



Christian View of the News



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A WAR OF ENDURANCE

As we begin a new year, with a new Congress being sworn in, it's a good time to take stock of the "global war on terror." The enormous conventional military power of the United States probably ensures that we will not lose in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond. Yet the considerable advantages of the jihadists suggest that we might not necessarily win, either.

So before we surge troops into Baghdad, as many Republicans wish, or yank everyone out of Iraq, as many Democrats are calling for, it is wise to review why America has had trouble turning wins over the Taliban and Saddam Hussein into long-term strategic successes.

Creating new political systems on the ground is far more difficult than simply blasting away terrorist concentrations. Such engagement demands that American soldiers leave the relative safety of ships, tanks and planes to fight subsequent messy battles in streets and neighborhoods. Once that happens, the United States loses its intrinsic military advantages.

First, the Islamists have just enough Western arms -- automatic small weapons and explosive devices -- to achieve parity with individual Americans on the ground. Our billions spent on aircraft carriers, drones and stealthy jets were not intended to fight hundreds of terrorists hiding in houses.

Second, when losses mount, they are viewed differently by the two sides. Violent death and endemic poverty are commonplace in the Middle East, but not so in the West. We aim to avoid casualties in our war making; the Islamists want only to inflict them, whatever the cost to themselves.

Third, everything our soldiers do is subject to Western jurisprudence and ethical censure. Americans distinguish soldiers from civilians to avoid collateral damage. Jihadists deliberately hide among women and children to ensure that our restraint provides them sanctuary. Our utopian moral expectations can never be met; their very lack of such considerations means we are accustomed to rather than are outraged by their beheadings, kidnappings and suicide bombings.

Fourth, in the process of reconstruction, Americans are held responsible for keeping the electricity and water on to ensure that life for Afghans and Iraqis gets better. Jihadists win only by destroying such efforts. And it is always easier to tear down than to build.

So we are at an impasse. Now after five years of fighting, Americans have two stark choices in the war against terrorists.

One, we can withdraw ground troops and return to punitive and conventional bombing -- tit-for-tat, retaliation for each attack in the future. That way, the United States stays distant and smacks the jihadists on their home bases below. Few Americans die; terrorists sometimes do. The bored media stay more concentrated on the terrorists' provocation, not on our standoff response from 30,000 feet in the clouds.

Or American forces, at great danger, can continue to change the political and economic structure of the Middle east in hopes of fostering constitutional governments that might curb terrorism for generations. This current engagement demands our soldiers fight jihadists on their vicious turf, but by our humanitarian rules. For this, we must pay the ensuing human and material price -- all broadcast live on the evening news.

The first choice, a return to what was practiced throughout the 1980s, is easy and offers short-term relief with little controversy. But the second path, which we have taken to prevent another 9/11, is hard, lengthy and thus unpopular. Yet it holds out the promise of long-term solutions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Presidents Reagan, Bush senior and Clinton, who respectively skedaddled out of Beirut, skipped Baghdad and fled from Mogadishu, didn't risk, lose or solve much against the terrorists.

In contrast, George W. Bush wagered everything by going into Afghanistan and Iraq. And he will either make things much worse or much better for millions -- depending on how successfully the United States can endure the messy type of war that jihadists welcome and the American military usually seeks to avoid.

Military success on the ground now demands that we expand the rules of engagement to allow our troops to shoot more of the jihadists, disarm the militias, train even more Iraqi troops to take over security more quickly, and seal the Syrian and Iranian borders.

This solution, of course, is easier said than done. The military must use more force against those who are destroying Iraqi democracy at precisely the time the American public has become exasperated with both the length and human cost of the war.

Imagine this war as a sort of grotesque race. The jihadists and sectarians win if they can kill enough Americans to demoralize us enough that we flee before Iraqis and Afghans stabilize their newfound freedom. They lose if they can't. -Davis Hanson, townhall.com, 1/4/07

BUSH'S IRAQ SPEECH

The president needed to connect with many audiences last night, and he did.

The message for the enemy in Baghdad -- both Saddamist and Shia radical -- was that the United States will respond to their violence with lethal force, and will fully back the Iraqi Army in the pacification of Baghdad.

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Iran had to have heard the distinct threat concerning the networks aiding the terrorists in Iraq. Good. That was long overdue.

The alQaeda operatives in Anbar got the message that far from having forced America from the field, thousands more marines and soldiers will be coming to the assistance of the local sheiks tired of the foreigners.

Iraq's often quarrelsome political elites got a clear message as well: The clock is ticking, and half-measures will not be tolerated. Baghdad will have three military commanders, and they will not be there to give cover to militias with friends in high places.

Supporters of the war at home heard what they have long hoped to hear: The rules of engagement are changing.

Critics of the war heard that their useful critiques will be welcome, and on a bipartisan basis.

The anti-war zealots heard a polite but firm rejection of their defeatism, and a rebuke of their utter fecklessness about events that would follow an American withdrawal.

And the American military heard, again, that the country needs even more of them. More months away from their families. More casualties. More sacrifice.

The president is correct that we are engaged in "the decisive ideological struggle of our time," and that the battle for Iraq is "noble and necessary." He was right to take responsibility for past mistakes, and also to refuse to let those mistakes paralyze the effort to secure Iraq and the region. And he owes the troops and the country absolute bluntness with Iran, even if that message is delivered out of the public eye.

Iranians are killing Americans. We cannot allow that to continue, any more than we can allow Iran to have nukes.

The president anticipated the propaganda war ahead. With the battle for Baghdad will come accusations of American brutality and probably stated atrocities to go along with reality of civilians killed or wounded in the battle. The media, the president warned, will be tempted to run scene after scene of carnage, which are easy to broadcast and difficult to explain. The enemy knows that the American revulsion at killing is the greatest vulnerability of the American effort. The president, the vice-president, Secretary Gates, Admiral Fallon and General Petraeus will have to stay on the virtual battlefield if that propaganda effort is to be blunted.

CentCom has to conduct daily detailed briefings on what is happening, and the enemies' losses have to be detailed.

Finally, the president again appealed for bipartisan support for this crucial fight for the future. Senator Joe Lieberman is leading the way, and his re-election now appears even more important than we realized at the time. Democrats of good will and serious purpose need to join him in the new effort to keep the war from becoming a partisan football.

It was a good speech, and it sounds like a good strategy. The sacrifice it requires of the men and women in uniform will be high. - Hugh Hewitt, *townhall.com*, 1/11/07

ROOTING FOR FAILURE

On Canadian television, yesterday, I was asked whether I thought the plan presented by President Bush would work in Iraq. . .

I have been listening to people in elected office from U.S. Senators down to who-knows-what; to people who were once in appointed office; people who were once in the military; people who have never been closer to a military unit than standing in front of the gate at a military base with their make-up on and their hair sprayed in place; reporters who evaded the draft (when there was a draft); reporters

who are too young to have needed to evade the draft; and cable hosts pontificating on the status of the US military who wouldn't know an FM22-5 from the menu at McDonald's. I am sick of all of them.

I don't know any more than anyone else whether what the plan the President proposed Wednesday night will work or not. I'm not at all certain that the President believes the plan -- as it was laid out to us -- will work. We will all know soon enough. Either the violence in Baghdad will abate, or it won't. If it does, the "surge" will have been a great plan. If it doesn't, Republicans will be looking longingly, after the next elections, at their current level of 202 Members of the US House.

A New York Sun reporter called and asked me what I thought the 2008 Presidential candidates should do. I said, if I were advising -- like a Solomon the Wise -- I would say that I didn't have all the information I might need to be able to look into the future. I would tell my candidate to wish the President well; pray for the safety of our troops, and hope -- for the safety of all Americans -- that the plan worked.

Democrats and Republicans who are children of the 60s and who are opposing the President are, I believe, misreading the mood of the public. The public isn't anti-war as it was during the Vietnam era. The public is anti-not having a good plan to win a war once we are in it. Americans are not anti-military. They are pro-military. But anti-politician. . . .

Those who are rushing to condemn the President's plan are putting themselves in great political peril because they need the President's plan to fail for them to be correct. I don't know if the President's plan will work because I am not a military specialist. I am a political specialist and I DO know that politicians who root for America to fail are buying a ticket to retirement. - Rich Galen, *townhall.com*, 1/12/07

SADDAM'S JUST DESERTS

In a final blasphemy, Saddam Hussein, who spent most of his life as a murdering secularist, went to his justified death holding a Koran and offering his soul to God, if God would accept it. If God does, He will have to commute the sentences of Saddam's mass murdering predecessors, including, Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot.

These days, not much that makes religious sense comes out of Iraq, or anywhere else in the maniacal Middle East, but one reasonable statement did pass the lips of Sheikh Sadralddin al-Qebanjib in the Shia "holy city" of Najaf. During a Friday sermon, the sheikh described Saddam's execution as "God's gift to Iraqis" and prayed "Oh God, you know what Saddam has done. He killed millions of Iraqis in prisons, in wars with neighboring countries and he is responsible for mass graves. Oh God we ask you to take revenge on Saddam."

That was a shorter summation than most prosecutors deliver in court, but in the end Saddam's execution wasn't about revenge. It was about justice. Many countries -- from Britain, which has abolished capital punishment, to Russia, where a moratorium on capital punishment now exists, have halted executions because they believe, incorrectly, that doing so makes them more humane. It does precisely the opposite and sends the message that innocent human life has less value than the life of a killer. It is more than curious that Britain and Russia, especially, have halted the death penalty for the guilty, but do nothing to restrict incredibly high abortion rates that kill the innocent. This reflects an inverted value system.

One of Saddam's lawyers, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, appeared on the BBC shortly after Saddam's hanging was confirmed, complaining the trial was a "travesty." No, the travesty would have been in not trying and executing Saddam. Saddam mocked the innocent lives he took, showing disrespect to the relatives of the dead

who had a valid claim to see justice done.

There may not be much to envy about Iraq these days, but the swiftness of Saddam's punishment is admirable. Had he been in the American legal system, lawyers might have clogged that system for years, allowing Saddam to die in prison. Instead, on Nov. 5, Saddam was convicted of crimes against humanity and sentenced to death. After the death order was signed, there was a 30-day window in which to carry out the execution. The Iraqis executed him within hours after the signing of the death order and just a few days after his appeal was denied. (This was Biblical. Eccl. 8:11 says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." That is self-explanatory. We have more crime because of bleeding heart liberals and activist judges. - N.P.) . . . Cal Thomas, *townhall.com*, 1/3/07

LIBERALS: THE REAL SKINFLINTS

Are conservatives and Christians becoming too narrow and selfish? Are we hypocritical skinflints, indifferent to the suffering of the needy?

The liberals say so. But is it true? Do conservatives and Christians really love their money more than they do the poor?

A new book by an expert on charity says: absolutely not. The real skinflints, he writes, are secular liberals.

Arthur Brooks, professor at Syracuse University, writes in his new book, titled *Who Really Cares*, that he grew up in a liberal home and accepted one of the liberal political nostrums: that the political left "is compassionate and charitable toward the less fortunate, but the political right is oblivious to suffering."

"If you had asked me a few years ago to sum up the character of American conservatives," he writes, "I would have said they were hard-headed pragmatists who were willing to throw your grandmother out into the snow to preserve some weird ideal of self-reliance."

But his own research forced him to change his mind. Religious conservatives give more, and do more, for the poor than anyone else. By contrast, liberals, who tend both to be irreligious and to believe that government can and should redistribute income, tend to be far stingier.

Brooks invites us to consider two people: one who goes to church every week and rejects the idea that it's the government's job to redistribute income. The second person never attends church and believes the government should reduce income differences. "Knowing only these [two] things," Brooks writes, "the data tell us that the first person will be roughly twice as likely as the second to give money to charities in a given year, and will give away more than one hundred times as much money per year" -- that's right, one hundred times -- and give it to both religious and non-religious causes.

This should be obvious when you think about it, because there are vastly different worldviews at work here. Christians are guided by revealed truth and the wisdom of the past -- what's often called the democracy of the dead. And we recognize original sin as the fundamental state of human nature, and so we are distrustful of big institutions. Moreover, Christians believe that they have a personal duty to help the poor, because the Bible commands it and because we understand that society's problems are morally rooted and, thus, more likely to need moral solutions. So, we are involved in creating what Edmund Burke called the "little platoons" of society: organizations devoted to feeding the hungry, freeing slaves, and helping those in prison.

By contrast, the secular liberal rejects the idea of original sin. He believes that with the right education and enough money, the lot of humanity can be improved. So liberals believe that, with their superior

wisdom, they can create utopia -- just give them the power -- which is why they believe in big-government solutions to society's problems, solutions that we now know have done more harm than good.

This is why, the next time you hear someone berating conservative Christians, for being skinflints and those "narrow minded bigots," use it as a double-edged opportunity: It's the Christians, not them, who are giving more than the non-Christians. And then explain why: It's because we worship a God who tells us that we should "abide in faith, hope, and charity, these three -- but the greatest of these is charity." - Chuck Colson, *townhall.com*, 1/5/07

CARTER & CLINTON START NEW CONVENTION

Former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton announced in Atlanta on Tuesday the creation of a Baptist organization they said would counter what they say is a negative image of their faith.

The New Baptist Convention was announced at the Carter Center by representatives of about 40 moderate Baptist groups that have distanced themselves from the conservative Southern Baptist Convention. Carter and Clinton -- both Baptists -- said the New Baptist Convention will look for solutions to problems such as poverty and racism. Carter and Clinton said they want to counter concerns that Baptists have been "negative" and "exclusionary" and promised an inclusive organization willing to debate openly all issues. (I think this is a good idea. Carter and Clinton were both Southern Baptist liberals who were often an embarrassment to Bible believing Baptists who practice what the Bible says. - N.P.) . . . In 2000, Carter left the Southern Baptist church after years of feeling "increasingly uncomfortable." At the time, he said the final straw was a denominational statement saying wives should submit to their husbands. (He couldn't take the plain language of Ephesian 5 on marriage. - N.P.) . . .

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said he wasn't invited to Tuesday's gathering. . . .

"Most Southern Baptists, 90 percent or more, are pro-life [when it comes to abortion]. Clearly Carter and Clinton are pro-choice," Land said. "This might be the 'Pro-choice Baptist Convention.' And whenever you disagree with Mr. Carter, you are narrow-minded."

Land said most Southern Baptists voted against both Clinton and Carter, and four out of five voters who identified themselves as Southern Baptists voted in 2000 for George W. Bush over Al Gore, a member of the denomination.

"I suspect that Mr. Carter and Mr. Clinton are upset about that," said Land.

Bill Underwood, president of Mercer University and the organizer of the meeting at the Carter Center, said politics has nothing to do with the creation of the organization. . . .

The formation of the New Baptist Convention springs in part from a 28-year denominational feud.

Moderate (you could read that "modernist" - N.P.) and conservative Baptists have for years clashed on issues such as the inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth of Jesus and women pastors.

Conservative Baptist leaders took control of the national convention in 1979 and gradually purged it of moderate leaders. The convention's conservative wing became the primary voice in the nation for Baptists, becoming a leading voice in opposition to same-sex marriage and abortion rights.

The Southern Baptist Convention withdrew from the Baptist World Alliance and in 2004 formally ended its relationship with Georgia's Mercer University. Convention leaders said both groups had become too liberal. - *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 1/10/07

PELOSI TO MONITOR YOUR CHURCH

Nancy Pelosi hasn't been Speaker of the House for two weeks yet and there is already proposed legislation which would be the most significant encroachment ever into the affairs and ability of churches and other organizations to communicate. Under the guise of lobbying reform, Speaker Pelosi and others have proposed legislation greatly expanding the scope of lobbying regulation which would have a significant impact on churches, pastors, religious denominations, public interest organizations, civic organizations and other nonprofit groups. Even private individuals who voluntarily pay for media to distribute important messages to the general public on political matters would be impacted.

So draconian is the proposed Lobbying Reform Bill that it would actually impose registration and reporting requirements on churches and other nonprofit organizations. This is because the definition of "lobbyist" and "lobbying firms" includes specifically grassroots-organizing efforts. Under the broad-based regulatory scheme that Nancy Pelosi is advocating, many churches, especially larger churches with TV and radio ministries, would be subject to registration as a lobbying organization. Failure to comply with these lobbying requirements could result in fines and even criminal sanctions. Churches and their pastors who address the social issues of the day and encourage members and non-members alike to mobilize for action, including communications with Congress, would be required to make certain initial and quarterly disclosures to the United States Congress about their activities. . . .

This attempt to slip in this onerous requirement on churches and other organizations must be stopped. The rationale behind Speaker Pelosi and others' desire to silence churches is obvious. Pastors addressing the moral issues of the day have been able to mobilize tens of thousands of individuals to speak out on various issues. But under this proposed legislation, if a church or denomination spent \$50,000 of its own resources on air time to encourage people to support the confirmation of federal judicial nominees or to lend its support to a federal marriage amendment, then that church or denomination would be classified as a grassroots lobbying firm. This is one of the most significant violations of free exercise of religion and the freedom of political speech in our Nation's history. Some have said that this plan is the most comprehensive regulation of political speech that has ever been put forward by Congress. . . .

This is not the way our Republic is structured. Congress has no authority to amend our United States Constitution on its own accord. If the Freedom of Speech and the Free Exercise of Religion Clauses mean anything, they mean that church leaders and other citizens have the right to address the moral issues of the day and encourage participation of the citizenry in support of or opposition to legislative initiatives. Nancy Pelosi's proposed legislation would have stopped Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from gathering support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In fact, as he addressed the social issues from the pulpit of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Ga., he might well have had to register as a lobbyist.

What we need to do now is exercise our existing First Amendment rights of freedom of speech, freedom of association and the ability to petition the government for a redress of grievances. Our grievance is simple: Congress cannot silence churches and other organizations from grassroots involvement in critical issues of our day. Let us now petition the government aggressively and support an amendment to this proposed legislation by Senators Bennett, McConnell, Kyl, and Cornyn that would eliminate the provisions of this lobbying reform dealing with grassroots efforts. This way we can ensure that churches and many other public interest organizations

would not have to register as lobbyists. - Jay Sekulow, *townhall.com*, 1/13/07

PERSEVERE IN PROTECTING LIFE

Embryonic stem cell research is back on the congressional agenda. As one of their first acts in office, the newly elected Democrats have reintroduced legislation that was passed and vetoed last year, hoping to pressure the President into changing his mind. President Bush, however, has promised to veto the bill again. Nevertheless, Americans are being forced to endure a replay of last year's debate. Those who oppose the taking of innocent human lives to benefit others will be ridiculed as heartless and cruel. The spectacle promises to be nasty and grueling.

This debate is not going away. If President Bush vetoes this new bill -- which was recently passed in the House and will soon come to a vote in the Senate -- and if the veto is sustained, then Democrats (and their Republican accomplices, Senators Hatch, Specter, et al.) will simply reintroduce the proposal in the next Congress. They will continue to belittle ethical arguments raised in opposition to their agenda. They will complain that their opponents are Neanderthals who fear science and the progress that follows in its wake. They will insinuate that the opposition is indifferent to disease and suffering. Those with moral objections will be denigrated, disparaged, and demonized.

Of course, this time around the debate has been a little different. Last week, it was reported in *Nature Biotechnology* that stem cells have been found in the amniotic fluid which surrounds embryos in the womb. These stem cells appear to have many of the same features as embryonic stem cells; they can develop into multiple kinds of cells, including brain, bone, and muscle cells. In addition to the fact that embryos are not killed in the process of obtaining amniotic stem cells, they show many other advantages. For example, one of the lead scientists behind the new study told the Washington Post that these cells "remain stable for years without forming tumors." This is in contrast to embryonic stem cells, which frequently produce cancerous tumors.

The success of amniotic stem cells has been encouraging to those of us who support scientists who develop life-saving cures without violating human dignity. . . . Amniotic stem cell research does not result in the destruction of a human embryo while embryonic stem cell research does. Therefore, even if amniotic stem cell research does not produce the same yield as embryonic stem cell research, it is infinitely more acceptable on ethical grounds.

What we need to make clear is that there are certain lines of research that are never permissible, even if they show great promise. It is never okay to kill and cannibalize one human life, even if such an action might benefit another, and even though the life to be destroyed is very young. We must draw the line in the sand: killing human beings at any stage of development to further research is unethical and indefensible. . . .

Standing for the protection of innocent life in the public square will require perseverance, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. The Bible says, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." (James 1:12) And let us not forget St. Paul's admonition to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us." (Hebrews 12:1) One aspect of the race marked out for us here in the twenty-first century is that we are called to defend human life and human dignity from conception to natural death. That stand will inevitably generate resistance and ridicule. Nevertheless, Christians are called to stand courageously and to persevere. - Ken Conner, *townhall.com*, 1/13/07

RUSSIA: RED STORM RISING

Since taking office in 2000, former KGB chief-turned Russian President Vladimir Putin has built strong personal, political and military ties to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and North Korean dictator Kim Jong II. Putin has sold Iran and North Korea billions of dollars worth of arms and even nuclear technology. He is arming America's worst enemies for war, and in so doing, Russia has joined the "Axis of Evil." Yet on this critical issue, official Washington seems to be in a true state of denial.

In December 2005, Russia signed a \$1 billion arms deal with Iran, providing the radical Islamic regime in Tehran high-speed missile and other high-tech weaponry, despite Ahmadinejad's call to annihilate the U.S. and Israel two months earlier. Russia is building nuclear facilities for Iran, has trained over 1,000 Iranian nuclear scientists, and running political interference for Iran at the U.N. to prevent us from imposing economic sanctions that could slow down Ahmadinejad's feverish bid for nuclear weapons. . . .

In August 2006, a Russian newspaper reported that U.S. officials are increasingly concerned that North Korea is laundering money through Russian banks and in the process helping North Korea sell ballistic missile technology to Iran, Syria and Pakistan. "The American Center for Nonproliferation Studies released a report yesterday claiming that North Korean authorities, with the help of private Russian companies, are providing ballistic missile technology to Iran, Syria and Pakistan in particular," reported Kommersant.

A red storm is rising. Mr. Putin gave a speech last year calling the collapse of the Soviet Union the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. He wants to rebuild the glory of Mother Russia. He is increasing Russia's military budget. He is arming our worse enemies. He is suppressing dissent inside Russia and centralizing power to himself in the Kremlin. Vladimir Putin is a New Czar in the making and he is building a new anti-democratic alliance against the United States and the West.

Thus far, Washington has done little to confront Mr. Putin effectively over Russia's increasingly dangerous ties to North Korea and Iran. But the Bush administration must immediately make it clear that Russia is becoming a real and growing threat to American national security. The President and top Congressional leaders from both parties must lay out the consequences of Russia continuing down this path. And they must do so immediately. The urgency and the stakes could not be higher. - Joel C. Rosenberg, *t.h..com*, 12/24/07

IRAN AND THE HOLOCAUST

Iran recently hosted an international Holocaust conference at which it appears the majority of participants denied the existence of the Holocaust altogether. The driving force behind the denial seems to be the perceived justification the Holocaust gives to a Jewish state in Israel.

"Depicting Jews as the overwhelming victims of the Holocaust gave the moral high ground to the Allies as victors of [World War II], and allowed Jews to establish a state on the occupied land of Palestine," says the summary of the paper given by American white supremacist and former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke.

What of all the photos of emaciated Jewish corpses and barbed wire enclosures? At least one exhibit at the conference argued that these were not genocide victims, but sufferers of typhus. (*New York Times*, 12/11/06) - *What In The World*, Vol. 42/#02

A LA CARTE CABLE CHOICE

In October, the Parents Television Council renewed its call for a

la carte cable choice and the enforcement of the broadcast decency law, citing evidence that "several television shows have moved from premium cable to basic cable, and some to broadcast." This move, says the media watchdog organization, means that sexually-graphic programming on subscription networks such as HBO will now be moving to cable networks that are part of typical basic cable formats.

"What we now have is a full-fledged programming conveyor belt taking sexually-graphic and violent shows from premium cable to basic cable, and some from basic cable to broadcast. The industry ought to be ashamed," said L. Brent Bozell, president of the PTC. "It is showing premium and basic cable programming that parents and families do not want in their faces. The content is no less shocking and no less inappropriate for children, and yet these programs are now being aired when more children are in the viewing audience."

He added, "A whole new audience that doesn't pay premium prices for soft porn now can get the same slutty product, diluted -- with a little less nudity and the word 'freaking' where the obscenity used to be." "If given a choice, Mr. Bozell asked, "how many families would choose to take this type of programming?"

While a 2004 FCC study of *a la carte* programming concluded that consumers would save money on their monthly bills only if they pick and pay for fewer than nine channels, we believe many families would opt to pay slightly higher cable rates in order to have additional confidence that sexually-explicit and ultra-violent programs were not available on their televisions. - *National Liberty Journal*, 12/06-1/07

AMERICAN TELEVISION WATCHING

"The average American watched 1,548 hours of television last year, the equivalent of more than 64 days," reports the *New York Times*. That translates to about 14 years of a person's life. The average adolescent or adult spends about 980 hours (41 days) each year listening to the radio and around 170 hours (a bit over a week) each year using the Internet.

The *Times* also points out that in 1970, 79% of college freshmen said their primary personal objective was "developing a meaningful philosophy of life." Last year, about that same percentage said their goal was financial success. - *WITW*, 42/1

BANKRUPT WORSHIPERS CANNOT TITHE

Judge Robert E. Littlefield, Jr., of the US Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of New York reluctantly ruled in August that charitable contributions are not a necessary living expense for those filing Chapter 13 bankruptcy, so tithing must take a backseat to debt re-payment, RNS reported. Littlefield said the 2005 law overrides the Religious Liberty and Charitable Donation Protection Act, which allowed tithing under the bankruptcy code. Henry Sommer, president of the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys, said the law favors creditors at the expense of religious liberty. . . . Observers say the decision in New York could lead creditors in other states to demand similar treatment. - *Sword of the Lord*, 12/15/06

TWEENS ACTING LIKE TEENS

A headline article in the Tampa Tribune (Florida) from the Associated Press for November 26 was "Young 'Tweens' Are Looking and Acting Like Teens." The theme is the sad and frightful fact that children 8 to 12 are being influenced by immoral pop culture trends that were previously associated with older teenagers. Consider this excerpt: "They listen to sexually charged pop music, play mature-related video games and spend time gossiping on Myspace. More girls are wearing makeup and clothing that some consider beyond their years.

. . . Beyond the drugs, sex and rock 'n' roll their boomer and Gen X pace of life, giving kids easy access to influences that may not be parent-approved. Sex, violence and foul language that used to be relegated to late-night viewing and R-rated movies are expected fixtures on television." There can be no doubt that the influence of the immoral pop culture is reaching down to ever younger hearts and minds. Parents beware! "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Proverbs 1:10). - *Christian News*, 12/11/06

SHUT DOWN THE MIDDLE SCHOOLS

New York City has a great new idea: Shut down the middle schools.

According to the New York Post, almost 50 of the city's 220 middle schools have closed in the last two years, part of a plan to move back toward the old K-8 grammar school model. New York City is joining Baltimore, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, among other urban school districts.

Why did this take the "experts" so long? Many parents can tell you: If an otherwise decent school district has a problem school, it's going to be the junior high. And even high-functioning middle schools can be a problem for the students in them. . . .

"Folks have been aware, in achievement terms, that what happens in the middle grades is disappointing," Douglas J. MacIver, a principal research scientist at Johns Hopkins University's Center for the Social Organization of Schools, told *Education Week*. "But I don't think they realized how stressed middle-school students are."

An influential 2004 Rand Corp. study looked at international data comparing American students to their peers in 11 other developed nations. American students rank near the bottom on measures of emotional health, including whether students feel their school is a pleasant place, and whether they find classmates to be kind and helpful. On that last question, only Czech students reported less kindness from their peers. Only students in Latvia, Israel and Lithuania reported feeling left out, lonely, helpless or bullied more often than American students did.

This June, Pittsburgh closed seven middle schools and doubled the number of K-8 elementary schools. One advantage of the K-8 model is that it tends to spread the potentially problematic middle-graders around. . . . Brent Johnson, a former principal in Pittsburgh, credits his school's performance (one of those rated highly in the Rand Corp. study) to the fact that he has between 100 and 500 fewer middle-graders to deal with than the average middle school. About half his sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders have been in the school since kindergarten, making relationships with teachers, administrators, and their "buy-in" to the school culture more likely. The K-8 model tends to keep parents more attached and involved, too, another plus for the model, according to the Rand Corp. study.

Plus, when kids stay in grade school, they tend to stay "younger, longer," reports a Long Beach, Calif., principal, and that's been my experience, too. I didn't pick a Catholic grade school for my younger son because of the K-8 structure that most Catholic schools retain, but I immediately noticed the benefits. Same kids, same principal, same parents for eight years -- it does build community. And maybe it's a "kibbutz effect," but kids who have been in class together since kindergarten seem less eager to launch into the distracting peer torture of premature dating games.

"It turns out the onset of puberty is really a bad reason to try to move kids to another structure and to another school altogether," the Rand report's primary author, Jaana Juvonen, told *Education Week*. Another bad idea from ed school hits the dust. - Gallagher, *th.*, 1/3

CONGRESS FUNDS PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Planned Parenthood showed revenue totaling nearly \$810 million. Of their \$810 million in revenue, \$265 million came from taxpayers in the form of government grants and contracts. In 2004 and 2005, Planned Parenthood received \$551 million in governmental funding.

This is money coming out of our tax dollars. Planned Parenthood uses our tax dollars to promote, advertise and market the benefits of abortion, including partial-birth abortion.

Last year, Planned Parenthood performed almost 250,000 abortions, a number that has steadily increased since 1997. . . . Over the past three years, Planned Parenthood has reportedly spent over \$110 million of taxpayer money bringing lawsuits, challenging legislation and promoting their agenda. . . .

US Senator David Vitter has proposed legislation that would stop the practice of taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood. Senate Bill 2206 states, "None of the funds appropriated under this title shall be distributed to grantees who perform abortions or whose sub-grantees perform abortions. . ." - Jay Sekulow, *Sword of the Lord*, 12/15/06

A DANGEROUS OBSESSION

(This obsession is that of "busy bodies" claiming the right to decide what others should be paid for what they do. This applies to pay packages for CEOs of big companies and minimum wages of people working at non-skilled jobs. - N.P.)

Perhaps it is one of the fruits of the "self-esteem" emphasis in our schools that so many people feel confident to voice strong convictions about things they know little or nothing about -- or, worse yet, are misinformed about.

One of the hardest things for anyone to be informed about is the value of someone else's productivity. Yet there are cries from all directions that some people are being paid "too much" and others "too little."

Who can possibly be better informed about the value of what someone else produces than those who use the goods or services that the person provides and pay for it with their own money?

Things are worth it or not worth it to particular individuals. What these things might be worth to somebody else is irrelevant.

People who think that they, or the government, ought to be deciding how much income people make are in effect saying that they know the value of people's output better than those who use that output and pay for it with their own money.

How did Bill Gates get his fortune? Not by someone deciding how much Bill Gates was worth to "society," but by innumerable people around the world deciding whether what Microsoft offered them was worth what Microsoft charged.

What all those sales added up to -- Microsoft's income and Gates' fortune -- nobody decided. Nor is there any reason why they should have, even aside from the fact that nobody is qualified to make such a decision.

We can each decide for ourselves whether what Microsoft offers is worth it to us. That is all we are competent to decide -- and only for ourselves individually, when spending our own money.

The idea that we should pool our collective ignorance and then decide how much is "fair" by Gates or anybody else to earn in total income is as ridiculous as it is dangerous, for it means arming politicians with the arbitrary power to decide everyone's economic fate.

Do we want our own family's living standards to be at the mercy of politicians? Are we so eaten up with envy that we will risk that, in order to keep Gates from having "too much" money, paid by people who voluntarily bought Microsoft's products?

A recent campaign in California to sock the oil companies with bigger taxes hyped the fact that oil company profits were \$78 billion.

That sounds like a lot of money. For that matter, \$78 million would sound like a lot of money. If the truth be known, there was a time when just \$78 would have seemed like a lot of money to me.

But so what? What do we know about the economics of the oil industry? How many billions did they invest to get that \$78 billion in profits? And how many billions did they lose in their bad years?

Utter ignorance of all these things has not been enough to discourage people from loudly demanding that the government "do something" about "Big Oil" and its profits.

The same reliance on ignorance applies at the other end of the economic scale. People who know nothing about retailing, nothing about labor markets and nothing about economics are loudly demanding that the local, state or federal government "do something" about the low pay of Wal-Mart's employees.

Those employees know what their alternative job opportunities are and other employers know what their productivity would be worth to them. If the workers themselves choose Wal-Mart as their best option, what qualifies us to say that either their choice or Wal-Mart's choice was wrong?

Most low income people, whether at Wal-Mart or elsewhere, do not stay low-income forever -- or for more than a few years. Most Americans in the bottom 20 percent at a given time are later in the top half of the income distribution, after they have acquired some more job experience.

Are individual decisions made by people deciding what is best for themselves to be over-ruled by ignorant busybodies, obsessed by things they do not understand?

Is the whole economic system of supply and demand, on which the nation's prosperity is based, to be disrupted whenever moral exhibitionists have a need to feel puffed up about themselves? - Thomas Sowell, *Conservative Chronicle*, 1/3/07

MARY CHENEY'S PREGNANCY

Mary Cheney's pregnancy poses problems not just for her child, but also for all Americans. Her action repudiates traditional values and sets an appalling example for young people at a time when father absence is the most pressing social problem facing the nation. With 37 percent of American children born to fatherless families, Mary Cheney is contributing to a trend that is detrimental to all Americans who will live with the ramifications of millions of children whose anger and frustration at not knowing their father will be felt in the public schools and communities of our nation.

Mary Cheney is among that burgeoning group of adult women over age 20 that are driving the trend of women who don't want a man in the picture, but want to have a baby. These older women are pushing out-of-wedlock birth statistics higher and higher. At a time when teen births and teen abortions are declining dramatically, older women are having more un-wed births and more abortions, including repeat abortions (indicating that they are using abortion as birth control.)

Well-educated, professional Mary Cheney is flying in the face of the accumulated wisdom of the top experts who agree that the very best family structure for a child's well-being is a married mom and dad family. Her child will have all the material advantages it will need, but it will still encounter the emotional devastation common to children without fathers.

One Georgia high school principal reported, "We have too many young men and women from single-mother families that don't have the role models at home to teach them how to deal with adversity and

handle responsibility. They've seen their mom work 60 hours a week just to put food on the table; they end up fending for themselves."

When fatherless children get to be teens, the girls tend to start looking for love in all the wrong places and the boys tend to find as their role model the bad-boy celebrities of MTV, NFL and NBA.

As they grow older, fatherless children tend to have trouble dealing with male authority figures. Too often children in single-mother households end up angry at their absent fathers and resentful of the mother who has had to be a father figure, too. Typically, the boys who have a love-hate relationship with their mother end up hating all women. Numerous of them look for vulnerable women where they can act out their anger and be in control.

Mary Cheney's action sets an example that is detrimental for mothers with less financial resources who will start down an irrevocable path into poverty that tends to be generational -- children in households without a father tend to themselves have unwed births later in life. Experts from both the left and the right cite a disastrous litany of negative outcomes that are predictable when a child grows up in a fatherless family. Such children tend to get involved in drugs, alcohol abuse, and delinquency; they tend to drop out of school and have teen pregnancies. An assistant principal in a Junior High School said that many of the behavioral problems that teachers face in the classroom stem from households without a father's influence.

Mary's pregnancy is an "in-your-face" action countering the Bush Administration's pro-family, pro-marriage and pro-life policies. She continues to repudiate the work to which her father has devoted his life. Mary has repeatedly said that "studies" show that children only need a loving home. Her statement is incomplete because the experts agree that for the well-being of children, they desperately need a married father and a mother.

All those people who talk about what is best "for our children" need to get back to the basics: children need a married mom and dad. Children can do without a lot of the trimmings of childhood, but nothing can replace a home where the mother and dad love each other enough to commit for a lifetime and are absolutely crazy about their kids -- enough to be willing to sacrifice their own needs to see that their children get the very best. - Janice Shaw Crouse, *th.com*, 12/7/06

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE JEWS

There is a lot of confusion about the relationship between the Christian and the Jewish people and the nation Israel, and I believe that William Newell got it right in the following statement from his commentary on Revelation: "Believers today need to be faithfully warned regarding their attitude to the Jews.

1) They should not join at all in that Gentile envy and hate lying at the root of 'anti-semitism.'

2) They should not give special place to Jews, even Jewish believers, as such.

3) They should glorify God for the 'remnant according to the election of grace' among them, now being saved.

4) They should remember that the most of the nation is to be cut off as apostate before the Millennium sets in.

5) They should believe that God's words in Romans 3:22-23, and 10:12 are true today: 'There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.' Jewish sinners, Irish sinners, American sinners. Hottentot sinners, Hindu sinners, English sinners, Scotch sinners; no difference at all! Just sinners, all!

6) They should understand that the nation Israel has not changed. It remains in spiritual death and blindness and enmity to-

ward God. When the opportunity offers, the majority of the Jews will go over openly to Antichrist, as we well know from Daniel 9:27, Isaiah 28:14-15, and many other plain prophecies. We do well to have "great sorrow" for them as did Paul in Romans 9; to remember that nationally they are 'beloved for the fathers' sake,' and to labor to reach them. But it is folly to close our eyes to their blinded, deadly state! The nation that crucified Christ, stoned Stephen, and most bitterly hated and opposed the gospel of grace preached by Paul, remains unchanged. The fountain for sin and for uncleanness is not yet open for them nationally, nor will it be until 'that day' of Zechariah 12:10 to 13:1, when, beleaguered by all the hostile nations of earth, and in despair, they at last 'look upon him whom they pierced,' and fall into such mourning as has never been known! They will not believe until they see." (William R. Newell, Revelation Chapter-by-Chapter.

ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHES TO COME

Though we believe that God has put man in the world to use it and not to abuse it, and though we are glad for clean air and rivers and most definitely support reasonable environmental laws (having lived for 17 years in third world countries), environmentalism should not be the focus of the child of God.

One can read the New Testament from beginning to end and not see as much as a hint of support for environmentalism. The focus of the Christian life and the emphasis of the Great commission is on preaching the gospel and thus snatching sinners from the judgment to come before it is eternally too late, and the New Testament presents this judgment as imminent and therefore as a motivation to be diligent

in the task that Christ has left us (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). The last book of the Bible describes in great detail the judgment to come, and it will be a total environmental disaster, but one that God Himself will produce (Rev. 8:7-12; 16:3-4, 8-9, 18, 20-21). - Above two articles from David Cloud in *Christian News*, 8/21/06

CHRISTIANS KILLED IN IRAQ

Professing Christians continue to be targeted and killed in Iraq. This year alone 14 Assyrian Christian women in Baghdad were kidnapped and murdered on August 13, an Orthodox pastor was kidnapped on October 9 and decapitated two days later, a car bomb targeted Christians on October 4, and one 14 year old boy was crucified in Albasra and another was decapitated in Baquba on October 21. It is not only the "extremist" Al Qaida types of Muslims that persecute Christians in the Middle East; it is also the "ordinary" Muslims who take the Koran seriously. And Muslims in the Middle East not only hate Christians and Jews, they hate one another. In Iraq the Sunni Muslims (Saddam Hussein's Baath party is mostly Sunni) hate the Shiite Muslims and the Shiites hate the Sunnis, and the Sunnis hate the Kurds and the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds all hate Christians and Jews. Christians in Iraq have petitioned President Bush to help them against the oppression of Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds alike. - *Christian News*, 1/1/07

I have just finished reading "Evidence and Truth" by Robert J. Morgan, a brief defense of Christian Faith. This is an excellent book for new and old believers. - N.P.



Christian
View of the News

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