

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

## **GOD, MAN AND THE FOOD CRISIS**

Psalm 65 God and Agriculture: He provides You are to be praised, O God, in Zion, O God of our salvation, O Hope of all the ends of the earth and of the seas that are far away. You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth. You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase. You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty. May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, and the hills be clothed with joy. May the meadows cover themselves with flocks and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; let them shout for joy and sing.

On the Human side- Factors in the world food crisis "The surge [in market prices] is due to several factors, including increased demand in developing countries, higher fuel costs, ... the use of crops for biofuels, and speculation on global commodity markets." <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/> In addition to the above factors, there are others here in USA: Profits and subsidies for farmers, profits for seed and fertilizer developers and suppliers as well as Federal Government policies and regulations. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/28/Anything-we-can-change-here-What-does-the-Bible-say-Study-the-Scripture-in-the-next-two-Posts-\(below\)](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/28/Anything-we-can-change-here-What-does-the-Bible-say-Study-the-Scripture-in-the-next-two-Posts-(below))

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 11:29

## **THE FOUR HORSEMEN ARE RIDING TODAY. WHO ARE THEY?**

Revelation 6 1 I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" 2 I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. 3 When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" 4 Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword. 5 When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. 6 Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!" 7 When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" 8 I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 11:24

## **ROGATION DAY AND THE FOOD CRISIS**

Yesterday in the Church Calendar was Rogation Day. Originally, in England, it was a day of walking about the fields and praying for God's blessing on the land and coming Harvest. The Word of the Lord for the day included the following. It is addressed to the Israelites. I believe it applies to America as well. It has direct application to the growing oil and food crisis.

Deuteronomy 28:1-14 If you will only obey the Lord your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today [The Torah] all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the Lord your God: Blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your ground. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading-bowl. The Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns, and in all that you undertake; he will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. The Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give you. The Lord will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. ... if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today, by diligently observing them, and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I am commanding you today, either to the right or to the left, following other gods to serve them.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 11:19

Monday, April 28, 2008

## **PRINCE CASPIAN, CS LEWIS AND HEAVEN**

"In the opening chapter of his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis describes this powerful longing he experienced from his youth onwards. There he cautions that anyone with no interest in this kind of experience need read no further, for, as Lewis asserts, "the central story of my life is about nothing else." Lewis found this yearning hard to categorize. He finally gave his sensation of deep longing the title of joy, defining it in a special way that distinguished it from mere happiness or pleasure and putting it center stage in his

title." <http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/commentaries/isthismancaspian.html>

This is a quote from an interesting CT article in which comparisons are made between the life of Prince Caspian [Narnia Tales] and his creator, C.S. Lewis. The author's deep desire for "Joy" is the same as many Christians desire for God or Heaven, words used interchangeably. Indeed, Dr. Peter Kreeft believes all human beings have that longing, which is the title of one of his books, *The Heart's Deepest Longing*. I agree. Certainly, I have that longing. This is said with another CT article in mind by N.T. Wright, "Heaven is Not Our Home" It is material from Dr. Wright's book, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*

(HarperOne). <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2008/april/13.36.html> I agree with Dr Wright's thesis and what he says in the CT article about "life after life after death". He is correct in saying that the focus in the New Testament in the matter of what happens after we die is on the resurrection of our bodies. That is not new at all. I have believed and taught that for many years. The clinching argument for me that there would be a millennial or Messianic Kingdom on earth was predicated almost solely on this Doctrine canonized in the earliest Church Creeds. The very End Times would not be simply a bodiless, spiritual existence wherein our saved souls enjoy Eternal Life. The physical resurrection of the body of Jesus demonstrated how essential the body and its redemption is. Other wise, why bother? Jesus could have gone back to being a spirit as God is and we would do likewise at our death. Since all the departed are now alive "in Heaven" and millions have been for millennia, apart from any resurrection, who needs it? What would be the point? The resurrection of the body is a Doctrine with much Scriptural support. There are very few verses to support the far more popular belief in a spiritual afterlife in "Heaven". Those verses speak to this hunger for Joy that Lewis and Kreeft have written about. Jesus taught us to pray for the Kingdom to come on earth. But our longing to be absent from the body and instantly present with the Lord is far more keen and deep than any desire we may have for that earthy Kingdom someday. Yesterday (Sunday), many of us believe we enjoyed communion with the Risen Lord who was truly present with us during the Communion Service. The Lord's Supper and that communion is often said to be a foretaste of Heaven. We look forward to the consummation some day of that communion with the Triune God which we enjoy now in a very limited way. That is our deepest longing and "Joy". Yes, I believe that, as with our bodies, so there will ultimately be a new heaven and a new earth; but, the realization of that is not our deepest longing. As with Jesus' resurrection, so the redemption of Creation will vindicate the Creator. Finally, death and decay on every level will be defeated and removed forever. That is why the redemption of the earth, as with our bodies, is essential- it is for the glory of God. We do long for that glory to be manifest, but on a very personal level we long for our time with our Risen Lord most of all, when every tear shall be wiped away, all pain removed and we shall enter into the joy and peace promised us by the Lord. That hope makes the few verses about "being with the Lord" in Heaven immediately upon our "death" far more meaningful and helpful to most of us, especially when we go through bereavement, than the many more verses about Resurrection and the New Heavens and Earth some day. "Heaven" is going to be our Eternal Home. Jesus purchased it with His blood and there will never be a foreclosure on that transaction. Footnote: Yesterday, we heard a sermon the Preacher thought was based on John 14- the text in which Jesus promised to take us to be with Him in His Father's House where a "dwelling place" has been prepared for us. The Preacher dismissed any literal interpretation of the text and said this passage was about how every human being is already a dwelling place for God and that when they love, human beings experience God's presence within them. That is terrible, unscriptural Theology. I will stick with my anticipation of a very literal "room" awaiting me. Jesus assured us, "If it were not so, I would have told you."

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 12:55

## **UNDERSTANDING "EMERGENT", PoMo CHURCHES**

Increasingly, churches are becoming known as "emergent". Members are usually 20-30 something evangelicals who see themselves as emerging from the churches of their youth, their parents' churches. Today, those latter churches will include "Boomer" (folks now in their 50's) churches that have followed a contemporary, seeker-friendly model and those

tend to become large or “megachurches” and occupy theater-type buildings. These emergent Christians generally share the characteristics of what is known as Post-Modernism.

There are variations, but PoMo characteristics (for Christians and non-Christians alike) include the following: Agnostic, skeptical, non-dogmatic; anti-foundational (anti absolutes and claims of certainty); not into right-versus-wrong or truth-versus-error; inclusion is preferred over exclusion Moral and religious Pluralism, accept paradox and reject the need for logical consistency Knowledge comes in many ways, by reasoning but also through the irrational and non-rational; Emphasis is on feelings, experience and intuition as ways of knowing Value Narrative and stories as the primary way of communicating and learning. Relational, open to shared learning and growth in community Group participation rather than individualism; value dialogue as essential to gaining knowledge (or understanding) These are the characteristics of the younger generations, for better or worse, typically from late teens into early 40's, sourced primarily in their formal education in school and reinforced by their music, videos (the Internet) and movies. It is important to realize that in many ways Post-Modernism is reactionary. PoMo adults intentional reject the characteristics of the Modernism that describes their parents' approach to Knowledge and Faith. [Various dates are used for the end of Modernism, usually in the 1950's and 60's. But actually, “Modernism” as defined by these characteristics is still prevalent everywhere today.] Knowledge is rational, cerebral, propositional, didactic Modernism values “Truth”, “Foundationalism”- absolutes, certainties Modernism values right belief and Confessions of Faith Modernism values method, logic, deduction from principles, systems It values organization and control- distains chaos, confusion and contradiction This of course is an over simplified, reductionist view of Modernism. It is all of this and much more. In matters of Religion, it also has strong elements of Pietism and Romanticism. So-called “Modernist” Christians believe in the Holy Spirit and a deep, personal spiritual life and also believe in the importance of the local church and Christian fellowship and sharing (community), as well as learning through dialogue with others. [Ironically, Post Modernists today call traditional or conservative Christians “Modernists”. That used to be used to be what conservative Christians called “Liberals”] The major issue that divides the Modernist and the Post Modernist is Epistemology: the nature of knowledge and how we acquire it, especially knowledge of God. Put another way, the issue is the nature of “Truth” and how we define and know it. But this issue must not be seen as “academic”. This is the major issue deeply influencing how people understand who God is, what Salvation is, what being a Christian is, what Church is and what Worship is all about (including the purpose and type of music used). To be or not to be an “Emergent Church (or Christian) is not simply a matter of personal preference. There are serious, important consequences.

Posted by Cal in Church at 04:28

## **HOW NON-CHRISTIAN YOUTH SEE THE CHURCH**

Last Fall a list from a survey circulated on a number of websites with descriptors of today's typical church offered by “outsiders”. Apparently, the following are ways the Church is perceived by young adults. anti-homosexual (91%) judgmental (87%) hypocritical (85%) old-fashioned (78%) too involved in politics (75%) out of touch with reality (72%) insensitive to others (70%) boring (68%) not accepting of other faiths (64%) confusing (61%) Obviously, these are subjective judgments and not verified (or verifiable) by hard evidence. They actually say more about the “outsiders” than they do about the church. However, “Insiders” of particular churches might do well to take note to see if any of these descriptors are fair about their congregation.

Many Services I have attended in this area, in my opinion, are boring. Most are definitely not old fashioned (by my standards as an older person) and I don't think most of them as churches are involved in politics as such [a few lean Left and maybe two or three lean Right]. Individuals may well be hypocritical, but I don't know of any church which is hypocritical as a church by its own standards. As to confusing, well anything can be confusing to a new comer- but that normally is temporary. As to out of touch with reality, well that depends on who's reality. If reality includes God, than agnostics, atheists, secularists and materialists are the ones out of touch. That leaves us with anti-homosexual (91%) and not accepting of other faiths (64%). I imagine it is primarily because of these two perceptions that churches are labeled as judgmental (87%) and insensitive to others (70%). Well, now we are down to what churches consider to be core Biblical Doctrine and Morality. And yes, by these standards, those who do not agree with what evangelical Christians believe might see us as judgmental and insensitive to others. We must take that chance. I'm glad the airlines are being judgmental about the safety of their aircraft and colleges are being more alert for students who exhibit abnormal or aberrant or anti-social behavior at the risk of being insensitive to individuals and their privacy. Core Biblical Doctrine and Morality must never be determined by what our culture or certain groups within it deem to be “correct” at the risk of offending someone.

Posted by Cal in Church at 04:25

Sunday, April 27, 2008

## **MORE ON THE MORMON DEBACLE**

I am still very troubled by what the State of Texas has done to the children, families and church (i.e.- the members of the Yearning for Zion Ranch) Read this news report. I find it scary. Apparently the anonymous phone call from an alleged abused teen that started this episode was not from an abused teen at the ranch at all, but from an adult unconnected with the ranch. I am not surprised. Nor am I surprised that some over zealous State workers jumped at the excuse the call gave them to invade the Ranch and snatch over 400 children out of their homes and away from their parents and go on to disperse them around the State in foster care. Reading the article we learn the State will not act on the original complaint of child abuse. Dropping that, they are now justifying their actions based on the State's judgment that the culture [Religion] of the Ranch endangered the children.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/26/AR2008042601742.html?wpisrc=newsletter>

They are especially concerned that young teens were having babies, even though those teens and their babies were part of extended families and had the support of a community which provided a physically healthy and secure environment in which to live. I wonder what the State would think and do about all the babies born to single teenagers and growing up on their own, financially supported by Welfare, living in poor housing with inadequate healthcare in crime ridden neighborhoods or homeless, here in Springfield and in dozens of other cities around the Nation. Could the real motive in Texas be animus against a Religion and a cultural bias against simple, rural living without TVs and video games and the different way those Mormons dress. Oh, such deprivation! "Now comes a legal fight with a twist. The state will argue that the sect's children are at risk at the compound, but not because every one of them has been physically or sexually abused. Instead, they will say that the culture of the church,... was a danger to any child immersed in it." [my emphasis] If the real issue is arranged or forced marriage of underage teens, which is illegal, there had to be other ways to enforce the law, on a case by case basis, without uprooting all those children or causing such pain to their mothers. To justify the violent abuse of these children in one (State approved) way because they were allegedly abused in another (State disapproved) way is unconscionable. As I have said before, if the State can do this to these folks, they could do the same to other Religions and Families. We should be very concerned!" "The children are in a position to no longer on a daily basis be influenced by adults who have encouraged a code of silence," said Darrell Azar, a spokesman for Child Protective Services. "Now that they are away from that influence they may become more comfortable, and we will have a better chance of learning the truth." "Who are the adults this spokesman refers to as the influence the children must be taken away from? Could that be their mothers? Hmmn yes, we should be very concerned." <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/>

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 15:02

## **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

Thursday, April 24, 2008

## **A MAJOR REASON TO WORK FOR THE WELL-BEING OF IRAQ**

Psalm 122 I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.' Where is this House of the Lord? It is found in Jerusalem-Now our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the Country's Capital, cf to Washington DC For there are the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May they prosper who love you. 'Peace be within your walls and quietness within your towers. Believers went into the City to Worship: Jerusalem is built as a city... . To which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, the assembly of Israel, to praise the name of the Lord. The House of the Lord, the Temple, is within the City. People assembled there to worship. This is why, the Psalmist said, we pray for the well-being of the City- for the sake of the Temple there 'For my family and companions' sake, I pray for your prosperity. 'Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do you good.' Today, the House of God, His Temple, is the Church (Eph.2:19-22, 1 Tim 3:15; Heb 3:6, et al) A major reason we should seek the prosperity and welfare of any City is for the sake of the Christians living there. The latter require the former. Cf 1 Timothy 2:1 I urge, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made... 3 for kings and all those in authority, [for the City] that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 4 This is good, and pleases God our Savior This is one of the major reasons we must pray for Iraq and work for its Shalom: the well-being of Christians who live there. The Church is being terribly oppressed in that Country <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/21/AR2008042103143>.

Posted by Cal in Church at 11:41

Tuesday, April 22, 2008

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

"As with any other subject, when exploring environmental ethics, one needs to discern the underlying worldview in order to understand and critique it. What is the philosophy's view of humankind in relation to nature? Is human progress seen as bad, good, or even the central issue? Is there a true balance between the biblical elevation of man as steward/co-creator/image-bearer and the avoidance of that role's abuse? Backing up a step, is the assumption of man as superior to the rest of nature mere arrogance? What are the foundational presuppositions of the various branches of today's environmental movement and where do they lead?" Here are some good resources from the article just quoted-<http://www.leaderu.com/focus/environment01.html>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 09:42

## **THE GLOBAL WARNING'S DANGEROUS DOGMA**

"Expelled" the movie has many Christians rightly concerned about the expulsion from the Academy of those who teach Intelligent Design in their classes. They clamor for academic freedom to teach ID. At the same time, many of the same Christians are adamant about denying such freedom to those who would question the current campaign to convince everyone that human behavior (especially American) is the cause of Global Warming. Many Christians have no problem accepting that accepted "scientifically proved" dogma even while they question the accepted "scientifically proved" dogma of Darwinism. Here are excellent articles about this by Thomas Derr "Global warming has achieved the status of a major threat. It inspires nightmares of a troubled future and propels apocalyptic dramas such as the summer 2004 movie The Day After Tomorrow. Even were the Kyoto treaty to be fully implemented, it wouldn't make a dent in the warming trend, which seems to be inexorable. Doom is upon us. Except that maybe it isn't. You might not know it from ordinary media accounts, which report the judgments of alarmists as "settled science," but there is a skeptical side to the argument. Scientists familiar with the issues involved have written critically about the theory of global warming. The puzzle is why these commentators, well-credentialed and experienced, have been swept aside to produce a false "consensus." What is it that produces widespread agreement among both "experts" and the general public on a hypothesis which is quite likely wrong?"

-T.Derr <http://carnageandculture.blogspot.com/2007/07/thomas-sieger-derr-politics-of-global.html> [http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id\\_article=6000](http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=6000) [http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id\\_article=395](http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=395)

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 09:35

## **HUNGRY BABIES**

Last week, another "summit" of Community activists about the problem of unemployment in this area. There is no end to the string of "Summits". And this afternoon, our Police Commissioner will announce his plans to prevent trouble this Summer among unemployed youth. Most of the youth here drop out of school. We also have the highest rate of illegitimacy in the State. And one of the highest rates of poverty in the country- mostly involving unwed mothers and their small children. The State must solve these problems. We need more money to fund more programs- That is the hue and cry. Why are folks so obdurate about accepting the obvious? Youth must graduate from High School. They must pursue skills in High School and beyond that make them employable. They must not have children until they (not the State) can support them or are at least married to someone who is employed in a decent job. It will always come down to these basics. Always! No excuses! No exceptions! <http://jewishworldreview.com/cols/fields041008.php3>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 09:20

Saturday, April 19, 2008

## **OH YOU'RE RETIRED! WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR TIME?**

I recorded a program on a local Christian radio station this week about the importance of personal evangelism. Most of my life, I have given priority to it; but no longer. The most obvious reason is that I literally do not see or spend much time with many people these days. Being engaged and involved with people, particularly unsaved people, is the first requisite for personal evangelism. Second reason is that people who come to Christ must be taught to live as Christians and my understanding of what that living involves has changed. New and older Believers need to think and act Biblically in all areas of daily life. I see very few Christians doing this. I want to spend my "retirement" years working to change this situation. Such work requires much time for study and writing, most of which is done privately, as well time as for teaching.

A third reason is new understanding of some basic concepts. The Gospel itself is wider than I once thought and begins with Creation rather than the Fall and ends with a New Creation, not simply Eternal Life or Glory. Christian living involves living daily in harmony with creational ordinances and the Torah- God's Norms for life; not simply church services, personal devotions, small groups and occasional outreach programs or ministry-to-others activities. I am finding it very difficult (if not impossible) to implement what I am writing about here in both the traditional and contemporary churches I know. Fourth, Christians unknowingly are dualistic and enmeshed in (dominated by) non-Christian and often anti-Biblical ideologies and isms. This prevents them from "walking the Talk". These ideologies and isms need to be "destroyed" before Christians can see clearly the path the Lord wants them to walk. I will continue, of course, to be burdened for the Lost and seek to lead them to saving faith as I have opportunity, but instead of giving priority to making more new Believers, as I have done all my life, I now am more concerned to help folks who are already Believers break free from their intellectual bondage to the ideologies and isms of our times and then re-form their minds and lives according to Biblical Principles. To this end I intend to start a Re/formation Institute- a learning community. This should have a greater, long range impact on the growth of the Kingdom. The enemy strongholds that must be brought down begin with Atheism and move on through Naturalism, Scientism, Technism and Materialism. Evangelicals are caught up in all of these Isms and they control their thinking about "how life works" and they live accordingly, rather than Biblically. The five major areas of life effected are Being Human, Marriage and Family, Environment, Economic Development, Government and Law (Justice) I see the local Church, no longer as the work I do, but as the primary means of the grace necessary for me to live as a Christian and to carry on this re/formational work.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 10:10

## **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

Friday, April 18, 2008

## **EXPELLED? NATURALLY**

There is a movie opening this week that conservative Christians are promoting: EXPELLED. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/reviews/2008/expelled.html>The major theme is the alleged suppression in academia of Professors who want to teach Intelligent Design in their classrooms (They have allegedly been "expelled"). The secondary theme is the claim that Academia denies teachers and students freedom to consider ID, circling pedagogical wagons around Darwinism.

Both Christians and non-Christians need to know that Intelligent Design is not Creationism or Christian. The underlying issue in this debate is Philosophical Naturalism. To most, that is the basis for Science. The "Scientific Method" itself is grounded in Naturalism. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the Scientific Method involves "principles and procedures for the systematic pursuit of knowledge involving · the recognition and formulation of a problem· the collection of data through observation · experiment· the formulation and testing of hypotheses" We frequently hear that the natural world is all the reality there is. Energy, matter, time, and space are all that there is. The universe is closed. It is a box. We human beings exist in a finite, limited, box consisting of energy, matter, time, and space. - a closed system of causes and effects. This is the dominant Philosophy of our time. It is called Philosophical Naturalism. Almost ever subject taught in our schools at all levels is based on it or assumes it. The Bible teaches us Naturalism is not true. Naturalism does not correspond to Total reality (and that is the traditional definition of Truth) Beyond and apart from the natural world is another reality. Genesis 1:1 tells us that there is the natural reality and there is the super-natural. "Super" means "more than", "in addition to". Total Reality includes both. There is the natural order and there is God. God is not the same as the natural order. The natural order is not God. We do not live in a box. We are not confined to a world consisting of energy, matter, time, and space. Many have been deceived and misled by their public education to believe that they are so confined. Let us be very clear- energy, matter, time, and space do not define, exhaust, contain, enclose or limit all of reality! That is what Genesis 1:1 teaches. Christians must learn to think out side the box made by Naturalism. I can't emphasize enough how fundamental, how important, this Truth is. It affects everything we do, how we think and how we live. What our children learn in schools in almost every field would be radically different if this Truth about Total Reality were to be taught and made the basis of all other knowledge. Unless and until we can show the inadequacies of Naturalism, there will be no real movement toward solving the Debate about Origins. A movie exposing opposition to ID at the University (nothing new there) won't make any real difference or change the minds of Philosophical Naturalists.

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 16:39

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

## **IS THE POPE A CHRISTIAN?**

I admire this Pope Benedict and his predecessor as well. I admire them for their strong, public stand on moral issues of our time, against much opposition. However, that does not mean he is a Christian. If a Christian is someone who believes the Doctrines of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, then Benedict is a Christian. He is certainly orthodox in that regard. Is it enough? He has been baptized and regularly receives communion and publicly identifies with a Church. For most people, that certainly means he should be considered to be a Christian.

Does Benedict know and admit that he is a sinner? I'm sure he does. Does he believe that Jesus' death was a substitutionary atonement for his sins? Certainly. Does Benedict believe that faith in Jesus and his Sacrifice is essential for salvation? Yes- for everyone? Yes. Certainly all this means the Pope is a Christian! There is still something else.

Does the Pope trust in Christ alone for his salvation? Does he trust in grace alone for his hope of eternal life? If the answer is "no", then Benedict is not a Christian according to the classic Reformed, Protestant definition. By that definition, Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. If the Pope believes that good works, as well as faith, are essential for salvation or that the grace that saves requires Sacraments to communicate it to the sinner, then the Pope is not a Christian- or at least not a Protestant Christian. And that will be because the Pope does not accept the fifth distinctive Protestant Doctrine that the definition of the Gospel and how to be saved must be based on Scripture alone. [Those are known as the Five Solas] Someone might ask how I can be an Anglican/Episcopalian- isn't that the same as Catholic? In some ways, yes. We are "Catholic", like the Pope, in that we are Creedal, Sacramental and Liturgical. Evangelical or Reformed Catholics certainly believe in the Creeds of the early undivided Church, as well as the Protestant Confessions. And we value and enjoy the Sacraments as means of grace, i.e.- as means by which God strengthens our faith. They are very helpful (grace- full) That is not to say we believe that Baptism and the Eucharist are essential to salvation. Unlike Roman Catholics, we do not believe that. Likewise, the Church and its Worship (Liturgy) is very important to building up and maintaining our faith, but we do not believe that they are essential to our salvation. The key word here is "essential"- desirable, helpful, important- but not essential. As to good works or holiness or righteousness- these are the results, the fruit and evidence, of having been justified (saved) by faith alone. They are not essential, in addition, to that faith or essential to salvation. As to Scripture alone, we do read them in light of Tradition and Reason; but, these are not of equal value or importance. Some Anglicans make them out to be 3 equal legs on the stool of our Authority for Faith and Practice. When they contradict each other, another leg is used, that of the Spirit speaking from within a Faith Community. An evangelical or Reformed Anglican consults several resources, but the Scripture is primary and ultimate for Faith and practice. If it seems to contradict the other "legs", the Reformed Anglican will proceed humbly and with caution; but the Word will prevail over all. (Of course, unlike Roman Catholics, we do not have a Pope or Church to interpret for us officially what Scripture means or to be a tie-breaker when we do not agree).

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 13:12

Monday, April 14. 2008

## **"PROTESTANTS" AND THE POPE**

Echoing the concept of the seven cardinal vices -- set to paper by Pope Gregory I in the sixth century... The Vatican has put together a list of seven "social" sins. The seven social sins include 1. [abortion] 2. [embryonic] stem cell research 3. Drug abuse 4. Polluting the environment The original deadly sins: 1. Pride 2. Envy 3. Gluttony 4. Lust 5. Anger 6. Greed 7. Sloth I hope that all those who plan on demonstrating this week at appearances of Pope Benedict here in the United States, against pedophilia among Clergy and for "Gay Marriage" and the ordination of women to the Priesthood will also express moral outrage against the personal and social sins listed by the Vatican and perhaps practiced by many of them NOTE: The common meaning of "protestant" is one who protests- speaks against". It also can mean the opposite- one who, literally, testifies for (pro) something. The 16th Century Reformers were of the latter group, not the former. The spoke out in assent on behalf of the Doctrines of Grace.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 16:29

## **BEWARE BIG BROTHER**

OK, I do not agree with polygamy or child abuse. Granted. But something about the raid and kidnapping and warehousing of children by the federal Government bothers me, too. Shades of Waco. We had friends we with adopted teen daughters. One of them was angry with her parents for making her do homework and keeping a curfew on school nights. She made "a phone call" to authorities and charged her loving parents with child abuse. Those authorities were soon at the door and weeks of accusations and investigation followed- all pursued by some over zealous social workers responding to charges trumped up by an angry teen who wanted to go out with her friends instead of doing her homework.

Christians need to be far more concerned (read, fearful and wary) about "Big Brother" than they are. The greatest evil in the Bible is idolatry and the greatest false god is Civil Government that assumes unscriptural authority over its citizens- the Totalitarian State. Remember the Beast from the Sea in Revelation 13. He is not Charley the Tuna or a laughing matter at all! Along with many others, Christians worship Civil Government. They look to it for security and provision from cradle to the grave. Something, anything, that goes wrong in our society or country, the first to blame is that Government. Then we demand that it fix everything. Multitudes are totally dependent on the Civil Government as though it were their "God". That is idolatry and Christians are as guilty of it as anyone. There is a scriptural place for the State, but only a place. Remembering the "Sovereignty of the spheres", Marriage and Family have government, Church has government and Business has government. All have God-given responsibilities that must be respected, each by the other. That includes Civil Government (the State) The more separate, although co-operative, they are, the better. If the State (or the feds) can come on like gangbusters and run rampant over one church and hundreds of marriages and families in one place, BEWARE. They can do the same in another- maybe where you live or worship.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 15:46

## **REALITY CHECK: What Crisis? Who's Crisis?**

Another healthy dose of realism from George Will re. the so-called Housing Crisis <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/11/AR2008041103250.html>

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 15:44

## **BASEBALL AND THEOLOGY**

"There is no question that a "slippery slope to liberalism" exists. I have observed it enough times in my academic career. But there are actually two slippery slopes with which we should be concerned. The one is to run rough-shod over our past, thus driving us so far from our roots that we become essentially disconnected with our own past. But the other is

just as dangerous. It is to define ourselves so rigidly and unyieldingly that no movement is possible, to canonize a particular cultural moment, to perpetuate uncritically the shape of our seminary when it was in its very infancy, and thus to slide down the other side of the mountain, down the slippery slope to traditionalism. Liberalism's opposite is not healthy conservatism but an entrenched, unyielding adherence to the past."

"A healthy church and seminary must continually seek to steer clear of either slippery slope. We must never lose sight of the fact that Westminster is not a context less phenomenon. The seminary was born in a particular cultural-theological-ecclesiastical moment. There were concrete factors in the first quarter of the 20th century that influenced the shape Westminster tradition took. The world around us has changed since then. There are new cultural-theological-ecclesiastical moments to address. We are perhaps most true to the Westminster tradition when we, as our founders did and as subsequent generations of faculty have already done, shape ourselves in conversation with the world in which we live. And this process will invariably lead to adaptations, shifts in emphasis, rethinking long-held opinions while firming up others. And we do this, not despite our tradition, but precisely because of it." A Enns, "Yankees/ Westminster," <http://peterennsonline.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/> This is part of a very interesting article by the embattled Dr Enns, suspended WTS professor. He illustrates his comments about the Seminary with comparisons to the history of baseball and the Yankees. Babe Ruth, for example, is part of the Yankee Tradition, but could not play today because of the changes in the game. My Question: Does Enns' analysis hold when we consider, not the Seminary, but the historic Reformed Confessions? Are they unchanged or must they, too, be rewritten to keep up with the Game?

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 07:50

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

## **CHRIST DIED FOR ME! HALLELUJAH**

Here is an excellent essay explaining the Gospel according to Paul, particularly the Doctrines of Substitutionary Atonement and Justification by Faith alone in Christ alone. Good Gospel Stuff!![http://www.fuller.edu/news/pubs/tnn/2008\\_Winter/4\\_atoning\\_cross.asp](http://www.fuller.edu/news/pubs/tnn/2008_Winter/4_atoning_cross.asp)

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 20:36

## **GOOD OLD PAUL- GOOD OLD GOSPEL**

This week several major Theologians, and many Pastors and Laypeople gathered locally to hear lectures about the Apostle Paul and his relevance to our time. I know many young evangelicals who have serious problems with Paul (really with their perception of Paul). They say they prefer "Jesus" (their perception of Jesus- shades of 1 Cor.1:12!) I appreciate the entire Bible. I have rejected the Marcion-type heresy that says we must be "New Testament Only" Christians, rejecting the God and authority of the Old Testament (I seriously considered that at one point years ago). I also reject the idea that the Gospel is the Sermon on the Mount and that Paul perverted the ("red-letter") teaching of Jesus into his own "Christianity", turning the humble Servant into the Cosmic Christ. That is all error! That said, Paul is still my main man when it comes to spelling out the saving Gospel and I still give far more weight to his didactic letters than to any narrative portions of Scripture. And as interesting and helpful the current concern is for studying the cultural, sociological, historical, even psychological context and background of Paul, I still chose to take him "straight up" on face value in the traditional, historical-grammatical manner. What brings all of this to mind today? I heard a Sermon recently. The message was about Holy Communion, based on Luke 24. If I understood the Speaker, somehow our taking Communion (whoever we are) enables God to accept us as His children. This is a wonderful assurance to have and why we take Communion frequently- Christ is "known" in the breaking of the Bread and so are we. Interesting. For the record, if I "got the Message", this is not evangelical, Reformed or Scriptural Doctrine. Paul makes it crystal clear that sinners are accepted or "adopted" as the sons (children) of God at the moment they enter into "union" with Christ by the exercise of saving faith- and in no other way. A sinner may receive Holy Communion every day for years, but if there is no such saving faith, there is no union with Christ, there is no adoption. We are recognized as children of God because, from that moment, being "in Christ", we are clothed in His Righteousness (reckoned or imputed to us by grace) and then given His Spirit to indwell us, a mark or seal of the adoption, who in turn gives us assurance we have been adopted by God. This is all very Pauline and none of it was mentioned in the Sermon I heard. Sadly, because our assurance of belonging to God is based on these truths, not from receiving Communion.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:34

## **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

## **NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR**

Books and Culture currently features 3 interesting reviews of important books about the American Civil War. They are relevant to current History as well.<http://www.christianitytoday.com/books/>

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 17:47

## **PRAYING FOR TIBETANS**

Tibet has been in the media recently due to the Chinese Government's violent reaction to Tibetan protestors. While many talk about a US boycott of the Olympics because of the Chinese treatment of Tibetans, we at AFM hope you can pray for those few Tibetan believers and the many Amdo Tibetans who have not yet turned to Christ during this traumatic season. With Easter wishes to you, Julian Linnell, PhD, Executive Director Anglican Frontier Missions O God of all the nations of the earth: Remember the Amdo Tibetans who have been created in your image but have not known the redeeming work of our Savior Jesus; and grant that they may be brought to know and worship you as you have been revealed in your Son. AMEN 5.4 million Tibetans Worldwide- 80% Lama Buddhism interwoven with pre-Buddhist Bon religion- 0.01% Christian- 3 main dialog areas: Lhasa, Khamba, Amdo- 620AD Lamaistic Buddhism introduced to Tibet- 1950 Chinese Army invaded Tibet: systematically destroyed Tibetan culture, religion, with loss of possibly 1 million Tibetan lives. About 500,000 Tibetans live in exile in Nepal, India and the West.- Before 1950s, about 2700 Buddhist temples and 110,000 monks- Today, about 1780 Buddhist temples and 46,000 monks- Dalai Lama (lit. 'ocean of wisdom') is considered god-King and highest priest of Lamaistic Buddhism\*Sources: World Christian Encyclopedia, Operation World

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 09:22

## **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

## **KILLING GIRLS**

Abortion of girls: A different pro-life argument

[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/)

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 06:58

## **SURVEYS CAN BE WRONG**

"World Opinion" is not reliable indicator of how USA is doing in the world

<http://www.creators.com/opinion/mona-charen.html?columnsName=mch>

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 06:56

## **UNHEALTHY CARE**

Health Care and Civil Government

<http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/pipes200601260811.asp>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 06:54

Monday, April 7, 2008

### **MOTHER CHURCH- Part 3**

I have been having an exchange with "Anonymous" about my first post about Mother Church (below) I am replying here, rather than in the Comment section, as (he?) raises important issues worth a wider read. He says, While I cannot speak for the website you were referring to (as I don't know what it is), In this case, that does not matter because I am using the words quoted as a sample of a point of view I often hear. I am taking them literally, exactly as written. I wrote: "I found this paragraph on a website, but it is a view I have heard often". I am discussing that view, not the website. The writer of the original paragraph specifically defines "Religion" (no qualifiers, ∴ All Religion) as "man-made attempts to reach God through rules and rituals". . (and) we reject man-made religion." This is an absolute, universal inclusive statement- all Religion is man-made. Then the original writer makes this claim "we believe religion has kept more people from the truth than anything in history."-again a universal, absolute statement about all Religion. I then tried to show that the writer of the paragraph is being careless and that his definition needs amending. I used the dictionary definition and do not believe that his argument is at all appropriate or fair, if that dictionary definition is used. I then stated that Christ Himself instituted an institutional Religion and that I strongly believe in that Religion- the Christian Religion, which does indeed include many rules and rituals. I deny that the Institution that began with Christ "has kept more people from the truth than anything in history." I agreed that many have and do trust in religious rules and rites for their salvation. This is futile and I am sorry that it happens. Anonymous says, in my experience believers often use this label to refer to the works based "religion" they (and their hearers) have experienced and are familiar with. I don't doubt that at all, but it does not change what I have said in my Post. It is not an attempt to distance themselves from "Mother Church" (usually they are involved in a church). Good, glad to hear that. I wonder if their current churches have rules and rituals. What would be the difference between now and then? I wrote that this is not an either or situation. Many of us enjoy both a relationship with God based on His grace and the nurture of that relationship that is found in our churches (our Religion). Great! Thanks for your comments, Anonymous. I hope we are in sync now

Posted by Cal in Church at 16:35

Sunday, April 6, 2008

## **MOTHER CHURCH Part 2**

I thought I better add to the Post below about the Church being our spiritual mother. I spelled out what I meant: the institutional Church in a broad sense is the God given primary source of our nurture and support as Believers through her Worship, Preaching, and Sacraments (especially Holy Communion). I would add education, discipline (accountability) and opportunities for ministry and outreach, but para-church groups also offer them. All of these are the normal means by which saving and living faith is made possible and built up. Hence, "Mother Church". I have loved, honored and served her all my life. However, she has also given me much frustration, pain and heartache. It has not been easy to be a faithful son and I have often been tempted to divorce my "Mother". I can't and I won't. But I can say, not every local church is a good mother. Some are downright terrible at motherhood. Some can smother or suck the very life out of you. So I would say that sometimes there can be the need to move away from "Mother", when living close becomes unhealthy- and to find another who will be more helpful for awhile. "Mother's home-cooking" can be great and I don't want to go without it for long; but sometimes a restaurant is nice, too, or going to a friend's house for supper can be enjoyable now and then.

Posted by Cal in Church at 14:23

Tuesday, April 1, 2008

## **THE CHURCH IS OUR MOTHER**

"Many people refer to us as "Christians," but we consider ourselves followers of Jesus. Like Jesus, we reject many of the issues found in "organized religion" (man-made attempts to reach God through rules and rituals). Actually, we believe religion has kept more people from the truth than anything in history. Although we reject man-made religion, we consider the personal pursuit of God as tantamount in each of our personal life journeys." I found this paragraph on a website, but it is a view I have heard often: we have no Religion, we have a personal relationship with Jesus. I understand what these well-intentioned folks are saying, but this concept and attitude really disturbs me every time I hear it.

By "Religion" these critics of it mean "man-made attempts to reach God through rules and rituals". The standard M-W dictionary definition of "Religion" is 1 a. the service and worship of God b. commitment or devotion to a Faith or observance 2 a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices The declaration that all that is encompassed in this definition comprises "man-made rules and rituals for the purpose of reaching God" is totally bogus. That is a presumption read into the definition and an unfair one at that. There is no warrant for it. Actually, it is silly. Last time I checked, most of us go to Church for regular scheduled organized corporate worship with recognized Leaders, which includes rules and rituals of some kind. We stand, sit and follow directions. We sing and stop singing on command. Likewise with praying. We bring offerings. Invitations are often given for people to come for healing, to confess sins and for help to accept Christ. We take Communion and we submit to Baptism. We confess faith and become members. All of this is Religion. I have a Religion, but I do not practice it in order to get saved or go to Heaven, if that is what the critics above mean by the words, "to reach God". I have a Religion and I have a personal relationship with Jesus- both. It is not either-or! The people saying this are evangelicals who do, in fact go to church. To say that my Religion (and theirs) is man-made and "has kept more people from the truth than anything in history" is ridiculous. Their argument puts all Religion into the same trash basket. I agree some Religious beliefs and practices may be harmful. Undoubtedly, some people may very well be religious and not have saving faith. Some do trust in their religious practices to "reach God" or Salvation. That does not mean every religious person does this and that all Religion is bad. They actually mean depending on "all man made rules and rituals" for salvation is bad. That is not what they are actually saying and they don't seem to be aware of the difference. I have found that many evangelicals who slam "Religion" are expressing a bias against the institutional Church and are (unknowingly?) advocating a docetic Christianity- one which is all "spirit" and no "body". Can't be done. Christ Himself (who, after all, was God in the flesh) instituted the institutional Church- complete with Doctrines, Clergy and Sacraments and Members. In other words, Christ established the Christian Religion. Let's not knock it, using His Name to do that no less ("No Religion for us. We just want to follow Jesus.") The Church is our Mother, inasmuch as she nurtures our faith and Christian life. This is true even when we disagree and are unhappy with her. She has the means of Grace. Her Gospel and Scripture, Her preaching and teaching, Her Sacraments, Discipline and Fellowship are all essential to our "personal pursuit of God". Let us love our Mother and not reject her as nothing more than a bunch of man-made rules and rituals.

Posted by Cal in Church at 08:45