

Monday, March 31, 2008

## **REMEMBERING "BURN OUT" AND HELP RECEIVED**

Two clergy who were very influential in my life at the same time, but independently, passed away last week. Some 32 years ago, I went through serious "burnout" as a Pastor. I had a difficult struggle which led to my resignation.

Outwardly, and by several indicators, my ministry was going well. I enjoyed fellowship with other Evangelical Pastors here in Springfield. We would bemoan the condition of the world and rejoice with stories of conversions, baptisms and church growth. I was happy to add my own. When I tried to share my struggles, however, something changed. We were committed to being overcomers and were not comfortable with stories of discouragement and depression [although I have learned, they abound]. I remember clearly my Choir Director berating me for having lost my joy. Didn't I know Pastor's were to always be an example of joyful Christian living?, she said. After resigning, my evangelical colleagues dropped out of sight. I seemed to have become some kind of pariah. My support group didn't support. But there was one Pastor who ministered to me- a local Episcopal Priest. He didn't do a lot for me and we seldom saw each other, but what he did was encouraging, mostly during and after Services. The last time we saw him and his wife was the day my wife and I spent with them at their summer cottage in the country. (I was also befriended by another Episcopal Priest, during that period. Together, these men unintentionally influenced me, by their friendship, toward becoming an Episcopalian- that, combined with a second hand 1928 Book of Common Prayer I began to use in my devotions at that time). The other Clergy person that passed away last week was very different. I decided to go for counseling during this same period of time and he was then in private practice as a Therapist. He sat there and encouraged me to "let it all out". I realized in those sessions that I had serious issues with my father and anger toward him was a major factor in my relationship with some folks at the church. Working through all that eventually led to some real healing and improved relations with my father. All this was good, but in the third session, my Counselor told me I needed to set aside my Religion, Faith, Bible- all of that, he counseled, had to be put on hold until I was able to work through my problems. That struck me as terrible advice and I stopped seeing him. His advice had an unintended outcome. It taught me a very important lesson- we don't let our problems come between us and God. We get even closer to God and then, with His help, deal with the problems. Well, both of these men have now passed on. I am grateful to the Lord for what they meant in my life. I am glad to have known them during a very difficult time in more than 3 decades ago. Requiescat in pace

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 10:31

Sunday, March 30, 2008

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD SERVICE**

We stopped at a major chain restaurant for lunch after church today. The sign said open at 11:30 and it was just before noon when we arrived. We walked in and no one seemed to be there. There were no customers and no hostess. We stood there for at least 10 minutes, then I walked around. I then saw at least 6 young ladies clustered and chuckling in the kitchen area. A janitor taking out trash called their attention to me and a few minutes later one of the young ladies came out to the front desk and asked "Can I help you?" Well, duh. I told her "no" and that we were leaving now because of the poor service already. We went somewhere else and spent our money at a restaurant that cared about our business and about customer service. I can't believe a Manager who is serious about staying in business would run such a loose operation. We will not be back. By contrast, we were really impressed by the service offered at church. There was a supply Minister and she (yes, she) did a great job. She conducted the Service well, projected her voice and spoke clearly throughout. (We have had to strain to hear anything the regular Minister said.) Her spirited sermon was well delivered, without notes and it had very good content with a pastoral, inspirational application. It might have helped that the preacher had been a trial lawyer before moving into her second career in the Church. At any rate, she delivered the goods and we enjoyed our spiritual dining experience and are thankful. We shall be back for more next week!

Posted by Cal in Church at 13:40

## **SEMINARY CENSORSHIP?**

Do you believe the Bible you read is verbally inspired by God, word for word, and literally true? There has been controversy brewing at Westminster Theological Seminary since the publication of a book by one of its Professors some two years ago. He was suspended last week. Apparently he taught the possibility that the Pentateuch, as we have it, came through the work of several editors, including a change in the actual language in which it was written, and not directly from Moses nor in the language he spoke. Whatever all the facts are in the WTS case, the controversy involves the process of revelation, inspiration, transmission and inerrancy in regards to the Bible and what the Westminster Confession (and hence the Seminary) teaches on the subject. I have posted essays recently in this Blog on those topics. See March 24 (below) and February 29 (a Series with 14 Parts- click on the calendar at the right)

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 13:34

Saturday, March 29, 2008

## **McCain on the MORTGAGE CRISIS**

Greed and irresponsibility are vices- they create bad behavior and dangerous outcomes. People with these vices definitely should not be rewarded and non greedy and responsible people should not be made to bail them out of the consequences of their poor decisions. That's true in general, but I am thinking of the housing crisis. Here is a good article comparing the presidential candidates' proposals on the subject <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=ZTQ4Y2YyNjcyMzk5MTYwYjBkMDUzN2QzYzNiZjFjMDY=>"McCain's approach ... is to avoid policies that reward irresponsible behavior; to increase transparency in the financial markets; and to allow the Federal Reserve to act only when a systemic crisis appears likely." "In McCain's formulation, irresponsible lending and borrowing created the problem, and uncertainty is at the root of its spread throughout the financial community. If accurate, this diagnosis demonstrates the folly of the Democrats' proposed cures, which would reward irresponsibility and increase uncertainty among investors." Here is an occasion for application of Biblical Values in Public Policy and Biblical Principles to Economic Policy

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 18:01

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

## **NOW OVER 10,000 VISITS! Thank you for droppin bye**

One year ago today, I wrote the following Post. it is still true. I struggle with the purpose of this Blog: what should I write, how and for whom? I read a lot of newspaper and magazine articles and columnists covering the gamut of daily news. There are many who Blog well on such matters. I will still do so occasionally; but most of all, I am interested in searching for answers to my many questions related to God, Christian living and life itself. I write to organize and express what I am learning. These become my personal "Position Papers". In truth, I also want to teach what I have learned and draw others into studying and applying it to their own lives. So I put my Position Papers on the internet with that objective and hope. I welcome responses, suggestions and questions to clarify what I write. (I do not want to digress into other areas). I would be glad to go deeper into the subject presented in each post with anyone interested in learning more about it. Thank you for reading. May God bless you!

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 11:31

Monday, March 24, 2008

## **PSALM 88- THE WORD OF THE LORD?**

This Psalm describes a very depressed (bipolar?) man. It is the darkest and most sad of all the Psalms. O Lord, my God, my Savior, by day and night I cry to you. Let my prayer enter into your presence; incline your ear to my lamentation. I am full of trouble; my life is at the brink of the grave... I have become like one who has no strength; Lost among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave. ...in dark places and in the abyss. I am in prison and cannot get free. My sight has failed me because of trouble; Lord, I have called upon you daily; I have stretched out my hands to you. O Lord, I cry to you for help; in the morning my prayer comes before you. Lord, why ...? why ? ...I have been wretched and at the point of death; ... with a troubled mind....terrors have destroyed me; They surround me all day long like a flood; they encompass me on every side. ...and darkness is my only companion. A more careful look at this Psalm reveals the cause of this man's pain and depression. The Psalmist is not suffering for the reasons most men suffer. He believes God is making him suffer!

O Lord, my God, my Savior, by day and night I cry to you. Let my prayer enter into your presence; incline your ear to my lamentation. He believes in God, that God is his Savior, that God answers personal prayers. He is a man of continual prayer. He believes God works wonders, has shown loving kindness and is both faithful and righteous. These are positive things about this lamenting Psalmist that must be kept in our mind as we continue reading his complaint. He says I am full of trouble; my life is at the brink of the grave. And that, he believes, is God's fault. God is making his life miserable! You have laid me in the depths of the Pit, in dark places and in the abyss. Your anger weighs upon me heavily, and all your great waves [the troubles you send me] overwhelm me. You have put my friends far from me; you have made me to be abhorred by them; [now] darkness is my only companion. O Lord, ... Lord, why have you rejected me? why have you hidden your face from me? Why are you treating me this way? And not just now, but all of my life. Ever since my youth, I have been wretched and at the point of death; I have borne your terrors [the terrible things you have put me through] with a troubled mind. Your blazing anger has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me; They surround me all day long like a flood; they encompass me on every side. Ever since my youth! The Psalmist does not identify his troubles, just that he has them and they are from God and his prayers for God to help him go unheeded. He does not admit or repent of any sin. Does he feel miserable, on the point of dying, because of his troubles or because he feels God has abandoned him or is punishing him? The Psalmist is Heman (see the Title) and he probably is the man mentioned several times in 1 and 2 Chronicles as one of the leading Singers and Musicians serving the King. He was assisted in this Service by his many sons. Although lamenting at the time of this Psalm, the writer was married, had children and a presumably normal life serving in the Courts of the King, by making music for public Worship. Since he complains that he has struggled with all his trouble since his youth, his Depression must have been on and off because he was able to live a normal life and work- as a church musician no less! (Perhaps he was manic-depressive, as many creative people are) Millennia later, we are still served and blessed by his work (and the work of his fellow musicians- 1 Chronicles 6:31-37 see the 12 "Korahite Psalms- 42-49, 84-85, 87-88 ). These words of Psalm 88 are not inspired, out breathed, by God. They come from deep within a very troubled, despondent (mentally ill?) Believer and are addressed to God. But the entire Psalm, this man's prayer, comes back to us from God. The very human words have become God's Word to us. God has seen to it that they are included in the Bible for our benefit. God can use them to speak to our needs, especially if we are like the Psalmist. God uses these tormented human words to reveal thoughts (propositions) from His mind to us. How? Why is this Lament (and others like it) in Scripture? We are to be realists about life and its pain. Believers can suffer emotionally and mentally and physically for many years. There is not always a happy ending to our lives on earth. We are to persist anyway. Doubt and questioning God ("Why, Lord? Why?") are not, in themselves, sin. This Psalm is usually associated with Jesus and his emotions and prayer in Gethsemane and on the Cross. Believing in God and His provident goodness over a life-time is still possible and not a contradiction. Actually, such faith demonstrates that God is working in the struggling Believer's heart. He Himself makes it possible. Believing in prayer and being persistent in prayer in spite of no seeming answer to it is both good and possible. God promises that He does hear and will respond in His own time. ("Ask, Seek and Knock") This Psalmist's faith and prayer life is a testimony to that and a witness to us that we can do likewise, if we suffer as he is. God still can and does use a Believer although he is not perfect or healthy and who struggles with darkness and terrors within. There have been many such Believers through the ages. Actually some of the best or most effective. These very sufferings are the furrowed ground in which God plants his seed. Often saints who suffer are the most spiritual and the most usable instrument in God's Hand. In fact, brokenness seems to be a prerequisite for personal holiness and serious ministry. Put all this together and we may say, "The Word of the Lord"! Thanks be to God!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:06

Saturday, March 22, 2008

## **EASTER AND THE AUDACITY TO HOPE**

"...what my former pastor too often failed to understand is that ... society can change. The profound mistake of Reverend Wright's sermons is not that he spoke about racism in our society. It's that he spoke as if our society was static; as if no progress has been made; as if this country - a country that has made it possible for one of his own members to run for the highest office in the land and build a coalition of white and black; Latino and Asian, rich and poor, young and old -- is still irrevocably bound to a tragic past. But what we know -- what we have seen - is that America can change. That is true genius of this nation. What we have already achieved gives us hope - the audacity to hope - for what we can and must achieve tomorrow." [http://www.barackobama.com/2008/03/18/remarks\\_of\\_senator\\_barack\\_obam\\_53.php](http://www.barackobama.com/2008/03/18/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_53.php)

I enjoyed the now famous speech of Barak Obama from which the above words are taken. I wish Mr McCain could write and deliver a message like that! I admit I was emotionally moved, not only by the rhetoric, but also by the Vision in the speech. I hope that the sermon I hear tomorrow in church will touch me the same way! That is the reason for the rhetoric- to stir and move hearts to dream and take action. Sermons should do the same. I do not agree with what Mr. Obama envisions the action should be, but his dream, the same as Martin Luther King Jr., is mine as well. I wish we had a conservative Republican who could light the same fire and stir the same passion and then show how the dream can be achieved on traditional conservative Republican Principles! Actually, the Dream of Racial Harmony [the end of racism] as well Equal opportunity [not outcome] and Equity [fair share] for all also requires conversion to Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all. This brings me to the above quote from the speech. I understand what Mr. Obama said and I recognize the truth and fairness of his explanation of where his former pastor was coming from when he preached. There was nothing new to me there. That Preacher. Rev Mr. Wright, echoed the sentiments of many African Americans (correct or not- see below). Conservative White people who do not know or associate with African Americans, let alone attend their Services, would find Pastor Wright's remarks a puzzle at best and very offensive at worse (Radical Leftist Whites would agree with much of it). The comment Mr. Obama makes that I have excerpted above struck me most on this Easter weekend. We are celebrating Christ's victory over the impossible. That gives all of us who believe in Him, the audacity of hope for victory over the impossible in our lives, in our society. Christ is the only hope for victory in Tibet, too, and in the Gaza Strip and in Pakistan and in Iraq- all places where people hate and kill each other and where division is so deep reconciliation is humanly impossible. The Easter Story assures us that miracles are possible in all these Nations and in ours as well. Because of the empty tomb, we have the audacity to hope for these things! Also see this commentary by this Black Pastor who carries solid Reformed credentials <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/marchweb-only/112-44.0.html>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:32

## **WHAT IS RIGHT ABOUT PASTOR WRIGHT'S SERMON**

Many of the comments in the Blogosphere about Pastor Wright's now infamous sermon and Barak Obama's response reveal that narrow mindedness, hate and racism do very much exist among white people. Every Bible believer knows that sin does find us out and the sins of fathers do lead to dire consequences for sons. These are oft repeated Biblical axioms. The fact is that white people did endorse and profit from African slave trade. Italian, Jewish and Irish immigrants were not brought here against their will to be slaves, only Black Africans were. Italian, Jewish and Irish immigrants had very hard times making it in America, but it was there choice to come and to remain here. Not so Black Africans. Italian, Jewish and Irish immigrants were not specifically denominated as property in our Constitution and thereby denied their "inalienable rights" as "men".

Yes, hundreds of years have gone by. None of us living today took part in slavery, but the consequences of that evil continue. The Bible holds all people responsible for their choices and behavior. But it is also true that much of the behavior of many, these many years later, still is the result of choices made under the influence of that slavery past (including years of segregation and discrimination that followed) We whites may deeply resent that reality. That only makes it worse. The sins of the fathers are visited upon their sons, even centuries later. This axiom will also be illustrated by our country's condoning the practice of abortion. Do you think we can condone the killing of millions of babies every year and not pay the as a price as a Nation? Many white Preachers have warned that America is under the judgment of God for this evil and that God will bring His wrath upon our Nation because of it (many other kinds of evils might and have been included here) Now if white people can agree with their Preachers who say God will judge

America and bring down His Wrath upon it for the evil of Abortion, how can we be outraged when a Black Preacher says God will damn America for the evil of Racism? Only if we do not agree that America is racist or that racism is evil. [Mr Wright indicts our National Government for many things he says are evil. I do take great exception to much of what he claims to be factual] The actual title of Pastor Wright's sermon was "Confusing God and Government". We Americans do well to heed the warning of that disastrous error. It is actually patriotic when we warn America of its idolatries and other evils and call it to repent as Jonah did Nineveh. This can lead to the Nation being saved from God's Wrath and blessed by Him instead. Note: Pastor Wright would have been much wiser if he used the Biblical word, "curse" instead of "damn". When he says that his language ("God damn America") is Biblical, he is referring to texts like Deuteronomy 30 See both articles on this Blog <http://purechurch.blogspot.com/>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:26

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

## **BRING ON THE CASINOS! AND OTHER FALLACIOUS ARGUMENTS**

It really annoys me when I read letters to the editor which use fallacious arguments. Probably most of them do. For example, this morning a writer was supporting the move to bring Casinos to our area. His fallacious reasoning? Casinos and scratch tickets are both gambling, he said. Since the latter is ok, the former is ok also. Bring on the casinos!

Well, I don't agree that scratch tickets are ok. (I have stood in line at convenience stores in poor neighborhoods, behind people who are putting down a lot of money- the last time the man in front of me paid out 10 ten dollar bills. They scratch them and invariably lose and throw away the expensive but worthless tickets within minutes after purchase- foolishness to me!) But the false argument is in making the casinos and scratch tickets equivalent. Yes, both involve gambling, but the similarity ends there and the stakes that are involved are very different beyond that! The casino is not a paper scratch ticket- it is a multi-acre multi-million dollar destination resort for the purposes of "gaming" and assorted entertainments. Thousands of people make their income off these "Resorts" and that is a major argument for them: jobs (the other is income for the State. That also applies to the lotteries) But, there is a huge social cost (gambling addiction, crime) as well as major changes in the local area with negative impact on local property values, roads and traffic, housing, schools and businesses. Scratch tickets and casinos are two very different matters, even if both involve taking a chance. Beware invalid arguments. And vote against the proposed casinos! The arguments in support of changing the gun laws in Washington DC illustrate another common fallacious argument. Both sides insist they are debating the same issue when they are not. In this case (and another currently before the Supreme Court), one side is arguing for the perceived constitutional right of all citizens to carry loaded, concealed handguns. (They assume that was what the Framers of the Bill of Rights intended in the 18th century). The other side is arguing about maintaining law and order in DC (and in National Parks in the other current case). This side marshals statistics about the use of handguns in crime and has the support of many Law Enforcement Officers to continue the present ban. The first group pays no attention to the crime stats. The second group does not heed the arguments being made about citizens right to bear arms. Nobody wins an argument or debate when they are really talking about very different subjects. They are arguing from different premises and will always end in disagreement because of that. The same is true about the argument that is supposed to be about Abortion. One side starts with the premise that embryos and fetuses are human beings and therefore, killing them is murder or at least homicide. The other side rejects that premise outright and thus will not agree to the conclusion. They go on to argue about the right of a woman to do as she will with her body, including having a lump of cells [not a human being] removed if she chooses. Another argument about homicide (the taking of one human life by another) is made by activists against all war and all capital punishment. They say, among other things, that the Bible forbids all "killing". They assume that "killing" means murder. Therefore, the Bible says, all killing (homicide) is murder. It is not. The conclusion is invalid because the premises are not valid and that is because the assumption about the meaning of "killing" is not valid. The Bible grants the State, as God's Servant, the right to wage just war (which includes the taking of human lives or justified homicide) and to execute capital punishment in certain cases (another justified homicide). What the Bible forbids is unjustified homicide, i.e.- murder.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:56

## **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

## **OUR SIN SHALL FIND US OUT**

How do we as Americans bemoan and berate the high illegitimacy rate among teenagers or unwed mothers living alone with their children with the absence of husbands who are also the fathers when Celebrities are commonly celebrated for this very behavior? How can we profess to being scandalized by adulterous affairs by public figures when we enjoy watching adulterous affairs every day on TV shows (not to mention frequent fornication)? How can we complain about speeding drivers or driving which endangers when that very thing is touted in automobile commercials daily and thrills so many of us in countless movies? Why are we so horrified when our economy is threatened and times become financially tough for people when greed and corruption or cheating is so rampant in our materialistic, self-indulgent, hedonistic consumer culture which is the base cause of the fiscal fiasco? Why are we so horrified by violence and killing when we spend billions every year on games and movies that glorify both? We even reward those which do this best! Why are we so concerned that every child have health care, but we kill almost a million babies every year before they even have a chance to get sick? How is it possible that we are the most "Christian" and church going Nation in the world?

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 11:25

Saturday, March 15, 2008

### **HERE IS A BOOK THAT NEEDS TO BE READ**

This essay marshalls great arguments against Atheism and for Christianity. It is written by Tony Snow and is based on this book by Dinesh D'Souza <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/march/25.79.html?start=3>

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 17:01

Saturday, March 8, 2008

## **ASIAN THEOLOGY?**

Mustard Seed and Leaven, Reflections on Asian theology by Nate Jones There is a review in the current Books and Culture magazine about "Asian Theology". The authors reviewed seem to think they are into something unique to Asia. And the reviewer is impressed with what they write. I am amazed if these three Theologians think they are onto something uniquely Asian. And I am surprised and dismayed that the reviewer not only likes what he is reading, but that he seems totally unaware that it is very common here in the States. Read any of the post modern, emergent and missional websites and the authors and books recommend there. They promote the same concepts that these Asian Theologians and their reviewer think are so "Asian". Actually, they are rooted in 19th and 20th century German and French philosophy made popular here first in University English Departments, beginning more than 30 years ago. Read the serious and extensive article here and see what we are dealing with in many of today's churches on an intellectual level and yet which is grabbing the minds and hearts of many young Christian social activists today on a very practical level. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2008/001/22.44.html>

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 16:19

## **SHOULD THE CHURCH BE EXCLUSIVELY SPIRITUAL?**

In a recent email, someone referred me to a Blog where I read that the church, as a visible and constitutional organization, ought to be exclusively concerned for "spiritual" matters.' Accordingly, the church supposedly serves to proclaim a gospel that transcends social activism, economics and politics. Here is my response-The "Church" can be defined as a community of Believers who have covenanted together to be the people of God, the Body of Christ, in a particular location. (The Bible expects every baptized Believer to be active in such a Faith Community.) Such local churches exist, first of all, to publicly, corporately worship God the Father, Son and Spirit. This worship will include listening to the Word of God preached. This could be said to the gathered church confining its concern to spiritual matters only (i.e.- Praising, Preaching and Praying). However, I'm sure listening to the Word of God is done with the expectation by the Preacher that what is heard will be obeyed and put into practice during the week after the gathered church has scattered into the community. This is possible only if the preaching includes expositing those passages that have to do with marriage, family, money, work, ethics, morals and righteous living. (Unless the Preacher confines himself to texts about Salvation, church polity, praying, personal evangelism, prophecy and the like. Many preachers do.) But if the preacher is really preaching what is in the Bible, cover to cover, he can not and dare not avoid what God has revealed about righteousness and justice. Do the spiritual only folks really believe God has revealed nothing relevant to social issues, economics and politics? Is there really no Word from God relevant to our world and culture and how we are to live in it? If there is such a Word, it is to be preached and the church is to scatter into the world to act accordingly. Neither the Gospel nor the Church transcends these issues. God forbid! Besides gathering for Worship and listening to the Word preached, the gathered local church celebrates the two Sacraments (or to observe the two Ordinances). What the Church is about is indicated by these Rituals. They are called Gospel Sacraments (or Ordinances). Baptism has to do with regeneration, saving faith and entrance into the Church- the beginning of life as a Believer. The Eucharist (Lord's Supper) has to do with strengthening saving faith and nourishing that new life in Christ. Are Regeneration and Life in Christ exclusively spiritual matters? Do they transcend social, economic and political matters? What is the Incarnation about? Was that exclusively spiritual? God the Son entered and lived in the real world. He was immanent- one of us. He had a physical body that sweat and bled. Is His Body, the Church, called to avoid that and not get dirt under its collective nails from laboring in the economical and political world? We are not docetists, renouncing the flesh as evil and seeking escape from it into some so-called spiritual, transcendent eyrie in which to nest and be safe high above the world. Could it be that God has not spoken about such matters? What kind of good news is the Gospel if it does not bring help and hope to this fallen world? A Gospel that transcends the world, a Cross that transcends the world, a Resurrection that transcends the world, a Savior that transcends the world, a Church that transcends the world- what are these? Surely not anything that is in the Bible! Or that we want!

Posted by Cal in Church at 13:46

## **GOD'S TWO HANDS**

Someone asked what I thought about the Lutheran concept of Two Kingdoms (God's Two hands). Here is my answer. There is only one Authority in the Universe- God Himself and all His authority has been given to Christ (Matt 28:18) The

exercise of authority is government. All government, the exercise of authority as such, is good and is a gift to Humanity. See Rom 13:1-2 The absence of government or anarchy and chaos is not good. Christ delegates His authority and governs through the four specific governments of Husband in Marriage, Father or Parent in Family, Elder in Church and Ruler in the State. These are all servants of God, to do His will in their respective spheres of influence. (In actual practice, each or all of them may be rebellious and not intentionally serve God.) With due respect for Luther, the idea of Two Kingdoms, one civil and one spiritual is incorrect and misleading. It implies that one is better (the spiritual) and the other not good (worldly or even bad). That is not what Luther meant, but the concept fosters or lends support to a dualism that plagues Christianity and Christians, leading them to divide their lives into the spiritual and good versus the physical and carnal or sinful. And thinking that way undermines the truth that Christ is Lord of all and that all comes from God and exists for the glory of God. Dualism in turn leads people to divide their loyalties or priorities and justify choosing between the four governments (above), pitting one against the other. This is not good- again, see Rom 13:1-2

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:44

Friday, March 7, 2008

## **WHAT MAKES A CHURCH MISSIONAL?**

Certain traditional churches I know are being confused these days by their new young Pastors encouraging them to become "Missional". That is a major buzzword these days. The following CT article is fair and helpful in explaining what these Pastors may have in mind. I add my own comments in response. **What Makes a Church Missional?** Title and quotes [in bold letters] are from the CT Essay found here <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/march/16.56.html?start=1>

missional and missional church are barely 10 years old A 1998 book titled *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* was the first work to introduce the concept of a missional church. [the authors] sought to bring the World Council of Churches' discussions of *missio dei* ("the mission of God") and Lesslie Newbigin's missionary insights to bear on North America. the authors of *Missional Church* emphasized that everything the church ought to be and do is mission: "Missions" should not be one church program among many, but the church's core identity as witnesses sent by God into the world. *Missional Church* authors ... sought to diagnose the cultural captivity of today's church, ... they painted a theologically rooted vision of the church as a community called to participate in God's mission in and for the world. [advocates of a Missional Church often disparage the traditional Church, its "cultural captivity" and History and want to move around or beyond denominational and doctrinal differences, becoming united with each other in being missional] Since [1998, there have been] many conflicting definitions of missional church. In general, these definitions share a sense that the church is not primarily about us, but about God's mission. But consensus breaks down over what God's mission is and what it means to participate in it. *Missional Church* speaks about the mission of God as the kingdom of God—something larger than the church of which the church provides a foretaste. Yet this emphasis can become reductionistic. For example, Brian McLaren, one of several Emergent church leaders who self-identify as missional, focuses so much on the kingdom "message of Jesus" in the synoptic Gospels that he sidelines other scriptural themes. Hearing McLaren and others, the kingdom often sounds like nothing more than a set of ethical activities in which anyone—Christian, Muslim, or atheist—can participate. The centrality of Jesus Christ himself can be eclipsed by the ethical "message of Jesus." Whereas *Missional Church* [the book] sought to free Scripture from its cultural captivity, some kingdom theologies reduce the gospel to a fashionable cultural creed of ethics, inclusion, and social action. Among the commonly cited deficiencies of Christendom are the Reformational marks of the church. Allegedly, concern for true preaching of the Word and right administration of the sacraments leads to an unhealthy focus on the church's internal life. With the ministry of Word and sacrament de-centered for a vague notion of "mission," strange forms of experimentation can result [in being church, as well as in Worship] Some see the missional church as a refocusing on God's action in the world rather than obsessing over individuals' needs; others see it as an opportunity to "meet people where they are" and reinvent the church for postmodern culture. \_\_\_\_\_ My Comments: the authors of *Missional Church* emphasized that everything the church ought to be and do is mission: "Missions" should not be one church program among many, but the church's core identity as witnesses sent by God into the world. Notice that "missional" does not mean promoting traditional foreign missions. These are two different words, but traditional Christians first think their Pastor means the latter when he uses the former until they learn better later. *Missional Church* authors ... painted a theologically rooted vision of the church as a community called to participate in God's mission in and for the world. Here is a new definition of Church. Until only 10 years ago, churchgoers never heard of *missio dei* ("the mission of God") Most still have not. They know of Christ's "Great Commission" to the Church. That is about being Missionaries, preaching the Gospel and making disciples, as we go into the world. They consider this the Church's Mission, but have not thought much about God's mission. If they do, they would probably say God's mission was to send His Son into the world to be its Savior, just as He now sends us into the world to spread the good news about His Son and Salvation through Him. None of this is what being "missional" is about. No wonder there is a disconnect between long time church members and new time Pastors using this word and exhorting his congregation to become "missional", i.e.- the church as a community called to participate in God's mission in and for the world. Huh? the church is not primarily about us, but about God's mission. Most church people would question this. The Church does exist for us- to facilitate our Worship of God (which includes offering Sacraments) as well as to minister to our personal needs, especially in times of grief and tragedy as well as in times of joy, like the birth of babies or adoptions, conversions and weddings. The Church exists to teach our children about our Faith and the Bible and to offer a Christian youth program. The Church exists to provide small groups and discipleship training and to help us in our personal lives. The Church exists to help our elderly, sick and shut-ins. Yes, our Church also exists to preach the Gospel and offer a variety of outreach programs and ministries to the community. The Church exists to support world-wide Missions and Missionaries. The Church rightfully exists for all of these things and it always has. But none of this is what is meant by "missional"! Well, then, what is meant by "Missional"? consensus breaks down over what God's mission is and what it means to participate in it. *Missional Church* [the book] speaks about the mission of God as the

kingdom of God—Brian McLaren, one of several Emergent church leaders who self-identify as missional, focuses so much on the kingdom "message of Jesus" in the synoptic Gospels that he sidelines other scriptural themes. Hearing McLaren and others, the kingdom often sounds like nothing more than a set of ethical activities in which anyone—Christian, Muslim, or atheist—can participate. The centrality of Jesus Christ himself can be eclipsed by the ethical "message of Jesus." ...some... reduce [this to a] fashionable cultural creed of ethics, inclusion, and social action. Evangelical friends who are into being "missional" strongly insist they are, nevertheless, Evangelical and evangelistic. I think they are deceiving themselves. In their heads they are undoubtedly sincere about this, but in their hearts and actions they are moving in a different direction. Some see the missional church as a refocusing on God's action in the world ... others see it as an opportunity to "meet people where they are" and reinvent the church for postmodern culture. With the ministry of Word and sacrament de-centered for a vague notion of "mission," strange forms of experimentation can result [in being church, as well as in Worship]. Reinvent the Church? Reinvent the Gospel? Can anyone say, "Yellow Flag"? I feel badly for traditional churches who find themselves with "missional" Pastors. If I were on a Search Committee and the candidate self-identified as "Missional" (if he defines that anything like this article does) I would move on to another candidate. Ironically, there is some good in all this "missional" business. The Bible certainly does say God and His Word are alive and active and on a mission in the world. Other friends are so into doctrinal orthodoxy, they seem to have forgotten this. Missional Christians are to be commended for drawing the church's attention to this Biblical truth about God. Jesus did ascend to the Throne in heaven from which He is actively ruling in the affairs of the world. He is an actual reigning Sovereign and His Kingdom is real and present and it is more and bigger than the Church. In fact, extending and establishing the Kingdom on earth is God's mission and the Church is His primary agency to accomplish that mission. I heartily endorse this teaching. It is not a 10 year old heresy.

Posted by Cal in Church at 12:56

## **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

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

## **DEADLY BLOSSOMS and A BETTER WAY**

I am frustrated when I hear of Evangelicals today turning to Christian left-wing speakers and books for answers to social problems. I remember the 60's and the rhetoric about Revolution to over turn the Establishment. T-shirts pictured Jesus as Che Guevara. I was a young inner city Pastor in those days. I remember the infatuation of affluent, white college students with Marxism and so-called Liberation Theology. I remember the civil rights demonstrations and protests against the War. I remember the Hippies and the Jesus Movement, too. I remember the Communes and Flower Power and the folk songs about peace, love and freedom. I am convinced the seeds of many of our worst social problems today were planted in the hothouse of that Decade. The flowers have born deadly blossoms.

Many young Evangelicals are becoming involved with social action. Christian colleges and churches of all kinds reflect the concern that many of us have with the state of our world. That is good. Turning to retread leftist ideas (especially coerced governmental social engineering and redistribution of wealth to help the Poor and welfare state entitlement programs) is not good. Buying into the rhetoric about Empire and denouncing America and market driven Capitalism as the major source of oppression and poverty in the world is as wrong now as it was in the 60s. Damning the American church outright as a Constantine sell-out to the Powers of Evil is offensive and slanderous to say the very least.

Appealing to Jesus and the "Red-lettered" verses in the Gospels as the Model and support for all this rhetoric is just plain wrongheaded (I can't say ignorant, because all kinds of professionally lettered academics are involved. But then that was true in the benighted 60's also). My earnest prayer is that young Evangelicals would look into the Torah. Here is a Biblical program- God's program- for dealing with the economic and social issues of our times. You want Justice? Learn what the real, Biblical meaning of that concept is- in the Torah. Most Evangelicals of all kinds have misunderstood and written off this portion of the Word. Big mistake. I hope you will give a fresh look at the Law as explained in the following Essay. I think both groups will be surprised and challenged!

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 16:30

## **WHAT THE TORAH TEACHES ABOUT ECONOMICS**

**INTRODUCTION** Economics: "a social science concerned chiefly with description and analysis of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services" - Merriam-Webster Economics is about the choices people make with regard to scarce resources - People chose to sacrifice some things in order to obtain other things because there is a scarcity of those things and nothing scarce is free (every scarce thing has a price). Economics is about the exchanges people make of things [time, possessions, money, etc] desired less, for things [time, possessions, money, etc] desired more. These choices and exchanges are affected by values and incentives. They should also be determined by long-range (rather than immediate) consequences. The Bible does not have a detailed blueprint for any particular Economic System, e.g.- Capitalism or Socialism. What it does have in abundance are moral and ethical principles that are very relevant to economic topics, e.g. - work, private property, profit, money, employee and employer relationship, etc. These Biblical principles provide the values that guide economic choices and behavior

I.) The Four Fundamental Economic Principles [from Genesis 1-2 ]            A. Stewardship The dominant Biblical economic concept. God, as Creator, is ultimate owner of all created things. Any claim to ownership by Human Beings, collectively or individually, is conditional- never absolute. God, as Creator, has given responsibility for the management [stewardship] of His created World [including all living creatures natural resources] to Human Beings cf Psalm 24:1 and 115:16B. Sharing natural resources They are intended by God to be shared by all for the sustenance of all. All legitimate end products of the economic process are also to be available to all (This does not mean distributed or given to all) C. Work: "Fill & Subdue" All people have the right and responsibility to be engaged in economic work, i.e.- in the production and distribution of goods and services D. Growth: "Be fruitful & Multiply" Growth in population requires growth in economic production. This is to be desired and expected. Growth of population and production will result in surplus and scarcity of goods and services. Surplus and Scarcity will lead to exchange and trade governed by supply and demand.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:55

## **EFFECTS OF "THE FALL" ON ECONOMIC BEHAVIOR**

The Four Creation Principles (Genesis 1-2) to govern economic practice: Stewardship, Sharing, Work, Growth have been, throughout history, often violated: Stewardship has been universally rejected and replaced by absolute private ownership and exploitation of natural resources for personal gain. The natural world itself is generally uncooperative and resistant to cultivation. The work process has been corrupted, often being harsh and demeaning for millions of people. The Rights & Responsibilities of all people to work and share in the economic process are often denied or commonly manipulated in favor of a few. Economic growth has become an obsession, even an idol; prosperity, materialism and consumerism are pervasive and this leads to spiritual backsliding. God and economic justice are inseparable. All of these developments are evil, condemned by God and His Prophets. Economic evil is injustice and is inseparable from idolatry. These Biblical Economic Principles, derived from the Universal Laws revealed in Genesis are to be practiced by the Church today. It is the redeemed, regenerated and Spirit filled People of God who can do this and be the Model for the world.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:51

## **THE FOUR ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES FOR TODAY**

The Biblical Economic Principles, derived from the Universal Laws revealed in Genesis are to be practiced by the Church today. It is the redeemed, regenerated and Spirit filled People of God who can do this and be the Model for the world. I.) STEWARDSHIP The Cultural Mandate remains as God's Plan for Humanity, i.e.- the care, development and preservation of Creation, which includes Culture and Civilization

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:36

## **SHARING**

II.) SHARINGAs for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share... 1 Timothy 6:17 of the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35): Money is for Ministry. Wealth is for Welfare (defined as happiness, well-being and prosperity of all).

A. Sharing by the extended family 1 Tim 5:3 Honor widows who are truly widows. 4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. 7 Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Christians must be activists on behalf of the family, the extended family (all families everywhere). We must be pro-natalist (birth, i.e.-pro-babies), pro-elderly, pro-life in every sense from the youngest to the oldest. We must oppose all the currents and developments in our society that weaken or undermine extended families (including those trends within the local church). We must teach and model the care of family members who become homeless or destitute due to tragedy, crisis or oppression.

B. Sharing by the local church (and then area, regional, national and international organized, local churches) We must recover the concept of church as an extended family and the responsibility it has to care for its members (brothers & sisters in Christ) who become poor [homeless or destitute] due to oppression [violence, exploitation, theft] or tragedy. 1 John 3:16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? James 2:15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? The local church will also seek to minister to non-members who are poor. Galatians 6:10 as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Think local! All of this is a call to plant and grow true neighborhood churches. Churches have always tended to be segregated economically, if not racially or ethnically: Churches tend to be primarily poor or middle class or affluent and churches are increasingly neither neighborhood nor local, but regional. Churches should be started in neighborhoods all over the city, dozens of them, ministering in very practical ways to everyone possible. They would co-operate, but each would incarnate Christ in that location. It would evangelize a neighborhood and assimilate and care for everyone in that neighborhood who comes to Christ- whether they be rich, middle class or poor. Effective care must be provided in the context of a community because hurting people require more than impersonal gifts (collections and distributions). It involves long-term, personal, accountable and responsible involvement with them. That is the Scriptural pattern in both Testaments. Such neighborhood churches would be a major part of a serious and Scriptural solution to poverty (including both the destitute and the working poor). The New Testament Church policy toward collecting money for the poor members of the church

was generous, systematic, proportionate, voluntary and ad hoc (formed to meet specific and immediate needs) All these adjectives are important. 2 Cor 8:1...brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 13 Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. 14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality [= equity = fair share]. This is not a mandate for the distribution of all income or wealth equally among all Christians, let alone in society at large. It is definitely not an endorsement of socialism or any kind of coercive government program for the redistribution of the wealth of its citizens 2 Cor 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver 1 Corinthians 16:1 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. People who become poor due to their own personal [sinful or lazy] behavior are responsible for themselves. Family, Church, Society (including the State) are not responsible for them. See 2 Thes.3:6 Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. 9 It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: 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. C. Practicing the Tithe of all our wealth [financial assets] Most of the Tithe (2/3rd) should be given for Worship and the support of Pastors who work full-time for the Church The rest of the Tithe is to be given to the poor who have no family to care for them We are not to be legalistic about the Tithe. It serves as a rule-of-thumb"- a Principle like all the others. Those who insist Christians do not need to practice the Tithe because it is not in the New Testament must explain why they want to practice many other things from the Old not mentioned in the New. If the argument is that the Tithe is legalistic and narrow and we live under grace which is greater, then it follows that the person making the argument will give far more than a Tithe to the Church and the Poor, certainly not less. D. Gleaning- Businesses are to designate a portion of their product or proceeds for the unemployed poor who are to be given opportunity to "glean" [temp work] for it. \_\_\_\_\_ These are 4 very practical, Scriptural ways of "loving our neighbor" by sharing. All remind us that God is the owner of all we have. We trust Him for it. We use it in His service.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:31

## WORK

III.) WORK Christians must model, and promote the Biblical Work Ethic. They must be active in promoting and securing education, training and opportunities for employment and work for all people. This is absolutely crucial. It is a major factor in the elimination of poverty. Christians are to be pro-labor [not the same as pro-union]. As employers, they are to be sure their employees are treated fairly and not oppressed or abused, paid fairly and promptly, and given regular time off. If they are not employers, Christians must actively promote policies within their workplace that will do this. Failure to treat workers in this way is considered by God and His prophets to be very serious sin- outright evil. Christians are to be politically active in seeking and enforcing legislation and laws to these ends. NOTE: What is essential for economic viability today is extensive knowledge and skills and appropriate technology (as well as systems of family and community support), for every person, including those who are involved in farming. Christians must advocate for everyone's right to have an education, access to support systems and entrance into economic processes. "Oppression" would include intentionally depriving [robbing] people of these necessities, eg- denying certain children access to good schools or denying certain adults training and employment or "minority business owners" the opportunity to bid on contracts or to develop their businesses. We see such deprivation, often institutionalized, as a major cause of poverty in America.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:27

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

IV.) ECONOMIC GROWTH Growth in population requires growth in economic production. This is to be desired and expected. Growth of population and production, mandated by Scripture, will normally result in surplus and scarcity of goods and services. This will lead to exchange and trade, governed by supply and demand. Christians tend to interpret this concept by one of two extremes: laissez faire, free-market Capitalism or totally State controlled production and

distribution, ie- Socialism *laissez-faire* = French *laissez faire*, to let (people) do as they choose- a doctrine opposing governmental interference in economic affairs beyond the minimum necessary for the maintenance of peace and property rights so-cial-ism = any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods *cap-i-tal-ism* = an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market

Biblically informed Christians will support the ideal of free-market Capitalism, rather than any form of Socialism, ie -collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods. They will oppose governmental interference in economic affairs beyond the minimum necessary for the maintenance of peace and property rights. They will resist any coerced redistribution of economic wealth. The Fall and "Man's" inherited sinful nature, negatively impacts the dynamics involved in economic growth. It especially leads to the control, for personal advantage, of the means of both production and distribution of goods and services. Greed and selfishness generated by the Fall leads to huge accumulation of wealth by a relative few for the benefit of a few. Biblical Christians are realists about both human nature and the evils caused thereby in the economy. They will continually and intentionally seek the regeneration of the hearts of all employers & employees through evangelism, with the aim of people becoming "new creatures" in Christ. Such people, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and properly taught the Biblical principles laid out in this paper, will work for the re-formation or redemption of the economic system. The private ownership of property and wealth is Scriptural (given the understanding that such ownership is never absolute, but is rather a matter of stewardship with accountability to God for its use) **THE PROBLEM OF UNLIMITED GROWTH AND ACCUMULATION OF WEALTH:** The Pursuit of Justice God expects increase in personal wealth, e.g.- The Parable of the Talents -(Matt 25:14-30) There are many laws and safe guards in the Law designed to prevent or limit the growth or accumulation of private wealth when it comes at the cost of economic injustice (violation of the Four Creation Economic Principles) Christians should practice economic policies that respect everyone's right to Education, Technical "Know-How" and access to "Social Capital". They will promote policies and laws designed to prevent anyone's acquisition of those assets. No one has the right to monopolize them or to deny them to others. Christians will not take economic advantage of (will not profit off of) a hurting Brother or Sister [or anyone else] This is a prohibition of usury and profit-gouging, not a prohibition of charging fair interest rates in a contractual commercial transaction. All of the principles laid out here apply, by extension, to Christian owned businesses. Christians should also actively seek to persuade the Boards, Stockholders, CEOs, CFOs- and all levels of Management of all Corporations and Businesses to conduct business according to these Principles. Socially, this will be a major factor in the eradication of poverty and economic well-being of all.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:21

Monday, March 3, 2008

## **CONSERVATIVE OR LIBERAL**

I knew for whom I would not vote before the primaries began. I knew I would not vote for an economic or cultural Liberal. That means, of course, I would not vote for either Mr Obama or Ms Clinton. I am a registered Republican, but I am not happy with our candidates either. I am a Conservative, more than I am Republican, but I am also a realist. I definitely prefer Sen. McCain over his Democratic rivals. George Will wrote an excellent column comparing Conservatism and Liberalism. I have separated his statements about each "ism" and am posting relevant excerpts from Will's column separately. This makes clear the differences. This is not about Republicans and Democrats. Both of these Parties have moved from their ideological moorings. Neither one can be described as truly Conservative or Liberal today. This is about two very different sets of values and political world views: two ideologies. Which one is more Biblically based? For excerpts of Mr Will's article read my Blog for June 2, 2007

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 14:31

## **WHAT AND WHO IS A LEFTIST EVANGELICAL?**

What is a Leftist or Left-wing Christian? Here are dictionary definitions to help decide—American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition (emphasis added) left-wing A descriptive term for an individual or a political faction that advocates liberal, radical, or even revolutionary policies, usually in favor of overcoming social inequalities. In the United States, left-wing groups generally support federal social welfare programs designed to open opportunities to all citizens. Note: Although both major political parties in the United States have left-wing factions, left-wing policies are usually associated with the Democratic party. liberalism In the twentieth century, a viewpoint or ideology associated with free political institutions and religious toleration, as well as support for a strong role of government in regulating capitalism and constructing the welfare state. right-wing A descriptive term for an individual or a political faction that advocates very conservative policies. Right-wing groups generally support free enterprise. In the United States, the right wing generally argues for a strong national defense program and opposes federal involvement in promoting social welfare. Note: Although both major political parties in the United States have right-wing factions, right-wing policies are usually associated with the Republican party. Here are some names of Left Leaning Evangelicals and other Religious Leaders [http://www.beliefnet.com/story/159/story\\_15998\\_1.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/159/story_15998_1.html) [http://www.beliefnet.com/story/150/story\\_15052\\_1.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/150/story_15052_1.html)

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 14:08

## **PLASTIC OR PAPER?**

The enemy is us. The problem with vehicles, guns, food, sports, emergency room care, churches, water, live performances, techno gadgets, Medicare, etc is not these things. It is us—our behavior, how we use or abuse these things. We don't need more legislation, we need more responsible, ethical people. The story featured this morning on the front page of our local paper, complete with a large photo of a "bagger", is the announcement of a local grocery chain that they will no longer use plastic bags. Bad for the environment, they say, jumping on the current bandwagon (undoubtedly pulled by horses fueled by corn).

The fact is there are pros and cons for both plastic and paper bags. A good case can be made, even by environmental groups, that plastic is better. The problem is not what the bags are made of, but how we humans use the bags. If we are irresponsible, use far more than we need and throw them away after only one trip home from the market or we scatter them to the wind, both plastic and paper are an environmental problem. Once again, it is our fallen sin nature that does us in. That is the case with all the items listed above. The answer to the question, Paper or Plastic? Is "Either will do with proper, ethical, responsible use." Hmmn, sounds like behavior Christians are supposed to practice. <http://www.reusablebags.com/facts.php?id=7> <http://www.sierraclub.org/bags> [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/09/0902\\_030902\\_plasticbags.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/09/0902_030902_plasticbags.html)

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 09:06

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