They seem to find it very difficult to admit and acknowledge God's Hand in the creation of this Nation and the unique Biblical Foundations upon which it is built- unlike any other Nation. I am very grateful to God that He saw fit to have me born in this Country because I know and cherish those Fondantions, those Principles and Values which are uniquely American. I do not accept multiculturalism and I do believe in American Exceptionalism. ["American exceptionalism, a term coined by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1831, has been historically referred to as the perception that the United States differs qualitatively from other developed nations, because of its unique origins, national credo, historical evolution, and distinctive political and religious institutions. American exceptionalism is the idea that the United States and the American people hold a special place in the world, by offering opportunity and hope for humanity, derived from a unique balance of public and private interests governed by constitutional ideals that are focused on personal and economic freedom."- Wikipedia] This, too, is being Patriotic. I do not see how a Biblical and informed American Christian could be anything else. A final good reason to be patriotic, that Christians should gladly endorse, is that it counters the perverse focus on individualism rampant among us. When we think of our Nation and our fellow citizens and act on what is good for all of us, as a people, one Nation under God, we are saved from the selfish indulgence of me-ism and the ever fragmenting effect of increasing tribalism.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:08

Friday, June 30, 2006

### **When to leave a job**

When do you voluntarily get out? I have left jobs that simply made me physically or emotionally sick, after working at them for awhile. That is being pragmatic. I have left jobs for which, it turned out, I was not well suited by temperament or skill. That is being pragmatic. Certainly, people leave jobs for ones that pay better or offer better insurance and other benefits. That is a pragmatic choice. Some have left jobs to relocate to better meet the needs of other family members. That is pragmatic. I have left jobs which were requiring me to compromise moral or ethical principles. I have left a few jobs because I was unable to be faithful to what the Lord was calling me to do there. If being pragmatic means making decisions based on outcomes or results, these latter choices were also pragmatic. If being pragmatic means making decisions based on doing whatever it takes to accomplish certain predetermined ends, then these decisions were not pragmatic- they were done out of obedience to the Lord.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:38

Friday, June 16, 2006

### **To Floss or not to Floss? Another life lesson**

I am still recovering from the shock of what my new dentist said about my teeth and her proposed plan for treatment. She insisted I have gum disease. What made this hard to believe is that I have always been told that I have good teeth and gums. Every 6 months for many, many years I have had checkups and cleaning- always same thing: no problems. All of a sudden; big problems requiring big treatment and a big bill. How could this be? Maybe this dentist is not honest. Wanting to sell me her product, she lies to me about my need, making me want to buy. This is very unlikely. Being fairly young and recently out of school, with all kinds of high tech gadgets, she is more likely to be correct and simply very zealous about doing what she has been trained for. Having a new hammer and being trained and eager to use it, she sees a nail she thinks needs pounding. <http://www.perio.org/consumer/smileforlife.htm> The puzzle to me is why now? How come I suddenly need this? I expected a good report as usual. No problems. Now, she says, without treatment, my teeth can start falling out and my general health is in danger. Wow! I did a quick internet search on what she told me. Sounds like she knows what she is talking about. Apparently, previous Dentists have not been as thorough as she. They have not done me any favors, if they simply were being easy on me. Granted, this condition is more likely to increase as we get older. Half of all people, by age 55, have gum disease and 1 out of 4 people my age have lost all their natural teeth. So I guess it was only Dentists in recent years, up to 6 months ago, who have not been really truthful or competent or, at least, as zealous about promoting oral health, as my new Dentist. We learn early on that life is not fair and that there is a difference between what is moral and what is legal. Part of the pain of this experience for me, is realizing, again, another life lesson- doing all the right things, being a straight shooter, following the rules, does not guarantee all will go well. In this instance, brushing thoroughly twice a day, flossing, using mouth wash regularly and having professional check-ups and cleaning does not prevent gum disease or having to spend big bucks for periodontal treatment. BUT, hard as it can be, frustrating and disappointing as it is, we must, as Christians, still believe in playing fair, being moral and doing the right thing- including brushing and flossing our teeth. Being idealistic may cost a lot sometimes, but we must never give up!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:16

Wednesday, May 31, 2006

## **Spiritual Formation: Becoming a Mature Christian**

The Pastor of the church, where I was Baptized 50 years ago, in his sermons frequently addressed the congregation as Saints. Even the invitation to bring Tithes and Offerings was prefaced by him, saying, "The Ushers will now wait upon the Saints". The Roman Catholic use of the title "Saint" (eg- the current move to canonize, make a Saint of, the last Pope) obscures the New Testament use. In it, Believers are called "Christians" 3 times. They are addressed as "Saints" maybe 60 times (depending on Translation). Every single believer in Christ is a Saint. I wonder what neglect of this Name reveals about the contemporary church. Does it reveal the same thing that neglect of the word "Holiness" does? We change concepts when we assign different meanings (definitions) while keeping the original names. We usually indicate we have jettisoned the concept entirely when we discontinue using the original name. In the simplest terms- A "Saint" is a "holy" person. The concept of "Holiness" is from the Old Testament and the word has several meanings. God is described as holy, meaning altogether Other (than His creation). Human beings can not share in such holiness. Anything set apart for God, for His use, is called holy. And "holiness" sometimes is interchangeable with moral righteousness, the opposite of wickedness. Any person or thing to be separated unto God's service must first be separated from sin. This two-fold concept is what we mean when we talk about Christians being holy. Sanctification is the process of making a Believer separate from sin and separate to God's service. Every day, I personally pray, "Lord cleanse and claim my mind, cleanse and claim my emotions and cleanse and claim my lips- make me holy."

A person who has come to saving faith and justified will have both this desire and daily surrender (i.e.- this process of sanctification) It is the Holy Spirit's work to make it happen. He does the cleansing and He does the enabling. This is a life long process. It has its set backs and periods of seeming dormancy; but it never ceases and always is making, over the long term, process toward maturity in Christ. Now, about the "Disciplines" or "means of grace". According to Willard and Foster and Leaders of the Spiritual Formation Movement, these are as follows- meditation, prayer, fasting and study simplicity, solitude, submission and service confession, worship, guidance and celebrations silence, frugality, chastity, secrecy and sacrifice, fellowship. I have explained above that if there is such a thing as spiritual formation it is the formation of mature Christians. We define that as a justified sinner, by virtue of being "in Christ", becoming sanctified, developing the following characteristics- Christ-like rationality: having the mind of Christ, thinking "Christianly" (Scripturally) about all things Christ-like creativity: making and developing works of beauty and grace (of all kinds in all fields) in harmony with the Creator of all good things Christ-like morality: living by the same Kingdom values and principles as Jesus did Christ-like communality: living in relationships with others as Jesus did Christ-like spirituality: praising God, waiting on Him (in prayer), trusting and obeying (to the death) God the Father, as Jesus did. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He has one primary means of Grace: the Truth. The Spirit uses the Word of God to build up and make Believers into mature Christians. Psalm 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. This means that there is one "Discipline" above all- the study of Scripture with the object of submitting to it in all matters. Implicit in this Discipline (per this very verse) is a high view of Scripture as inerrant, propositional revelation, using an historical-grammatical (plain sense) method for interpretation. The John 15 passage about the vine and branches teaches us that God will prune the branches to make them more fruitful. What does He use to do the pruning? His Word, the truth- v.3 and 17:17 Psalm 119:9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. AGAIN- 2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is ... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (- i.e. a mature Christian!) The second major means of grace follows: This study of the Word should be more than individual. It should ideally be done in a community of Believers, united with this same purpose - a community of the Word. (I am not talking here about the typical small-group Bible study or Sunday School class) The third major means of grace should be obvious: This study must be more than private. What is learned is meant to be obeyed and practiced publicly. If we learn about forgiveness, we must forgive. We have not really learned until we practice. If we learn about mercy or compassion, we must practice being merciful and compassionate. This is how we are fruitful. This is how we really grow in maturity and see God working in our lives. Of course, all through this process of being sanctified there will be worship and prayer. The worship will be God centered- singing about Him, His attributes and work. It will also, as in the Psalms, include affirmations of our faith and love for Him. Prayers will be, as in the Psalms, verbal. Praying has content; it is not word-less contemplation. Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, Intercession and Petition all are done with words. The Scriptures do teach us to meditate; but, Biblical meditation is pondering the names, attributes, character and works of God. This means that, primarily, Biblical Meditation is meditation on the meaning of passages of Scripture. The test of

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whether we are on the right track: Are we becoming like Christ in the 5 ways outlined above, i.e -are we becoming holy?  
are we becoming more separate from sin in our lives and becoming more committed to serving God?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:49

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

### **More on Spiritual Formation**

Spiritual Formation must be built on solid Biblical grounds. That means, grounded in Reformed, Pauline Theology. Being formed into a mature Christian begins with forensic position, not experience. (Very few Christians these days seem to know this distinction) The emphasis on experience is misplaced. Experience must, and will, follow position. Our basic, essential and fundamental position is "in Christ". All else derives from that. Miss this truth and the understanding of Spiritual Formation is hopelessly muddled. Being "in Christ" is a relational concept, but not mystical or subjective or "personal". Paul uses forensic language. The phrase refers to being in a legal relationship with Christ, as in a Marriage between husband and wife. It refers to the Believer's standing before God. God sees (declares) the Believer as standing in the Covenant, in the Body, in Grace- "in Christ". In that judicial, legal relationship, the Believer has Justification, i.e.- forgiveness and acceptance as well as Adoption (in Christ, we are declared to be children of God). As a result of that, the Believer is given the Holy Spirit, to dwell within. Becoming a mature Christian begins with, and requires, certainty and assurance of this position. Many Believers are on a never-ending search for what they already have. Many turn to the mystical and experiential [often in liturgical practices] to find or increase their sense of union with God, of His forgiveness and acceptance or of the indwelling Spirit. This is totally unnecessary, as well as futile. All of this is a gift from God to those whom He has chosen and is based entirely on the work of Christ and is our possession, based on our forensic relation to Christ, which begins the moment saving faith is received. At that moment, once and forever, we are in Christ and, therefore, justified, et al. Sinners are commonly encouraged these days to seek the peace of God, particularly through certain disciplines such as silence, fasting and contemplative prayers- often with Gregorian chant in the background. Wrong. Whatever relaxation and reduced stress, they may experience, such folks have not found the peace of God, if they have not first made peace with God, "in Christ". This must be made clear: The peace of God is a gift directly from God to Believers who have made peace with God in Christ and know that they have. Spiritual Formation, becoming a mature Christian, begins with this and not without it.

After Justification, which is a once-forever moment, the process of Sanctification begins. They are made sequential only for explanatory purposes. They can not be separated theologically. Sanctification begins the moment Justification does; but, while the latter is complete, the former progresses. A justified Believer can not, and need not, be justified again and again or increasingly. However, the justified Believer will, and must, seek to grow and progress in the process of Sanctification throughout life until Glory, the last stage of Salvation. Once this process of sanctification has begun, at the moment of justification, it can, and necessarily must, continue. If a sinner has been justified in Christ, s/he will be sanctified. If there is no evidence of progress in sanctification, there is no reason to believe that there was ever any justification. I consider such a person to be, for practical purposes, not a Christian, not "in Christ". Instead of "Spiritual Formation", we would be far more Biblical to say we are pursuing Sanctification, other wise known as Holiness. -----More to follow

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:06

Monday, May 29, 2006

## **Two Sons**

In the post preceding this one (AWOL), the co-author of a new book is Frank Schaeffer. Once he was known as Franky Schaeffer, son of Francis Schaeffer, one of the most influential apologists for Christianity of the last Century (he passed away in '84- I wrote of him here recently) Here are good places to learn about him and his work-<http://www.labri.org/history.html><http://www.rationalpi.com/theshelter/sitemap.html><http://www.worldmag.com/articles/10452>One of Francis and Edith Schaeffer's daughters, Susan, has been very influential in promoting her fathers' work and the current work of L'Abri. Many current Christian leaders were greatly influenced by Schaeffer and L'Abri. Among them is Os Guinness, whose books I recommend <http://www.leaderu.com/marshall/mhr08/os1.html>For all of that, what is of special interest here is that Francis' son, Frank, has totally repudiated the Reformed Faith and Apologetics of his father. He remains a conservative Christian, but converted to Eastern Orthodoxy in reaction to the alledgedly strait-jacket, dogmatic, legalistic Calvinism of his family. (That is his perspective- I know nothing about it) He says he is now more comfortable with the "mystery and paradox" of Orthodoxy.If you google his name you will be able to read his many statements about this. He makes no bones about wanting nothing to do with Fundamentalist Christianity. He has written 3 novels that explore the (supposedly fictionalized) struggles he says he went through growing up in the Schaeffer household. If at all true, this is a very sad turn of events. In contrast, think of Billy and Franklin Graham.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:30

Saturday, May 27, 2006

## **Networking**

"It's who you know". That has been standard truism for years about what it takes to get a job or promotion. Well, there is obviously more involved than that. However, "networking" is the major approach urged by employment agencies to finding a career position. According to an article in this week's The Week newsmagazine [a very helpful one, by the way], 70% of human resources chiefs depend on personal recommendations to fill upper level positions. It is strongly suggested that job-seekers spend a lot of time every week "net-working, ie- visiting and talking with all kinds of people in their life. People getting to know people leads to people getting to know more people, which eventually leads to contacts, referrals and recommendations for open positions. Seems reasonable to me. Also seems like a really effective way to share the Gospel: Networking for Jesus!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:33

Wednesday, May 24, 2006

## **Spiritual Formation**

"What Is Spiritual Formation? This is the definition by the Office of Spiritual Formation, PCUSA website" Spiritual formation is the activity of the Holy Spirit which molds our lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This likeness is one of deep intimacy with God and genuine compassion for all of creation. We cooperate with this work of the Spirit through practices that make us more open and responsive to the Spirit's touch..." The following material is taken from Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship's website-Spiritual Formation -- "We cultivate intimacy with God and growth in Christ-like character through personal and corporate spiritual disciplines, empowered by the Spirit." What is the primary purpose of our lives? Our ultimate desire should be intimacy with the Lord. At its core, true spirituality is a matter of developing patterns of lifelong fellowship. True Spirituality is not doing things for God but of being with him. It is aligning ourselves with his will, listening to his voice, being beneficiaries of his grace. "The aim of life is ... to lose ourselves in the glory of God." As we cultivate intimacy with the Father, we seek to develop Christ-like qualities and to live as he would. Our goal [is] becoming "conformed to the likeness of his Son" (Romans 8:29) By what means do we grow close to God and become more like Jesus? meditation, prayer, fasting and study simplicity, solitude, submission and service confession, worship, guidance and celebrations silence, frugality, chastity, secrecy and sacrifice, fellowship -The Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster -The Spirit of the Disciplines, Dallas Willard ...spiritual maturity does not simply happen to us ... To grow in intimacy with God and to develop Christ-like qualities requires our active participation. Our role in this divine-human dance is to place ourselves - with intentionality and regularity - in the loving arms of our Lord. He has promised to do the rest. These concepts and the promotion of them are becoming increasingly popular- a "Movement" - among a broad band of Evangelicals, including many Seminaries, Organizations such as IVCF, National Leaders and well-known Pastors. Foster and Willard are among the key speakers/writers in this Movement. Consider the second national Conference for Spiritual Formation. Notice the sponsors and speakers- [http://www.spiritualformationforum.org/sff\\_event.html](http://www.spiritualformationforum.org/sff_event.html)

Is this Movement a good thing? Certainly, becoming like Christ is good! How does the Bible define this concept? More later.....

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:32

## **Podification**

Our local Sunday paper carried a major article from the Denver Post by Sheba Wheeler. Ms Wheeler quotes many experts on the subject, as well as interviews with users, about MP3 players, especially the iPod version. More than half of all households have some version of MP3 players. Among teens, the iPod is a "must-have", a "requirement", a "status symbol", owning one means peer acceptance. "It is seen as extreme lack of status if they do not have one". Somehow [having the latest technology] proves power. Adults value them for the same reason. It makes them feel hip, in-the-know and youthful. Are Christians, people who are called to deny self, pick up their cross and follow Jesus, supposed to think and feel this way about some thing? Does it mean that Christian kids who affirmed in Church yesterday, "Jesus is Lord", today are singing "Our iPod reigns"? You will please note I am not knocking the technology involved with MP3 players. I am questioning the social meaning and use of them in people's lives. Ms Wheeler makes two very important observations. First, "the iPod has become a cultural phenomenon because society deemed it so. Society takes a created concept...and gives it power by choosing to use and be identified with it." Whoa, wait a minute here. Read that again. That is exactly how the Bible defines a "Idol" and idolatry is one of the greatest temptations facing God's People in every age. Are your teens worshipping an idol they carry around attached to belt and ear? Talk with them about that. Ms Wheeler's second observation is even more serious-

She quotes a marketing consultant. He says "Apple's marketing success and cultural appeal is due to 'podification', the current longing among Americans to insulate themselves from the outside world and demand experiences that are unique to them and their own tastes." Where do we see evidence of that? Are any Christians you know, teens or adults, podified? The marketing consultant makes another sharp observation, "Apple delivered the perfect tool: it shields us from the outside world, but at the same time...it allows us to keep up with the Jones". Are Christians, who say "Jesus is Lord", interested in "keeping up with the Jones". Wouldn't that make the Jones, Lord? As to the consequences of being shielded from the world by gadgets like the iPod, There was a teen killed here recently because he was walking on the railroad tracks. He didn't hear the train coming up behind him. Friends said, he was always listening to music. Could there be a connection?

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Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:22

Monday, May 22, 2006

## **The New Super Spirituality**

Francis Schaeffer had a tremendous ministry for Christ among young people disaffected with Church and World from the 1950's into the early 80's. He founded, what is known as, L'Abri in 1955 and wrote books that have changed minds and lives ever since. They are somewhat dated now, but still very valuable. I recommend you check out some of the websites about his work. In 1972, Dr Schaeffer wrote a short book about The New Super Spirituality that is relevant to the growing numbers of Evangelicals pursuing "Spiritual Formation". (I will soon post a paper about this) Schaeffer noted the move from drug induced "highs" among young people into another kind of trip induced by various forms of Mysticism often mixed with occultism. Among youthful Christians this move in the 70's was into "new Platonic spirituality". The most notable characteristic of this "spirituality" was its anti-intellectualism and rejection of Reason. This included all efforts to do Apologetics- the rational defence of the Faith. There was a growing emphasis on asceticism and separation from the consumerism and materialism of the world. There was no concern about social justice or cultural problems. Remember, these were young people burned out by the "radical" movements of the 60's. Prophecy and the Rapture was a "hot topic" for discussion. There was much interest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and charismatic worship. This was increasingly contentless spirituality with downplaying or rejection of propositional Truth and the authority of Scripture. Experience and emotion were more important. This was in the early 1970's- 30 years ago! Is "Spiritual Formation" the new super spirituality of today? There are similarities and differences, as follows-

"Schaeffer noted the move from drug induced "highs" among young people into another kind of trip induced by various forms of Mysticism often mixed with occultism." "There was a growing emphasis on asceticism and separation from the consumerism and materialism of the world." I see similarity to this in today's Emergent Church, the so-called "New Monasticism" and aspects of "Spiritual Formation" [more on this later]"Prophecy and the Rapture was a "hot topic" for discussion." I personally see no interest in these matters today among young adults" There was much interest in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and charismatic worship." There are emotional and physical expressions that remind me of charismatic meetings and worship. But many younger Believers are not traditional Pentecostals or Charismatics at all [this is not true of many immigrants and minorities] "The most notable characteristic of this "spirituality" was its anti-intellectualism and rejection of Reason. This included all efforts to do Apologetics- the rational defence of the Faith.' 'increasingly contentless spirituality with downplaying or rejection of propositional Truth and the authority of Scripture. Experience and emotion were more important.' 'The most notable characteristic of this "spirituality" was its anti-intellectualism and rejection of Reason. This included all efforts to do Apologetics- the rational defence of the Faith.' I definitely see all of this today, but with differences. There is now a very different take on what "Truth" is compared to 30+ years ago, as well as what being a Christian is all about. Among youthful Christians this move in the 70's was into "new Platonic spirituality". There was no concern about social justice or cultural problems. Many of today's young Christians are dualists (Platonists) as much as the last generation, but with different compartments. There is the search for contentless, subjective spiritual "highs" at the same time there is serious interest and commitment to social action and ministries of charity and mercy. This is dualism with a difference. Schaeffer would be even more alarmed today than he was in the 70's. Me, too. On a positive note: One subject that Dr Schaeffer encouraged was "orthodox community" - the importance of genuine fellowship and relationships that are a working out of Truth in practice. Many of today's young Christians could not agree more. Likewise.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:50

## **Holy Food on the Fly?**

Another report came out last week indicating that, in general, Americans are reading less. We are increasingly an audio and visual culture. Is there a connection between that and the decline among Christian Americans of serious Bible study (which requires time spent reading words) ? We have historically been "People of the Book". Many reports also document the obvious- Americans seldom eat meals around a table as a family. Increasingly, we eat fast food or we eat take out and bring home or delivered to the door food, fast. Often we just skip a meal- and the family time that could go with it. Is there a connection between that cultural reality and the attitudes and practices of many Believers and churches toward the Lord's Supper?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:21

### **Going through the Motions?**

I wrote below of the concert last Saturday at Whitinsville School. It was an interesting comparison to the First Communion we attended at a local RC Church three weeks ago. I had said how impressed I was with the latter. Some 50 second graders solemnly lining up to receive [not "take"] Communion for the first time, observed by 700 reverential family and friends. There had been a big build-up to the First Communion- 2 years of once weekly Classes. They dressed in their Sunday finest. They were about to receive, they had been taught, the very Body [not the Blood] of Christ. You'd think this would be a very special, "mystical" experience for each child. I doubt it. The wafers were given quickly and most of the kids just popped them into their mouths as they hurried away, going back to their seats. They were followed by most of the adults present, doing the same thing. That was it? All the preparation and formality led up to just that? That is all that receiving Christ amounts to? I gather that "receiving Christ" for those folks, is a mechanical thing. Put the wafer into your mouth and it is done. Christ has been received. Automatically. All done. At Whitinsville, the youthful musicians were consciously putting their thoughts and feelings into what they were doing, as they did it. There may have been a few, out of the hundred players, that were on auto pilot, playing mechanically. But most assuredly, most were caught up and passionately involved in making beautiful music. They were using knowledge and skills, acquired over many years, during the actual concert. Participation in the performance itself was the "means of grace", not a care-less, mechanical after thought to all that preceded it. Which is like the way you take Communion?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:04

Friday, May 12, 2006

## **The Debt Slayers**

So many Christians are in unhealthy debt that there is a growing need for the ministries of the Debt Slayers. That is the title of an CT article featuring three of them-<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/005/23.40.html> There is no one, simple fix and different people have different problems with money management. Usually, there are underlying problems, too, as there is on the topic of sexuality. When couples come for counseling about either money or sex, money and sex are not the most important issues they have. Money management is often about values and power or control issues. Those, in turn, are often directly related to early childhood and family issues. A couple will need to get a real handle on both income and spending, keeping records for a long period of time, probably over a year- holidays can be serious budget busters. Every expense must be recorded. Needs must be separated from wants. And all of those must be prioritized and budgeted for. Mutual agreement between husband and wife must be reached- room here for lots of discussion and compromise. Then, there will be need for serious discipline, mutual support with "temptations" and mutual accountability. Mutual is important. Money management in a marriage must be mutual, a cooperative effort. Cutting up all but one credit cards may be essential. All of that is the easy part. Getting at the values and control issues are harder. Why do we want what we want? Why do we spend what we spend? Why is even talking about such things so hard. especially for men? All this means it will be usually be a good idea to get the help of a good financial counselor. Finally comes what must actually be first. Where is the Lord in all this? Certainly our values and goals are matters that the Lord wants to be involved with. Prayer and the Holy Spirit will be necessary for wisdom and strength to make and keep decisions. The Bible is full of principles to guide us in making money and being good stewards of it. And faith, as well as sanctified common sense, is an absolute essential. If the Lord speaks to you about major changes, like tithing or changing jobs or moving, faith will absolutely be required to obey.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:00

Wednesday, May 10, 2006

### **Lares and Penates**

An interesting article in the current AARP Bulletin has a lot of wisdom. The writer talks about the process of cleaning out her old house, as she moves into a place better suited to her advancing years. The new place actually has more floor space, but she brought almost nothing to it from her former home. She describes the process as sorting and separating her lares from her penates, ie- her "must haves" from her "don't needs". Lares and Penates are the Latin names for ancient Roman household gods. Usually the names together simply mean "household goods". Many of us Christians have household gods, not only household goods, cluttering up our lives. These would be things- things someone convinced us we absolutely need (must haves) to serve us. Over the years, they increasing control our lives and need us to take care of them, serving them after they no longer serve us. These gods become "don't needs". The AARP writer describes how wonderfully free and liberated she came to feel, as she divested her life of these "don't needs". She makes the important distinction between divestment and downsizing. The latter is about pinching, cutting back, restricting. All of that can be painful and make you dread it. Divestment, she says, is about expansion, space freedom and redefining ones self. She will enjoy memories of people experiences and places (nostalgia) while not being pained over loss of things. She intends to let old dreams go, while creating new ones.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:23

Thursday, April 27, 2006

### **Eat it while it is fresh**

Sometimes, as today, the website I use for my morning QT is not available. It comes from England. Then I turn to another, which features Readings and prayers from the Book of Common Prayer <http://www.missionstclare.com/english/April/whole/morning/27m.html> The Old Testament Reading this morning was from Exodus 16. This is the story of the Manna. God provided bread for the wandering Israelites on a daily basis with the promise they would have enough for the day, every day, and with the proviso that they use it up every day, lest it be wasted. He wanted them to trust Him for the next day. Likewise, our Heavenly Father grants us a new day, every morning, along with the essentials we need to live it. It will be both a sin and a shame to waste what we have been given; not simply out of laziness, but out of fear for tomorrow, if we use what God has given today.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:09

Tuesday, April 25. 2006

### **Audience One and Steve Camp**

In the post prior to this one (below) I linked to the site of "Audience One". I have never heard the music of Steve Camp, but I am impressed with his personal story and his ministry of contemporary music based on Reformed Theology. The links on his website are also a very impressive array of good speakers and writers. I recommend you check our Audience One [guess who that is?]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:46

### **The Third use of the Law**

I heard another sermon recently assuring the congregants that we Christians are free from the Law. We are saved by grace alone. Forget the Law. Live by Love. This is not only very misleading advice, it is unscriptural, as well as contrary to Reformed Theology. We are not saved by the works of the Law. Absolutely true! The ceremonial and rituals of the Law are done away "in Christ". True. But Christ did not do away with the Ten Commandments, the moral principles of the Law. They teach us Christians how to live. More exactly, the Law teaches us how to love God and our Neighbors. Check out this expansion by Louis Berkhof-<http://a1m.org/page.php?page=template1.php&pageid=b3142a020490e6a20b43b5a0fbd9cac1>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:16

Wednesday, April 19, 2006

### **How can it be, that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?**

Here's an example of a great, powerful Gospel Hymn, loaded with Biblical Doctrine. This has been a favorite of mine for over 50 years. We used to enjoy singing it during college days at Intersarsity Christian Fellowship meetings. It is a solemn but joyful song, sung boldly by the congregation with great depth of feeling (and four part harmony) And can it be that I should gain An interest in the Savior's blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain—For me, who Him to death pursued? Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? He left His Father's throne above So free, so infinite His grace—Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race: 'Tis mercy all, immense and free, For O my God, it found out me! 'Tis mercy all, immense and free, For O my God, it found out me! Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in Him, is mine; Alive in Him, my living Head, And clothed in righteousness divine, Bold I approach th'eternal throne, And claim the crown, through Christ my own. Bold I approach th'eternal throne, And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:03

Thursday, April 13, 2006

### **What does "Maundy" mean?**

Maundy => mandatum => mandate. That is how to remember what this day commemorates. Many churches celebrate Communion today, but the Day is not named "Communion Thursday". During the Supper in the Upper Room, according to John's account, Jesus washed his disciples feet and gave them a Command, a Mandate: "Love one another just as I have loved you". Maundy Thursday is named to commemorate this Mandate to Love.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:27

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

## **Life Decisions**

Psalm 31 -Love the Lord... Be strong and let your heart take courageOur 13 year old granddaughter, Abbie, made a major, life changing decision this week. She and her 16 year old sister have always gone to school together- small Christian schools. This week, she was accepted at, and has decided to attend, a new, large public Technical-Vocational School. She does not know anyone there yet. All will be new in every way. She will be way out of her comfort zone. But she has carefully weighed all the pros and cons. It is a well thought out and prayed over decision. She goes with her family's support and prayers. I marvel at the faith and courage God has given to her to do this. I am sure when her older sister decides on college next year, she, like her oldest cousin did, who moved away to college last Fall, will also go with faith and courage into that new world. All are making major life decisions. It gives their parents and grandparents great comfort to know that the Lord loves them even more than we do and that He will guide and provide for Abbie and Caitlin and all their cousins as they each- all 7 of them, make their life decisions- with the Lord's help- in the years ahead.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:24

## **Move on!**

Another thought from Psalm 31 in today's QT Reading from Oremus- ... life is wasted [thrown away] with grief, and... years with sighingWe once knew a couple whose 12 year old son had died during surgery. When we met them, they told us the story and showed us his room. It was exactly as he had left it- many years before! They, too, had died that day. We must not allow tragedy, regrets, mistakes, poor judgement, failures from the past prevent us from living our lives here and now. We occasionally visit them for a moment, but we dare not settle down and live there.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:45

## **The Cell Door is Open- Walk out!**

Psalm 31Into your hands I commend my spirit These are the last words of Jesus from the Cross (Luke 23:46)Into your hands I commend my spirit for you have redeemed meThey would make wonderful words on the lips of anyone whose body is dying; but there is another lesson here to greatly help us in our daily life-It is one thing to have assurance that we have been redeemed by the Lord, and another, to commend our spirit into His hands. Many of us fail to do the latter. We are secure about Eternity, but we do not have peace within, on a daily basis. We must learn to continually surrender, to willfully commend, our spirit, i.e.- our mental attitude, our emotional state into the Lord's keeping. A friend signs his letters with "In His grip". That is where we need to know are. O Lord, O God of truth. ...I will rejoice and be glad because of your mercy; for you have seen my affliction; you know my distress. You have not shut me up in the power of the enemy;Many of us live as captives of the Enemy, which includes being confined by dark thoughts and feelings. The power of our weaknesses control us.Romans 8:1 assures us that there is no condemnation for those who are in union with Christ. This verse is not about eternal condemnation. It follows the wretchedness of the defeated life described in chapter 7. We are not condemned to live every day like that. Life lived in the Spirit's control is a life of freedom from imprisonmentyou have set my feet in an open place.The Cell Door is Open- Walk out!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:32

Monday, April 10, 2006

## **Keep your Fork**

Here is a wonderful story sent to me by our daughter, Mindy of Maryland- "There was a young woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live So as she was getting her things "in order," she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the young woman suddenly remembered something very important to her. "There's one more thing," she said excitedly. "What's that?" came the pastor's reply. "This is very important," the young woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking at the young woman, not knowing quite what to say. "That surprises you, doesn't it?" the young woman asked. "Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor. The young woman explained. "My grandmother once told me this story, and from there on out, I have always done so. I have also, always tried to pass along its message to those I love and those who are in need of encouragement. 'In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'Keep your fork' It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming. Like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance!' So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder "What's with the fork?" Then I want you to tell them: "Keep your fork. The best is yet to come." The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the young woman good-bye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the young woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She had a better grasp of what heaven would be like than many people twice her age, with twice as much experience and knowledge. She KNEW that something better was coming. At the funeral people were walking by the young woman's casket and they saw the pretty dress she was wearing and the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over, the pastor heard the question "What's with the fork?" And over and over he smiled. During his message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the young woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. The pastor told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either. He was right. So the next time you reach down for your fork, let it remind you ever so gently, that the best is yet to come." Thanks, Mindy. The best is yet to come!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:58

## **Stride Rite?**

Just got back from my Cardiac Therapy [walk around the neighborhood]. Nice out. I did a lot of walking around here, before we went to Vermont. There, almost none. Walking here, on sidewalks, is far more interesting to me. So much more to look at- and pray about. I wonder if Mr McPherson struts when he walks? It is said we should not judge anyone until we walk in their shoes. Well, I do most of my walking in the shoes of a teenager from Vermont, who gave me his shoes a few years ago [Thanks again, Zach] What is more important than the shoes is the steps taken in the shoes. Where do they go? When I wear them, or any others, do I stride rite?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:54

Monday, April 3, 2006

### **Intellectual Servants of the Lord**

Charles Thaxton earned his Ph.D in physical chemistry (Iowa State Univ) and went on to complete post graduate work in the history of science from Harvard and in molecular biology from Brandeis. He is a strong Christian who has devoted his life to lecturing, particularly in former Communist countries (working out of Prague, Czech Republic) as visiting professor at several Universities. His research has been published in several books. He specializes in debunking Darwin and Darwinism and promoting Intelligent Design. (Remember his credentials, and others like him, when you read that no true scientist supports ID) He and his wife and their ministries are known as Konos-<http://www.konos.org/>Read their life stories and Charles' articles re the Science and Christianity connection. The Link to the Science Conference gives you an idea of the level and type of work he does and who some of his colleagues are. We met them in Northampton, MA more than 30 year ago. Charles went through a serious battle with cancer a few years ago, which cost him one leg. It did not stop them. Their story inspires me. It includes the important influence of a place called L'Abri, where the two of them met. That inspires me, too.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:48

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

### **"I pledge Allegiance to ...?"**

In an article on the Christian Peacemaker Teams website [below], there is a rebuttal of a column written by Cal Thomas about their work. In it, the writer says the members of CPT owe allegiance to no governments, only to the Kingdom of God. I assume the writer is a taxpaying citizen of some Nation, carrying a passport. There is an obligation that comes from that- an allegiance, if you will. Missing from the thought and discourse of many Christians these days, is serious reflection on what it means to be a citizen. What is the theology, the Scripture, about the Christian's responsibility as a citizen to his or her Country. Here are key passages-Luke 20:22-25 22 Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" 25 [Jesus] said to them, "...give to Caesar what is Caesar'sRomans 13 1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted... 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. 6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.1 Peter 2:13-17 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 17 Show proper respect...honor the king.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:08

Tuesday, March 14, 2006

### **Worship through the Wardrobe**

Several principles inform John Calvin's [the Reformed] approach to worship. 1] Centrality of the Word, i.e.- the careful exposition of Scripture [thus the centrality of the Pulpit] 2] Simplicity. This meant for Calvin the absence of distractions such as elaborate decoration and showiness. It should be rather a focusing on God in simplicity. 3] Part of the reason the Reformed wanted simple places of worship [think of the colonial New England Meeting House] was to prevent our thinking of them as temples and thus becoming unduly attached to the place in which we worship. Calvin, in the Reformed tradition, knew that the real place in which we worship is Heaven. We see this Heavenly Jerusalem not with our eyes but by faith, and it is to this Zion that we lift up our hearts to meet with God in worship. We don't recreate a temple here on earth, because our privilege as children of the New Covenant is to worship in the Heavenly temple with Christ. 4] Fourthly, Calvin was very concerned about reverence. Psalm 2, "Serve [worship] the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" These thoughts are taken from an article on the Banner of Truth website [http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article\\_detail.php?428](http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article_detail.php?428)

"the real place in which we worship is Heaven"- this concept has been on my mind lately. We Protestants do not believe that Christ himself is literally, corporately in the Elements served during Holy Communion. We say, "The Body/Blood of Christ"; but they can not actually be that. Why? Because of the bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven. That is where He is today- at this very moment. He does not come down to us in our Worship, let alone in the Supper. Rather, we ascend to Him in our hearts by faith. We approach the Throne and worship Him there, in the heavenlies, in the Spirit within our spirit. Col 3:1; Heb 6:19-20 + 7:25, 10:19-22; Eph 2:18, 3:12 I have concluded through the years, that many substitute a man-made edifice for the God-made Temple above. People with the weakest interior life often have the most elaborate external Worship Services in the most elaborate buildings. That does not mean that people who worship in plain, simple buildings necessarily have a deep, rich interior spiritual life. By no means. In all cases, the Reformed view is the most Scriptural. I have always enjoyed entering into the sacred space of Cathedral type churches (naves) for the sense of the Holy that they affect in me. It is very conducive to meditation for me. But, I appreciate, more than ever, the need to have a "holy", sacred space within my heart and to enter into that, or, better, as in Lewis' Wardrobe, to go, through my heart, into the Presence of Aslan in His Land above, even though I never leave my chair.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:05

Monday, March 13. 2006

## **"Getting in the Way" - is it God's way?**

Christian Peacemaker Teams - Motto: "Getting In the Way" Quotes from their website (*italics*)- Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) arose from a call in 1984 for Christians ... to nonviolent peacemaking... Enlisting the whole church in an organized, nonviolent alternative to war, CPT places violence-reduction teams in crisis situations and militarized areas around the world at the invitation of local peace and human rights workers. CPT embraces the vision of unarmed intervention waged by committed peacemakers ready to risk injury and death in bold attempts to transform lethal conflict through the nonviolent power of God's truth and love. Initiated by Mennonites, Brethren and Quakers with broad ecumenical participation, CPT seeks to enlist ...the whole church in conscientious objection to war- "We believe that faithfulness to what Jesus taught and modeled calls us to more active peacemaking.

CPT History, by Gene Stoltzfus Director of CPT until 2004.Excerpts from the CPT website (*italics*) -The original call for a Christian Peacemaker Teams was informed by the scriptural encouragement for ... enemy loving in the spirit of Jesus. Our experience is that violence can be disarmed with the witness to peace, truth, love and justice. The willingness to give life instead of taking life is very powerful. ... the absolute refusal to kill in situations of conflict. I wonder what stand these folks would have taken during the American Revolutionary War? If everyone agreed with them, what would have been the outcome of WW II? And the massacres wrought by Hitler and Stalin? For that matter, Saddam Hussein would probably still be killing tens of thousands of Kurds and Shiite Iraqis. There is evil in the world, and God himself uses one nation and its military to punish and stop the evil perpetuated in another. It is called Justice. And it is Biblical.In this [above] Christ is the example. Where? Certainly, on some occasions, Christ suffered violence to himself without returning it. He came to intentionally die as an atonement for our sins. His atoning death required that he submit to someone killing him. How does his doing that make a model for non-violence, such as CPT is seeking to practice, for all Christians to follow? It doesn't!There is a continuity to our witness reaching back to the age of the Old Testament prophets. We intend for our work to connect to the ministry of Jesus and the early church.I am convinced that there is no Biblical warrant or support for this statement. It is spurious. Wrong. (I say this as one who attempted to register as a conscientious objector as an idealistic young Christian of 18 and who held on to his pacifist ideals for a number of years)What Jesus did do was call believers in Him to be his disciples. Disciples are those who so identify with a Teacher that they willingly accept his fate, if need be. We are called to carry our cross even as he did. Our cross is accepting the consequences of being faithful to God. That is the example of Jesus we are to follow. Obeying the Word-Law of God is costly. Living by the Principles of the Kingdom can extract a painful price, e.g.- the loss of employment, the suffering of ridicule and rejection, (for some youth, it might mean forgoing playing on a sports team that insists on having its games on Sunday morning or for some college students it might mean loss of membership in some prestigious campus organization because of its hazing or discriminatory policies, et al) Perhaps for some it might mean jail time or even death in some societies, as the recent beheading of 3 Christian teens in Indonesia by Moslems). In these types of situations, Christ calls us to not retaliate in kind. This is the context for his teaching on non-violence. It is not related to the program or policies practiced by CPT.If you, if we, are truly serious about countering the violence in the world, which predates the Noahic Flood, we must get truly serious about evangelism and world wide missions. Peace will come only in and through Jesus Christ and regenerated hearts. Let us as Christians work to overcome all the personal sin that is behind personal violence.Let us seek the Spirit filled life that will give victory over anger, hate and greed in our relationships. Let us seek to remove all the games and music and movies and books and magazines ("comic strips" ) which incite or facilitate violence, let us also learn means of resolving conflict and managing anger. Finally, let us identify and work to confront and remove all personal and systemic corruption, oppression and economic injustice in our personal spheres of influence and through the legal and legislative systems before it escalates into armed conflict.These are realistic means of pursuing peace and ending violence in our world. People who love each other, do not kill each other. Let Christians be those people!\_\_\_\_\_A few of you reading this might disagree with what I am saying. This is my Blog and these are my opinions. Do not bother to send negative, critical comments. Being a peace-keeper, I do not want a fight about any of this. Thanks

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:27

## **Present with the Lord**

Our son-in-law (who lives in Maryland) lost his grandmother Saturday. She had been in a Nursing Home here in Springfield. We leave in about an hour to pick him up at the airport. I think this will be the 12th family member or friend who has passed away during the last year, including both of our mothers. Her Funeral will be late Wednesday morning. I had prayer with her and her immediate family on Friday. It was, as always, a comfort to share the hope we have

## Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>

because of the first Easter. It is good we will be showing Mimi our respect and honoring her life, but we do it knowing that she herself will not be present at the Service. The first Funeral I ever conducted was for my own grandmother, Grams. She was not there either. Scripture assures believers: absent from the body, instantly present with the Lord! More alive than ever. Amen

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:28

Saturday, March 11, 2006

### **Surf, Sand, Stupidity and Sin**

There have been several "special reports" on TV this week related to the annual orgies of excess indulged in by college "Men and Women" during this week's Semester Break in places like the beaches of Florida. Allegedly, "Women", especially, are sinking to new lows of drunkenness and sexual libertinism. The "Men" are glad to accomodate them. Where did these immature, libidinous adolescents (and their perverted sense of fun) come from? What kind of homes and families? Are any of them professed Christians? I thank God for the multitudes of College students who do act like mature men and women and do not induge is the Surf, Sand, Stupidity and Sin of Spring break. I know of one Christian student who has spent this week home with her family, observing classes in a local school as part of an Ed Course requirement, as well as working nights in Restaurant to help pay for her education. I am very proud of her.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:46

Wednesday, March 8, 2006

## **WHAT COMES FIRST?**

Jesus gives us a clue. He said, the first thing to pray for is: "Our Father...hallowed be your Name" The chief end of Human Beings is to glorify God. The Glory of God is the sum of all that God is = His attributes and work Therefore, to glorify God is to recognize, confess, worship and enjoy the Glory of God. To glorify God also means to reflect His glory, ie- His attributes and work. OUR ULTIMATE GOAL IS NOT THE END OF HOMELESSNESS, POVERTY, INEQUALITY or RACISM. OUR ULTIMATE GOAL IS NOT SOCIAL JUSTICE. OUR ULTIMATE GOAL IS NOT TO SEE EVERY PERSON "SAVED": EVANGELISM and MISSIONS. OUR ULTIMATE GOAL IS THE GLORY OF GOD

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:57

## **Just love people?**

Weekly, since last September, a small but faithful group has been listening to me strongly expound on topics derived from the Book of Genesis and the Mosaic Law. We have been doing a fast overview of Principles or God-given Norms by which I am convinced Christians should live. This is the second time through this Course (we did the first version in Vermont). There were strong reactions as some wrestled with ideas not heard before and which seemed to challenge previous convictions. That was healthy. The great Commission is to go into the world, and make disciples among all nations, teaching them to obey all the Commands of God. This is why I am nonplused by slogans like one heard this week: "Love God, love others, nothing else matters." (This is the motto of a group called Mission Year) I am perplexed because that slogan sounds antinomian: Just love. Teaching people you love, how God wants them to live, does not matter? to them? to God? How are we loving them if we fail to do that? How are we loving God if we fail to do that? I am confused, because how do we "just love" people? How do we love? Do we respect their lives and marriages and property? Do we respect their privacy and honor? Are we loving them, if we fail to treat them this way? And if they are victims of oppression and injustice, are we not to act on their behalf? How can we say we are loving them or their Creator, if we do not? The Law teaches us that loving God and our neighbors involves all of this. Of course, if people are unbelievers and not living as God intends, they are living in sin and face eternal condemnation. Doesn't loving them include calling them to repentance and saving faith in the Gospel? and baptizing them into the life of the Church? I'd like to believe the people who use the Motto know all this and agree with me. And that they will replace the motto with a better one.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:25

Wednesday, March 1, 2006

### **'Tolle lege, tolle lege'**

In August 386, the man we call St. Augustine heard the voice of a child singing a song with the refrain, 'Tolle lege, tolle lege' ("Pick up and read, pick up and read"). Yet ANOTHER report came out this week, indicating AGAIN that American youth are not learning to read well. Only 51% read well enough to do first year work (including math and science) in college. They are not learning to analyze sentence and paragraph structures and layers of meaning or to follow extended argument and thought. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11608629/>I know this is the age of video, but people still need to READ well. This applies to Christians, too. 'Tolle lege, tolle lege' ("Pick up and read, pick up and read"). The advice led to the conversion of a man who would become one of the most important, influential Christians in the history of the Church, perhaps second only to St Paul. What Augustine read that day was Paul's letter to the Romans. "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." 13:13-14 (New International Version) My, isn't that appropriate on the day after Marti Gras!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:54

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

### **Faith in the Workplace**

A website that I continue to find helpful is Faith in the Workplace. It has this advice today-Any work done well is done for the glory of God. "Sell cars and soap with excellence," we told him. "Simple integrity glorifies God, too!"As you go about your business this week, honor God in everything you do.This is excellent advice on the surface of it. Certainly, sloppy and shoddy work of any kind does not honor God. And we certainly do admonish Christians to consider what they do everyday to be for the Lord- whatever the "job" might be.But, what if the Lord does not want you to sell cars or soap but has totally different work for you to do? I talked with some one earlier today who turned down a worthwhile position because it was not "him". What if you are gifted to be a salesperson, but your product is cheap or defective. Doing a great job selling a piece of junk will not honor God. What if the product is fine, really nice; but, the company itself treats its employees poorly or is involved in some illegal or unfair business practices? Doing a great job selling a good product for such a company will not honor God.The original website advice (above) is still good, but not enough.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 17:53

### **A Purse and a Sow**

"Can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear", the saying goes. The Good Samaritan used the money in his purse for ministry- to care for the man he found in the gutter. The Prodigal Son used his money on "riotous living" [maybe he went to New Orleans for Marti Gras] and ended up in the gutter with a sow.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:27

### **Far More than Bye-Bye to Bon Bons**

Tomorrow is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of a period set aside each year for special self-reflection and repentance [that word means changing mind and direction] in preparation for Holy Week. For some, Lent seems to have to do with giving up some pleasure. This is, in turn, the rationale for an overindulgence in pleasure today. The church we visited last Sunday invited folks to attend a presentation about Fasting-- to be offered immediately following a sumptuous "Coffee Hour". When I went through a tough time 30 years ago, my help came from the Lord through an old 1928 Episcopal Book of Common Prayer that I found in a used bookstore. It gave me the words to pray when I couldn't come up with any on my own. Very good words that helped a lot. During that period, I took to spending time in Roman Catholic churches. The sense of sacred space was very conducive to prayer and reflection. Particularly, I was drawn to meditate on the suffering of a young, 33 year old, man. I connected to him and his suffering in a new way. From that time, I have valued a crucifix. I have some of them, here in my study. Occasionally, I have been ridiculed or even chided, by evangelical Protestants for these "Catholic" things. We believe in the resurrected Christ, they say. Of course. Absolutely! That is Easter ("Resurrection Sunday" )Don't we evangelical Christians also believe in the Blood of Jesus. Didn't many of us flock to watch his flogging, in the movie called Passion of the Christ, ("Passion" means "suffering". ) Don't we testify that we believe he suffered and died for our sins? Don't we, with Paul, preach Christ crucified? Don't we admonish sinners to repent and turn to the Suffering One? And did he not admonish us to pick up our cross and follow him? Are we not to be crucified with Christ?Well, all of that is Lent and Holy Week!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:23

Wednesday, February 22, 2006

## **My Kingdom Vision**

What was the theme of all Jesus' sermons? The Kingdom of God. It has two meanings. There is the dynamic Reign in which God the Spirit is present and moving in the hearts and lives and affairs of people. There is the objective Realm. Jesus preached about both Reign and Realm. The Realm over which God reigns is human society organized and running according to God's intentions and norms. That includes: · All education grounded in Christ and His Word · The Sciences and Technology serving God · The Fine Arts and Pop Culture pleasing to Him · Marriages and Families functioning by God-given principles · Nature and the Environment managed and used as God intended, at its Creation. · Businesses (the entire economic endeavor) organized around Biblical principles This is the Kingdom Vision that dominates my heart and mind. This is not a secular vision. This is not a Plan for the world to follow. It won't. It can't. The world hates God and will not submit to Him or His Law. We are not seeking to bring in this Realm via governments or coercion of any kind. "Not by might, but my Spirit, says the Lord". -Zechariah 4:6 The Scripture makes it clear that this Kingdom on earth will never be fully realized until the Second Advent of Christ. The Vision is not about Christians making it happen. We are not seeking to make America, or any other Nation, Christian. I am concerned about how Christians live: about making Christians Christian. God's Nation (The Church) will demonstrate God's Law by living it in their lives. That means they must first learn it. They will also give public (verbal) witness to it. For example, they will promote and advocate God-given economic Principles, the Ultimate economic Goals and Methods to achieve them [see yesterday's post], in whatever country they happen to live, regardless of the outcome or effect such a witness may have. The Realm absolutely requires the Rule. The Rule must precede the Realm. The Realm is only possible in the lives of regenerated Believers living in a Covenant relationship with Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. These Believers are the only Nation who can organize and live this way. That is the Vision: the people of God around the world, living under the Law of God, in the midst of, and opposed by, other nations who worship false gods. They will be Light in the Dark, the one Nation through which God will bless all others, as He promised in His Covenant with Abraham, millennia ago.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:05

Tuesday, February 21, 2006

### **What is the difference between Christians in higher education and Christian higher education?**

Reading this speech [greatly abridged here] prompted my comments, printed in italics I can talk knowledgeably about Christians in higher education since I am one. Christians in higher education, at secular schools, can be placed in two different bins or categories. I'm not happy with the terms, but I'll call one group the "privatizers" and the other, the "evangelicals." Privatizers in higher education view their faith as disconnected from their work as professors. They are involved in a local church (often heavily involved); ... But these professors, the privatizers, are not identified at their schools as Christians; These professors live in two worlds, not simultaneously, but sequentially: one is secular; that's the campus; the other is sacred; that's their church. The second kind of Christian professor in higher education I'll call the evangelical. The professors, researchers, and scholars in higher education I have labeled the evangelicals believe that the quest for truth begins and ends with Jesus. Their work involves teaching and research in their disciplines... their calling entails extending the reign of Jesus into all realms. But, we shall see below, this does not include teaching and, in the writer's case, the field of Economics!

These professors can be found giving talks to the campus chapter of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, or Campus Crusade for Christ; or the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, or a dozen other parachurch organizations on their campuses... leading a Bible study in their office with students or other faculty... having office hour conversations about the Christian faith, as well as office hour conversations about sociology and microbiology... praying for the spread of the gospel on their campuses. But ... you will not find these professors teaching their courses from a "Christian perspective." While they are Christians in higher education, their institutional environment is not one of Christian higher education. Evangelical professors may be quite visible as Christians at their secular colleges and universities. But they operate under the constraint that, fundamentally, they have been hired by their institutions to teach and do research in a particular discipline or subject matter. So these are two versions of Christians in higher education: ... one Christian professor sees his faith as largely irrelevant to his job. For the other, her job is fully under the Lordship of Jesus as a calling. How can the writer say this? If his teaching is under the Lordship of Jesus, doesn't it have to be taught from a Christian perspective? Christian higher education should be radically different. ... integrating the Christian faith with one's discipline. It is not easy to do. ... to take the Bible's great themes ... and weave them into classroom discourse. But what is the alternative, if integrating the Christian faith and the Bible's great themes are not woven into classroom discourse? To my mind, this is the great distinctive between Christian higher education and Christians in higher education. The classrooms and laboratories and seminar rooms of Christian higher education are places where faculty and students are free to explore topics that are, to some extent, off-limits to Christians at secular universities, or simply irrelevant to the academic discourse at secular schools. Does this mean that this Teacher believes Christian doctrine is off limits or irrelevant to the study of Economics (his field)? How can the writer believe in a Christian education and then continue offering one that is not? His answer seems to be that just being on campus and available to witness to students out side of class is reason enough. I have a problem with that answer. No field of knowledge is neutral. Every field (including Economics) involves presuppositions and values. If the latter are not grounded in God and His Word, they are not neutral, rather they are against God and His Word. This is the Doctrine of Antithesis. The full text of this speech by an evangelical professor at a "secular" university can be found at <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2005/09/30/elzinga>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:13

Sunday, February 19, 2006

### **Got Teens?**

This seems like a very good website for information that will help to understand and relate to Teens today <http://www.cpyu.org/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:09

### **Call to Worship- Confession of Faith**

Psalm 99 The Lord is king; let the people tremble; he is enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth shake. The Lord is great in Zion; he is high above all peoples. Let them confess his name, which is great and awesome; he is the Holy One. 'O mighty King, lover of justice... Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and fall down before his footstool; he is the Holy One. Psalm 63 O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a barren and dry land where there is no water; Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power and your glory. For your loving-kindness is better than life itself; my lips shall give you praise. So will I bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name. My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips... For you have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice. My soul clings to you; your right hand holds me fast.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:23

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving from the BCP**

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen. <http://www.missionstclare.com/english/February/morning/19m.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:13

Thursday, February 16, 2006

## **Fear Not**

The father of two of our granddaughters' classmates passed way unexpectedly last week. He apparently was overcome by carbon monoxide while working on his snow blower in his closed garage. He was 44 and leaves his wife and 3 sons, one of whom was away at college. This is very reminiscent of what happened with a friend of ours in Vermont two years ago. I have posted thoughts about Alan elsewhere. He was about the same age when he too was suddenly called home and also left a wife and 3 children, all about the same ages. In both cases, words intended to comfort have come pouring in. On the Funeral Home website, letter after letter is posted with words of love and support for Bob Wood's family. On the website of the Christian School where the Woods were very active, there is a heartfelt letter written by the Head Master. The messages are all faith filled. The primary focus is on the comfort that comes from knowing that a loved one is not "dead" but has gone on to be with the Lord, more alive than ever. That is a blessed assurance for Christians. It almost goes without saying, but it is always a comfort to hear again. It also does not deal directly with the feelings of those left behind with a great hole in their hearts and lives. Here words fail us. Time does not help. To say time heals is not telling the true. Only the Lord can fill that aching abyss. He will do it directly by His Spirit within and through words of Scripture and Hymns and through the actions of others who are in our circle of friends--and often through the missing loved one himself- through the memories and momentos he has left behind that speak of him to those who have ears to hear. The most blessed assurance is that we who are left behind will not be facing this or the future- so many things to change, to do- alone. God truly is Immanuel: with us through it all and He is faithful and will supply our every need. That is a most comforting assurance. We can face tomorrow knowing who holds tomorrow. We do not need to fear- for our selves, for our children. Another comfort follows from that: if God shall be with us, guiding and providing, He must have been with us on the day the "tragedy" happened, too. The common temptation in moments like this, is to be angry and to cry out, not only "How...?" but also "Why...?"

If we are to trust in God's love and providence for tomorrow- that He is in control of what shall happen- then we must also have the confidence, by faith grounded in His Word, that He has been in control up to now. What happened to Bob Wood and the entire Wood Family, somehow, is in God's Plan for them. With eyes filled with tears, it is difficult to see this. That is why we need to see this hard and comforting Truth before the trials and tears come into our lives. Through the years, I have been with couples when their babies have passed away, their teen agers have died in car accidents, fathers have committed suicide or had fatal heart attacks. I have funeralized many who have died from disease or simply old age. When we come into the world, we all have an expiration date written somewhere. We do not, and should not, know what the date is. We should know that it is definite and will come and thus we should prepare for it. That includes making the most of what unknown time remains, before the date arrives. We must not allow fear of the unknown ruin what is known. We can not change the past. We can not allow fear of the future spoil a perfectly good present. Actually, everyone lives the same length of time: forever. Our ultimate choices are how we will live in this world and where we shall live in the next one. If we truly trust God to be in control, working in all things to fulfill His perfect will in our lives, we shall not be afraid!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:35

## **Mission to Maryland and Beyond**

In 1696 Thomas Bray, an English country parson, was commissioned to report on the condition of the Church in the colony of Maryland. He spent only ten weeks in the colony, but he radically re-organized and renewed the Church there, providing for the instruction of children and the systematic examination of candidates for pastoral positions. He founded thirty-nine lending libraries and numerous schools. Both in Maryland and upon his return to England, he wrote and preached in defense of the rights of enslaved Africans, and of Indians deprived of their land. Back in England, he worked for the reform of prison conditions, and for the establishment of preaching missions to prisoners. He persuaded General Oglethorpe to found a American colony (Georgia) for the settlement of debtors as an alternative to debtors' prison. He founded a missionary society, the SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) and an educational and publishing society, the SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge), both of which are still active today. [written by James Kiefer, found on Oremus]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:43

Sunday, February 12, 2006

## **Bonhoeffer**

A book that was very influential in my Christian life is "The Cost of Discipleship" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. We watched a very good documentary about his life and work this afternoon. He was executed by the Nazis for his part in a plot to execute Hitler. Bonhoeffer still has a lot to say to Christians today about incarnating the Gospel and speaking Truth to evil power, even to the point of martyrdom. Most of his Christian contemporaries in Germany did not agree with Bonhoeffer. Most of them supported Hitler and the Third Reich, believing that loyalty to God and Country demanded that. I suspect that many (most?) evangelical Christians in America today would do the same, inasmuch as those same values are deeply ingrained within us. Note: Ironically, most of us would also probably have been Loyalists, rather than "Patriots" during the Revolutionary War for the same reasons. We are, after all, Conservatives. In my formative years, every theologian in the documentary (Bonhoeffer, Barth, Niebuhr) was considered by Fundamentalists to be Modernist or Neo-Orthodox and thus all were dismissed. Note: In the 50 and 60s, "evangelicals" were new on the church scene. They were known then as "Neo-Evangelicals" and were also suspected to be Modernists. In all these cases, the major issue was the Doctrine of Scripture.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:04

Friday, February 10, 2006

### **How about me too, U2?**

I often hear that we older Christians need to learn how to communicate the Gospel to the younger generation. We must learn to speak their language, use whatever medium that they understand. Probably one of the rock groups most popular among younger Christians these days is U2 and its leader, Bono. His social activism is in the news a lot. He was the recent speaker at the President's Prayer Breakfast in Washington, DC. Certain Pastors I know think very highly of him. (Some of you reading this do also) They won a lot of awards at this week's Grammys. Dare I say it- U2 and Bono mean nothing to me. In an interview, I heard him say that he and his group do what they do because they believe in their songs. I have tried a few times to listen to those songs to see what I have been missing. If they want to communicate to me (and my generation) they must put the message of their songs into a medium that I can understand. They won't, of course. Seems like change has to be all one way. Older people or traditionalists must adapt to the younger, never vice versa. If Bono wants me to understand, let alone, believe in his songs, like he does, he must adapt them to a style of music that communicates his songs to me. (As I write this, by the way, Vivaldi is playing in the background ) Of course, if he doesn't care whether I understand or believe, that is another matter. Question: If it is truth that the message and the medium are inseparable and the new medium is essential, doesn't that mean the old Message will be inevitably changed by the new medium?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:17

### **Wealth: Bane or Blessing**

The teaching about wealth, in the Bible, is multi-layered. On the one hand, God promises to bless His People who are obedient with wealth. Poverty, destitution, is not good. God will provide and enable us to make wealth. On the other hand, too much wealth is dangerous. It can be used for evil. It can corrupt our souls and ruin our lives on every level. God holds us accountable as stewards of the wealth He blesses us with. Wealth is meant to be used for ministry. He enables us to create wealth for His purposes, not ours.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:25

Friday, January 27, 2006

### **Sacrificing our Children**

Today's OT lesson [in Oremus] warns Christians to beware of the dangers of multiculturalism. Deuteronomy 12:28-32 What is "doing the right thing?" This text makes it clear: Want to do the right thing? Obey the Law of God. Want life to go well for your children? Obey the Commands of God. Be careful to obey all these words that I command you today, so that it may go well with you and with your children after you for ever, because you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. When the Lord your God has cut off before you the nations whom you are about to enter to dispossess them, when you have dispossessed them and live in their land, take care that you are not ensnared into imitating them, after they have been destroyed before you: Moses is talking about the tribes of Israel displacing (maybe 3600 years ago) the people we now call the Palestinians, the original settlers of the "Promised Land." Here's the warning: do not inquire concerning their gods, saying, 'How did these nations worship their gods? This is simply the study of other Religions. What is wrong with that? Nothing unless it leads you, God's People, to also say, "I also want to do the same.' That is the "ism" part of being multicultural. The dangerous part. You must not do the same! take care that you are not ensnared into imitating them, ...because every abhorrent thing that the Lord hates they have done...They would even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. Oh, we would never do that, we insist. Not literally, of course. But, if our study of other Religions leads us to adopt some of their beliefs and ways, which the Lord hates (Multiculturalism and diversity and relativism are not for Him), and this leads our children into those Religions and away from the Lord, we have sacrificed our children to false gods. Final word on the matter: You must diligently observe everything that I [Moses] command you; do not add to it or take anything from it.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:56

Monday, January 23, 2006

### **The Spear still sticks**

Cal Thomas gives a glowing review, in his column today, of the film, "End of the Spear". He sees it as a well-acted, well directed and beautifully filmed movie of a classic story of forgiveness and reconciliation. A must see. Non-Christian reviewers are not so sanguine about the movie. They pan the acting and direction, while agreeing that the cinematography is beautiful. And they definitely do not agree with the merits of the story. To them "Spear" is about a clash between two cultures. What right, they say, did those self-righteous "missionaries" have to seek to impose their religion on those tribal people. (Never mind that those tribal people were led to stop killing each other when they adopted the outsiders Faith) Such critics just miss the whole point of the movie and the wonderful outcome of this true story. Maybe viewers must first be Believers to "get it" I am somewhat amazed and dismayed that this story is coming as new to most everyone we know. We personally learned of these men and their mission and its outcome 50 years ago, when it happened. It had a great impact on my life. way back then. "Through Gates of Splendor" and "Under the Shadow of the Almighty" are missionary classics. The world is very different now. Young Christians are not brought up in homes, churches or on campuses, where there is great missionary fervor for reaching the millions of unsaved people around the world with the (now) old fashioned Gospel. The movie may also perpetuate, I am afraid, the idea that the primary work of missions and missionaries is to evangelize primitive tribal people. Today, the call is primarily to reach urban non-Christians, living in cities, with a Gospel that is much more holistic and with methods that are far more sophisticated, than those depicted in the film from 10 decades ago. Nevertheless, I urge you to go and see the film.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:31

### **"...though all the fields should wither"**

...we cheerfully can say,  
let the unknown tomorrow  
bring with it what it may,

It can bring with it nothing  
but he will bear us through:  
who gives the lilies clothing  
will clothe his people, too:  
beneath the spreading heavens  
no creature but is fed;  
and he who feeds the ravens  
will give his children bread.

Though vine nor fig tree neither  
their wonted fruit should bear,  
though all the fields should wither,  
nor flocks nor herds be there;  
yet, God the same abiding,  
his praise shall tune my voice;  
for, while in him confiding,  
I cannot but rejoice. Words: William Cowper, 1779

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:02

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

### **Looking for Guidance?**

Looking for guidance? Here is a good prayer from Psalm 25. It also has important conditions for receiving guidance. I personally needed this Psalm today  
To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; my God, I put my trust in you; This reaffirmation of faith is the place to begin  
Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths. Thy will comes before my will  
All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness His paths are the best. I need not fear where they might lead me.  
Lead me in your truth and teach me  
I want to be open to whatever "truth" He wants to show me  
Remember not ...my transgressions; remember me according to your love and for the sake of your goodness  
I'm counting on this. The Lord will not treat me as I deserve, but with mercy and grace  
He guides the humble in doing right and teaches his way to the lowly. he will teach them the way that they should choose. So the key is brokenness and teachability. Willing to follow through on whatever He shows me- to choose whatever He chooses for me to do.  
My eyes are ever looking to the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. Focused on Him, I will not stumble or fall. FINIS

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:50

Sunday, January 15, 2006

### **Learning from Losing**

Two lessons we learn about life early on: life is not always fair and losing happens. Just as dying is part of living, so is losing. People who say, "I hate losing. I refuse to lose. I'm in it to win it. If I can't win, no sense in playing. Win at all costs" set themselves up for major disappointment. And they miss out on some valuable lessons that make living more worthwhile and meaningful. The wise person is the one who knows that he will lose occasionally, but plays anyway. Better to play and lose occasionally, than to never play at all [for fear of losing]. Actually, the agony of defeat makes winning all the more sweet. The advice to the Patriots [and their fans]: Mope and move on. Analyze the game tapes, learn from what happened and look forward to being better next time because of it. These are lessons for a lot of us.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:28

Saturday, January 14, 2006

## **Is Christianity a Culture?**

In the CT article by Dr Horton mentioned below, his answer is "no". Actually, the answer depends on how we define the word "culture". I will repeat here, what I said about this in posts last August (in case you missed them )In defining Christian culture [I am greatly simplifying here], it is essential to distinguish it from "Civilization". The latter involves government and economics and such subjects as the arts, literature, philosophy, the sciences and history. It is also very important to distinguish between Core Culture and Peripheral Culture. The former has to do with those core beliefs, morals and values that bind a group together. The latter has to do with preferences and tastes in manners, food, clothing, decorative arts, customs and traditions such as Rites of Passage (coming of age rituals, weddings, anniversaries, birthdays). There is, and should be, a lot of diversity in all of these peripheral cultural matters. When I say that there a Christian Culture, I refer to core beliefs, morals and values which Christians believe are Biblical and essential. Core Christian Culture (CCC) ideally includes the following: Life- CCC highly values and honors creation and life. It is very pro-life in every senseMarriage- CCC honors marriage, defined as a life-long committed relationship between a man and a woman. Divorce is generally considered a sin. Virginity and Chastity are greatly valued. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is a sin. Unwed mothers are unheard of and single parents are those who have lost their lawful spouse to death.Family- In CCC, children are desired and valued; extended, cross generational families are the norm; honor (respect) of parents by their children, and of the elderly by everyone, is expected. Work- CCC places a very high value on work: everyone who is able works throughout life, for the welfare of the family and community. Freedom to do this is highly valued.Welfare- People who become poor (particularly widows and orphans) in the CCC are the responsibility- first, of the extended family and then, of the churchIndividual Responsibility- CCC holds individual persons accountable and responsible for their decisions and actionsReligion- CCC, above all, is religious. it is centered on the worship and service of the God who has revealed Himself in Creation, Scripture and, particularly, in Jesus Christ. CCC is Christian. People who share CCC see themselves as the Covenant People of God. This is their primary identity, no matter what their ethnic origin may be. It will be readily seen that core Christian Culture is not identical with Eurocentric Western Civilization. It is certainly not the Dominant White Culture in America. In fact, it is not what most Christians believe it to be. And it is far from the Culture that many Christians actually have. To promote and practice this Core Christian Culture would be counter-cultural.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 17:12

## **How the Kingdom Comes- Part 2**

I mentioned an Chritianity Today article by Dr Horton in a post below. It is now on line <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/001/2.43.html>It is a solid article from a Reformed perspective, but there is another variety of Reformed: the "Dutch Reformed", also known as neo-calvinism. It is called the Reformational World View. [This is where some of you scratch your heads in dismay or confusion] I write from the latter perspective. Here are a few issues with the article-Dr Horton does not discuss the place of the Cultural Mandate and of the Law in the Christian Life. And while he does mention Common Grace, he omits entirely the concept of the Antithesis. Furthermore, in an article about the "Kingdom", a definition of that word is essential. The dynamic and the static definitons need to be distinguished. The definiton of "Culture" also needs clarification. In many ways, there is a Christian Culture (as I understand that word. I have written about it in this Blog)Particularly, I am strongly convinced that all academic subjects are based on presuppositions- antithetical presuppositions. [nothing is neutral or value free] These need to be exposed and challenged on Biblical grounds and the Discipline rebuilt. Ideally, this would result in a re-formation of the Field (eg all the Sciences based on philosophical Naturalism. What would Biology be without it?) But the idea is not to change the world per se, but for Christians to discover and be faithful to Truth in the World. Hopefully, this would lead to changes for the better here and there; but, the main point is to be faithful in seeking to uncover and live by the Norms of God- to be faithful witnesses to Truth, particularly in Academia and in the Public Square as well as in the Arts) and suffer the consequences from an obdurate and hostile world.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:36

Thursday, January 12, 2006

### **The Little Children Jesus Loves**

Just came in from my Heart Therapy (walk around the neighborhood) I use the time as a "Prayer walk", seeking the Lord's blessing or mercy on various people, events and places that I come upon. At 2:30 the students pour out of the Middle School near here. I wonder what they learned today- or did not learn. I pray for the ones by whom I walk. We viewed a very unusual film last night, George Washington. It is almost a documentary, cinema verite style, about a summer going by, in the life of poor kids, all around 12, hanging around a small town. No real plot. No professional actors- but a story about relationships and dreams. The movie has received high reviews. I wondered if any of the kids I saw today were like those kids in the movie. Probably. At one point, I was surrounded by at least a dozen, jabbering students. A real cross-cultural, multi-racial, inter-generational, inner city experience. I claimed the kids for Christ and wondered who is ministering to them for Jesus. There is at least one Christian teacher in that school I know of. There must be others. There is a church across the street from it- wonder if they have an after school program?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:49

### **Punk or Poser?**

I was looking for a definition of "Punk" recently and came across the Urban Dictionary. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/> Users beware: I do not endorse or recommend everything on this website. Most insist that the original and true definition of "punk" has to do with a style of music: Punk Rock. It had nothing to do with a style of clothes. You were punk if you liked the music no matter what kind of clothes you wore or what the color of your hair might be. Nevertheless, people into punk often have dressed differently to show an anti-establishment, in your face attitude. "Posers" are people who have adopted the look associated with punk rockers because they think it is "cool". They may not have the attitude or like the music- they just the look. They are imitators. Not the real thing. Which kind of Christian are you? Real Thing or Poser?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:59

Tuesday, January 10, 2006

## Holistic Christianity

Life is meant to be approached "holistically", in Christ. "Holistic" means "relating to or concerned with wholes or with complete systems rather than with the analysis of, treatment of, or dissection into parts" ----Dictionary Definition  
Ephesians 1:9 [God] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 --to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. [God] 20 raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 20 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 and God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything. Christ is meant to be Lord of everything! - of all the stuff of daily life. However, Christians tend to divide the stuff of life into categories- they view life dualistically, rather than holistically. Furthermore, they separate and rank the categories- God eternal souls spiritual sacred evangelism church ----- world temporal bodies physical secular all other work  
Categories are valid and necessary. The problem comes in the way they are separated and life becomes compartmentalized: seldom, or only occasionally, interconnected. The categories above the line seldom, if ever, have anything to do with the categories below the line; but, Christ, as Lord, is meant to be involved in all the categories. The Bible says, whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God. But, traditionally, Christians have held 3 assumptive principles that effect whatever they do- 1. eternal over temporal 2. sacred above secular 3. souls before bodies  
A fourth assumption is that whatever is temporal, secular and physical is not important to God, He has no will for them and they are beyond redemption. These assumptions ignore the doctrines of Creation, Incarnation and Resurrection. Scripture teaches the inter-connectedness of all these categories. Separating and prioritizing them is contrary to Scripture. The eternal, temporal, sacred, secular, souls and bodies are all parts of one whole- interconnected and inseparable. Therefore, work that involves the temporal, secular, and physical is just as much God's work as that which involves the eternal, sacred and spiritual. Life is holistic. Redemption is holistic. God and Satan (or demonic "powers") can each invade any or all of those compartments. In fact, both God and Satan want to be in control of each those compartments. Our concern is that Christians not abandon any of them, or separate their Christian mind and life from any of them. If they do, Satan will rule there. Christ's Kingdom is holistic. We are to seek to extend the reign of Christ into all areas. 2 Corinthians 10:5 ... we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:42

## Picking a Fight

A wise person will pick his battles. A lot of things just are not worth fighting, let alone dying, for. Some things are. The wisdom, of course, is in knowing the difference. How about clothing? Today, the Church Calendar commemorates William Laud who decided to fight over a surplice. That is the loose white garment Catholic priests wear over their black cassocks when leading certain Services. Actually, it was members of the Church of England, in which Laud was an Archbishop, who picked the surplice to fight over. They wanted to purify the Church of all signs of popery (hence they were called Puritans) The argument wasn't really about clothing. The clothing was symbolic. The Puritans wanted nothing (not just the surplice) that smacked of the Roman Church in the Anglican Church. The logical progression for the Puritans ended with the very plain Meeting House we are familiar with here in New England and a Pastor who wore the black academic robe during the Services. The logical progression for AB Laud was execution. He would rather face death than surrender what he believed was a holy and proper form of Worship, including its rituals and symbols [what some of us today call "bells and smells" ] And he insisted that he was not a Roman Catholic. The Puritans and the High Churchmen wanted the same thing: Worship that would glorify God, They disagreed in what that was and were determined to fight over it to the death. One Puritan insisted, in a famous pun, "We should give praise to God and Laud to the Devil."

Were the Puritans and AB Laud wise in deciding to fight to the death over the matter of what is proper in formal Worship? Is a surplice surplus? (Today, evangelical Pastors do not even wear the academic gown and increasingly, not even a business suit; while their churches increasingly look like theaters, complete with plush theater seating) Were they wise in fighting over "Popery", which was the deeper issue? None of us would fight to the death over a surplice or

## Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>

over popery today. What are the deeper issues that we would be wise to fight about today and with whom?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:40

Sunday, January 8, 2006

### **Only a Savior?**

Among the many nice cards we received during Advent was one with a poem by Roy Lessin. The lesson of Mr Lessin is that God sent us a Savior, not a educator, scientist or economist. Indeed, more than anything, we need a Savior and how glad we are that in Jesus we have one- the only one. But Jesus is more than Savior. He is also Lord- He runs every thing. He is in charge. That requires Him to also be educator, scientist and economist. If we want to know Truth, He is our Teacher. If we want to know where the world comes from and what holds it together and makes it work, He is the Creator of it all and will reveal all that to us. If we want to know how to cultivate and distribute all the natural resources and to be good stewards of what God has made and wants us to enjoy, He is the one to show us how. For some people, having a Savior is enough. It means we are in control of everything in our every day life. We can run the world on our own terms, as we want. Come to think of it, that's not such a great idea.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:47

Friday, January 6, 2006

### **When is Faith not Faith?**

If someone says they are a Christian and something "bad" happens in their life and they then curse God or insist they no longer can believe in Him, what does that say about their faith to begin with? Doesn't their recanting mean they only were "believing" because they thought that it would guarantee nothing "bad" would ever happen to them? "Faith" was some kind of insurance policy. I believed, I went to church, so that I would be protected. When I wasn't, I quit. Such folks were not really believers. They miss what faith is about. Faith is being convicted and having assurance that God is and that He rewards those who seek Him (Heb 11:1,6)- no matter what our circumstances, even if the coal mine of our life should collapse on us. Faith is certain God will get us through, not that He will always keep us from, terrible times. We must not let the troubles we have come between us and God, but rather drive us to Him. I know it is true from my personal experience (like Joseph's): people can mean us harm and treat us wrong, but God takes that and turns it into something good. The good, however, is according to His definition of "good"- something that serves His purpose. (Rom 8:28 ) Faith is ok with that. Faith says, come Hell or High Water, I trust You, Lord.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:23

Thursday, January 5, 2006

## **Living by Grace**

I preached a sermon last Sunday which was an exposition of Gal 4:4-7. There were very few people present to hear it, and almost no response from those who did. I feel badly about that. I used at least 20 hours to write it. One challenge was to compress the material into a mere 22 minutes. A lot was left on the "cutting room floor". I eliminated all illustrations and stories and went straight to the great doctrinal truths in the passage. It deserves a series of messages. The version delivered was the fourth written. I could have given the first version, written in maybe two hours. But there was one main point I wanted to focus on that was not in that first version. A very important and practical point that has been very helpful to me personally. I wanted to share that- it could change many lives, marriages and families. Because of this, since very few heard or responded to the message (even when I emailed it to dozens of friends), I will try again here. Not the entire sermon, but the main point that I wrestled with for hours. It is about living by grace.

A simple exposition of Gal 4:4-7 would repeat the truths familiar to most of us. Paul had preached the Gospel of salvation by faith only in Christ only by grace only. The Galatians had accepted that good news, but certain Teachers were persuading them they must add the Mosaic Law to this Gospel. Alarmed, Paul wrote to warn them about the folly of doing this. OK. Since most of us are in no danger of seeking salvation by obeying the Law, such a message could be considered ho-hum. But wait a minute-I know this Gospel and this danger as well as anyone, but, I have become aware in my own life of a very real tendency to do exactly what the Galatians were doing. And I see many Bible Christians everywhere doing it, too. We began our Christian life by grace and somewhere along the line we slipped into living the Christian life by Law. Not the Mosaic Law per se, but Rules nevertheless. It is very easy and common to make Christianity to be all about Rules- rules about Church, about marriage and family, rules about life "in the world". I meet many Believers who lament that their children have wandered from the Lord. More often than not, they have been turned off by a Religion of Rules. We failed to introduce them to the grace of God. Mostly, we failed to live our daily lives by grace. We all seem wired to need rules of one kind or another and we live and die by them. These rules usually are about power and control. They reveal that we approach relationships (with God, spouse, children and "others" ) according to how they are doing according to our rules. People must earn our respect. They must merit our approval. They must deserve our attention. We must do that ourselves, too. The big problem is- no one can succeed at this. Thus our lives are filled with frustration, guilt, fear and failure. Christ came to set us free from this condition. Like the Galatians, we have fallen away from living by grace, which is, after all, unmerited, undeserved, unearned favor. Unconditional love. Acceptance "just as I am". Those of us who are perfectionists and idealists have the biggest problem with this. So do the folks who have to live or work with us. I have been told that I can be very rigid and demanding. By God's grace, I have come to see this- I have learned and changed. More, accurately, I am learning to change. Blessed is the marriage when the partners learn to live with each other by grace. Blessed is the child whose parent(s) learn to relate to them by grace: by unmerited, unearned, undeserved acceptance and favor. Does all of this mean we toss out rules, boundaries and standards. Absolutely not. This is something else all of us Galatians need to learn. What has changed is our reason for seeking to obey them. We do not do it to win or deserve or merit the approval or acceptance of God's or our spouses or our parents. Rather we obey out of gratitude that they give us approval and acceptance- by grace. Being "saved" by grace, we obey. We no longer obey in order to get saved. Some of us would be spared a life time of emotional agony trying to please a parent [or a God] who can never be pleased, if we lived this grace-full way. Because we are secure in our relationship with God (and Parents and spouse) by grace and because we now trust that grace, we can trust the one who gives it to us and trust that His rules are really good and beneficial in themselves- they are not about His control, but about our well-being. Anyway, these are some of the concepts I have personally wrestled with and wanted to share in my sermon. I know others could benefit from them and that is why I want to share them with you here.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:40

Tuesday, January 3, 2006

### **Jesus as Comfort Food?**

We know that many of us are driven to eating certain foods for their emotional comfort. One of the rules of dieting is to recognize this factor and to resist it. Eat only when you are truly physically hungry, not other wise. Easier said...The same seems to be good advice for those who are trying to get their checkbooks under control. Many of us go shopping for emotional comfort. There is nothing like buying something to make you feel good (for the moment at least). Again the rule is, beware this motive and resist it.If it is wrong to use food and shopping for emotional comfort, is it ok to use Jesus for the same reason. Are we to avoid Him too, when that is our need?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:18

### **Second String? No Way!**

In the previous post, I quoted a statement made by a sportswriter after the last Patriot's game. The Pat's Coach decided to have most of his key, highly paid, players suit up but sit out most of the game for good reason. He was saving them for the next game, which begins the playoffs for the championship.I am very mindful that in school ball there are highly motivated and skillful student athletes who are ready, able and willing to play. If and when they play depends totally on the Coach, not on them.Be assured, the Lord puts each and every Christian who is ready, willing and able into the Game of Life. If it is up to Him, everyone plays. The only exceptions are those players who refuse. There is a big difference here. On the Lord's Team, everyone is first string and no one is supposed to sit on the bench.Now this is a Coach and a Team really worth playing for!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:50

### **A Description of Many Christians?**

FOXBOROUGH -- The two-time defending Super Bowl Champions were there, but not there. In the stadium, but not in the game. In uniform, but not on the field. By Jerome Solomon, Globe Staff | January 2, 2006

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:15

Saturday, December 31. 2005

## **Defective Christianity**

In a letter to the editor in the current Christianity Today, a writer laments the fact that Rwanda was considered one of the best evangelized countries in the world when the genocide of 1994 took place there. 800,000 people were killed. Christians were slaying other Christians. The Gospel with which the people had been evangelized did not prepare and equip them to face the social, economic and political realities of their world: it did not teach them how to make and live in peace with their neighbors. It did not prevent them from murdering each other. This is a defective Christianity. The letter writer wondered whether the evangelizing proposed for Rwanda by Rich Warren from California was going to be more of the same. I read articles by those who insist that all the Church is commissioned to do is just preach the Gospel with the object of getting people saved. So what, one brother in Christ attacks another since they are both going to Heaven. That is sick. (Many who participated in racist lynchings and violence in this country claimed they were good Christians, too) Is this the Gospel of God? Is this the salvation that truly saves? I read articles that decry the mixture of the Kingdom with the Gospel. The former, they say, is Marxist or Leftist Liberation Theology and not a part of the true Gospel of Christ. Strange that the message Christ himself preached from the beginning of his ministry was a combination: the Gospel of the Kingdom and the last thing we read about the Apostle Paul was that at the end of his ministry he was preaching the same Gospel of the Kingdom in Rome (Acts 28:23, 28-29) People who are justified by faith only in Christ only by the grace of God only are expected, therefore, to also be indwelt by the Holy Spirit and sanctified. People who have a forensic position of righteousness in Christ are therefore expected to have the experience of righteousness in their daily lives. They are expected to live for Christ- doing all for the glory of God. That includes the social, economic and political aspects of life (how else can "all" be "all"?). Sanctified people are meant to be holy people. Holy people are meant to live by Kingdom principles which include peace-making and reconciliation. They do not include principles that lead to slaughter and genocide. Any Christianity that teaches otherwise is defective.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:36

## **Facing a New Year: What to pray for?**

Psalm 90...we fade away suddenly like the grass. In the morning it is green and flourishes; in the evening it is dried up and withered. The span of our life is seventy years, perhaps in strength even eighty; ...for they pass away quickly and we are gone. So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. 1 Kings 3:5-14...the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, 'Ask what I should give you.' Give your servant therefore an understanding mind ... able to discern between good and evil...' It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, 'Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind...'

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:16

Friday, December 30, 2005

### **Kicking a Dead Horse**

Some one recommended articles to me today about a trend being called a "Revolution". I wrote about this back on Nov.14 In fact, looking through the archives of this Blog, I have written often about the state of today's church with my thoughts about the trends involved. Of immediate concern is the article in the current Christianity Today which reviews a new book by George Barna called "Revolution". That so-called new revolution is about Christians exploring ways to grow their Christian lives and to serve the Lord outside or apart from the local, traditional church. There is no surprise here- nothing new. The book reviewer laments Mr Barna's apparent preference for the invisible Church over the visible local church. He misses the point made by Mr Barna (to which I give reference in my Nov 14 post) that the so-called revolutionaries do not become churches of one, but seek to worship and study and serve with other like-minded Believers, only apart from the local church. Actually, many are more serious about seeking "community" than most church members I know. There have always been "lone rangers" among us. And multitudes of Christians, who are members or attend local churches, are in fact functioning as spiritual loners. Many more members and attenders are heavily involved in para-church organizations. For example, many local churches have members who divide their loyalty, time, money between their church and the local Christian school. When conflicts arise between these commitments, the school often takes precedence. There is nothing new about Christians finding fellowship and ministry outside the local church. This is not revolutionary. Where has the reviewer been? Woe to the Pastor who expects loyalty to the visible local church. He will often hear the argument, "We are all Christians. It is all for the Lord. There is no difference between the work and importance of local church and the [para-church]." Significantly, even the CT reviewer dropped out of the Church at one point. He is a member of a congregation that left the Episcopal Church. For a few years it was unaffiliated. It was a "church of one", a corporate loner. It was doing corporately what he laments many individual Believers are doing. The argument is the same. Today, that local congregation is affiliated with a new "denomination", a new association of other loner congregations seeking community. If it is ok for them to do this corporately, the reviewer should have some understanding and patience with the people Mr Barna is talking about. Actually, they are in a transition, not in a revolution. A "revolution" fights against, and seeks to overturn, the status quo. I think it is more accurate to say many Christians have simply come to a spiritual dead end in the local churches they have tried and are moving on to other ways to start growing and going again for Jesus. The reviewer agrees with Mr Barna at one point. He says, "In the book's strongest chapter, he [Mr Barna] provides a relentless statistical indictment of the local church's failure to develop disciples. Barna is rightly incensed at the low level of spiritual maturity in the American church: as the research data clearly shows, churches are not doing the job." Well, if this is the case, where's the beef? The so-called revolutionaries are right. If the horse is dead and you need to get on with your journey, do not stand around and kick and cuss out the horse- get a new one and keep on going! The Christians Barna describes have given up on the local churches they know; but, they have not given up on koinonia or fellowship or community or being part of a local body of Believers. They simply have not found that yet. I am very sympathetic with them. I expect that, in time, they will, as the CT Reviewers congregation did, find an affiliation with like-minded Christians and thus birth a new local church.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:41

Wednesday, December 28, 2005

## **Teens and Suicide**

Today's AP coverage of the Funeral of Tony Dungy's son was very touching. It included remarks that the Coach made about his 18 year old son, James, who, apparently, committed suicide. Mr Dungy said his son was a "sweet young boy" who was "searching for who that person was inside of him. Who he was going to be..." "We loved our son very much and he loved us. James was a good young man with a compassionate heart." [But] He "went through a time as a teenager that he wasn't sure his parents always had the best advice. He wasn't sure we always had his best interests at heart." "My daughter said it best. 'I just wish he could have made it until he was 20. Because when you are 17 or 18, sometimes the things [parents] say to us don't always make sense. When I got to 20 [she is now 21, the oldest of five] they started making sense...'" There must be a lot of details left out of this AP account, but there is enough here for us to read between the lines. It is an oft repeated, heart wrenching story about many young people [suicide is the second highest cause of death of teenagers] I have known several people personally who have taken their lives, They come to that point where they see absolutely no hope for their lives, no choices, no options for their future. That is never, ever true- but they become convinced of this terrible lie. Teens: Give yourself time. Never, ever, give up on your self. God doesn't. People who love you don't. There is always, always, a way out. If anyone in your life, outside your family, is dragging you down, getting you to be or feel or say things you really know are wrong for you, get rid of them fast. Run. Avoid them. But don't give up on your parents or God. They have been on your side your whole life. Make your self spill your guts to them. Make yourself talk to them or other older, wiser people (Grandparents?) But give yourself much more time! Parents: Platitudes do not help. Simply telling teens "Jesus is the Answer" doesn't help. More important is being available, listening, no matter what your teen says. And they must be sure that you will. Keep the boundaries you have laid down, don't cave in, if those boundaries are Scriptural, fair, reasonable and consistent. Pray for your teens without ceasing. Recognize the signs of depression and address them. Get help. But keep the communication open. When your teen does let it all out, do not rank or dump on them, Work to see their point of view- to understand where they are coming from. "Listen and Love". It is too late for the Dungy's and James- not too late for the Dungy's and their other children- or for you and yours.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:51

Tuesday, December 20, 2005

### **More Jargon I don't Get**

A brochure came in the mail today from 'Group'. It announces a series of training workshops being held through out our area, promoting leadership development in the local church "Discover the Biblical Foundation that drives the focus of an equipping ministry. Master the process of defining systems to support the culture you are creating in your ministry. Gain six non-negotiable core values necessary to create a culture that will support an equipping ministry." HUH? "Space is limited. Sign up today!" I think I'll pass and let someone else have my space.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:04

### **A Great School or a Dangerous One?**

Some 150 years ago, the college, that was to become today's University of Rochester, began. It was a Baptist school. The first 3 Presidents were Baptist clergy. Since 1935 they have not been Baptist and the school long ago left its Christian origin. This is true of many of today's elite schools, eg- Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth and Amherst. The current issue of First Things tells the same sad story about Davidson College in North Carolina. The newest President of UR quoted the first President in his recent inaugural address, "We will demonstrate that Martin Brewer Anderson's words are as true today as they were in 1854: 'Our work is but begun'". I am sure the first President's understanding of "our work" was very different from what the current President envisions. His inaugural is entitled; "One University" Actually, that is a redundancy. The word "university" literally means "turning toward one" in contrast to diversity, which means "turns away", ie-going in different directions. "University" normally refers to several colleges organized as one institution. The new President said that what holds the several colleges and schools affiliated with UR together and makes them a university are four "core values": academic excellence, academic freedom, diversity of student body, commitment to the greater City of Rochester community. Significantly, the new President quotes the first President, the Baptist Pastor, as saying that "spiritual interests transcend all others", even as he omits that "value" for the school under his watch. A Christian University would be many schools united in Christ. The "uni", the "one" that holds all things together is none other than Jesus Christ. (See Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1) By society's standards, the University of Rochester is a great educational institution. It is a very important one. It has great influence in many places. Its faculty and graduates are change-makers in our world. The new president documents all this in his speech. He proudly declares (his) university is a "safe haven for thought that is new, daring or controversial. We are the intellectual laboratory for the ideas that change the world." Exactly! And that is the problem. The "ideas" that come from UR are "secular" at best. At worst, they manifest the anti-Christian bias, yea, animus, that permeates our culture. They are intended to change the world, but not for Christ. An important discussion of this influence of the naturalistic-materialistic, relativistic, pluralistic University on our society and public debate, on just about everything, is found in the latest Theology Today. It decries the current separation of facts from value, seen in academia. There is growing interest, even demand, for moral and social relevance of schools on all levels. Concurrently, there is rejection and increasing scorn on the study of Theology as legitimate knowledge. Study Religious values, sure. Do not study Religion as a body of Knowledge. To many, faith as fact is an oxymoron. Personally, I long for the day when Christian students integrate their faith and their field of study, when they learn to think Biblically about the work they do, both in the class room and in the "real world" beyond it. In this endeavor, "Our work is but begun". It sounds like that work is not being done at all at UR. That is a shame.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:48

Sunday, December 11, 2005

### **Do we really want only integrity?**

One of my constant concerns is the matter of definitions. So many arguments are won or lost because of definitions. Most often it is a matter of using the same word with two or more definitions- either by the same speaker or by more than one in the same conversation. "Marriage" is such a word. "Justice" is another. "Pizza" can be with thin crisp crust or thick, soft and chewy crust. And there is a "pizza" with no crust at all. Some things that are "bad" are really "good". Frequently, I hear Christians say that having integrity is more important than being orthodox. "The man may have all the right or correct beliefs, but does he have integrity?" Usually, the meaning of "integrity" seems to be "not phony", "real", authentic. It apparently is becoming more important for people to be real and not phony as a person, than than for a person to be correct or right about (anything) The context I have in mind is usually a discussion about Christians who know their Bible and Doctrine, but are hypocrites as persons- they do not walk the talk. They are phoney- not authentic. They do not have integrity. This can be dangerous talk.

Merriam-Webster, a company located here in Springfield, says the most looked-up word on its website this year was "Integrity". Some 200,000 people asked for its meaning on-line. It is defined as "firm adherence to a code" and "incorruptible". I doubt if it is meant either way when I hear or read it. Members of a gang must adhere firmly to certain codes of honor among themselves. That means they could have integrity when they kill someone in a drive-by for breaking their code. Murderers with integrity! They are not phony. They are the real deal. Are they "incorruptible? Well, yes, if that word means "stays on task no matter what", "can not be led astray, ie- will abide by the code at all costs, even if that means will not chicken out on the plan to rob a store or will not rat out some one else who robbed the store. Of course, the more usual meaning of incorruptible is "will faithfully adhere to the highest moral standards: and by that, most of us mean virtues like honesty or unselfishness. The Ku Klux clan member can consider himself faithful to high moral standards if he defines his ideas of racial or religious purity as high moral standards. I guess I'd rather have someone be an orthodox, but phony Christian than an authentic gang-banger or Klansman. It would be better to have someone who is doctrinally correct and a personal hypocrite than an incorruptible criminal with integrity. Obviously, the problem here is not only getting definitions of the words we use, dictionary correct, but also of being sure we properly understand and use correctly all the other words before and after our target word. The ideal would be to have a Christian who is Biblically and doctrinally well gounded and who is also personally not a hypocrite, but actually does walk the talk with integrity and incorruptibility

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:23

Thursday, December 8, 2005

### **Mary, Model for us All**

Ok, Protestant Friends, what was the Immaculate Conception? The Church Calendar commemorates it today. Some of us confuse it with the miraculous conception by Mary of baby Jesus. Actually, it commemorates something we Protestants do not believe in: a person being conceived without sin, without Original Sin. We believe in what is traditionally called "Total Depravity". That Doctrine refers to the corruption at the core of our very beings, that we are all born with, due to Adam's disobedience. "Original Sin" is not the First Sin, but the consequences of it in all of us, no exceptions, including Mary. It effects (corrupts) us totally, ie- through and through in all aspect of our humanity. Thus, there could not have been an immaculate conception. When Mary was conceived, she was, by nature, a sinner like everyone else. This dogma of Mary's immaculate conception was motivated by the desire to undergird the doctrine of the sinlessness of Mary's son, Jesus. How could the sinless Son of God be born of a sinful woman? But that is the point. He was. We all should really appreciate and honor Mary. If we are determined to "keep Christ in Christmas", we must keep Mary in Christmas; because without her, there would have been no Christmas to begin with. Her story is touching and powerful. She is the model of a humble believer submitting herself to God to be His handmaid. None of us could have a better attitude than she had: be it unto me according to your Word. Lord use me. Do what you want with me. Thus a sinful, poor, uneducated, teenaged girl (probably) became the chosen instrument of God to bring Jesus our Lord and Savior into the world. Hail, Mary, blessed among women, indeed!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:43

Wednesday, December 7, 2005

### **Preparing for Christmas**

A friend sent to me, this morning, a link to this site about Advent. It is full of interesting material and helpful suggestions, even an online Advent Calendar. Check it out <http://www.markdroberts.com/#nov2905>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:54

Monday, December 5, 2005

### **Living Involves Dying: Be Prepared**

In writing our annual Advent letter, I became aware that the main focus this last year has been dying and death. Among our family and personal friends, 10 have passed on this one year. For me personally and as a Pastor, over the years there have been innumerable occasions of bereavement, many of them tragic. We come into this world alone and, dying, ultimately, is something which each must do alone. But, our individual deaths impact many others and they share some, or even much, of the experience and its consequences. Over a life time, there is a lot of death time for all of us. They are both inseparable and inescapable. (I am always amazed and dismayed by people who seem to think otherwise) We must be realistic and prepared for both and scared by neither. And that is really only possible in Christ.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:10

Wednesday, November 30, 2005

## **Teens and Cell Phones**

45% (11 million) of American teens own a cell phone, according to a recent Pew Foundation survey. 33% use them for text messaging and increasingly as personal computers. But topping the cell is online instant messaging- it is the method of communication for teens. 90% of all 13-21 year olds use IM according to AOL. That is nine out of every ten teens! Even signing a Year Book is now a matter of writing a "screen name" under the photo. All of this includes Christian kids. The teen who writes the Teen Scene column in our newspaper here says that laptops, cell-phones, iPods, Online instant messaging and cell phone text messaging "are a necessity to our lives- placed just above eating and below breathing on the list of life's essentials." Can a Christian teen seriously mean that? I know Christian adults who might say that. They must have the latest tech gadgets. I am absolutely not one of them. This computer in front of me is my typewriter. That's it. Many Pastors and churches love, value highly and eagerly use, the latest technology, for the Lord's work, of course. I can't understand how I have lived a lifetime and have had a long career of Ministry without today's popular must have gadgets. Truthfully, I do not see that its use today has greatly improved the Lord's work. It has certainly not made us more holy or righteous, God filled or more loving. Anyway, here is an excellent article, with a lot of good links on the subject of Christians and popular technology- <http://www.ctlibrary.com/32386>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:42

## **Fatal Attractions**

The story yesterday and this morning about the young teen who died because she was kissed by a boy who had just eaten peanut butter was particularly meaningful to us, because it comes too close to home. One of our grandchildren also has severe, life-threatening reactions to peanuts and has had close calls, needing to be rushed for life saving emergency treatment. Many people are indifferent, even ridicule, the problem. Hopefully, this tragic experience in the news will educate and alert people to the reality of the danger of food allergies. And other kinds, too. I am very allergic to many corn products and have been very thankful to folks who have accommodated me on that, when being their guest for a meal. I am especially allergic to chemical odors and have severe seizure-like episodes, if I am not careful. This is a constant battle, as chemical fragrances are everywhere, including in church. Perfumes, colognes and aftershave lotions make me sick. So do molds and musty odors and the smell of the glue under new carpeting. And there are the fragrances of potpourri and candles that seem to be every where. Allergies are a serious problem and I am thankful the public is becoming aware. I am very sad for the the 14 year old and her family- actually hundreds die every year and innumerable others become very sick from allergies. If we Christians are into loving and caring for others, and we are, we need to include being sensitive about people who are sensitive to chemicals (including food additives). As they say, it can be a matter of life and breath.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:36

Saturday, November 26, 2005

### **Advent has Come: a Time for Prayer and Fasting?**

For those of you who attend non liturgical churches which do not follow the Church Calendar, tomorrow is the first Sunday of Advent. The lady across the street has already put up a lot of Christmas lights on her porch, but it is not yet Christmas. That arrives on December 25 and lasts for Twelve Days until Epiphany. I do not know why I bother to repeat all of this every year, as almost no one seems to agree or care. Parking lots were jammed yesterday with people who remind me of lemmings. It is the American Amalgamation of Anniversaries, marking several annual religious and secular events. As usual, the Babe is covered over and almost lost in the straw piled on by a pagan people. It is right to be troubled by this. Advent was originally not a time for parties, but for penitent preparation for the prophesied Priest who was coming from Heaven to earth to make atonement for the sins of the world by the sacrifice of Himself. Then, having arrived, we greet that Happy Morn with joyous celebration that lasts for almost 2 weeks. We mustn't let all that get lost with the lemmings.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:06

### **Mad About Harry**

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/commentaries/madaboutharry.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:24

Friday, November 25, 2005

### **Simple 3 Point Sermon**

The Apostle Paul tells us (Rom 3) that "while we were weak", Christ died for us- and "while we were sinners"-----and "while we were enemies" Note the progression: weakness, sin and hostility. Most evangelism these days seems to focus on the first- weakness. The Gospel is presented to people who are hurting as the solution they need. They are glad to come to Jesus for healing and help. That's it. No interest in sin, let alone repentance from that sin. The presentation these days does not often seek to confront folks with their sin, let alone call them to Christ for forgiveness. I know some traditional evangelists and "soul-winners" still do. When was the last time you heard any presentation of the Gospel include exposing and confronting deep rooted hostility in the heart toward God? probably never. Truth is all three dimensions of the human condition are present and need to be, and can be met, by the Gospel. Our presentation of that Gospel must include all three: Healing, Forgiveness and Reconciliation. If we came to Christ for only the healing or only the forgiveness, we must experience both. Most of us have never really faced up to the hostility within us toward the God who heals and forgives. As strange as that sounds, it's true. The test comes when He asks us to obey Him and doing that is going to cost us a lot. More than anything, the Lord requires a broken, submissive and trusting heart and life.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:50

Monday, November 21, 2005

### **Seeing Things the Way They Are**

Tis the Season for the annual fund-raising appeals that come in the mail from all over the country. Today included one from a monastery in Oklahoma. The Brothers there live a simple austere life of prayer and daily manual labor in their garden. They only want to raise \$20 million dollars for a new chapel and visitors center?! Vow of poverty indeed. The image of the Brothers portrayed in the promotional letter and leaflet doesn't go along with the image portrayed by their fund raising campaign goals. The local paper published a survey yesterday in which those interviewed said they see people who live in New England as aloof, reserved and basically unfriendly. We'll be going downtown in a few minutes. We'll be driving through the main Hispanic section of the City. These New Englanders are far from aloof, reserved and unfriendly. They do not fit the stereotype at all. Neither do most of the New Englanders thronging to the Mall a few miles from here. I mentioned the huge Black Pentecostal Church building, standing a few miles down the road, to a person at the white church where I preached recently. Oh, she said, those folks are not from this town. "This town" has had a predominately Black population for many years. The stereotype, based on what once was, persists. There was that Young Couples' Class I was asked to speak to in one church. Everyone in the Class were elderly. How come, I asked? Well, that was the name of the class when it started years ago and we never bothered to change it. We rightfully make much about Truth. "Truth" is defined as correspondence to reality. There are many illustrations possible where what people say about themselves, or about how people are perceived by others, which are not true: they do not correspond to what is. Sometimes this is not intentional; rather, what "is" has changed and the representation has not changed with it. This is very common. We want Truth in Doctrine. We also need Truth in people and about people.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:00

Friday, November 18, 2005

### **Harry Potter's Latest Film Adventure**

I continue to be impressed and to profit from the film reviews at this site-  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/> Sign up for their weekly newsletter for the latest. The one that came today is very good. It is about being opened minded about film, film reviews and Christians who disagree with each other. In this case, about Harry Potter. The writer finds it ironic that the same Believers who are looking forward to Lion, Witch and Wardrobe shun Harry Potter because there is witchcraft in the latter, ignoring that there is witchcraft in the former as well. Here is another site that might be helpful-<http://christiananswers.net/spotlight/home.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:32

Monday, November 14, 2005

## **What is Jesus "about"?**

A friend recently sent me this statement that came to him as part of the 40 Days of Purpose program in which he is involved- "When the first disciples chose to follow Jesus, they didn't understand all the implications of their decision. They simply responded to Jesus' invitation. That's all you need to get started: decide to become a disciple. Christ-likeness is the result of making Christ-like choices and depending on his Spirit to help you fulfill those choices. Once you decide to get serious about becoming like Christ, you must begin to act in new ways. You will need to let go of some old routines, develop some new habits, and intentionally change the way you think." On the surface, this is true and sounds good. Upon deeper reflection, it has a great flaw: it assumes the reader knows what Christ-likeness ...Christ-like choices ...becoming like Christ means. No definition or explanation of these phrases is included. How can we know what they mean?

Sister Helen Prejean, author of "Dead Man Walking", is speaking here at a local college this week. She is 66 and says that she had been content to be a nun, teaching High School English until she was 40. She is quoted in our paper as saying, "I awoke to the fact of what Jesus was about." She moved into an inner city housing project to live and work among poor African Americans. That led to her involvement with a prisoner on death row and ever since she has been an ardent opponent of Capital Punishment. This defines Christ-likeness ...Christ-like choices ...becoming like Christ for her. I am sure most people going through the 40 days of Purpose do not define these phrases in this way. Why not? Who is right? How can we know? I do not believe that what the Sister has done is what Jesus is "about". What the Sister is doing may be what Jesus wants her to do; but, Jesus is "about" far more than that. I am guessing that the Sister is basing her conviction upon a particular reading of the life of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. According to the words of Jesus in all the Gospels and the explanation of those words by the Apostles, Jesus primarily was "about" suffering and dying as an atonement for the sins of the world. Jesus went on to be raised from the grave, defeating the fallen powers and given all authority in Heaven and earth by his Father. Now Jesus Christ is enthroned above and exercises His rule on earth as Lord of All. He is "about" all of that. The singular way we are to be like Christ is to be obedient to God as he was. Jesus did the will of his Father in Heaven. In doing that, we will be like Him. How do we know what the will of the Father is? It is revealed in His Word, beginning in the beginning in Genesis.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:57

## **The Effective Church**

The brochure announcing the next Vision New England "Congress" came today. Once again the popular pastors of huge churches are featured. American Christians continue their obsession with size and numbers. I wrote the following and posted it here last July-"I have become convinced that the church that the Lord will use most effectively to communicate the Gospel and truly make a difference in today's world will be a church which incarnates [embodies and manifests] the life of Jesus Christ in a small town, or neighborhood in a city, where its members live. It will be known for 5 characteristics-1. Spirit-led Worship2. Intercessory Prayer3. Personal holiness4. Servant and prophetic ministries5. Suffering [a consequence of 1-4] This may be its most ineffective witness. It will not be known for the size of its attendance or building."

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:36

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

### **Worship from Ezekiel, Bk of Revelation and the 5th Century Church**

Words: Liturgy of Saint James (fifth century); trans. Gerald Moultrie 1864

Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;  
ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in his hand  
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood,  
Lord of lords in human vesture, in the Body and the Blood  
he will give to all the faithful his own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,  
as the Light of Light descendeth from the realms of endless day,  
that the powers of hell may vanish as the darkness clears away.

At his feet the six-winged seraph; cherubim with sleepless eye,  
veil their faces to the Presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry,  
"Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, Lord Most High!"

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:52

Thursday, November 3, 2005

### **Our One God-given Purpose**

The Purpose God, the Creator, has given to every human being is to be pro-Life, in the broadest, most inclusive sense possible. This Purpose is properly known as the "Cultural Mandate". It is better understood as the "Stewardship Mandate". Why are all the babies, being born in this hour, being born? Why are they coming into this world? What are they to do before passing away from this world? Why were you and I born? What is the Purpose of every human being? Each of us is marvelously made, body and brain, including our emotions. More than that, each of us is created in the Image of God. Like Him, we have rational, creative, moral and relational abilities. Being in God's Image, we are God's representatives here on earth. He has placed us in the world He created. He wrought order out of chaos. He blessed His creation, pronounced it to be good. It exists to glorify and serve God. We human beings are here to continue and extend God's creational work- turning the Garden into a Civilization to glorify and serve God. Creation and Civilization will do that as they function according to His Norms- everything, literally, being directed to accomplish His will (Norms, Principles, Word, Law) This is why we all are here. This is our purpose: using our bodies and brains, using our faculties for rationality, creativity, morality and community, we are to work with and for God: seeking to build civilization as God intended it to become at Creation. We each enter the world under this Mandate from God to be His stewards, cultivating and caring for what He has made. This does not change for Christians. We do not have a Purpose different than all other people. Why especially should Christians fulfil the Stewardship Mandate? Because we love our Creator, the world He has made, and our fellow human beings and neighbors on this earth. We want to obey the Great Commandments. We strive to convince those who have different purposes to forsake them and join us in fulfilling this singular purpose. The effort to do that fulfills the Great Commission. When asked how fulfilling the Stewardship Mandate can be possible, given the fallen and corrupt condition of this world and our own nature, we proclaim the Good News of the Incarnation: the obedient life, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus who is the Christ. Through all of this, redemption has come. The Enemies have been conquered. The Reign of God has entered History. The re/formation, the redirection of the world is now possible. The New Man, the New Adam, each human being in Christ, can and must fulfill the Purpose for which s/he was created.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:38

Tuesday, November 1, 2005

## **More about The Communion of Saints**

A good Protestant friend reminds me that yesterday, Oct 31, is known as Reformation Day in many, especially Lutheran, Protestant Churches. Of course, an important commemoration it is. That does not change anything I said about All Saints Day which is today, Nov.1. Two different days. Please notice I said nothing about praying to the Saints or asking them to pray for us. The common Protestant objection to observing All Saints Day is based on the idea that All Saints Day is about such prayer. My concern is not with the Day, but with the Doctrine of the Communion of Saints. To me, All Saints Day reminds us [or can remind us] that the Body of Christ is universal and both militant and triumphant, including generations of Believers past, present and future. Remembering this truth can be a much needed corrective of the highly individualistic, non-ecclesial, anti-institutional, gnostic, ahistorical concept of the Church so very prevalent today. Here are what some of the Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation say about the "Communion of the Saints" mentioned in the Creeds:

Augsburg Confession Article XXI: Of the Worship of the Saints ...the Scripture teaches not the invocation of saints or to ask help of saints, since it sets before us the one Christ as the Mediator, Propitiation, High Priest, and Intercessor. He is to be prayed to, and has promised that He will hear our prayer; The Belgic Confession Article XXVII - The Catholic Christian Church We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit. This Church has been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this that Christ is an eternal King, which without subjects He cannot be.... Furthermore, this holy Church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed over the whole world; and yet is joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same Spirit. The Heidelberg Catechism-54. Q. What do you believe concerning the holy catholic Christian church? A. I believe that the Son of God, out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself, by His Spirit and Word in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life. And I believe that I am and forever shall remain a living member of it. 55. Q. What do you understand by the communion of saints? A. First, that believers, all and everyone, as members of Christ have communion with Him and share in all His treasures and gifts. Second, that everyone is duty-bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members. The Westminster Confession Chapter XXV. Of the Church. I. The catholic or universal Church which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Chapter XXVI. Of the Communion of the Saints. I. All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head by His Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. II. Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God; and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities, and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:10

## **All Saints Day**

Halloween was not intended to be a Hollow Evening filled with the macabre. Originally, it was a Hallowed (Holy) Evening, the night before today: All Saints Day. We Protestants neglect, or even reject, All Saints Day as being "Catholic". Yet, many of us recite the Creeds in which we confess faith in the Communion of the Saints along with Life Everlasting. The Bible calls all Christians "Saints". ie- "holy" in Christ. When we pass away we do not cease to be Christians. Therefore, there are Saints in heaven as well as still on earth. We cared and prayed for each other when we were together here. Why should we cease doing that for those who are in Heaven now, even as we do for those who have moved and now live in another part of the country? However we unpack this teaching, we need to remember that the Church existed before our time and will continue after our time. It is composed of all Saints, past present and future. This unity of all Believers is essential to what the Church is. This unity is the Communion of the Saints that is rightly celebrated on this day in the Church calendar.

**Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>**

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 07:39

Monday, October 31, 2005

### **When Faith Alone isn't Enough**

The Harriet Miers case illustrates well that simply being a Christian is not enough to serve God in the public square. Ya gotta have the chops, as musicians say- the necessary skills (or qualifications) particular to the job. In this case, simply being a good attorney, as well as a Christian, was not enough. If Christians are to work within the Systems and "speak Truth to Power", then we must be well equipt on every level, to do the work effectively. That doesn't guarantee success, of course, but at least it would get us off the bench and into the game- or in Sister Miers case, onto the Bench.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:21

Sunday, October 30, 2005

### **Can Fiction be used to teach Truth?**

"Good night and Good Luck" is a story about Edward R. Morrow, TV journalist and Joe McCarthy, Senator and Communist Hunter in the mid 1950's. The story is presented as true. There is evidence that the story as presented is not historically accurate. That is ironic, because reviewers say the movie is about "telling the truth" and is being touted as a great story for our time in the early 2000's. In other words, the writer, producer (George Clooney), has a message for today about the current administration and is using a story from the 50's to convey it, even if that story itself is not what it purports to be. The story as written serves his purpose. This is another example of fiction presented as truth, though it is not, being used to try to teach a moral lesson. To my mind, this is not an acceptable use of fiction and leads to error. Reviews and links can be found here <http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/filmforum/051020.html> [http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/good\\_night\\_and\\_goodLuck/](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/good_night_and_goodLuck/) This Fall, another movie will debut: "The Lion, Witch and Wardrobe". This story is not true as presented. No one claims it to be anything other than fiction, an allegory, that communicates truth. The story itself never happened. It is not true. All agree. Aslan the Lion does not exist. What he represents, of course, does exist and is true. How do we know that? Because the Bible tells us so. The story would not have us believe that Jesus actually is a lion. The fiction faithfully conveys what the Bible does teach. Using fiction, in this case, to teach truth, is acceptable. No one will be misled if they believe it. On the contrary, the Lord has used this fiction to lead many to Himself. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/interviews/michealfaherty.html>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/commentaries/photographingnarnia.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 17:35

Saturday, October 29, 2005

### **More on the Critique of Rick Warren's books**

The critique of Rick Warren's books, posted two days ago, focused on two issues: Dualism and Dispensationalism. Perhaps more explanation is in order. 1. Dualism- Dividing reality into two spheres: Spiritual and Physical, Eternal and Temporal, Sacred and Secular, Heaven and Earth, Church and World, etc. The opposites are compartmentalized and kept separate. They are seen as equally real and valid "worlds", just different with different "rules" or they are seen as enemies. Such "Dualism" is the common perspective of Christians. Neocalvinists are Holists and seek the redemption of all Reality, including arts and culture, work and leisure, marriage and family- all in Christ, the Sovereign of all, for the Glory of God. 2. Dispensationalism- in Naugle's article, he was not discussing Eschatology (End Times). He was discussing the common view of the Church, as taught by Dispensationalism. That view says the Church did not exist in the Old Testament. It is a New Testament, Age of Grace, Body. In Naugle's perspective, Evangelicals like Warren divide the Bible in two and thus also have a very deficient or incomplete understanding of the Church. In Naugle's Reformed view, the Bible must be considered as a whole and the Church is the Covenant People of God, having replaced Israel. This is tied in with the Neocalvinist Reformed World View taught by Naugle. That WV begins with Creation and the Purpose of all Humanity, as the Image of God, to be responsible for the cultivation and care of all Creation. The Fall impeded that Plan. Israel was formed for this Purpose, creating civilization according to the Norms (Law) established by God for His glory. They refused this mission. Christ came and redeemed the Elect, the Church. The Church assumes Israel's role to carry out the Cultural (Stewardship) Mandate. This is its "Purpose". What motivates it? Love of God and Humanity (the "Great Commandments" ) It intentionally seeks to enlist others in this Purpose (the "Great Commission" ). Commonly, Evangelicals do not "buy" this Purpose, because they are Dispensational Dualists (as defined here). The "purposes" of Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry and Evangelism, as defined and taught by Rick Warren and most Evangelicals, while of value, are not at all the same. In practice, this 5-fold purpose ends up supplanting the original Purpose, given at Creation and elaborated on through out the entire Bible. I agree with Dr Naugle.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:00

### **More on being Purpose Driven**

In yesterday's post about Rick Warren's two books about being purpose driven, I referred you to the website of Dr David Naugle. He is a professor at Dallas Baptist University with earned PhDs in both Theology and Philosophy. If you read his biographical material on his website [recommended], you saw his photo. Sitting with him is his pet dog. An important clue to where Dr Naugle is 'coming from' is the dog's name: Kuyper. Dr Naugle is known for his writing and teaching promoting a Biblical World View. For him, that is the world view as developed from Scripture by Abraham Kuyper. A simple introduction, written by Dr Naugle can be found here <http://www.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/IntroReformWV.pdf> His critique of Rick Warren comes out of this World View.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:04

Thursday, October 27, 2005

## **A Critique of Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Books**

The Purpose Driven Church and the Purpose Driven Life are mega hits with Pastors and Christians everywhere. Endorsed by many national and famous Evangelicals, they must be good and valuable books. Here is an excellent critique that exposes what is wrong with the books and, by extension, with Evangelical Christianity. In brief, Warren and his books are dualistic and dispensational. What does that mean? Read this article (starting on page 3) [http://www.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/worldview\\_church.pdf](http://www.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/worldview_church.pdf)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:05

## **We must follow the Law**

Joshua 3 1

Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. 2 After three days the officers went throughout the camp, 3

giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. 4 Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. 6

Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people." So they took it up and went ahead of them. In the post below, I quoted Psalm 138. The Lord has exalted His Word. All who are serious about serving the Lord, insist that they are following His Word. All agree that doing that is essential. The problem is we define "the Word" differently. Where we go, following the Word, depends on what we understand the Word to be. Otherwise, "following the Word" is a meaningless or mushy motto. Personally, I am losing patience with those who reduce the Word of God to the example of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels and then reduce that example simply to open and inclusive "love" which means acceptance of everyone and every behavior [except everyone and every behavior which does not practice this "love"]. Others seem content to reduce the example of Jesus simply to service: do-goodism. This, they insist is the Word of the Lord. The Israelites did not know the way for them to go. They needed guidance. The instruction was: follow the Ark. They were to go where following it would take them. What was in the Ark? The Torah: the Law of God, which is the Word of God. To me, this story provides the necessary metaphor for our times. We do not follow the Ark across the Jordan into Canaan; but, we must follow what was in the Ark into the public square of our day. Yes, I hear you say, we are saved by grace, not the Law. Of course, I know that. But why are we saved? To go to Heaven, you say. Well, what about now? Most of us have years to live before going to Heaven. How are we to live them? By following the Law of God as interpreted by Jesus. We are saved and Spirit filled, in order to do this. The Law, rightly interpreted through a Christian or New Testament grid, teaches us how to live our daily lives here and now. It is neglect of this most basic truth, in the name of "Saved by grace alone" that has led us into the moral morass which is our American culture.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:58

## **Speaking Truth to Power**

Psalm 138 1 I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; before the "gods" I will sing your praise. Who are the "gods" of this pagan age? Isms and Ologies, Tyrants and Dictators, Fashions and Fads, Moneymongers and Greed, Technism and Scientism: in front of them all- in their face- I will sing the praises of Jehovah, the LORD. 2 I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name [because] you have exalted above all things [all other names] your name you have exalted above all things your name and your word. How can I exalt God? by exalting His Word. I do not exalt Him, if I ignore or reject His Word. My worship must be according to Truth 4 May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth. My prayer and hope is to have all the Kings of the earth join me in praising God. In order for that to happen, they must first hear the Word of God. That is our mission: God's Word must be spoken to the kings of the earth- to the powers and systems that seek to rule this world, as though it exists for them.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:26

Wednesday, October 26, 2005

### **A Psalm for a Senior**

I really appreciate Psalm 71. So much is made of young adults today. I mentioned in the previous post that we are in the midst of a revolution when it comes to how church is "done". What I was wrestling with, in that post below, was not post modernism, et al, but the realization that the church, with its doctrines, worship and traditions, that I have known and served most of my life, seems to be disappearing, like firemen on railroad engines did. What further disturbs me is that these changes are rationalized as necessary to reach the youth and young adults. Of course, we must "reach" and serve them; but, from deep within me comes a loud "Wait a minute!" The fastest growing segment of the American population is middle age and older. Sometimes I get real tired of hearing about young adults and that we must jettison centuries of Tradition and Heritage because they are not interested in it or don't like it. Since when does that have to be the measure of what is good or bad, right or wrong, worthwhile or worthless? Often I have heard from older members that they do not like the changes in their church, but if that is what it takes to get the young people to come to church, they will sacrifice what they do like and have enjoyed all their lives. Who says they must do that? One of the most basic principles in the Bible is that parents and the elderly are due respect and honor. Doesn't that apply to what they believe and value in their churches? In our youth oriented culture, older folks don't count for much. Well, some facts: The future belongs to the elderly. For a century, the American population has been getting older. In 1900 4% of the population was 65+ Today it is 13% nation wide and by 2030 it will be 20%. In the Northeast in the year 2010, adults 45-64 will be 27% and 65+ will be 14% -that means 41% of the population 5 years from now will be middle age and older. Young adults between 20 and 30 will be 20% [Google US demographics and see for yourself] Serve the youth? absolutely; but, we must not sacrifice the elders, and what they have valued and sacrificed for, to do it. Psalm 71 5 For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. 6 From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you. 9 Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone. 16 I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone. 17 Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. 18 Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:18

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

## **A "Revolution" ?**

There has been a rapid change we should note over the last 2-3 years according to the attached research by the Barna Group. Until recently, 40 % of Christians (all kinds) attended traditional Services on Sunday. Now 31 % of them attend alternative Services. They periodically keep in touch with their church of origin for family and social purposes, but most look to these alternative Services as their primary church home or fellowship. These alternatives are primarily house churches or meetings held at work places during the week. We are talking here about 50 million Christians! Almost half are evangelicals (4 of 10) and they are not the youth, but mostly Baby Boomers (40-55 year olds)- the ones behind the mega-church movement in recent years. These surprising stats (and more) are found here-<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrow&BarnaUpdateID=202> Add this trend to the other major trend by many formerly "traditional" and "contemporary" churches toward the so-called post modern or "Convergent" Services and methods to reach younger and unchurched people where they are at today, in ways that communicate to them today, and we do indeed have a revolution going on

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:55

Saturday, October 22, 2005

## **Spirit of Women**

"Women of Worth", "Women of Faith", "Women of the Word" purport to be evangelical Christian organizations for women. "Spirit of Women" is not. It is an organization sponsored by Baystate Health System, this area's largest Medical Center. "Spirit of Women" offers programs and services dedicated to promoting women's health and well-being. I am sure they mean well and do a lot of good [They should probably change their acronym] They are having their annual Conference next month and are featuring a national speaker and author, promoted by a full page article in today's newspaper: Cheryl Richardson. Christians beware- Ms Richardson's so-called "self-help" books are all about "Grace". That alone is an oxymoron that should raise a warning flag. Her latest title is "The Unmistakable Touch of Grace" Why do I bother to tell you this? Because it is also unmistakable that Christian women will be misled by the title and this (wrong) use of the word "Grace". They will naively assume that the book and the lectures are about God and His Grace. They will be very wrong. To their credit, CBD does not carry the speaker's books, but they have a number with similar titles and a Google search reveals many churches and Christian women's ministries use names similar to "Touch of Grace". Definitions, as I am wont to say, are very important. Ms Richardson defines "grace" as "a benevolent force that is all around". Her testimony is how her life was turned around by grace. Her message is that all women can find meaning and purpose by becoming aware and receptive to this benevolent force which is everywhere and available to anyone with eyes to see and faith to accept it.

This is not what the Bible means by "grace" at all; but, this message sounds a lot like what I hear and read is very popular in Christian women's circles. There is no place or need for a Savior or Regeneration in this message. That is because there is no Sin either. But "Grace", in the Bible, is all about God (who is personal and not an impersonal "force", like electricity) who extends His unmerited favor to helpless sinners who deserve the consequences of their sins. And He extends that unmerited favor to those whom He regenerates and thus repent and come to faith in Jesus as the Christ (God's Prophet, Priest and King), which saving faith, itself a gift from God, manifests in discipleship. This is what "Grace" is about in the Bible. This is not what women attending the conference, or reading the "self-help" books of Ms Richardson, will learn. (Do you see now the oxymoron?) Granted, it is not the purpose of Ms Richardson or SOW to teach the Biblical Doctrine of Grace; but, it is mine!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:03

Wednesday, October 19, 2005

### **Burning Out for God**

My inspiration this morning comes from reading about Henry  
Martyr <http://chi.gospelcom.net/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses/glmps096.shtml> He is commemorated today in the Church  
Calendar

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:44

Monday, October 17, 2005

### **Bankruptcy or Bondage?**

Thousands rushed to meet the deadline to file for bankruptcy this weekend- before new rules make it more difficult for many to do that. I have always had mixed feelings about "going bankrupt" There is still a stigma attached to it. People should not take on debt they can not repay. That is a Biblical concept. The idea of knowingly piling up huge debt and then being able to have it cancelled doesn't seem right- or fair to me and multitudes of others who do pay their bills and forego buying things they can not afford. [I know exceptional unforeseen circumstances, especially medical, do happen.]As I thought about this- debtors must pay their debts themselves. Cancelling debts is not right- I remembered that my many sins are debts to God. I have voluntarily accrued them and will never be able to pay them off. God has cancelled those debts. I do not have to pay them. Is this, too, unfair? YesThen, I remember my debts are cancelled, because he Himself has paid them in full. Actually, he absorbed them. The debts were to Him. He paid himself off at the expense of His own humiliation and suffering as one of us. My debt was paid. This is fair [just], but not deserved. This is mercy and grace. It turns out, I am still a debtor for my sins- not to pay them, but to live for Him who paid them for me. Accepting what He has done for me, I belong to Him- "bought by the blood of the Lamb". I am not a debtor set free, but a debtor in bondage to the One who freed me.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:36

Sunday, October 16, 2005

### **Secular "Spirituality"**

The latest copy of the AARP magazine came a few days ago. One of the articles is about "spirituality" and it recommends several websites to visit to learn more. A person does not have to be a Christian to be "spiritual" as defined in the article. In fact, many Christians do not seek or practice the "spirituality" that this article says many people are seeking. And many of those people are not interested in being Christians. Actually, there is some benefit to what the article is talking about: finding inner peace and quiet and thus removing stress and being healthy. Those can be rare qualities among Christians. They should not be. Many Christians could benefit by using secular techniques for relaxing and reducing stress. Of course, such secular "spirituality" is not salvation nor is it Christian prayer. It is not "mysticism" either. Beware, Mysticism. Mysticism is seeking literal union with the Divine. That is not possible. God has created us and there will always be an essential or intrinsic difference between us and God, between the Creator and His Creation. Ignoring or denying this, mystics seek to be absorbed into God and lose themselves in Him [It]. This is not Scriptural at all, but many through the ages have found the idea appealing. On the other hand, upon coming to saving faith in Christ, God the Spirit does come to dwell or abide within the Believer and we are to commune with Him there in our hearts. That is another matter for a different post.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:00

### **A Hard Chair for Christ**

I mentioned a story on the Oremus site yesterday. They change the content daily so if you did not look at it yesterday, it is gone. But, here is my copy -Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky was born in Lithuania in 1831, went to Germany to study for the rabbinate, there became a Christian, emigrated to America, trained for the priesthood, and in 1859 was sent by the Episcopal Church to China, where he devoted himself from 1862 to 1875 to translating the Bible into Mandarin Chinese. In 1877 he was elected Bishop of Shanghai, where he founded St. John's University, and began his translation of the Bible into Wenli (another Chinese dialect). He developed Parkinson's disease, was largely paralyzed, resigned his position as Bishop of Shanghai, and spent the rest of his life completing his Wenli Bible, the last 2000 pages of which he typed with the one finger that he could still move. Four years before his death in 1906, he said: "I have sat in this chair for over twenty years. It seemed very hard at first. But God knew best. He kept me for the work for which I am best fitted."

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:22

Saturday, October 15, 2005

### **Sitting on a Hard Chair for the Glory of God**

Here is the story of an amazing man and his amazing devotion to Christ with a great lesson for me---and you?  
<http://www.oremus.org/oremus.cgi?f> (The story is at the end of the page)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:33

### **A Halloween Meditation after a Funeral**

We have been away and busy with the passing and Funeral of my mother-in-law this week, so I have not put much thought or time into posting anything. These events always bring out the best and worst in memories and feelings as we recollect the past or see people from the past, after many years. They are occasions to forgive and reconcile, although that often does not happen. Stuff comes to the surface- it could be dealt with, but is often pushed back down. Besides, how much can you (or should you) deal with during a Wake or the Reception following, in a room full of people. After all, there is the business at hand. But, we all know our time will come. Now, today is the time to catch up with the old friends that we promise over and over to visit. Now, today is the time to let stuff in the past go and to give certain people in our lives a second or third chance if need be. We all, hopefully, have changed. We are not, hopefully the same person we were back in high school or when we were newly wed or as young parents. Why do we keep people in a box that has long disintegrated? Especially, as Christians, we believe that God can change people, Circumstances and life experiences certainly can. Why then do we insist that no one has? or not, at least, first observe and listen to see if they have, before assuming that they are the same as we remember them from many years ago? Some, it seems, never learn. Some, it seems, are the same as ever; but not all. It always impresses me how impressionable we were as children. We call childhood our formative years for good reason. Much of our character and values, certainly our personalities, were formed then. For better or worse. Many of us carry wounds from those days, too. Our memories are so imperfect and so selective, but they are powerful; maybe because they have been replayed and reinforced over the years. Why go into any of this? It is Halloween. Many of us really are haunted by ghosts from the past. It is time, with God's help, to confront the skeletons in our closets. The next Funeral will come soon.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:42

Thursday, October 6, 2005

### **The Great Commandments**

Mark 12:28-34'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." "Love your neighbor as yourself" is commonly interpreted as a command to love ourselves. Then, loving ourselves, we are to love others in the same way, ie- with grace and mercy (forgiving, accepting, affirming, supporting) Many of us rarely do the latter because we struggle with the former. "Love your neighbor as yourself" really means love your neighbor as though he were yourself: treat him as though he were you. Furthermore, "loving God" is not a matter of forgiving, accepting, affirming and supporting Him. It is a matter of serving Him. Thus, the command to love our neighbor as we love ourselves actually means to serve our neighbor as though he were us. And how are we to do that? By first loving God with all the fiber of our being. This will govern and shape what we do toward our neighbor. Serving others must be done in the context of serving God. When we are involved in serving God first, we are free and enabled to serve others and we will know what is the best way to do that.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:38

Tuesday, September 27, 2005

### **Corruption, Poverty and Making a Difference**

Re African relief efforts-<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/010/19.38.html> Re Gulf Coast relief efforts-  
<http://www.opinionjournal.com/diary/?id=110007312> Illustrations abound around the globe. What can be done? Mass relief efforts are needed, of course, which involves governments and politics. The corruption comes down to individuals and the S word- sin Have you heard any sermons about sexual immorality? abortion? When was the last sermon you heard about corruption and greed? When was the last sermon you heard insisting that Christians must be people of clean hearts and hands? Certainly there are multitudes of people in government and business who profess to be Christians. It is so easy, so "spiritually correct", to condemn homosexuality and pro-choice advocates while looking the other way, condoning dishonesty in politics and business. 'Well, that is the way the world is.' "That is the way things get done." "Nothing I can do about that." "I would lose my job if I insisted upon being honest. What good would that do?" "I am honest personally, what the company does is not me." Etc Balderdash! We hear sermons about 'making a difference', living for Jesus, witnessing. Rarely, if ever, do they call us to be honest in the public square. We would make a major difference in the world by simply insisting upon honesty in all we do, privately and publically. Now that would be a witness! When people ask why we are "making trouble" in the company, our answer would be, "I'm living for Jesus".

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:57

Saturday, September 24, 2005

**Hymn: "Abide with me"**

Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;  
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide:  
when other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
help of the helpless, O abide with me.

I need thy presence every passing hour;  
what but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;  
ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death's dark sting? where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;  
shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;  
heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;  
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:03

Wednesday, September 21, 2005

### **What's in a Name?**

"Marshall Fields" - mean anything to you? People in Chicago are upset because the company that recently bought the department store (it is now part of a chain) is changing its name. Same thing for Filenes in Boston. The new CEO explained that though the people in Chicago resist the change, they were no longer supporting the store by shopping in it. Nostalgia, tradition and memories are important to these folks; but, without shopping in the store, those things, valuable as they are can not be sustained. Honored Traditions, beautiful works of art (including architecture), high culture- all require high maintenance. They are preserved and handed on to the next generation at great expense by the present one. If the present generation does not see the value, they will not pay. Does the name, Marshall Fields, mean anything to me? Nothing at all. Same with Filenes, G.Fox and Sage Allen- all long gone. Hello Kohls, Target and ...Walmart. Same is true for church buildings. Many in this area are being closed by the Roman Catholic Church, against the protests of parishioners. Same reasons: Nostalgia, tradition and memories are important to these folks; but, without supporting the church with loyalty, attendance and money; those things, valuable as they are, can not be sustained. Of course, I mean many other things, as well

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:13

Monday, September 19, 2005

### **Life goes on**

Yesterday, the Service at the church we attend, was an emotional experience. It was the last Sunday there for a beloved Pastor (he had been engaged as the interim, but served almost 3 years and had filled the role very well). His experience at this church was a time of affirmation and healing for him, as it followed a very stressful full-time pastorate elsewhere. Knowing that, made his parting message all the more poignant for me, as he encouraged the congregation to welcome, love, respect and support their new permanent Pastor, who begins his work this morning. It will be the first pastorate for this young man, beginning his ministerial career. Last Sunday, the church had given their Interim Pastor an appreciation dinner and gift, with many expressions of appreciation for all he had done among them. It was very nice. Everyone is filled with hope and faith for the future. The emphasis yesterday was on love. Knowing full-well the vicissitude of church life, both men have my admiration and prayers.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:51

Thursday, September 15, 2005

### **The Suffering of Mothers**

The Theme of today's Oremus was probably disconcerting to some Protestants. It is about the the suffering of Jesus being shared by his Mother, Mary. No, the material does not say Mary was adding her suffering to her Son's to atone for the sin of the world. It does not suggest that Mary was in any way co-redemptrix with Jesus. Those of us who stuck with the readings, not turned off by the Theme as too Catholic, were led to meditate on the reality, often under appreciated, of the suffering that mother's go through for their children- the personal sacrifices, which may be heavy; but, more- the hurt and pain that they may often experience from the words and deeds of their beloved children; and even more, as with Mary, by feeling the pain they see their children experience throughout their lives. Jesus suffered- a lot! All his life. No one knew that more than his mother. From before he was born to the day he was murdered, Mary suffered with Jesus, as only a mother can do. The photos in the news that always grab our hearts most are those of mothers holding their dying or dead children in their arms- from New Delhi to New Orleans-like we see in the pieta: Mary suffering as she hold the body of her child. It brings appreciation and gratitude to my heart for the mothers I know and for Mary, the Mother of my Lord

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 18:53

### **Learning to Sew**

I go into fabric stores because my wife does. She loves to sew and through the years has done a lot of it. Besides the pleasure she gets out of it, she gets fulfilment because she has helped keep others outfitted in nice clothes and inexpensively. I appreciate that and admire and support her sewing. Fabric stores are usually attractive places and spending some times there can be pleasant and interesting, even for a non-sewer like me. My wife, and millions of others like her, did not learn how to sew in a fabric store [or in a pizza parlor or computer store either] -that is not its purpose. She, and probably all the others, learned at home from their mothers or in small classes set up for the purpose of teaching sewing. Being taken to fabric stores was part of the learning process: learning appreciation for good fabrics of all kinds and the process of purchasing them (mostly value and getting the right amount for the project); but the actual learning of the art and craft of sewing was learned over time at the side of a good teacher, sharing her knowledge and skills one on one. Those who do learn that time-honoered and effective way, love to go to fabric stores for their sewing needs as well as to share with others who appreciate sewing as well. They actually share a lot of good ideas, solve sewing problems and encourage each other. All of that is the purpose and value of the fabric store. It is an essential and important place for millions.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:14

Sunday, September 11, 2005

### **The Necessity of Skeletons**

Young adults who distainfully dismiss denominations and their doctrine really disturb me. [note the trend in recent years to replace all church ID with the generic name of "Community Church" and the current trend now to replace "church" with a wide variety of other, non-religious names- "Baptist Church" => "Community Church" => "Family Life Center", et al]This distainful dismissal reflects naivete' and ignorance of Church and Denominational History and Heritage and disparages and dishonors the untold numbers of brothers and sisters in Christ who worked and died to build, extend and preserve the Church and its denominations. It is worse than saying the people who died for America through out its history did so in vain and their sacrifice has no value or meaning for us today. Is is also like saying the body needs only soft tissue and organs. The skeletal system is useless, unnecessary Or even more foolish- we have outgrown the need for bones. We are so sophisticated and mature that our brains do not need skulls.It occurs to me that a lot of young Christians adults are like young adults who have grown up in families where everything has been handed to them. They do not appreciate all they have because they did not have to work hard for it. They are spoiled. The Church has been handed to them by those who did work for it spiritually, intellectually and physically. Well, the day is coming when, under persecution, a new generation will have to work to preserve the very Church, its Doctrine and Heritage, that they now dismiss. The vulnerable brains will desperately seek skulls.These metaphors suggest that Doctrine and Tradition provide structure and protection and tools essential for Christian living. Exactly!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:10

Saturday, September 10, 2005

### **Learning How to Read**

Bible "teachers" will often ask those in their small groups, after reading a passage of Scripture, "What does this mean to you?" People are encouraged to share their answers. One passage might turn out to have 10 meanings. These Christians, without realizing it, have adopted one of the most dangerous practices of the non-Christian world. They are "reading" the post modern way. It is the common method used in schools everywhere. Teachers want their pupils to appreciate books and authors. This new method does just the opposite. A story is read. The children are asked to share what ideas or images or feelings they experienced while reading or listening to the story. They answer. The focus has shifted from the meaning of the words written by the author, and the intent of the author in writing those specific words, to the reader. The focus becomes the ideas or images or feelings of the children. In other words, they create the meaning of the book. Twenty children in the class, twenty meanings. The text and the author are discarded. Christians who read this way do not focus, say, on the words of Peter or James or on the intent those apostles had in writing their letters. Someone might even say, "I do not care what Peter or James said or meant, what their letters mean to me is... ." They might even say, "I do not agree with what Peter or James meant, to me their letters mean... ." That is very audacious arrogance. This method disrespects Scripture and the Spirit who inspired the writers of it. This method also prevent the "reader" from learning what it is the Lord is saying to them, to their great loss. It is important to understand that this post modern method is not the same as applying Scripture to our lives. Time spent studying the Bible should end with application of the original meaning of the words written to our lives.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 20:20

Thursday, September 8, 2005

### **Mary's Birthday**

This day on the Church Calendar commemorates the birth of Jesus' mother, Mary. If nothing else, this is a harbinger of the coming Coming (Advent). It also reminds us of a wonderful example of a youth (teenager) who loved and obeyed God, putting her body and life totally into His service. We are thankful she did. She became the portal through which the Light of Life entered the world. Oh, that we would do the same, in our small part of the same world, today. Mary is also a reminder that the purpose of our obedience and service may be to make possible the life and ministry of someone else.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:03

Tuesday, September 6, 2005

### **Bodacious!**

On our regular prayer walks through sections of the inner city, we often go by a particularly run down section known for drug dealing. Last Saturday, as we passed by, a man in a driveway shouted to us across the street. He had seen us praying on the corner- our intercession included the buildings where he was standing. He identified himself as a Christian and invited us to pray there in the driveway. It turns out, he had been led by the Lord, he told us, to move to Springfield from Boston to buy and rehab those four buildings. He had evicted the drug dealers. Redemption was coming to that block and the people who live around there, through this man's faith and obedience to the Lord. Bodacious! Huge! Needless to say, our group was thrilled to see this answer to prayer before us. We praise God!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 06:20

Thursday, September 1, 2005

### **"Who's your Daddy?"**

"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done..." "My Big Daddy, special and important am I. [Help] My ship come in. [Help] My well-being be done." Do we see our selves as a "Self" to be served and God as one who comes to the table of our life and introduces himself to us as "I am your server today"? OR Do we see God as the Almighty, Creator of heaven and Earth and ourselves as people who come to His Throne and introduce ourselves to Him as "I am your server today." ?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:28

Thursday, August 25, 2005

## **Power of the Press**

This city of 151,000 has but one newspaper. Every morning, readers are impacted by it's pronouncements. The Editor never ceases his support of "Gay Marriage" and stem cell research and abortion and anti-war, anti-Bush protestors. He is also in favor of giving the city employee unions what they demand, even though the city is near bankruptcy. Editorials are supposed to be confined to the Editorial page. They also show up in headlines and in the selection and placement of stories. (Hartford is about the same size and it also has but one daily paper. It is half hour away- different headlines and stories.) Today's headlines trumpeted the return of the "Peace Mom" to Crawford, Texas. She is a saint around here. The lead headline is "Teachers dig deep" to buy supplies for their students. The article buries a quote from the Ass't Superintendent saying the City is spending \$20 million for essential supplies. She says many teachers simply have personal preferences for supplies and thus buy their own even though they are not needed. The paper is trying to make the readers feel sorry for the teachers, having to spend their own money: they must have a raise.

What is a Christian to do? There are national magazines that provide alternative news sources that help with analyzing national stories, such as the proposed military closings- that has been the major story in southern New England in the last two days and often, over the Summer. (And the focus is on jobs and the local economy, not military preparedness) What is a Christian to do to understand local stories? Allegations of police brutality (aka racism) ? Civil Service (unions) or direct hiring? Councilors at large or Ward representation? Neighborhood schools or School Choice? etc, etc What action should a Christian take in these matters? The Bible gives many principles to guide us on these issues. Christians often stick their heads in the sand and sing, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through". "These are not spiritual topics", they say- we shouldn't be concerned. "Why did you move out to the suburbs?", one could ask many. "For the quality of life. The school system. Safety. The lower taxes." Hmmn Jesus is Lord of all- or He is not Lord at all. If the local paper constantly pushes its liberal or secular agenda, someone in the Christian Community needs to provide Christian perspectives to counter balance the Press. Who has a weekly platform (pulpit) to do just that? Christ-centered, Bible-based small groups also could take up these issues for prayerful study and action.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:29

Wednesday, August 24, 2005

### **Martyr's Blood**

We know nothing of the life of the Apostle Bartholomew [today is his Feast Day] Strong tradition has it that he died a martyr's death in Armenia, possibly by flaying. Obedience to the Great Commission has often involved laying down one's life for the Gospel. There are thousands of graves around the world, where people who were killed, because of their faithful witness, are buried. The latest newsletter from Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse features ministry in the Sudan. Hundred's of Pastors have been martyred there in the last couple of years. One goal is to replace each one with five more. Only the Lord knows what Bartholomew did; but, as with these Sudanese martyrs, the Church of Christ grew from his sacrifice.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:36

Saturday, August 20, 2005

### **Is size important?**

I read of 3 churches this week involved in multimillion dollar building projects: bigger is better. I also read an article this week in the current Harper's magazine. The latter is a good critique of much that passes for Christianity in America these days.

"The Christian Paradox: How a faithful nation gets Jesus wrong" by Bill McKibben is a good read [it is not online] Even if you do not agree with his politics, his description of how the dominant "Christian" culture mirrors the dominant secular, self-indulgent, materialistic consumer culture is right on. Including mega-church buildings, sermons, services and programs. We have yet to join a local church. The one we have been attending most often has been blessed with an interim Pastor who is a very good preacher. The new Pastor arrives tomorrow. Remains to be seen what we will do; no matter what he may be like, we will not be joining. It is a mainline denomination with all the baggage that brings with it. No thanks. What are we looking for? Preaching full of Biblical and theological content, measured by classic Reformed standards. Reverent Worship that joyfully exalts a Holy and Sovereign God. A membership that is serious about self-denying-other serving discipleship and applying the Word of God to all of life. A church that has a vision and a passion for extending the Kingdom of God, in America and around the world. A congregation that is local, made up of actual neighbors [people who live near by] who really incarnate the love of Christ to each other and in the neighborhood where they live. A building and ministries that reflect and facilitate these values. This description eliminates just about every church I know. I have gone with the trends of the times, believing in church growth and promoting it. My experience with that, studying the Scripture afresh, observing the culture around me and comparing notes with many others have led me to these conclusions. I pray we will also be led to a church home soon. It will not be one of those multi-million dollar enterprises!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:30

Saturday, August 13, 2005

### **Preaching tomorrow 8/14**

"Facing the Future with Faith" is the title of the sermon I will be preaching tomorrow at Christ Presbyterian Church on Allen St, here in Springfield at 9:30 AM tomorrow. It is an exposition of Psalm 121. It has been good to prepare this week. I do miss preaching the Word. This is the church we usually join for Worship when we are in town. Normally, the Praise Team, which has an excellent ministry, occupies the center of the platform (yes, it is a Presbyterian Church). They are on vacation, so I plan to push the pulpit to the center for this Service, where I believe it belongs. Yesterday, while out shopping, we stopped in at an open Episcopal Church building. It was so refreshing to step through the door into a sacred space- a special moment for quiet meditation. There were no other people there; my focus was entirely on the presence of God. I know we need people, fellowship, I know; but so often these days that is the entire focus, not the Lord. It was very nice to have eyes for Jesus only for awhile. We need the balance. For the record, in the above Nave (Sanctuary) the pulpit was one side, a Lectern on the other. In the middle, the focal point, was the Altar (Communion Table) The challenge today, every day, is to maintain a Sanctuary within my heart, complete with an Altar and Pulpit, and to spend time there.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:36

Friday, August 12. 2005

## **Suicide**

Recently, an active Christian, a person who confessed and demonstrated personal faith in Jesus for salvation, committed suicide. There has been debate as to whether, because of this one act, he has gone to Hell. Let me say, unequivocally, NO. This issue has come up a number of times through the years. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. If we can do one single act, no matter how terrible, that can cause us to lose our salvation, then it is not true that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. This cardinal doctrine is the very truth we need to hear, and believe, most at times like this. Our eternity is secure in Jesus by grace. If our loved one has committed this sin, s/he and the consequences are in the Hand of the God of Grace and Mercy. Taking one's life is self-murder ("sui-cide" ) and that is a grievous, tragic sin. It is wrong- the wrong response to a problem. There might be a number of explanations or reasons for the suicide. It might have been avoided. It brings great pain and anger and often guilt to those in the victim's circle who are left behind. All I am saying here is that I believe "once saved, always saved". I am convinced that believers are eternally secure, because the God who saves is the God who keeps and nothing can separate us from Him- not even committing self-murder. If staying saved depends on us, that means we are doing something we say God can not do. We are saying we are greater than God. That attitude is more damning than suicide.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:27

## **Only for the bennies**

It occurs to me that men and women who voluntarily sign up for military duty in order to receive the benefits, often college tuition, and then complain about having to actually fight in a war, saying, "This is unfair! I just enlisted for the benefits." are very much like people who sign-up to follow Jesus, for the benefits of salvation and then cry, "Unfair!", when they hear that they are expected to be cross-carrying disciples, too.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:34

Wednesday, August 10, 2005

## **Christian Culture**

This is a followup to posts made earlier (below)-We have said that Christians are to be committed to a core culture [defined in earlier posts] that is Christ-centered, Biblical. We do believe in absolute Norms and that all core cultures must be judged accordingly. Any core culture that does not conform to Biblical Norms is not normal by these standards and should be changed. The serious problem is that Christians tend to assume that whatever culture they have grown up in, or are comfortable with, is Christian. That is often a poor assumption. Many values and practices that Christians are comfortable with [eg- Southern Rural or Bostonian Brahmin or Floridian Cuban or Lake Wobegone Lutheran] are just as unscriptural as values and practices they condemn in other cultures. What is the core Christian Culture? Based on Biblical Norms, here are some of the essentials:

Life- CCC highly values and honors creation and life. It is very pro-life in every sense  
Marriage- CCC honors marriage, defined as a life-long committed relationship between a man and a woman. Divorce is generally considered a sin.  
Virginity and Chastity are greatly valued. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is a sin. Unwed mothers are unheard of and single parents are only those who have lost their spouse to death.  
Family- In CCC, children are desired and valued; extended, cross generational families are the norm; honor (respect) of parents by their children, and of the elderly by everyone, is expected.  
Work- CCC places a very high value on work: everyone who is able works, 6 days a week throughout life, for the welfare of the family and community  
Welfare- People who become poor (particularly widows and orphans) in a CCC are the responsibility- first, of the extended family and then, of the community  
Individual Responsibility- CCC holds individual persons accountable and responsible for their decisions and actions  
Religion- CCC, above all, is religious. It is centered on the worship and service of the God who has revealed Himself in Creation, Scripture and, particularly, in Jesus Christ. CCC is Christian. People who share CCC see themselves as the Covenant People of God. This is their primary identity, no matter what their ethnic origin may be. It will be readily seen that core Christian Culture is not identical with Eurocentric Western Civilization. It is certainly not the Dominant White Culture in America. In fact, it is not what most Christians believe it to be. Of course, in peripheral cultural matters, Christians value and enjoy diversity and there will be many local differences among them.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:30

Monday, August 8, 2005

## **Dualism**

Our secular society separates values, which are private choices, from facts, which are public data. The latter are supposed to be verifiable, while the former supposedly can not be. When we hear about Relativism, it is actually limited to values, not facts. Many Christians have bought into this distinction: they have a private faith (value system) and it is not connected with the public and factual world in which they live. They are dualists. Thus they can separate their life as Christians from their life in the public square. The exception to this is when they publically promote certain values (for some reason, usually limited to abortion and homosexuality). This effort does not gain much traction among those in society who relegate values to matters of personal choice. Many Christians have difficulty refuting that position, logically, as they also place great importance on personal choice in their own lives. When Christians declare that Jesus is Lord of all, do they really mean: Lord of their salvation, of their souls, of their spiritual lives? or do they really mean Lord of their money, their bodies, their work, their politics? their recreation? their retirement years?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:52

Friday, August 5, 2005

### **Genesis: From Chaos to Civilization for Christ**

Some of you may be interested to know that a Course I have been working on for a year and a half is now ready to go public. The alpha version was developed with a wonderful group of Christian friends in Vermont, over about 7 months. They were very supportive and encouraging and made many important suggestions. I am very grateful to them for all of that. This is a study based on the Book of Genesis and covers the beginning of essential Biblical themes. It is unlike any study I have seen elsewhere. This college level course, using my 60 page syllabus, begins here in Springfield on Sept 19 for twelve 2 hour sessions. We are doing this in association with Nehemiah House and with the hospitality of the (Baptist) Church in the Acres. This will be the first (Foundational) Course of my projected Re/formation Institute. The next one covers Biblical principles for economics and government, again beginning with Genesis.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:30

### **A Wasted Life ?**

It was again an extremely oppressive hot and humid day. We again sought relief after lunch at our local Barnes & Noble. While there, a thunder storm hit hard and heavy. We couldn't make it home, so stayed, bought a couple of books and sat there reading. Delightful afternoon. One of the books was by one of my most favorite authors, John Piper. Don't Waste your Life is a powerful, no-nonsense book. Everything from Pastor Piper is excellent. I recommend his website

<http://www.desiringgod.org/> The jacket carries a story about a healthy, young couple who took early retirement at 51 and 59 so that they could spend the rest of their lives on their 30 foot yacht and, among other things, collect sea shells. Piper says, "Picture them before Christ at the great day of judgment: 'Look. Lord. See my shells.' This is a tragedy." A wasted life.

On the wall, in the home where John Piper grew up was the motto: "Only one life, t'will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." Amen. Amen

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:11

Tuesday, July 26. 2005

## **A Parent's Anxiety and Comfort**

Today the Church calendar commemorates the unknown parents of Mary, mother of Jesus. They could have never known what their baby daughter would experience in her lifetime. They could not have known what would happen to her after she met Joseph. They must have had their share of anxiety. But, perhaps, they drew comfort from the promises in Psalm 121:5 The LORD watches over you—he will watch over your life; 6 the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. It is comforting to know that the Lord loves our children more than we do. And certainly He is stronger, wiser and far better able to care for them than we are. And here is the promise that He will always be with them, wherever they may go, watching and caring for them, forever! Truly, a parent's greatest comfort. 7 The LORD will keep you from all harm—This, too, is very comforting; but, reality check: we know of children who have been harmed: children of Believers, of people who have claimed the promises of this Psalm. What happened? Is this promise false? Bad things do happen to God's People. The Psalmist certainly knew that in his own life. The promise of v. 7 often has been demonstrated; in fact, more than we can know; but taken literally, at face value only, it can lead to some bitter

disillusionment with Scripture (You can't believe it) and, worse, with God (You can't trust Him after all)

Sometimes the verse means God will keep you from all harm- in the long run. In the end, terrible things will work out for the good. This is true and we are wise to take the long view of all things (keeping perspective). Sometimes it means, God will keep the terrible things from harming your soul. They won't "get to you". You will overcome them. God will keep you, preserve you, give you peace and strength, as you go through the terrible experiences that do happen. This also has proven true to untold numbers of Saints. Interpreted in these ways, Psalm 121:7, can give believing parents comfort as their children grow up and move out into the world. Parents and child are both in the Lord's Hand always and in all ways.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:27

Wednesday, July 20, 2005

### **America's Largest Church**

Started 46 years ago in a feed store, Lakewood Church in Houston TX occupied its new building this past weekend. Lakewood secured a 30-year lease to the Compaq Center from the city for \$11.8 million – paid up front – in 2001. The church took over the center in 2003, and began \$95 million in renovations. What was once a basketball court has now been turned into a theatre with seats that slope up from a stage complete with waterfalls, according to the Houston Chronicle. It will seat 30,000 people. The Rev. Joel Osteen, popular author and TV preacher, is senior pastor. Pastor Osteen apparently does a great job inspiring and motivating people and must give them what they want to attract such a crowd. But is this really of the Lord?

I have become convinced that the church that the Lord will use most effectively to communicate the Gospel and truly make a difference in today's world will be a church which incarnates [embodies and manifests] the life of Jesus Christ in a small town, or neighborhood in a city, where its members live. It will be known for 5 characteristics-1. Spirit-led Worship2. Intercessory Prayer3. Personal holiness4. Servant and prophetic ministries5. Suffering [a consequence of 1-4] This may be its most ineffective witness. It will not be known for the size of its attendance or building.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:34

Tuesday, July 12, 2005

### **Thinking Biblically about Business**

I continue to be impressed with this website and its practical, Biblical principles for the workplace and business. I recommend it.<http://www.christianitytoday.com/workplace/articles/whatbusinessworldview.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:35

Monday, July 11. 2005

## **More on Peacemaking**

from notes written in February 1993-What God did as a peacemaker was to remove barriers that divide: Eph 2:13 (ESV)...in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. This gives us a model for peacemaking. Peacemakers are those who remove any barrier that may exist between themselves and others, thus making reconciliation possible.

If the barrier is Christ or right living it can not be removed. If the barrier is a wrong perpetrated upon us, that can be absorbed. What debts are owed us may be cancelled. This is forgiveness. Our anger toward our enemies can be loosed. That is non-retaliation. Our hate can be replaced by doing good to them. That is love. Thus, obstacles in us that separate us from others, our enemies, are removed. In this way we have made peace with them, even if they have not made peace with us.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:37

## **Peace Making?**

I have heard several passionate and well-meaning talks lately in which it has been said that Jesus calls his disciples (and everyone else) to be "peace makers". It seems that there is some confusion in defining the concept, but it usually comes out meaning Jesus wants everyone to work toward reconciling enemies [whoever they are] and/or to practice non-violence [non-retaliation] when being assaulted. Such talks are primarily based on the Beatitude, "Blessed are the peace makers." The "command" to work toward reconciliation and/or to practice non-violence is applied to individual Christians, to the Church, and to America and, ultimately, to everyone.

First, it should be noted that the Beatitude is not a command, but a description. It should be noted that the description is of disciples and of no one else, let alone the government. There is no command to anyone to be peacemakers as defined. What is commanded is discipleship. That is what the topic should be, not peace-making. To my mind, speakers on this topic of peace making usually have a weak (if any) theology of evil and especially of fallen human nature. They are usually Arminian and have a far more optimistic view of people, saved and unsaved, than what I believe Scripture warrants. Furthermore, they usually have nothing to say about the role of civil government and its God-given responsibility to serve Him by maintaining law and order in a corrupt society (ironically called "keeping the peace" ) When this topic of civil government is addressed, to my mind, the plain teaching of Scripture is explained away. This, I believe, is connected to their view of human nature and evil. I started wrestling with this issue when I was a teenager, as a new Christian. It was my first big test-confronted by the need to sign up for the Draft at 18, I decided that, as a disciple of Jesus, I must register as a Conscientious Objector. That was denied me as I was not a member of a Peace Church, like the Quakers. I was granted a clergy deferment, since I was planning on entering the Ministry. I kept my pacifist convictions private in the ensuing years. The ideal still appeals to me, but my views have changed. In 1976, I put together notes for a Course on Discipleship. I here summarize from them-What Jesus does command is "Follow me!" Jesus calls believers in him to become his disciples. This means to imitate and follow the way Jesus lived, i.e.- a. to be a servant b. to love, particularly to lay down our lives on behalf of others c. to passively accept any hardship that comes because of doing right. Further study deepened my understanding of what Jesus meant by "discipleship"- 1. he wanted the men he chose to be with him, travel with him, be his companions. 2. to share his fate, particularly to be crucified and then, to be

glorified More than anything, the mark of a disciple is sharing the cross of Jesus. The cross of Jesus has two basic meanings: First, the death of Jesus on the cross was a ransom for sin, a substitutionary atonement. This is the orthodox interpretation of the death of Jesus- it comes from Jesus himself. By it, sinners and God are reconciled. Jesus' death was a propitiation: it placated the Wrath of God because it was an expiation. It removed the reason for that Wrath. Thus God was reconciled to Humankind. This is how Jesus was a Peacemaker- a Reconciler. Evangelism is spreading that good news and exhorting people to respond and become reconciled to God. This is how we can, in fact, be peacemakers- Reconcilers. Second, the cross was the occasion of Jesus' victory over Satan and Evil. This is also very Biblical, but has not been as popular a doctrine as the first. By obeying God the Father, Jesus came into conflict with the Powers of Evil, especially as manifest in the State and in the Religious Leadership of his day. He voluntarily submitted to their wrath. His innocent suffering for obeying God defeated Satan. "The conquered conquered". It is to sharing in this second meaning of the cross that disciples are called. Discipleship is following Jesus. That, as Paul develops the concept, is to imitate Jesus. That means one thing: obey God as Jesus did and pay the price for doing that as Jesus did. Obeying God, living by Kingdom Principles, will in itself, work much good in society. But more: obeying God will bring us into conflict with Evil ("If they hate me, they will hate you"- Jesus) Our calling is, should that happen, to submit to the consequent suffering. That is carrying our cross. Doing this will rout Satan. He has been defeated by Jesus, but still is active. He is conquered in our lives and in society, when disciples do not retaliate while being persecuted for the stands they take in obedience to God. When they practice personal non-violence in those circumstances, absorbing their losses, forgiving the trespasses of others against them, the forces of Evil are overcome. You can call that peacemaking. And it is a command. To do this peace making, to practice non-retaliation in these circumstances and to forgive our enemies is humanly impossible. Only those individuals who are indwelt and filled by the Spirit of Christ can possibly live this way. And they must.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:08

Sunday, July 10, 2005

### **Knowing who who we (Christians) are**

What is our identity? How do we define ourselves? We are many things, in this order- 1. an animal 2. a human being 3. the image of God: a person 4. the image shattered: a person in Adam 5. the image of God restored: a person in Christ 6. a gender 7. member of a family 8. member of a nationality 9. member of a ethnic group10. member of a culture11. member of a subculture12. member of an occupation13. member of an avocationIt is a very serious mistake to identify or define ourselves by singling out only one or two categories.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:24

Thursday, June 30, 2005

### **The Key to Inner Peace & Joy**

I have said to the Lord, 'You are my Lord, my good above all other.' O Lord, you are my portion and my cup; it is you who uphold my lot. My boundaries enclose a pleasant land; indeed, I have a goodly heritage. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not fall. My heart, therefore, is glad and my spirit rejoices; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore. --Psalm 16 adapted

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:57

Monday, June 27, 2005

## **More about Christians and Multiculturalism**

In response to the Post below about Two False Doctrines, a reader asked- "Can you give some examples of 'Many evangelical Christians have adopted these Doctrines.'? I replied [for those of you who may have missed it-] You might say that anyone who is an evangelical Christian could not ascribe to multiculturalism or cultural relativism by your definition of 'evangelical Christian". Perhaps I should say, "many people I know or read, who consider themselves to be evangelical Christians..."

There are three main groups of them-

1. post modern college and grad students, especially on secular campuses
2. those who live in an urban multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-racial area
3. particularly, those who are engaged with Social Issues, esp Racism
4. a fourth group are (members) of contemporary, emerging churches which have adopted pomo premises
5. a fifth group are parents of children in public schools, where their children are indoctrinated with these two Doctrines and have no problem with that (which means they agree with the Doctrines)

Of course, there is far more to these two False Doctrines than I mentioned in the original post and when I say Christians subscribe to them, that does not mean every aspect of these Doctrines or all their implications.

Check out this sermon by a Presbyterian Pastor. Here is a comment from a Lutheran Seminary: Challenges and Opportunities of Multiculturalism by Director of Multicultural Mission Resource Center, H. S. Wilson in his article, "Multicultural Christian Community" (quoted in Word & World, Spr 2004, Vol 24, No 2, pages 171-181) "The challenge of multiculturalism has created opposing reactions. If Christians and churches see it as a new Pentecost experience, they will be able to welcome it. Today, we have unparalleled opportunities to build, intentionally and actively, a culture of pluralism among the people of many cultures and faiths in America." "Open and bold interactions going on between Christians of different ethnic and cultural communities everywhere are slowly changing situations. Hitherto segregated monocultural churches are opening up to multicultural fellowship, making Christian communities true to their calling (2 Cor. 5:17). "To be true to their calling to be a new humanity and a foretaste of the new creation, Christians and churches should welcome the flowering of multiculturalism in North America as an opportunity to reclaim their authentic nature as Pentecost Christians, celebrating it as a gift...." Of course, Mr Wilson may define "multiculturalism" differently than I do. For many, the word simply means diversity- recognizing and respecting many cultures and ethnicities. It could simply mean allowing and appreciating foods from all around the world to be on our table. There are many foods (cultures) to be enjoyed- they make our diets more interesting. That is good. "Multiculturalism" is far more- as I have defined it in the earlier post. There has been controversy on Christian College campuses about endorsing or teaching Multiculturalism, eg Calvin College and there are campus organizations like this one at Gordon College. This is a complex subject. Here is a serious proposal for developing a curriculum at Cedarville College which indicates what is involved. Goshen College is approaching the subject this way I could go on. This just skims the top of a major subject, about which I expect to write more.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:12

Saturday, June 25, 2005

## **Two Major False Doctrines Many Christians Believe**

Scripture exhorts us to not conform to the world, ie- to its prevailing, non-Christian concepts, but to develop a Christian mind. Many American Christians are not aware how they have uncritically adopted, and live by, two dominant concepts: Cultural Relativism & Multi-Culturalism. As defined here, both concepts need to be rejected by Christians:

Culture is defined as a composite of beliefs, morals, values, traditions, customs, behaviors and manners belonging to a group of people. There are many groups and cultures. Multiculturalism is a Doctrine that all cultures should be equally respected and accommodated in America. More, America should modify its historically dominant Western European culture in schools and society so as to give at least equal recognition and representation to all non-Western cultures. Cultural Relativism is the Doctrine that all cultures are basically equal. They are all unique and none should be allowed to impose itself on the others. Each must be accepted on its own terms from within. No culture is better or worse, higher or lower, superior or inferior when compared to the others. To disagree and insist that one culture is better or superior than another is a form of racism and to act on such judgement is to be oppressive. (In practice, this does not preclude advocates of multiculturalism to inconsistently judge, condemn and seek to overcome Western European Culture. In fact, some advocates insist that the latter is necessary in order for American schools and society to be truly diverse and multicultural) Many evangelical Christians have adopted these Doctrines. They have been deceived. It is a prime example of the control of Spiritual Powers over our minds and of the Spiritual Warfare that I outlined on my website. We all have culture. Whether we are from North Ireland, North Korea, North Carolina or South Africa, we have unique beliefs, morals, values, traditions, customs, behaviors and manners. There are many practical reasons why every culture can not be accommodated in all times and places within the same local community, state or nation. There are very strong reasons why there must be a common cultural core to bind people into a community, state or nation, apart from which there would be division and strife. And I personally am persuaded that our historic Western European Judeo-Christian Culture should be that core, but these arguments are not my concern here. My concern here is the notion that culture, any culture (including my own), is beyond judgement and that within any culture there are not unhealthy or destructive elements that must be addressed and removed. My greatest concern is that Christians can buy into the Doctrine that beliefs, morals, values, traditions, customs, behaviors and manners are not under the standards of God's Word and that anyone's culture is not subject to Christ's approval. This is utterly false. All beliefs, morals, values, traditions, customs, behaviors and manners- all culture- must be evaluated in the light of Scripture and its Norms. This means that some culture of some people will most definitely be inferior or worse than others- not by comparison to other cultures, but by the Standard of God's Word. This Biblical view will be totally repugnant and oppressive and arrogant to many non-Christians. So be it. My concern is for the Christians that agree with them.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:37

Friday, June 24, 2005

### **More on the Thot below**

Some might wonder why I am convicted Christians need to to "Behold God". Don't they already do that?What I mean is "Behold God as defined in classic theology" As I have noted in other posts, the concept of God has undergone change among contemporary post modern evangelicals into something other than the classic concept.I also mean "Behold God, as defined in classic theology, first", before Self actualization and need fulfilment and before tackling Cultural Issues.By seeking the Kingdom of God, I mean the dynamic Reign of God-[not salvation and not the Millenium]-ie, life organized and lived under the Rule-Word-Law of God, rather than seeking the health and/or growth of the local church

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:24

Saturday, June 18, 2005

## **How the Eucharist makes the Gospel Visible**

For most evangelical Protestant Christians, the Lord's Supper is a simple re-enactment of the Last Supper in the Upper Room. The Elements of Communion (Bread & Grape Juice) are simple symbols of the Body & Blood of Jesus which were given (broken and shed) as the Atonement for sins. The action of the Communion itself ("Take, eat...drink..." ) is the action Jesus mandated (hence, an Ordinance- a command: Do this in memory of me)

So, once a month (ie-periodically) Christians remember Jesus' Sacrifice by obeying this ordinance, eating a piece of bread and sipping from a little cup. Done in a few minutes, usually tagged on to a regular Sunday Church Service. Of course, it is normally accompanied by some introductory Meditation (talk) about its meaning, some Scripture verses are read and prayers are made. Maybe 15 minutes all together. Most have no idea how much more meaning can (and should) be attached to "taking Communion" First, is the concept that the Eucharist makes the Gospel itself visible. Thomas Cranmer, Protestant Reformer in 16th Century England developed an entire order of Service (a Liturgy) which is shaped by the Gospel. This is done by designing it (the entire weekly Service) around a sequence of three themes: Theme One is detecting and confessing sins. Theme Two is announcing God's Grace- forgiveness of those sins and promise of pardon and restoration. Theme Three is responding to this offer of Grace by faith. This faith is expressed in a formal Confession of Faith, in prayers of praise, thanksgiving and intercession and, finally, with attention to God's Word preached (the Sermon). This sequence of sin + grace + faith is repeated three times in three different ways, in the Liturgy composed by Cranmer. The third time the sequence is in the celebration of the Eucharist itself. That celebration has the three themes (of sin + grace + faith) in it, thus making visible, through symbolic action, the Gospel. The second major concept that typical evangelicals often miss- Communion is done for edification. When all of this is done with understanding (personal faith), the entire Liturgy, but especially the Eucharist, is used by the Holy Spirit to invoke and strengthen grace in the hearts of the worshippers. They participate in order to receive that grace. A third major concept, that should be connected with all of this, is the "Doctrine of the Real Presence". The Risen Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, but not in the elements of Bread and Wine, as Roman Catholics may believe. The true and real presence of Christ is in the hearts of those who come to the Table as Believers- we are to feed on Him in our hearts by faith (not in our mouths, by chewing with our teeth. After all, the actual body of the Risen Christ is in Heaven). When properly used, worshippers experience the true and real Presence of Christ in their hearts during the Eucharist. Thus, the Supper can be a time of intense, peak communion with Him. The fourth concept is that Holy Communion is communal. The action that memorializes Jesus, is the body of Believers, the Church, taking and eating together. (You, plural, are to do this) As we obey that injunction collectively, the Body feeds on the Food, the Nourishment, which is Christ, and grows (Col 2:19) Properly understood and used, Holy Communion is an effective and important means to living the Christian life. I Packer has written and spoken on these ideas and I am indebted to him for them. Cranmer's work (1552) was embodied in the 1662 Prayer Book of the Church of England. The closest to that today, of which I am personally aware, is Rite I for celebrating the Eucharist, in the 1979 Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:45

Thursday, June 16, 2005

### **I don't think I am getting through**

The Christian Life is not about 1. Personal Evangelism and leading people to Christ (soul-winning) 2. Church Meetings and programs and small groups 3. Spiritual Formation or becoming a fulfilled person with a purpose 4. the Jabez Prayer or finding an ever expanding territory of health & wealth 5. helping out at the local food pantry or working with kids on the streets. The Christian Life may include some, or all, of these things; but they are not the parts that make up the whole. I have been saying this over and over, but I don't think I'm getting through. Almost everyone I know who is a Christian, and almost every Preacher I hear, talk about one or more of these 5 topics as though they are what the Christian Life is about (which also means that the rest of their daily life is not connected with being Christian). The Christian Life is about God, about loving and obeying God with all our heart, mind and strength. That means loving and obeying His Law with all our heart, mind and strength and living all of life according to His Norms. The Christian life is about glorifying God in our personal behavior, in our marriage and family, in our daily work, with our time and talents and treasure. It means seeking to do His will in our vocations and on our vacations. It means faithfully following the Principles of His Kingdom in the Public Square, as citizens of both a neighborhood and a nation. Each of those things on the above list can be done apart from anything I have just written about in the last paragraph. How many Christian youth graduating from High School or College this month heard anything like what I have said? How many are leaving home openly and earnestly desiring to answer the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth", with their lives? How many parents want them to? I recently heard a TV Preacher assure his audience that only two things were important: getting saved and helping others get saved. He was very, very wrong.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:01

Tuesday, June 14. 2005

### **Revival in New England?**

In the recent mail was a brochure promoting Vision New England: Ten Reasons for Celebration. The brochure claims that that God has used Vision NE over the last 45 years to transform this Region. (I remember its beginnings as The Evangelistic Association of New England). Having been a Pastor in Northern New England, I realize that the Region in mind is primarily metro Boston and highly populated areas of Southern new England (MA & CT). The cover of the brochure says, "Look at what God has been doing in New England and rejoice!" Inside, impressive statistics are listed detailing innumerable conferences and workshops offered during this period. Included are the large numbers of attendees and participants who have benefited. The main achievement has been training for all kinds of ministry. I stopped attending many years ago, although enthusiastic friends continue to promote all these meetings. By the way, why do people who preach Discipleship, always enjoy sumptuous accommodations in posh Hotels and in Resort or Cruise ship settings? Just asking. I do not see New England transformed or any more Christian today than it was 45 years ago. I see a lot of churches, many growing- but, that is not the same thing at all. God has undoubtedly been at work- He always has been. His Kingdom is present- lives and society are being changed and impacted- but that is with the Gospel and by people who live that Gospel in the Public Square. We should never equate the work of God and the Kingdom with conferences and so-called training workshops (as informative or inspirational as they can be in themselves)

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 22:18

Tuesday, June 7, 2005

## **What does God expect? A Message to Graduating Seniors and Others**

What does God expect of our personal lives? If we follow the Bible, this is the answer-As individuals-1. Love the Lord with all the head, heart, strength and will (none of what follows makes sense, or is possible, apart from this first, basic, absolutely essential commitment. The concern here is not how society should act, but how we, the Covenant people of God, should live)2. Create, innovate, be a thinker, be an artist- love beauty and form and order3. Work as stewards, developing and managing the earth's natural resources4. Work to produce and distribute goods and services. Be involved in Community Development

5. Marry and have children [one way or another] 6. Be pioneers- spread to the frontiers (in pursuit of #3 and 4)7. Practice being an extended family- responsible and caring for all relatives8. Practice old fashioned charity for non-family members- be generous and intentionally, regularly give stuff away [main point of the Tithe]9. Be pro-life, in every sense of the word10. Keep all of the 10 Commandments

Conversely, 1. do not waste or spoil natural resources; nor be greedy or selfish with them2. do not settle down for the "good life" in the city, suburb or country. Do not acquire "enough" for yourself and be content3. do not intentionally remain single or childless4. do not make take advantage of, or make money off of, a family member.5. forgive debts owed you by family members

Many Christians never consider any of these issues. They have never been taught how to live by God's Norms. There is a real need for further study and sharing, on these personal matters. The more, and the sooner, the better.

As Citizens (members of a Community)- Seek Justice, do not oppress, ie-1. do not treat others violently- do not subdue, crush or kill 2. do not defraud, cheat, rob or exploit3. do not treat anyone with scorn, ridicule or contempt4. respect private ownership

God expects us, as His People, to live by these same principles in our workplace and in the public square. We can not leave these principles at home and consider ourselves good, "Bible believing" Christians. The company we work for may not claim to be Christian, but we do. The Administration may or may not claim to be Christian, but we do. This is a call to be faithful witnesses. Therefore, we will personally take a stand in our company, and in our country, for equal opportunities for all to share in the economic process and its benefits. We will stand for, practice and promote, the fair treatment of all employees (including equal opportunity for promotions, fair pay and benefits). We will oppose any corporate or government policy that violates, overtly or covertly, the practice of our personal principles (above) and support those policies that are in harmony with these principles.

There is a great need for Christians to study and discuss all of these social principles. Unpacking them in a local or particular context- applying them to real world conditions- requires a lot of effort. There are no easy answers. Many Christians take a simple way out, by following either conservative or leftist magazines and writers. I find the issues far more complicated, not so black and white. Besides, we are Christians. Read the magazines, of course, dig and do research, eg- about NAFTA or global warming or fighting terrorism or the minimum wage or social security; but then, we must come together, pray and search the Scripture for guidance. After all that, we must act as Christians. All of this is our Christian, God-given and Scriptural duty. The Gospel preached in our churches, and the Worship engaged in there, must inspire and equip us for this kind of living. If the preaching and worship simply meets "spiritual" and relational needs apart from a call to living a holy, righteous life, as defined by the Scripture, it is woefully inadequate- at the very least.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:28