



# Christian View of the News



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## IRAQ: WHAT IF WE WIN?

Most Democrats seem so invested in defeat in Iraq that they apparently have no "Plan B," which would be success. . . .

So cynical have our politics become that a spokesman for Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Democratic leaders are "not willing to concede there are positive things to point to" in Iraq. And House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn said that a favorable report from Gen. Petraeus could lead 47 moderate to conservative "Blue Dog" Democrats to oppose a withdrawal timetable, making it virtually impossible for the liberal leadership to pass withdrawal legislation. "(It would be) a real problem for us," said Clyburn.

Is that what the Iraq war has become? Instead of viewing it as a generational war that will determine the future of civilization (because, if we lose, Iraq will become a launching pad for terrorist acts around the world and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis would surely die), is it now just another tool in the Democrat's quest for the White House? Where are the statesmen who put their country and its interests before personal and political interests? Was Harry Truman right when he observed, "A statesman is a politician who has been dead for 10 or 15 years?" Aren't we Americans before we are Republicans or Democrats? And don't we all lose if one political "side" wins and it costs others their freedom and puts America in greater peril?

Much of Washington is buzzing over a recent New York Times column by two scholars from the Brookings Institution, Michael O'Hanlon and Kenneth Pollack. In addition to their association with a left-of-center think tank, the two have credibility because they have been harsh critics of the way President Bush has directed the war.

Their column, which was titled "A War We Just Might Win," expresses something we haven't heard in several years: **optimism**. "We are finally getting somewhere in Iraq, at least in military terms," they write. This surprised them and they saw "the potential to produce not necessarily victory, but a sustainable stability that both we and the Iraqis could live with."

Testifying last week before the House Armed Services Committee, U.S. Army General John M. Keane said Gen. Petraeus' new offensive has turned the tide against al-Qaida and insurgents alike. "We are on the offensive and have the momentum," said Gen. Keane, citing improved security throughout Baghdad, reduced sectarian violence, and al-Qaida losing ground in Sunni areas.

This is bad news for Democrats: so invested are they in defeat. What would they do; what *could* they do should pacification, if not unification, set in? It would not be beyond them to ignore the positives and focus only on the negatives. Will the mainstream media support them in such a strategy? Some might, but the "alternative" media, including talk radio, cable TV and the Internet, won't let them get away with it. Democrats may be reduced to asking if the public is going to believe them or their "lying eyes."

On "NBC Nightly News" last week, anchor Brian Williams ignored the column by O'Hanlon and Pollack and instead focused on "a draft U.S. report," saying "there are disturbing new details about corruption at the very top of the Iraqi government." ABC's Terry McCarthy apparently didn't receive, or ignored, the Democratic talking points when he said of the O'Hanlon-Pollack column on "World News Tonight," the report tracks fairly closely with what we're seeing." David Martin on "CBS Evening News" reported on July 31, "With one day left in the month, American casualties in July are the lowest since the troop surge began in February."

NBC News notwithstanding, these somewhat upbeat assessments on CBS, ABC (and in The New York Times) must be unsettling to a lot of Democrats. Even Sen. Hillary Clinton, who flipped on her "favorite" baseball team when it became politically expedient to do so, will have a tough time selling the line, "I believed in victory from the beginning." - Cal Thomas, *townhall.com*, 8/2/07

### DEMOS. DON'T REALLY SUPPORT THE TROOPS

Cindy Sheehan, mother of a soldier who was killed in Iraq, emerged on the American political scene two years ago.

Distraught and unstable, she was shamelessly exploited by opponents of George W. Bush and the war while such exploitation seemed to pay political benefits. When she became an embarrassment, she, like other before her, was tossed onto the trash heap of history by her progressive minders.

Sheehan was useful to the antiwar left in a particular way. As Jonathan Cohn put it in the Sept. 12, 2005 New Republic, "Sheehan's value isn't as a barometer of public opinion or as a source of foreign policy wisdom. It's as proof of one very simple point that a person can criticize the war and still support the troops."

It's unclear that Sheehan was particularly interested in "supporting the troops+ - unless one means by that lamenting the fate of the troops as victims. The fact that relatively few soldier see themselves as victims, the fact that few families understand their loved ones' service and sacrifices in that light -- that didn't matter. What mattered to the left was that it was dangerous politically not to "support the troops."

Of course the antiwar left hated what the troops were doing, fighting the enemy in Iraq, and they hated the troops' goal, victory in Iraq. So "supporting the

- What's Inside . . .**
- Prosperity Gospel**
- Hate-Crime Laws**
- Lower Budget Deficit**
- Books and Reading**
- Alcohol Abuse**
- The Supreme Court**
- Creation Museum**

troops" meant feeling sorry for them, or pretending to -- something antiwar politicians and media did with great hand-wringing and hoopla.

With the ongoing progress of the surge, and the obvious fact that the vast majority of the troops want to fight and win the war, the "support-the-troops-but-oppose-what-they're-doing" position has become increasingly untenable. How can you say with a straight face that you support the troops while advancing legislation that would undercut their mission and strengthen their enemies?

You can't. So those on the cutting edge of progressive opinion are beginning to give up on even pretending to support the troops. Instead, they now slander the troops. - William Kristol, in *Weekly Standard*, by Fox News.

## CHARISMATIC MILLIONAIRES

Early this summer, **Paul Crouch of the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN)** wrote to supporters, telling them that the network's spring "Praise-a-Thon" was a success. For five days, Crouch and a slate of other televangelists had raised money on-air for TBN, the largest Christian television network in the world. "TBN is debt free," Crouch wrote. "Free to invest every penny into expansion to the rest of the world!"

For TBN, that means investing in broadcasting its Christian-themed programs on thousands of cable systems and more than 5,000 television stations. But it also means investing in something else: Southern California real estate.

The 34-year-old ministry based in Santa Ana, Calif, owns a slew of real estate in Southern California as well as a mobile home park in Florida. But it's not the mobile homes that have drawn national attention. Instead, the public's gaze has fallen on a pair of TBN-owned mansions in Orange County, Calif. that are reportedly worth millions.

Earlier this year, ABC's 20/20 reported that property records revealed one of TBN's mansions is worth about \$4 million. A second home with more than 10,000 square feet is worth about \$6 million, according to the report.

TBN spokesman Colby May wouldn't confirm or deny those figures, but told WORLD that the mansions are used for "ministry purposes" like taping shows and hosting guests. TBN founders Crouch and his wife, Jan, sometimes stay in the homes as well. May says the couple reimburses TBN when they use the homes for purposes unrelated to the ministry.

May also explains why TBN owns the expensive properties. He says they are a wise investment of the ministry's funds, including more than \$110 million that donors give to TBN each year. . . .

**Rusty Leonard** is the founder of *Wall Watchers*, an independent watchdog organization that reports on the finances of more than 500 Christian ministries, including TBN. The group's website features data for donors, outlining how much money ministries have and how they spend it.

Wall Watchers asks Christian ministries for audited financial statements, and most eventually comply. But a handful of organizations refuse, creating troubling questions about how they handle millions of donor dollars.

Some financial information about non-profits is already available through publicly accessible tax records called 990s. The forms include broad information, including revenue and the salaries of top officials. But churches aren't required to file the forms, and IRS standards are broad: Ministries that hold little resemblance to a traditional church often gain church status and the freedom from public filings.

One high-profile example is **Benny Hinn** Ministries. The Texas-based international organization is known for its appeals for financial

donations and its "miracle crusades" where ministry founder Benny Hinn claims to heal participants of a range of diseases and disabilities. The organization also claims it is a church, and the IRS agrees. The group isn't required to file public tax records. That means the public doesn't know how much money Hinn takes in, or how the ministry spends it.

But media reports have given some indication of where the organization's money goes. NBC's *Dateline* reported in 2002 that Hinn lived in a ministry-owned home in California worth \$10 million. In a letter to supporters Hinn defended the oceanfront mansion, calling it a "parsonage." He added that the property was a wise investment and noted that it had quadrupled in value.

The segment also reported that Hinn drove a Mercedes SUV and a convertible, both valued at about \$80,000. The report documented hotel stays for Hinn ranging from \$900 to \$3,000 per night, all charged to the ministry. Hinn called the hotel stays "international stopovers" designed for rest.

Hinn says an independent accounting firm audits his organization's finances each year, but he refuses to make the results public. The organization hasn't responded to Wall Watcher's requests for audited financial statements, and Hinn officials did not return calls from WORLD seeking comment. Creflo Dollar Ministries, another non-profit that would not release financial statements to Wall Watchers, also did not return phone calls from WORLD. . . .

TBN's cash and short-term investments totaled more than \$340 million. Leonard calls that "a huge cash hoard" for a non-profit ministry. "They have the profit margins of Microsoft."

TBN's March newsletter announcing the network's spring fundraising telethon included 15 separate links to donating options. Crouch wrote: "If you have a need -- 'GIVE GOD A SEED!' . . . Fill out your pledge on the flap of your envelope."

In a two-part investigation of TBN, the *Los Angeles Times* noted that in a past telethon, Crouch encouraged viewers to pledge \$1,000 even if they didn't have it. "Do you think God would have any trouble getting 1,000 extra dollars to you somehow?" Crouch asked. The report added that Crouch told viewers: "If you have been healed or saved or blessed through TBN, and have not contributed . . . you are robbing God and will lose your reward in heaven." . . .

Leonard rejects TBN's assertions that he targets the organization because he disagrees with its theological bent. He does acknowledge his disagreements with so-called "prosperity theology" that emphasizes personal health and wealth as a sign of spiritual blessing. "It's turning the gospel on its head."

But Leonard says he reports fairly on organizations that emphasize prosperity, and points to the St. Louis-based **Joyce Meyer** Ministries (JMM). In 2005, Wall Watchers issued a "donor alert" for JMM, noting that the ministry did not make financial records public.

The alert also noted a series of reports from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that revealed Meyer and her four children lived with their families in a five-home compound owned by the ministry. The homes were worth a combined total of more than \$3.7 million. Meyer's home included a putting green and an eight-car heated garage, according to the report.

After months of criticism, JMM relented. The ministry sold the homes, paid \$1.56 million in real estate and property taxes, and stated making audited financial statements available on its website. Wall Watchers removed its donor alert and reported JMM's efforts at financial transparency.

Leonard doesn't expect all of the 29 ministries on Wall Watchers "transparency watch" list to follow suit. The list reports ministries

that refuse to make financial statements available. At least eight of the organizations, including Benny Hinn and Creflo Dollar Ministries, have programs on TBN. - *WORLD*, 7/28/07

## NEWTON: MAN OF SCIENCE, MAN OF FAITH

Have you heard about the religious fundamentalist who wanted to teach physics at Cambridge? This would-be instructor wasn't simply a Christian, he was so preoccupied with biblical prophecy that he wrote a book titled *Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*. Based on his reading of Daniel, in fact, he forecast the date of the Apocalypse: no earlier than 2060. He also calculated the year the world was created. When Genesis 1:1 says "in the beginning," he determined, it means 3988 B.C.

Not many modern universities are prepared to employ a science professor who espouses not merely "intelligent design" but out-and-out divine creation. This applicant's writings on astronomy, for example, include these thoughts on the solar system: "This most beautiful system of sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and domination of an intelligent and powerful Being. . . He governs all things, and knows all things that are or can be done."

Hire somebody with such views to teach physics? At a Baptist junior college deep in the Bible Belt, maybe, but the faculty would erupt if you tried it just about anywhere else. Many of them would echo Oxford's Richard Dawkins, the prominent evolutionary biologist, who writes in *The God Delusion* that he is "hostile to fundamentalist religion because it actively debauches the scientific enterprise. . . It subverts science and saps intellect.

Equally blunt is Sam Harris, a PhD candidate in neuroscience and another unsparing foe of religion. "The conflict between religion and science is inherent and (very nearly) zero-sum," he writes in an essay whose title -- "Science Must Destroy Religion" -- makes clear the antipathy with which many modern scientists regard religious faith. "The success of science often comes at the expense of religious dogma; the maintenance of religious dogma always comes at the expense of science."

Less elegant but more influential, the National Science Education Standards issued by the National Academy of Sciences in 1995 classified religion with "myths," "mystical inspiration," and "superstition" -- all of them quite incompatible with scientific study. Michael Dini, a biologist at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, made headlines in 2003 over his policy of denying letters of recommendation for any graduate student who could not "truthfully and forthrightly affirm a scientific answer" to the question of mankind's origin. Science and religion, he said in an interview at the time, "shouldn't overlap."

But such consideration didn't keep Cambridge from hiring the theology - and Bible-drenched individual described above. Indeed, it named him to the prestigious Lucasian Chair of Mathematics -- in 1668. And a good thing too, since Isaac Newton -- notwithstanding his religious fervor and intense interest in biblical interpretation -- went on to become the most renowned scientist of his age, and arguably the most influential in history.

Newton's consuming interest in theology, eschatology, and the secrets of the Bible is the subject of a new exhibit at Hebrew University in Jerusalem (online at [jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/Newton](http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/mss/Newton)). His vast religious output -- an estimated 3 million words -- ranged from the dimensions of Solomon's Temple to a method of reckoning of the date of Easter to the elucidation of biblical symbols. "Newton was one of the last great Renaissance men," the curators observe, "a thinker who worked in mathematics, physics, optics, alchemy, history, theology, and the interpretation of prophecy and saw connections between them

all." The 21st-century prejudice that religion invariably "subverts science" is refuted by the extraordinary figure who managed to discover the composition of light, deduce the laws of motion, invent calculus, compute the speed of sound, and define universal gravitation, all while believing deeply in the "domination of an intelligent and powerful Being." Far from subverting his scientific integrity, the exhibition notes, "Newton's piety served as one of his inspirations to study nature and what we today call science."

For Newton, it was axiomatic that religious inquiry and scientific investigation complemented each other. There were truths to be found in both of the "books" authored by God, the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature -- or as Francis Bacon called them, the "book of God's word" and the "book of God's works." To study the world empirically did not mean abandoning religious faith. On the contrary: The more deeply the workings of Creation were understood, the closer one might come to the Creator. In the language of the 19th Psalm, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." - Jeff Jacoby, *Conservative Chronicle*, 8/1/07

## MAJORITY BELIEVE TV IS HARMFUL

A new survey commissioned by a media watchdog group claims the news and entertainment media are damaging the nation's moral values.

The Culture and Media Institute (CMI) has published a report called *The Media Assault on American Values: The Conflict Between the media, personal responsibility, and respect for religion*. The report found that 68% of Americans said they believed the media have a negative impact on moral values in this country, and 73% said the entertainment industry is having a negative impact.

At an event in Washington to unveil the report, CMI director Bob Knight argued the more a person watches television, the less likely he is to accept personal responsibility for his actions.

"We believe that the figures show clearly that the more TV you watch, the more you want to depend on the government," Knight explained. "The people who are heavy TV viewers, by 73% think government should be primarily responsible for our health care. Sixty-four percent believe government should be primarily responsible for retirement. That's a good deal higher than the light TV viewers and the overall findings."

According to the report, "heavy television viewers" watch four or more hours each evening: "light" viewers, one hour or less.

The report also showed the more a person watches TV, the less likely he is to value religious principles and obedience to God.

According to the CMI report, "Most Americans believe the nation's morality is slipping. These people name the media as the second greatest factor in the moral decline, exceeded only by the [collapse of the] family." - *AFA Journal*, 8/07

## GRANDMA RUN OVER BY 'HATE-CRIMES' LAW

*Next month Congress is expected to take up a hate-crimes bill that would establish special protections for homosexuals.*

So, what's the big deal? Aren't "hate-crimes" laws really just aimed at people who commit violent crimes and at extremists like Fred ("God Hates Fags") Phelps? No. They're also designed to govern the speech, actions -- even thoughts -- of the general population. That's me, you, your friends, neighbors -- even your grandmother.

Just ask Philadelphia grandmothers Arlene Elshinnawy and Lynda Beckman. Elshinnawy, 75, a grandmother of three, was holding a sign that said "Truth is hate to those who hate the truth" when she was arrested with Beckman, grandmother of 10, and nine other Chris-

tians on a downtown Philadelphia street in October 2004. This Repent America group, later dubbed the "Philadelphia 11," was conducting a counter-demonstration near homosexual activists celebrating National Coming Out Day.

They spent the night in jail, but that wasn't the worst part. "When we were released and given this piece of paper -- which were three felonies and five misdemeanors -- if they had found us guilty of these things, it was worth 47 years in prison, plus a \$90,000 fine for each of us," Elshinnawy told an interviewer.

The charges were dismissed a few months later, but not before some sleepless nights for the Philadelphia 11. Pennsylvania's hate-crimes law is styled "ethnic intimidation." "In my case, pretty ironic that I would be charged with 'ethnic intimidation,' said Elshinnawy, who is black. "But since when does your sexual preference qualify you as making up an ethnic group?"

Dr. Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission: "Hate-crimes legislation is a bad idea on steroids," Land said. "We should never allow the government to decide what is acceptable speech and what is unacceptable speech. We should penalize behaviors, not opinions and not speech. If you start trying to regulate speech and start trying to regulate thoughts, start trying to regulate beliefs rather than behaviors, there's no way that you're not going to abridge the constitutional rights of millions of Americans." - Stephen Adams, *Citizen Link*, 8/12/07

## LESSONS FROM BRIDGES AND MINES

Two recent tragedies -- in Minnesota and in Utah -- have held the nation's attention. The implications of these tragedies also deserve attention.

Those politicians who are always itching to raise tax rates have seized upon the neglected infrastructure of the country as another reason to do what they are always trying to do. Those who live by talking points now have a great one: "How can we fight an expensive war and repair our neglected infrastructure without raising taxes?"

Plausible as this might sound, tax rates are not tax revenues. The two things have moved in opposite directions too many times, over the many years, for us to take these clever talking points at face value. This administration is not the first one in which a reduction in tax rates has been followed by an increase in tax revenues. The same thing happened during the Reagan administration, the Kennedy administration and the Coolidge administration. . . .

Some of the money already appropriated for maintaining and repairing infrastructure is being diverted into other pet projects of politicians. Money supposedly set aside for repairing potholes and maintaining bridges is diverted to the building of bicycle paths or subsidizing ferries or buses. These other things have more of a political pay-off.

Not only are there well-publicized ribbon-cutting ceremonies for building something new, many of these new things can be named for the politicians who had them built. But nobody names pothole repairs for anybody or puts any politician's name on the rivets used to repair an existing bridge. Moreover, nobody blames a politician when a bridge collapses years after he put his name on some government building with money that could have been used to make bridges safer longer. If the collapse occurs on somebody else's watch, it will be somebody else's political problems. . . .

The other recent tragedy that has held the nation's painful attention -- the mine cave-in in Utah -- also has implications that few seem to notice.

We could have far fewer men going down into those mines in

the first place if we could use other readily available and economically viable substitutes for coal, such as nuclear power or more of our own oil. Here, too, politics is the problem. The only "alternative energy sources" that are on the political agenda are those few very expensive options that environmentalist zealots approve. Nuclear power is not on the green zealots' approved list, even though nuclear power is widely used in other countries. Some say nuclear power is not safe. But nothing is categorically "safe." The only serious question is how its safety compares to that of alternative ways of generating energy.

Ask the families of the trapped miners if they think mining is safe. Ask them if they would rather face the grim reality of a death in their family or the hypothetical possibility of inconveniencing some caribou in Alaska. -Thomas Sowell, *townhall.com*, 8/14/07

## INCREDIBLE SHRINKING BUDGET DEFICIT

There is some very good news in the battle to slay the budget deficit. It is being cut in half well ahead of forecasts, offering fresh evidence that reducing federal tax rates does not undermine government revenues.

The Bush administration has a lot of problems on its plate, both foreign and domestic, but the budget deficit is not one of them. This is one area where President Bush's policies have been a resounding success, though don't expect to see this reported on the nightly network news shows.

The Office of Management and Budget announced last week that the annual deficit, estimated at \$400 billion just a few years ago, will be \$205 billion by the end of this fiscal year (which ends in September).

That's still a lot of money in a nearly \$3 trillion-a-year budget, but it is 1.5 percent of the gross domestic product (the measure of everything that our economy produces each year) and it's racing downward.

The latest forecast represents a \$43 billion decline from last year's deficit, which has been shrinking for three years in a row.

The administration says it is solidly on track to balance the budget in five years when it will turn into a \$33 billion budget surplus by 2012. . . .

Well-timed tax cuts pulled the U.S. economy out of its sharp decline in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the resulting economic growth they triggered has produced steadily rising tax revenues that have steadily eaten into the deficit year after year.

As OMB correctly reported last week, "A growing economy delivered higher-than-expected tax receipts." The people who said that would not happen have been strangely silent ever since, because the results are irrefutable. . . .

While the overall economy produces this growth, it's the workers who pay the bulk of the tax receipts out of their paychecks, and more money is pouring into the U.S. Treasury because more people are working.

Since the Bush tax cuts fully took effect in 2003, the American economy has created more than 8.2 million new jobs, cutting the unemployment rate to 4.5 percent. That rate, by the way, is on average lower than the rates for the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, OMB says. - Donald Lambro, *Conservative Chronicle*, 7/16/07

## SCHOOL'S IN: DO YOUR KIDS READ?

Every generation worries about the next -- and usually with good reason. Here is another reason for worry about today's adolescents and young adults: They don't read. That is a generalization, of course. But the generalization seems to be holding true.

Thomas Washington, librarian at a Washington, D.C. area private school, recently contributed a "lament" to The Washington Post. The kids are privileged and have no problem of access to books, but they do not read. As he reports:

"I'm a librarian in an independent Washington area school. We're doing all the right things. Our class sizes are small. Most graduating seniors gain admission to their college of choice. The facilities are first-rate.

"Yet from my vantage point at the reference desk, something is amiss. The books in the library stacks are gathering dust.

In the minds of the students (and of many librarians) the library is now not about books, but about "information literacy," the Internet and database searches.

Many librarians are no longer called librarians, but "media and information specialists."

"The buzzword in the trade is 'information literacy,' a misnomer, because what it is really about is mastering computer skills, not promoting a love of reading and books. These days, librarians measure the quality of returns in data-mining stunts. We teach students how to maximize a database search, about successful retrieval rates. What usually gets lost in the scramble is a careful reading of the material."

Do these students eventually settle down to a love for books?

"Conventional wisdom has it that teenagers don't read because they're too busy. Only after high school, sometimes midway through college, do young adults reconnect with their childhood love of reading and make books their partners for life. I don't think so anymore. The 2004 Reading at Risk report by the National Endowment for the Arts concluded that literary reading was in serious decline on all fronts, especially among the youngest adults, ages 18 to 24, whose rate of decrease was 55 percent greater than that of the total adult population." - Thomas Washington, Librarian in Washington, D.C.

Librarians and secular educators have ample reason for concern, but Christians must look at this reality with an even greater concern.

Reading is an important Christian discipline. Further, growth as a Christian disciple is closely tied to the reading of the Bible as well as worthy Christian books. This is why the Christian church has championed the cause of literacy. It is why the Reformers fought for the translation of the Scriptures into vernacular languages.

A loss of literacy and respect for the book amounts to grave danger for the Christian church. The transmission of Christian truth has been closely tied to scrolls, codices and books throughout the history of the church -- a legacy inherited from the Jews who often protected the sacred scrolls with their lives.

The electronic media have their places and uses, and I am thankful for the accessibility of so much worthy and important information through digital means. Nevertheless, the electronic screen is not the venue for lengthy, thoughtful, serious reading. The vehicle for serious reading is the book and the Christian should be a serious reader. - R. Albert Mohler, *Christian News*, 4/16/07

## WHAT WE READ: BIGGEST BEST SELLERS

To list a few: Ten Little Indians and Lord of the Rings - 100 million each; Charlotte's Web and Peter Rabbit - 45 million; Ben Hur and Spock's Child Care - 50 million; Harry Potter Series - 400 million, and made J.K. Rowling the richest woman in the world, a billionaire.

For Religion: Books of Mormon - 120 million; The Quran - 800 million; Chinese Communist Mao Tse-Tung's (little red book) - 900 million; **The Bible** - 6 billion, far more than all these others combined. (That doesn't mean you can trust any or all of the versions and trans-

lations. - N.P.) - From *NewsMax*, 8/07

## YOUTHS HOOKED ON CIGARETTES IN 2 DAYS

A disturbing new study of youth smokers finds that it only takes two days from when they first start inhaling cigarettes to become addicted to nicotine. And, children need only smoke seven cigarettes a month to report symptoms of dependence.

The findings of the study, which looked at the smoking habits of 1,248 sixth-grade Massachusetts public school students, were published in the July issue of *The Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*.

The study, conducted by a team of physicians from the University of Massachusetts Medical School, contradicts the belief that long-term smoking is necessary to develop an addiction. . . .

Most of the youths began inhaling at just under age 13 (average age of 12.8 years), 38 percent developed tobacco dependence, and 70 percent had cravings that were difficult to control before they were smoking every day.

The study's authors urged that teenagers be warned that it might only take "one cigarette to initiate a life-long dependence on tobacco." - *FoxNews.com*, 7/31/07

## THIRTY PERCENT OF ADULTS ABUSE ALCOHOL

More than 30 percent of American adults have abused alcohol or suffered from alcoholism at some point in their lives, and few have received treatment, according to a new government study.

Alcoholics who got treatment first received it, on average, at about age 30 -- eight years after they developed dependence on drinking, researchers reported.

"That's a big lag," especially combined with the fact that only 24 percent of alcoholics reported receiving any treatment at all, said study co-author Bridget Grant of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The treatment rate for alcoholics was slightly less than the rate found a decade earlier. The study did not look at reasons for the decline, but other research has revealed a belief among doctors and the public that treatment doesn't work.

However, Dr. Mark Willenbring, director of the institute's Division of Treatment and Recovery Research, said evidence indicates that substance-abuse treatment is more effective than treatments for many medical disorders. . . .

Alcohol abuse was defined as drinking-related failure to fulfill major obligations at work, school or home; social or legal problems; and drinking in hazardous situations. Alcoholism was characterized by compulsive drinking; preoccupation with drinking; and tolerance to alcohol or withdrawal symptoms. The definitions were based on the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic manual. - *A.P.* from *FoxNews.com*, 7/3/07

(Alcohol is the number one drug in the U.S. and has been for generations. - N.P.)

## ADULT BINGE DRINKERS PREFER BEER, TEENS LIQUOR

Binge drinkers are more likely to have a beer can in hand than a shot glass, new research shows. Unless you are talking about teens. They prefer liquor.

The stereotype-shattering findings are reported in two studies by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Access may play a major role in the choices of the two age groups, experts suggested.

For adults, beer is cheaper and easy to find, sold in gas stations

and grocery stores. However, for teens, it may be easier to filch free alcohol from their parents' liquor cupboards, one of the researchers said.

Binge drinking -- no matter which type of alcohol -- is bad for your health. Excessive alcohol is acutely dangerous because of its role in car crashes, violence and other traumatic injury, and is blamed for 75,000 deaths annually. . . . - A.P. from *FoxNews.com*, 8/7/07

### SHOULD DRINKING AGE BE LOWERED?

*Parade Magazine* for August 12 considered the dangerous problem of underage drinking.

My answer to the question is **NO** and that young people need salvation from sin and a new life in Christ. Then take seriously the scripture that says, "Wine (or beer) is a mocker, strong drink (liquor) is raging and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise. - Prov. 20:1.

See above about binge drinking practiced by many college students to their detriment and many times their death. - N. P.

### GWYNN AND RIPKIN: THE 'RIGHT WAY'

In the reporting and commentary that preceded Sunday's Baseball Hall of Fame induction ceremony for San Diego's Tony Gwynn and Baltimore's Cal Ripken Jr., one ESPN sports journalist observed: "They did it the right way."

That is a foreign concept in our day: the "right" way. Why? When I was growing up -- and until recent years -- most athletes played by the rules and did things the right way. Their only "enhancement" was hard work, which refined natural talent.

At the start of the week, Barry Bonds was preparing to equal and surpass Hank Aaron's record of 755 career home runs (He did this and more). . Bonds will deserve more than the asterisk baseball attached to Roger Maris, whose only "enhancement" was playing in more games than previous record holder, Babe Ruth. Bonds is alleged to have been helped along with steroids.

Last week, Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick emerged from a courtroom following indictments on federal dogfighting charges. Vick promised that the coming trial will help him get his "good name" back. One must first have a good name, which increasing numbers of sports celebrities do not. Professional basketball and cycling are other sports recently tainted by rule infractions, even lawbreaking.

And then there are Gwynn and Ripken who did it "the right way." I saw Gwynn play only on television, and have read that he is a strong family man and humanitarian. Living closer to Baltimore than to San Diego, I saw Ripken play a lot. On and off the field, Ripken conducted himself as a gentleman, a word that began to fall out of fashion in the '60s. He would sign autographs before games and waited after games to sign even more until the last child (or adult) was satisfied. There was never a story about Ripken that involved drugs, alcohol, extramarital affairs, boorish behavior, gambling, conceit or anything else that would discredit Ripken, the game, the city of Baltimore, the Orioles, or disgrace his family.

On Sept. 6, 1995, when Ripken broke Lou Gehrig's record for consecutive games played, the outpouring of emotion in Baltimore and in the voices of the announcers calling the game (even I teared up) was heartfelt. It was as if America was lamenting what it had lost when it traded real accomplishment for celebrity and false glory.

What do we celebrate today? Upon whom is our attention fixed? It is the likes of Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears. And if one turns to tabloid cable TV, it is also missing women, murdered women and their daughters, missing daughters who disappear with men who murder them and other sensationalized and violently gratuitous tragedies.

Do we teach, encourage and practice "the right way" in our personal lives and relationships, schools, politics, or anything else? We do not. That would require imposing a moral code, which is less acceptable than the immorality that inevitably fills a culture trapped in a moral vacuum.

Instead we adopt the philosophy behind the Frank Sinatra song, "My Way." Whatever feels good at the moment and helps us make it through the night is all we want. We crave the immediate over the eternal, the base over the noble, the cheap over the valuable and the tawdry over the wholesome. And then we are surprised when we get fewer Gwynns and Ripkens and more Bonds, Vicks, Lohans and Spears. - Cal Thomas, *Conservative Chronicle*, 7/31/07

### SCHUMER'S OPINION OF SUPREME COURT

The U.S. Supreme Court under Chief Justice John Roberts is "the most conservative in memory," and the Senate should not confirm another nominee to the bench from President Bush "except in extraordinary circumstances," in the view of Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.). Addressing the fifth annual American Constitution Society convention Friday, Schumer said the Senate had been misled by the "charm of nominee Roberts and the erudition of nominee [Samuel] Alito." "Our fears were more than justified from the ultra-conservative record of [those] two men," said Schumer, a member of the Senate judiciary Committee. . . .

Schumer citing a remark by Justice Stephen Breyer -- who was appointed by President Clinton in 1994 -- said, "It is not often in the law that so few have so quickly changed so much." "In case after case, our most recently confirmed justices have appeared to jettison decisions recently authored by their immediate predecessors," the *New York Democrat* said. . . .

Ed Whelan, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, on Monday sharply criticized Schumer for his speech. "Schumer is adept at bluster, and he is shrewdly trying to shape the environment in case a vacancy arises," he told Cybercast News Service. Whelan said the Roberts and Alito confirmation hearings had been productive, contrary to Schumer's assertions.

"We learned quite a bit, during Roberts' and Alito's testimony, about the quality and integrity of their Senate attackers, including Schumer...after harshly criticizing, and voting against, both the Roberts and Alito nominations. Schumer can hardly pretend to be disappointed by their performance," he said. "There is no inconsistency at all between their testimony and their performance [on the bench]," Whelan added. Whelan characterized the court's rulings this term as rather modest -- "a small step towards the right, and towards the center. After decades of liberal judicial activism on so many issues, the court's position remains decidedly on the left," he asserted. . . . - Evan Moore, *CNS News*, 7/31/07

### '08 ELECTION AND THE SUPREME COURT

Most of all of the great culture war issues of our day can be directly traced to bad decisions by the United States Supreme Court. Consider this: duly elected legislative branches of government are not ultimately responsible for abortion on demand, legalizing same sex marriage, protecting pornography as free speech, removing faith symbols from the public square, and undermining private property rights. Instead, these moral and social ills are the responsibility of unelected, unaccountable members of the federal judiciary who refuse to recognize their limited and restrained role as jurists and insist upon acting as social change agents.

Between age and ailing health, most legal observers believe we

are all but certain to see two, maybe three, US Supreme Court justices resign between 2009 and 2012. Since most of these justices are liberals, the 5-4 majority our opponents have enjoyed could be either dismantled or reaffirmed for the next couple of decades. In the final analysis, the 2008 election presents us with the most significant window of opportunity to change the direction of the court (and hence the culture war) that will occur over the next 15-25 years.

There are really only two equally important questions conservatives should ask about the upcoming presidential election: 1) Which candidate is most likely to pick the best judges; AND 2) Which candidate is most likely to win both the primary and general elections. Every other issue is just window dressing. If we all stick together, work hard to reach a consensus and use these questions to think about the election, we might have a chance to elect a conservative who could produce historical pro-life and pro-family victories in battles many of us have been fighting all of our lives. - John Stemberger, *townhall.com*, 7/31/07

## POLITICS BENEATH CONTEMPT

A president removes a U.S. attorney, and Congress demands to see privileged files, related to the firing. The president refuses, noting that "these suspensions are my executive acts," and "based upon considerations addressed to me alone." The Senate has a meltdown, arguing it has oversight authority over the removal of administration officials and threatens to censure the attorney general.

If this sounds familiar, it shouldn't, since it's the story of a long-forgotten battle that President Grover Cleveland fought with Congress in 1885. One reason it is long-forgotten is because nothing happened. The Senate was steamed that Cleveland wouldn't cough up the docs, but it also recognized there were limits on its power. It never did hold any officials in contempt, never did take any judicial action. Instead, it confirmed Cleveland's new choice for the U.S. Attorney position.

What a difference 122 years makes. Democrats are conducting an insincere probe into President Bush's firing of U.S. Attorneys, but these days they see no constitutional reason why the White House shouldn't cooperate in their partisan attack. In response to the administration's refusal to respond to subpoenas, the House Judiciary Committee this week voted to issue criminal contempt citations against Chief of Staff Josh Bolten and former White House Counsel Harriet Miers.

Chairman John Conyers is spinning the line that his party had no choice, but was forced into this by a recalcitrant president who is eviscerating Congress' oversight authority. If you believe that, Mr. Conyers also has a Capitol building to sell you. The contempt citations are, rather, an audacious break with history and Mr. Conyers has far more honorable options. The reason Democrats haven't pursued those more dignified routes is because this is about smearing the president, not proving a principle. . . .

Democrats seem only too happy to continue turning this attorney's probe into an event, so long as they think it might inflict some political damage on their opponent in the White House. Ole Grover never knew how good he had it. - Kimberley A. Strassel, *Opinion Journal*, 7/28/07

## CREATIONIST FUNDAMENTALISTS

A recent report drawn up by the Council of Europe, which is the continent's main human rights body, warns strongly of "creationist fundamentalists" and calls them dangerous religious extremists who "could become a threat to human rights" ("Secularist Europe Silences

Pro-Lifers and Creationists," *Brussels Journal*, June 23, 2007).

The report claims that creationism "was for a long time an almost exclusively American phenomenon," which is pure nonsense. There are countless Christians throughout the world who believe the Bible's account of creation. The report identifies "creationist theories" with "all manner of fundamentalism and extremism, synonymous with attacks of utmost virulence on human rights."

The "extremism" this report should be worried about is the Islamic extremism that aims to put all of Europe under the heel of Islamic law. There is no evidence that creationists have attacked anyone's human rights or injured anyone in any way, but jihadist Muslims have done all of that.

The report says the creationists have a "total rejection of science," but in fact creationists simply refuse to worship science as infallible, knowing how often it has proven itself to be wrong and changed its opinions. Creationists don't reject science; they reject "science falsely so called" (I Timothy 6:20).

The Council of Europe report in question was to be voted on Monday, June 25, with the objective of banning creationist and intelligent design views from schools in Europe, but the resolution was sent back to committee for "further study."

Deputies from east European countries, who voted against approving the report, recalled with no fondness that "Darwinian evolution was a favorite theory of their former communist rulers." The very fact that such a report could be written and given any serious consideration at all demonstrates the very real danger to freedom of speech and religion in Europe today.

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee" (I Timothy 6:20-21). - D. Cloud, *Christian News*, 7/16/07

## NEW CREATION MUSEUM

You don't have to be a Ph.D to understand what is at stake for western culture in the evolution versus creation debate; everything.

To begin with, there's the issue of the existence and character of God, and His relationship to mankind. Then there's the nature of truth, the question of what happens to us after death; the value of life and the trustworthiness of science and history as we know it. The philosophical foundations on which our government and civilization rest are up for grabs, as are the values and morals that we live by and teach our children. The debate also informs the ethical framework by which we do business, write laws and make public policy. And of particular interest to Christians is the veracity of the Holy Bible.

Certainly that list is but a brief expression of why the question of origins has been front and center in the culture war as far back as the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial. It's also why those who believe the universe is the creation of a master designer -- the God of the Bible -- are celebrating the May opening of the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky.

"At a foundational level the culture war is really a battle between God's Word and autonomous human reason," says Ken Ham, founder of Answers in Genesis, the ministry under which the museum operates. "And in that way, the Creation Museum really deals with the foundational issues in the culture war. . . .

The museum's presentation is designed to demonstrate the truth of the Bible particularly in its account of creation.

"We're saying the Bible's history is true, even back to Genesis," Ham explains. "So the truth of creation validates the rest of the Scripture, including the claim that Jesus is the only way to be reconciled to

the Creator God."

"We connect the Biblical account to the dinosaurs, fossils, American Indians, Australian Aborigines, even death and sufferings," Ham says. "So we are answering questions at the point that the Bible's credibility has been attacked in our day. We're giving those answers, then proclaiming the Gospel in the context of real history and presenting it in a very clear way. That's the uniqueness of the Creation Museum." - Rusty Benson, *AFA Journal*, 8/07 (I recommend this to be visited on field trips or vacations. - N.P.)

### SEX AND THE LUTHERN YOUTH GROUP

How do they do it? I mean, how can the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) tell their kids with a straight face not to be sexually active outside of marriage when they've just voted last Saturday to no longer enforce the celibacy requirements for their unmarried staff -- both straight and gay?

The ELCA and other pro-gay denominations have been ordaining gays for decades. That's nothing new. What's new is that now staff can openly have lovers while on the job and there will be no disciplinary action for violating the celibacy requirement.

The message to the kids is loud and clear: We can have sex with our boyfriends and girlfriends, but you can't. What hypocrisy.

This is what happens when sin and the Bible collide: either the Bible will change the sin or the sin will change the Bible. In this case, it's homosexual passion that's changing the Bible. Not only have they decided, essentially, to rewrite the Bible and declare homosexuality no longer a sin, but now they've gone beyond that to include fornication

too. Adultery can't be far behind. Look for other liberal denominations to follow suit. - Frank Pastore, *townhall.com*, 8/19/07

### DRESS CODES EXIST FOR A REASON

Parents across the USA are organizing in objection to school uniform and clothing policies. The parent groups in question are unanimous in feeling that any policy restricting sartorial choice on the part of a child limits his or her freedom of expression. . . The same meritless argument can be made for employees who are restricted in what they can wear to work. Is a policeman's right to free expression violated because he must wear a uniform?

Ironically, however, the parents have unwittingly hit the nail on the head. School uniform and clothing policies are designed to restrict clothing intended to express arrogance, rebellion, claims to superiority, disrespect, gang membership, sexuality and profanity. If such expressions are restricted, then the only expression that remains is, "I am a self-respecting person with due respect for authority and the sensibilities of others." Exactly what essential expression do these parents feel their children are being denied? Furthermore, it is one thing to claim that a policy restricts free expression: it is quite another to demonstrate that said restriction causes harm. The only evidence of anything remotely resembling harm is testimonies from kids who don't like wearing uniforms. - John Rosemond, *Atlanta Journal/Constitution*, 8/18/07

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