



Christian View of the News



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MERRY CHRISTMAS

Twenty centuries ago, who could have cared about the birth of a baby while the world was watching Rome in all her splendor? Bounded on the west by the Atlantic. . . on the east by the Euphrates. . . on the north by the Rhine and Danube. . . on the south by the Sahara Desert, the Roman Empire was as vast as it was vicious. Political intrigue, racial tension, increased immorality, and enormous military might occupied everyone's attention and conversation. Palestine existed under the crush of Rome's heavy boot. All eyes were on Augustus, the cynical Caesar who demanded a census so as to determine a measurement to enlarge taxes. At that time who was interested in a couple making an eighty-mile trip south from Nazareth? What could possibly be more important than Caesar's decisions in Rome? Who cared about a Jewish baby born in Bethlehem?

God did. Without realizing it, mighty Augustus was only an errand boy for the fulfillment of Micah's prediction. . . a pawn in the hand of Jehovah. . . a piece of lint on the pages of prophecy. While Rome was busy making history, God arrived. He pitched His fleshly tent in silence on straw. . . in a stable. . . under a star. The world didn't even notice. Reeling from the wake of Alexander the Great. . . Herod the Great. . . Augustus the Great, the world overlooked Mary's little Lamb.

It still does. - Charles Swindoll in *Seasons of Life*

REFLECTIONS ON CHRISTMAS

An infant named Jesus was born more than 1900 years ago in the days of Caesar Augustus. No responsible person doubts it - not Jews, Unitarians, Muslims, etc. The historical evidence is there to prove it. Time dates from before or after this Infant's birth. The Greeks were going to date time from the Olympics, the Romans were going to date time from the founding of Rome. The French were going to date time from the Revolution. All of these failed and most never heard of their efforts. Time dates from before or after the birth of Jesus. If this was all you knew about Jesus, you would know enough to stir any reasonable man's imagination to know why.

Jesus is the only universal character the world has ever known. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses are Jewish. Paul was more universal than any but Jesus, but he was no son of man+. Gladstone, Lloyd George and Churchill were Englishmen. Abraham Lincoln was an American. Americans are closer to Jesus than they are to Lincoln. The English are closer to Jesus than to Churchill. Why?

Jesus stood before the physically, mentally, morally and spiritually sick of this world and said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No other man outside of an insane asylum ever said a thing like that and made such an invitation. Why? Think about it. - Noel Smith, in *Baptist Bible Tribune* in the 1950s.

Though this is the first edition of the 32nd year of printing CVN, I thought that many of you would receive this before Christmas.

And I thought that these thoughts might be more uplifting than another reminder of the ACLU's continuing attacks on Christmas and Christians.

I am sometimes asked the subscription rate to receive CVN (12 times a year). There is no official rate, but the average cost to me is \$10.00 a year for each one sent out. I am grateful for generous gifts from a few who make up the difference. Gifts may be sent to the church for CVN. Thanks. - N.P.

IRAQ: IS THIS THE WAY OUT?

By its own admission, the Iraq Study Group (ISG) has submitted a "flawed" report to the president, to Congress and to the American people.

While the report properly calls for the Iraqi government to do more to reconcile warring factions, take greater control over its defense and defeat insurgent-terrorists, the ISG falls into a trap set by panel co-chair James Baker, who has long believed that what the United States and Israel do determines the behavior of unelected dictators and religious fanatics.

"Given the ability of Iran and Syria to influence events within Iraq and their interest in avoiding chaos in Iraq," the report says, "the United States should try to engage them constructively." The ISG must not have noticed that Iran and Syria are largely responsible for destabilizing Baghdad. Syria is simultaneously using its Hezbollah proxy to undermine the elected Lebanese government. What possible reason would Iran and Syria have to stabilize Iraq so that the United States can leave behind a free nation? Iran and Syria would see a free Iraq as a threat to their own dictatorial regimes.

Here's another flaw, straight from the familiar Baker playbook: "The United States cannot achieve its goals in the Middle East unless it deals directly with the Arab-Israeli conflict and regional instability." Among other things, that means "a commitment to a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine.:" Leaving aside the historical argument that Israel is Palestine, that approach has been tried (and has failed) over several administrations. That is because the only formula the "Palestinian" side will accept is one that obliterates the state of Israel.

There are noble calls for cooperation between Republicans and Democrats and be-

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tween the White House and Congress, but the problem is not on our side. It's on the other side. The ISG failed to deal with the religious motivations of those who believe their God wants us dead and who have no qualms about devising weapons of mass destruction to wipe out millions of us. "Infidel" diplomats are not about to influence dictators and mullahs who believe their "holy book" commands them to lie to the "cross worshippers" and "crusaders" in their own crusade for world dominance by force.

Weak European governments, which are busy capitulating to their growing Muslim populations, won't help us. Neither will Russia and China, which need oil and don't think much of America. What kind of "diplomacy" will work to bring them on board?

It is not the United States that has caused regional instability in the Middle East, as suggested by the ISG. If that were the case, who was to blame for instability before this Iraq war, or the previous one; indeed, who was to blame for instability before Israel became an independent state in 1948. The region has always been turbulent. Turbulence is their problem, not ours. The United States is a convenient excuse for the failures of numerous regimes to use their vast wealth and their once-proud heritage to secure a better life for their people. Dictators must always blame someone else for their failures to avoid being blamed themselves. It has always been so, whether the dictator is Islamic, communist, or fascist.

The incoming chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D.-Texas), may have the best short-term approach. To my surprise, Reyes is breaking with many of his Democratic colleagues, telling Newsweek Magazine he wants to increase the number of American troops in Iraq by 20,000 to 30,000 to help "dismantle the militias." Sen. Lindsay Graham (R.-S.C.), has been saying much the same thing for many months.

Enemies like this understand only one thing: power. They do not keep promises, or honor treaties and agreements that do not serve their primary interests. For them, those interests include humiliating the United States, securing Iraq for the acolytes of Osama bin Laden and then moving on to challenge America in other places and finally on our own soil. The problem is that if we wait to crush them until they reach our shores (and too many are already among us), it will be too late.

George Orwell said, "We sleep safe in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm." The Iraq Study Group Report won't contribute to our safety. Finishing the job we started, by whatever means necessary, will. - Cal Thomas, *townhall.com*, 12/7/06

SEPTEMBER 11 - - OUR PEARL HARBOR

On Dec. 7, 1941 -- 65 years ago this week -- pilots from a Japanese carrier force bombed Pearl Harbor. They killed 2,403 Americans, most of them service personnel, while destroying much of the American fleet and air forces stationed in Hawaii.

The next morning, an outraged United States declared war, which ended less than four years later with the destruction of most of the Japanese empire and its military.

Sixty years after Pearl Harbor came another surprise attack on U.S. soil, one that was, in some ways, even worse than the "Day of Infamy."

Nearly 3,000 people died in the Sept. 11 attacks -- the vast majority of them civilians. Al-Qaida's target was not an American military base far distant from the mainland. Rather, they suicide-bombed the United States' financial and military centers.

It's been five years since Sept. 11. After such a terrible provoca-

tion, why can't we bring the ongoing "global war on terror" -- whether in Afghanistan, Iraq or elsewhere -- to a close as our forefathers fighting World War II could?

Is our generation less competent? Not really. The United States routed the Taliban from Afghanistan by early December 2001. America's first clear-cut victory against the Japanese, at Midway, came six months after Pearl Harbor.

Do we lack the unity of the past? Perhaps. But we should at least remember that after Pearl Harbor, a national furor immediately arose over the intelligence failure that had allowed an enormous Japanese fleet to approach the Hawaiian Islands undetected. Extremists went further -- clamoring that the Roosevelt administration had deliberately lowered our guard as part of a conspiracy to pave the way for America's entrance into the war.

Are we in over our heads fighting in both Afghanistan and Iraq? Hardly. Within days after Pearl Harbor, the U.S. found itself in a three-front war against Germany, Italy and Japan -- an Axis that had won a series of recent battles against the British, Chinese and Russians.

But there are significant differences between the "global war on terror" and World War II that do explain why victory is taking so much longer this time.

The most obvious is that, against Japan and Germany, we faced easily identifiable nation states with conventional militaries. Today's terrorists blend in with civilians, and it's hard to tie them to their patron governments or enablers in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Pakistan, who all deny any culpability. We also tread carefully in an age of ubiquitous frightening weapons, when any war at any time might without much warning bring in a nuclear, non-democratic belligerent.

The limitations on our war-making are just as often self-imposed. Yes, we defeated the Axis powers in less than four years, but it was at a ghastly cost. To defeat both Japan and Germany, we averaged over 8,000 Americans lost every month of the war -- compared to around 50 per month since Sept. 11.

So far the United States has encouraged its citizens to shop rather than sacrifice. The subtext is that we can defeat the terrorists and their autocratic sponsors with just a fraction of our available manpower -- ensuring no real disruption in our lifestyles. That certainly wasn't the case with the Depression-era generation who fought World War II.

And in those days, peace and reconstruction *followed* rather than preceded victory. In tough-minded fashion, we offered ample aid to, and imposed democracy on, war-torn nations only after the enemy was utterly defeated and humiliated. Today, to avoid such carnage, we try to help and reform countries before our enemies have been vanquished -- putting the cart of aid before the horse of victory.

Our efforts today are further complicated by conflicting Internet fatwas, terrorist militias and shifting tribal alliances; in short, we are not always sure who the enemy cadre really is -- or will be.

So paradoxes follow:

A stronger, far more affluent United States believes it can use less of its power against the terrorists than a much poorer America did against the formidable Japanese and Germans.

World War II, which saw more than 400,000 Americans killed, was not nearly as controversial or frustrating as one that has so far taken less than one-hundredth of that terrible toil.

And after Pearl Harbor, Americans believed they had no margin of error in an elemental war for survival. Today, we are apparently convinced that we can lose ground, whether in Afghanistan or Iraq, and still not lose either the war or our civilization.

Of course, by 1945, Americans no longer feared another Pearl

Harbor. Yet, we, in a far stronger and larger United States, are still not sure we won't see another Sept. 11. - Victor Davis Hanson, *townhall.com*, 12/7/06

MAINLINERS PRINT 9/11 CONSPIRACY BOOK

The World Trade Center and Pentagon were actually blown up on 9/11 by the Bush Administration, according to a new book released by the official Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) publisher and written by a professor at a United Methodist seminary.

"That senior mainline church officials would publish this kind of absurd revisionist history is a scandal," said Mark Tooley, who directs the United Methodist committee at the Institute on Religion and Democracy [IRD].

Christian Faith and the Truth Behind 9/11, published by Westminster John Knox Press and written by David Ray Griffin, identifies the 9/11 terrorist attacks as a "false flag" operation organized by the U.S. government to justify aggression against its opponents. . . .

Westminster John Knox Press, which is funded by the 2.3 million-member Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), plans to print 7,000 copies of the book and has defended what it calls Griffin's "intellectually rigorous" arguments.

Griffin, a professor emeritus of philosophy and theology at United Methodist Claremont School of Theology in California, is a member of "Scholars for 9/11 Truth," a group that says it is "dedicated to exposing falsehoods and to revealing truths behind 9/11." Griffin is a process theologian who believes that God is constantly evolving. He asserts that the apostles and early church covered up Jesus Christ's real agenda, which was the overthrow of the Roman Empire. Like this hidden "Jesus," Griffin wants to overthrow the American "empire."

Editor's Comments: The enemies are inside our borders as well as outside. Some of them are religious too! This is positively wacky, but both the Presbyterians and the Methodists are involved in it.

The publisher issued a mid-November statement in which it criticized its publishing of this project but also said no one would be disciplined for doing so and they will continue to sell this book. A rather typical "apology" for liberals with their fingers caught in the door! - *The Sword of the Lord*, 12/1/06

GRAYING OF AMERICA: INCONVENIENT FACT

"Honor thy father and thy mother. . ." (Exodus 20:12)

Writing in *The Weekly Standard*, Yuval Levin observes that in the last few election cycles, significantly greater attention has been placed on foreign policy than domestic policy. "Apart from immigration and the vague odor of corruption," he says, "it is hard to find a single domestic issue that candidates consistently stressed on the stump this year." This, however, will not always remain the case, and Levin believes that conservatives would do well to develop a fresh perspective on domestic policy. This policy, he argues, should be geared toward the concerns of the "parenting class." Levin discusses the anxiety many mothers and fathers face in the current economy. He says that one of the primary concerns confronting more Americans every year is how to meet the needs of their aging parents.

It's a big problem, and it is only going to get worse in the next few years. America is undergoing a remarkable demographic shift that will change the face of our nation. In 2005 there were 36 million Americans over age 65. Within thirty years, this number is expected to double. Because people are generally having fewer children, however, there will be fewer young people to take care of their aging parents. There will be more elderly men and women requiring long-term care and

fewer young people to provide it.

When commentators discuss the fact that America is getting "grayer," they often talk about the problem in economic terms, which is perfectly understandable. After all, the elderly often require expensive care, yet they rarely produce money in their old age. Who will foot the bill? It is often noted that the economic crisis associated with the "age wave" will also be a crisis for the government. Medicare is slated to run out of money in 2018. A year before that, in 2017, Social Security will begin paying out more money than it receives in taxes. As the baby-boomers begin to retire these government programs will be stretched to their limit, and eventually the programs will not be able to meet the demand.

As ominous as the economic crisis is, there is an even greater cultural crisis. Many talk about the elderly as if they are merely parasites draining our time and money. Older men and women are often treated with little respect. I see it every day in my law practice, where I frequently represent men and women who are victims of nursing home abuse and neglect. Weak and helpless grandmothers and grandfathers are at the mercy of their caregivers who all too often are short of the staff and supplies necessary to provide adequate care because their employers are busy pursuing profits over people. The result is an epidemic of preventable pressure sores, malnutrition, dehydration, and falls among the institutionalized elderly.

Other than the unborn, no single age group in the United States suffers from a diminished view of the value of human life more than the elderly. We have adopted a sliding scale of dignity which depends upon one's functional capacity, quality of life, and level of sentience. Woe be unto the old person who does not score well using this quality of life calculus and who costs more to maintain than they produce.

There is no doubt that the *Roe v. Wade* ethic has had a striking effect on how we view the aged. *Roe* teaches us to look at other people in terms of how convenient they are to us. If someone is wanted, then their life has worth; if not, it is permissible to dispose of them. Now that we are facing a future where elderly men and women will be seen as economically inconvenient, where some will be unwanted and unloved, and where many will lack the mental or physical capacity to defend themselves, it is clear that the elderly are in danger of abuse, neglect, or perhaps even worse.

Increasingly, as a society we are demonstrating that we are willing to negotiate whose life is worth living, and whose life is not. These negotiations are done very publicly when it comes to the pre-born. The discussion is not quite as candid when dealing with the elderly - not yet, at least. Still, we are seeing more and more signs that people are ready to enter the negotiation. They are beginning to pose the questions: Is life under certain conditions really worth living? What are the circumstances that result in the forfeiture of one's right to life? Will a lack of self-awareness do it? Will the necessity of a feeding tube be enough? At what point do the elderly have "a duty to die and get out of the way," as posited by former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm. Notably, these questions are almost always posed by someone other than the person who is experiencing the unwanted condition. Stripped of their gloss, these questions might be rephrased, "Is it really fair that I should have to make sacrifices for this sorry life form? Isn't my comfort more important?"

This conversation is only now beginning, but as we approach the demographic changes ahead the debate will become increasingly acceptable in the public square. What was once seen as unthinkable may slowly become inevitable: "Of course the elderly should be given the dignity of a peaceful death! What kind of monster are you, desiring that they should suffer and decline over several painful years!"

The demographic and economic crises are real, but even more important is the crisis of human dignity. Will we allow ourselves to see the elderly as an inconvenience to be managed, or as people who are to be nurtured, cared for, and cherished? Will we see the dignity in their lives even when they are no longer useful to us? Will we love them regardless of their abilities?

In the increasingly utilitarian age in which we live -- an age where moral absolutes are mocked and the notion of transcendent truths is ridiculed -- the answer to these questions can be terrifying. -

Ken Connor, bvnhall.com, 12/1/06

HOVINDS FOUND GUILTY OF TAX FRAUD

Kent Hovind, a creation-science evangelist from Pensacola, Florida, and his wife have been convicted of tax fraud and are awaiting sentencing on January 7.

Hovind was charged with and convicted of fifty-eight federal counts, including failure to pay over \$800,000 in employee-related taxes and withholdings. He now faces the possibility of a prison sentence that could total as many as 288 years. His wife, convicted of aiding and abetting her husband in evading bank-reporting requirements, could be sentenced to as many as 225 years.

Owning and operating the Dinosaur Adventure Land in Pensacola, Hovind has claimed he was not obligated to pay the taxes because his workers were volunteers or missionaries. It is his contention, according to the *Pensacola News Journal*, that he and his employees at the theme park and his ministry are exempt from paying taxes since they are workers for God.

Editor's Comments: The Hovinds are not the first people to head down the trail of tax protestation claiming exemption because of their ministry. It is, however, a flawed and failed philosophy.

Several observations seem appropriate here:

1) This is neither a church/state issue nor a First Amendment case!

2) Pastors, evangelists, yes, all of our church and ministry workers do pay income taxes. We are NOT exempt from this in any sense.

3) If you or I are unhappy with the law, as we all sometimes are, then as law-abiding citizens, we should work the system to get the law changed. If we succeed, fine; but if we fail, the law is still the law.

4) While we all know people who have chosen this tax protest path for themselves, it has been my observation that though the process of prosecution is slow, it is sure. The fact that someone has gotten away with it for a time does not mean he is getting away with it. Their day of reckoning will eventually come.

5) None of us want the government nosing its way into the business of churches and Christian ministries, but at the same time we must abide by the law.

6) Employee withholding taxes are the law, a fact of life; and since it is the law, no one of us can just arbitrarily choose to go his own way. To do so simply invites the full force of the government to come against you.

7) Churches and other non-profits (not the ministers but the ministries) do have exemptions on property taxes, sales taxes, etc.; but again, that is the law!

Incidents such as this one with the Hovinds seem senseless and totally unfruitful. While he is sitting in a prison cell for the next few years, his life and his ministry are both ruined.

Our advice to churches, ministries and all of God's servants: get good tax advice, pay what is owed and live within the law. - *The Sword of the Lord*, 12/1/06

BRINGING BACK THE FAIRNESS DOCTRINE

In 1982, under the leadership of Chairman Richard E. Wiley, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) repealed a major broadcasting restriction, the Fairness Doctrine. There were howls of protest from conservatives who did not understand the effect this action would have upon the broadcast industry.

Some even pleaded for the reinstatement of the Fairness Doctrine. That is because prior to 1982 conservatives had so little access to the media they wanted to use government to force stations to give them a few minutes to reply to a controversial issue.

What they didn't understand was that the FCC action paved the way for Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Mike Reagan, Mark Levin, Janet Parshall and the host of other syndicated radio shows. In addition there are some 1,100 local conservative talk-show hosts. At the time AM radio was going down the drain. Stations were sold for a song. Some even went off the air. Why? Because no one under age 30 had even heard of AM radio. FM was the rage. The FCC action saved AM radio. In the process, controversial issues could be discussed without the need for the Fairness Doctrine. Liberals have tried to imitate what conservatives have done with radio. First, they tried various programs. They all failed. Then with Air America they were going to try to put a network together. In case you haven't heard, it went belly up. Now they are trying again. Likely they will fail. Why? Because of the hopelessness of their message. A third of self-professed liberals listen to conservative talk radio. Why? Because we offer hope. . . .

Now that Democrats will have majorities in both Houses of Congress they want to attempt to re-instate the Fairness Doctrine, which would effectively shut down conservative talk radio. How do I know? Because liberals in Congress have said so.

Under the law regulatory agencies such as the FCC have a majority and minority status depending on which President is in power. The Free Congress Foundation has decided to make the preservation of talk radio a major effort. First, we want to be sure if President George W. Bush is able to nominate any potential FCC Commissioner that the nominee would oppose reinstatement of the Fairness Doctrine, whether he nominated a Democrat or a Republican. Next we want to secure commitments from Senators that they will filibuster any nominee put up by a subsequent Democratic occupant of the White House who seeks to re-impose the Fairness Doctrine or its equivalent. We want to press for legislation which would outlaw re-imposition of the Fairness Doctrine.

Some of you may support some type of re-regulation upon the ground that it would rid the airwaves of raunchy material. The FCC took care of that problem by enacting far greater fines than ever in history so all stations which carry filth can be penalized. Further, the FCC ruled that if a network carried the show every affiliate must be fined. The fine was 30 times higher than the previous fines.

That was the reason that Howard Stern took himself off AM radio and on to satellite, which at this time is not regulated.

The higher fines are driving filth off of the airwaves. If you hear filth complain to the FCC. FCC likely will take care of it. The protection of children and sensitive people from raunchy radio is a wholly separate issue from the Fairness Doctrine.

Talk radio is our answer to *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Without talk radio, we have very little sway over the electorate. With it our experts are interviewed. Even the view of the talk show host are challenged. Some times they don't know the facts. . . .

On a separate matter, both domestic liberals and the United Nations want to tax the Internet. Some also want control over so-called bloggers, those people who have an opinion and who express it. Yes,

I know the downside to the Internet. But I also know that it is a powerful tool to get out information fast. Some of the best sites are Newsmax.com, which carries our commentaries, by the way. But the largest sites are those with a conservative viewpoint, such as Worldnetdaily.com. Attempts will be made to tax or otherwise interfere with the Internet. I can assure you that Free Congress will be in the forefront of the fight.

Every time liberals can't get what they want through persuasion or the free market they legislate. This is true of compulsory unionism. This is true of campus groups which operate from compulsory fees from students. Now that talk radio has failed, rather than try further they want to shut down their competition. This much I can promise you. They will not get by with it without the fight of their lives. - Paul M. Weyrich, Chairman of the Free Congress and Education Foundation, *townhall.com*, 12/6/06

PATRICK LEAHY: JUDICIAL WRECKING BALL

The new make-up of the United States Senate -- 51 Democrats and 49 Republicans -- means that Vermont's Patrick Leahy once again wields the gavel when the Judiciary Committee meets.

Leahy held that gavel from the date of Jim Jeffords' defection from the GOP in the late spring of 2001 through January 2003, and in that time numerous nominations by President Bush to the federal courts were blocked in committee. Expect more in the way of obstruction when the new Senate convenes in January.

In his January State of the Union address, the president must make it clear that the judiciary of the United States deserves better from the Senate. President Bush should note that some Republicans also have played politics with nominees, many of whom have been pilloried and slandered.

The Senate is close to wrecking the nomination process, especially with regard to the highest court. If a vacancy arises on the Supreme Court in 2007 or in the first half of 2008, the president's nominee will deserve a hearing and a vote by the full Senate in the same year. If that is denied, the seat should remain vacant for as long as it takes to remedy the underlying problem of a left unwilling to abide by the Constitution's bestowal of the "advice and consent" power on the entire body. -Hugh Hewitt, *WORLD*, 11/25/06

RUMSFELD & WASHINGTON MEAT GRINDER

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld faded away more quickly and quietly than almost anyone who has been so prominent and so controversial for so many years.

What history will say of him, we cannot know because most of us cannot today know all the things that were known within a small inner circle of those who had all the available facts -- and all the weight of responsibility for decisions that had to be made under inescapable uncertainties and dangers.

It is hard to think of any defense secretary who has ever been popular, and Donald Rumsfeld certainly did not become a historic first in that department. He did not suffer fools gladly, even though they are a major constituency in Washington.

Whatever history's verdict on the Iraq war and on Mr. Rumsfeld, both deserved to be discussed and debated far more seriously and responsibly than the all-too-common media sound bites, political spin and venomous cheap shots. Whether Donald Rumsfeld's policies were mistaken or not, that is no reason to accept superficial and even gutter-level discourse on momentous national issues. Once even politicians understood that.

When British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain died early in

the Second World War that his own blunders brought on and nearly lost, Winston Churchill delivered the eulogy -- though Churchill had more reason than anyone else to be bitter at Chamberlain, who had for years turned a deaf ear to all Churchill's warnings.

"Neville Chamberlain acted with perfect sincerity," Churchill said. How many people would say that today about a political opponent on an issue as explosive as war and peace?

Churchill said, "We are so often mocked by the failure of our hopes and the upsetting of our calculations" but "however the fates may play, we march always in the ranks of honor" when we have done our best. Chamberlain's best fell disastrously short, but no one could accuse him of doing what he did for selfish or corrupt reasons -- which has become standard operating procedure for many today. That was a different era but we need to become aware of what is possible and how much we have declined from those days.

In the United States, Wendell Wilkie received the largest vote of any Republican candidate for president when he ran against Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1940. But, after the elections, he did not spend his time trashing Roosevelt. He in fact became an emissary from Roosevelt to Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

The issue is not whether people should be nice to Donald Rumsfeld or even whether history will vindicate or condemn him. The real issue is whether we can have responsible adult discussions of issues while the nation's fate hangs in the balance in its most dangerous hour, with reckless and hate-filled leaders in Iran and North Korea about to become nuclear threats.

This country needs to be able to draw on its best people from every walk of life and from every part of the political spectrum. But the nation will not get them if going to Washington means seeing the honorable reputation of a lifetime dragged through the mud just because someone disagrees on a political issue.

Our confirmation hearings for federal judges have become a circus and a disgrace. Nominees who have fought for civil rights, even when that was risky in the South, have been pictured as "racists" just as a political ploy to prevent their confirmations.

Washington has become a political meat grinder where character assassination is standard procedure. Clever and glib people say, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen." But the far larger question is whether the country can afford to repel people who are desperately needed but who may have too much self-respect to let political pygmies smear their character.

We need to attract allies abroad as well as Americans at home. Yet too many in the media are as ready to trash our allies as to trash Americans whose politics they don't like. It is a great game to some, but a dangerous one when the country faces unprecedented threats. - Thomas Sowell, *Washington Times Weekly*, 12/4/06

'SEX AND VIOLENCE' HURT OUR IMAGE

It will probably take decades for America to repair its poor image abroad, a senior Bush administration official warns.

"All you have to do is sit in a hotel room in the Middle East and watch the media. . . there is a big drumbeat out there going against our interests," says Undersecretary of State Karen Hughes.

Hughes, who's in charge of dealing with the U. S. image abroad, says anti-American feelings around the world have been aggravated by war in Iraq. U.S. policy toward Israel, and America's "sex and violence" culture. The damage is so great that repairing it is "going to be the work of years and maybe decades," she says.

"One of the things that I hear a lot," Hughes says, "particularly in deeply conservative societies, is that parents feel assaulted by

American culture. The sex and the violence that they see on television and movies. . . some of the lyrics of our music." (She is right about the sex and violence image produced by Hollywood as being offensive to millions of people worldwide and especially Muslims. I wonder about the wisdom of sending women to represent our country to societies that are patriarchal and are particularly concerned about womens' dress. It seems to me that feminine clothing should be standard for those going to such cultures, whether it be Laura Bush, Condi Rice, Karen Hughes, or lady missionaries and their daughters. - N.P.) - *Newsmax*, 11/06

ENTERTAINMENT: DESTROYER OF CULTURE

It has been said that the more a man has in his own heart the less he will require from the outside: excessive need for support from without is proof of the bankruptcy of the inner man. Thus, the present inordinate attachment to entertainment is evidence that the inner life of modern man is in serious decline. The average man has. . . no inner strength to place him above the need for repeated psychological shots to give him the courage to go on living. . .

The fantastic growth of the amusement phase of human life is a threat to the souls of modern men. It has. . . greater power over human minds and human character than any other educational influence on earth, a power almost exclusively evil, rotting the inner life, crowding out. . . eternal thoughts which would fill the souls of men. . . It has grown into a veritable religion. . . against which it is now dangerous to speak. . .

For centuries the Church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it as a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience. . . diverting attention from moral accountability. . . But of late. . . she appears to have joined forces with. . . the great god Entertainment. . . So today we have the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven. Religious entertainment is in many places rapidly crowding out the serious things of God. . . and hardly a man dares raise his voice against it. - From *The Best of A.W. Tozer, Berean Call*, 9/06

BOLTON GOOD, U.N. VERY BAD

John Bolton's resignation this week as ambassador to the United Nations was hardly the result of his being -- as some have charged -- ineffective, or a bully, or abrasive. The real problem is the shrunken character of the U.N.

Bolton was a Gulliver dispatched to Lilliput, a truth-teller in a den of diplomats. As a principled man in a dishonest institution, he was a threat to a whole raft of special interests that feed off the U.N. system.

If anything, Bolton was polite in a setting where bullying and abrading hardly count as sins. This is the U.N. where Secretary-General Kofi Annan, when queried last year about the Mercedes on which his son saved a bundle by making false use of U.N. perquisites, chose to bully the reporter -- and avoid answering a good question. This is the U.N. whose deputy secretary-general, Mark Malloch Brown, set out this past spring, in violation of the U.N. charter, to meddle in U.S. politics -- insulting a number of right-wing media outlets and sneering at their audience in the "heartland." This is the U.N. whose "excellencies" this past September applauded the histrionics of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad -- behavior that in civilized quarters might well be deemed abrasive.

This is the U.N. that in recent years has incubated such scandals as oil-for-food, procurement bribery, and peacekeeper rape. This

is the U.N. whose "reforms," in answer to these scandals, have consisted largely of demands for more money, and a revamped so-called Human Rights Council that has devoted itself entirely to condemning Israel. This is the U.N. system that still does not provide coherent accounts of how it spends about \$20 billion per year, about one-quarter of that supplied by U.S. taxpayers.

And while the debate over Bolton's worthiness to serve as ambassador to this sinkhole has focused in great part on Washington partisan politics, far too little attention has been paid to the extent to which the U.N. secretariat itself has become a favorite sandbox of a number of highly partisan Americans, including Ted Turner, whose U.N. Foundation dispenses about \$100 million every year via the secretariat -- bypassing the General Assembly budget process while amplifying causes favored by Turner.

Accompanying this, the U.N. plays host to the turf wars of contending national cliques that are chronically angling for patronage slots inside the ever-expanding U.N. system. Overlaid are a variety of dictators who can lay no legitimate claim to represent the people they suppress back home, but who gather yearly to enjoy the dignity of seats in the grand General Assembly Hall and the rounds of parties and meetings devoted to dispensing billions via U.N. programs.

Into this twilight zone walked John Bolton, who set about treating the U.N. itself with a respect few of its long-term denizens have shown. The emblematic moment would be the first day he took the seat as chairman of the Security Council and banged the gavel, on time, to open the meeting. He was the only one there. All the rest were late.

Within the U.N. Bolton was astoundingly effective. On his watch, the Security Council finally got around to asking Iran to stop its nuclear-bomb program, agreed on limited sanctions on North Korea, began at least trying to address the genocide in Sudan, and passed a resolution giving Annan his much-desired cease-fire this summer in Lebanon. Bolton dared to table such issues as the in-house corruption and peacekeeper rape. He even did the U.N. the large favor of helping to keep Venezuela's sulfur-sniffing Chavez off the Security Council.

Unfortunately, reform within the U.N. is blocked by a system in which too many have grown comfortable with the customary immunities, secrecy and corruption. And in dealing with real dangers in the world outside Turtle Bay, U.N. actions rarely live up to even the most decisive U.N. words. Despite assorted U.N. resolutions, the nuclear projects of North Korea and Iran have not stopped, the genocide continues in Sudan, and Lebanon now teeters on the edge of a takeover by Hezbollah terrorists re-arming with the help of Syria and Iran.

Bolton's vital contribution, if only we have the wisdom to heed it, has been to highlight the grave failings of the U.N. itself -- an outfit that shows every sign of being beyond anyone's power to mend. - Claudia Rosett, *townhall.com*, 12/9/06

I want to break in at this point to recommend a book.

"Heaven," by Randy Alcorn, a leading authority on Heaven who has spent over 20 years researching all the Bible says about it, plus what hundreds of others have said and written. It is thoroughly Biblical and Christ-honoring as far as I can see. You will not be disappointed.

BEWARE OF "CHRISTIAN" PSYCHOLOGY

The following is excerpted from "Psychology and the Evangelical Church" by T.A. McMahan, *The Berean Call*, March 2006: "Psychotherapy has sold the church the lie that psychology can be integrated with the Bible. That ought to be scandalous to any thoughtful believer. Since psychology and the Bible are fundamentally in opposi-

tion to one another, it should be obvious that there can be no real integration of their teachings. Moreover, if the Bible, the Manufacturer's handbook, isn't sufficient to cover all things that pertain to life and godliness, then His created beings must look elsewhere for their mental, emotional, and behavioral welfare. And if they must look elsewhere, then the Bible's claim to be authoritative, inerrant, and sufficient is also false. How influential is psychotherapy in the church? It would be rare indeed to find a topical sermon with no supposed insights from psychology. Typical would be Willow Creek church near Chicago, whose influence is national and international through its 10,000-member association of churches. One researcher of church-growth methods who spent a year at Willow Creek observed, 'Bill Hybels not only teaches psychological principles but often uses the psychological principles as interpretive guides for his exegesis of Scripture. . . King David had an identity crisis, the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to do self-analysis, and Peter had a problem with boundary issues. The point is, psychological principles are regularly built into Hybels' teaching.' Rick Warren's record-breaking *The Purpose Driven Life* furthers the acceptance of psychology in the church by including such psychobabble as 'Samson was co-dependent' and 'Gideon's weakness was low self-esteem and deep insecurities.'" - *Christian News*, 9/18/06

MARRIEDS ARE A MINORITY

New census figures analyzed by the New York Times reveal that married couples are a minority in America. As a once and long-married white male, I never expected to be a minority. There are no protest songs for people in my group. "We shall overcome" is taken and "married man's rights" lacks the resonance of "out and proud."

Part of the devolution of marriage to minority status is the fault of the media. Look at who they feature on magazine covers, tabloid TV and awards shows: the cohabiting without benefit of clergy, same-sex "couples," fornicating couples who flaunt their "lifestyles" and dare anyone to tell them to stop. The STDs that come from these "lifestyles" are not the fault of those who engage in the sort of behavior that puts them at risk. Rather, Republicans are to blame for spending too little on "cures" so the promiscuous can continue practicing their "lifestyles" without fear of disease. TV commercials for drugs that treat genital herpes now run close to erectile dysfunction ads without irony.

This decline into minority status for people like me is also partly the fault of people like me. My generation has been obsessed with making money and acquiring things in place of investing necessary time on marriage and children. The message the kids get is that if marriage is mostly about accumulating wealth and acquiring stuff, they can do that without getting married.

Family trees are beginning to resemble kudzu and if people are having fewer children (The United States birth rate is at an all-time low, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and we are barely having enough children to replace those who die), this has profound implications for domestic and international policies. For example, Hispanic and Muslim couples have more children than others in America. And one-third of all new births in the United States are to unmarried women.

Another reason marriage is now a minority practice is the loss of social stigma. When I was growing up, "society" approved of certain behavior in hopes of encouraging more of it and disapproved of other behavior, expecting to get less of it. While some of that disapproval discriminated against racial minorities and women, social stigma generally was a good thing. It kept people like me from engaging in behavior that would not have been beneficial. I not only cared what my

parents thought of me, I also cared about my reputation. Do many people care about such things today? Not when celebrities, politicians, lobbyists and boorish sports figures with bad reputations earn more money than those with good reputations. When was the last time you saw or read a story about happily married couples in the mainstream media?

The clergy have not always been helpful to marriage. Many - not all, but many - regularly ignore biblical instructions about marriage, divorce and remarriage because their congregations are populated with members who have divorced and they reason that their money in the collection plate spends just as well as that of married couples. Some people prefer to hear about the sins of others - or no sins at all - than about their own. The "fear of God" long ago was replaced in too many churches with the portrayal of God as a warm and fuzzy uncle who understands why you do the things you do and doesn't care all that much as long as you are happy and "fulfilled."

The Times article gives us two other reasons why marriage is suffering. Andrew A. Severidge, a demographer at Queens College of the City University of New York, says of the decline in marriage among those 25 to 34: "It's partially fueled by women in the work force; they don't necessarily have to marry to be economically secure. You used to get married to have sex. Now one of the major reasons to get married is to have children and the attractiveness of having children has declined for many people because of the cost."

Life is all about me, the defining characteristic of this generation. - Cal Thomas, *townhall.com*, 10/19/06

20,000 SCIENTISTS DENY GLOBAL WARMING

The following is from *The Berean Call*, Oct. 18, 2006: "20,000 scientists, of whom about 2,700 of them are physicists, geophysicists, climatologists, meteorologists, oceanographers or environmental scientists, who are in a position to understand the global warming issues, have signed the following statement: 'There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate. Moreover, there is substantial scientific evidence that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide produce many beneficial effects upon the natural plant and animal environments of the earth' (Beisner, E.C., P.K., Driessen, R. McKittrick, and R.W. Spencer, 2006. 'A call to truth, prudence, and protection of the poor: An evangelical response to global warming.' p. 10). Christians especially need to be cautious when it comes to the issue of global warming and other environmental issues. One of the reasons is that these issues have been hijacked by individuals who desire to change our way of life, and in particular, the Christian worldview that has guided the Western Hemisphere." - *O Timothy*, 11/06

YOUNG ADULTS LEAVING THE CHURCH

Findings from a new study by The Barna Group reveal a frightening dis-engagement from Christianity during young adulthood. The study based on data collected from 2,124 teenagers and 22,103 adults, including 3,583 twenty-somethings, "shows that despite strong levels of spiritual activity during the teen years, most twentysomethings disengage from active participation in the Christian faith during their young adult years -- and often beyond that," a Barna report said.

Specifically, 61% of today's young adults, who, as teenagers, were churched at one point, are now spiritually disengaged. Spiritual disengagement is identified as being inactive when it comes to church attendance, Bible reading, or prayer. Only 20% of twentysomethings

have maintained spiritual activity consistent with that of their high school experiences, the study revealed.

"In total, 6 out of 10 twentysomethings were involved in a church during their teen years, but have failed to translate that into active spirituality during their early adulthood," Barna said. . . .

David Kinnaman, director of research for the study, believes these findings lend significant insight into the current state of youth ministry and young adult ministry.

"There are certainly effective youth ministries across the country, but the levels of disengagement among twentysomethings suggest that youth ministry fails too often at discipleship and faith formation," Kinnaman explained. - *AFA Journal*, 11-12/06

CHARISMATICS AROUND THE WORLD

Researchers at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in Washington have released a wave of data from 10 nations documenting that the diverse 100-year-old movement called Pentecostalism has touched the lives of one in four Christians around the world.

The Pew team defined "Pentecostals" as members of older bodies such as the Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ and the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. Then there are "charismatics" who are Catholics, Anglicans and mainline Protestants who embrace healing, prophecy and other spiritual gifts, yet remain in their own churches.

Together, these groups form what many now call the "renewalists." According to this study, these believers - to cite four examples - make up 60 percent of the population in Guatemala, 56

percent in Kenya, 49 percent in Brazil and 44 percent in the Philippines.

"Renewalists, as a group . . . tended to have a very high view of the authority of Scripture. They tended to be very regular in worship attendance. They tended to uniformly believe that Jesus is the only way to salvation," said John C. Green, senior fellow at the Pew Center in religion and American politics.

"They tended to be quite conservative or traditional on moral beliefs such as sexual behavior, the consumption of alcohol, divorce and so forth. . . . But even in those countries where majorities of the population hold very traditional beliefs, renewalists tend to hold those beliefs more intensely and more extensively."

Another interesting part of this study indicated that "glossolalia," or "speaking in tongues," may no longer be the spiritual gift that defines charismatics and even many Pentecostals. Within the Assemblies of God, for example, (about 40% of them have never spoken in tongues.). . . .

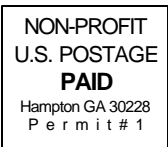
Meanwhile, there are conservative Protestants -- especially Calvinists and Baptists -- who reject Pentecostalism and its emphasis on prophecy and "glossolalia." Leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention, for example, have decided to ban all foreign missionary candidates who confess that they practice "a private prayer language," another phrase often used to describe "speaking in unknown tongues."

Nevertheless, Pew Forum Director Luis Lugo said, "it is getting harder and harder to find non-charismatic Protestants in Latin America, Africa and many other parts of the world." - *Atlanta J/C*, 10/21/06

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



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