

Yankee Steve's Column
for the Week of April 21, 2011

Why So Boring?

Easter Message

Many preachers that I have heard are not very interesting. Now I don't mean that kind of preacher that gets his sermons out of *Newsweek* magazine. He should find another line of work. I mean the straight-up kind of guy who believes that the Holy Bible is the Word of God.

The Protestant reformer Martin Luther said that bad preaching must be addressed. In particular, he felt that long-windedness was injurious to preaching. A preacher that goes on too long can defeat his purpose. His advice: know when to finish.

Some preachers that I have heard can go on and on, and you are not bothered. A handful of preachers in Wales and Africa that I have heard have that ability. They do not stand up to preach because they want to say something, but because they have something to say, and because they know that they *must* say it. They have been seized by an imperative. Let us put it this way - what they say has already been spoken to them.

One famous preacher, who could preach for 90 minutes to two hours and make it seem as if he had only spoken for five or ten minutes was the Rev. George Whitfield of England.

The great evangelist traveled to America in 1740 so that he could participate in what has been called the First Great Awakening. No one understands America who has not looked into what transpired then when a nation that was about to forget God was jolted out of its spiritual lethargy.

What took place had a direct effect on the wording of the U.S. Constitution. A pastry dipped in batter does not taste only like that batter, but the baker knows that without it the pastry would taste differently. The same is true of the Constitution; had there never been a Bible (a book, that without the Awakening, would have been replaced by Enlightenment propaganda) the Constitution would read very differently.

Secularists are quick to mention that the Constitution does not mention God except in its date, "year of our Lord." They should look before they leap. By researching further, they will discover that the Book of Esther in the Old Testament does not refer to God either. The laws of God, a biblical understanding of human nature, and an appreciation of the truth that we cannot be robbed of God's providence are presumed throughout both Esther and the Constitution.

The Constitution's unromantic view of human nature and its operative outlook that **human nature is not only corrupt but also immutable** were culled from the Holy Scriptures with which all the founders were more than familiar.

Not even the ancient Greeks were so aware of the way a republic can be driven off course as were the founders of America whose speeches, letters, and essays show an attachment to the biblical idea that power corrupts because human nature is corrupt. Original sin is at the heart of the Constitution. The founders unequivocally rejected the 18th century Enlightenment view of

human nature which believed in original innocence, an idea adopted from Jean-Jacques Rousseau [1712-78] whose antidote to human misery and corruption was to dispense with private property.

The founders believed that human nature was not only corruptible, because it could acquire too much political or ecclesiastical power, but that it was innately corrupt. As such it could not be changed; it could only be restrained. Therefore Constitution would need to have within it certain checks and balances which never should be tampered with. When Barack Obama (and other presidents) appoints “czars” accountable only to him without the approval of Congress, he is placing considerable distance between himself and the founders.

Enlightenment thinkers who for the most part were atheists or agnostics believed that human nature was about to be reborn and that it would soon recover its lost innocence. The catalyst for change would be philosophy or reason. This same naiveté was passed down to many of our contemporaries whose perspective is not based on the Bible. The future they believe must allow for a certain amount of social engineering because man is essentially good and not sinful.

It is reported that Rev. Whitfield was so engaging that a certain ship builder, who customarily found preachers so humdrum that he would reconstruct a ship in his mind during the sermon said, “When Whitfield preached I could not so much as lay the keel!”

But not everyone is a Whitfield. So we have to ask, “How is it that Christianity, which is the only religion which can satisfy all the needs of human nature, is being presented by some of us as if it were a speech by monotonous politician?”

I ask you, why are preachers so boring? I think it has to do with Easter. We have not plummed the real meaning of this sacred and joyous holy day. We don’t experience every day as Easter!

I can illustrate what I mean. The Rev. R. W. Dale was a distinguished English preacher. I like him because he held Socialism in low esteem saying, “Christianity says what is mine is thine, but Communism says what is thine is mine.”

One day while he was preparing a sermon Christ met him in an unusual way. Rev. Dale ran to his secretary and with an uncharacteristic loud voice, he said, “Christ is alive!” Taken aback she replied, “I know that; you have always preached it.” “No, no,” he shouted, “He is ALIVE!” Now that is what we need! A fresh, personal vision of the miraculous resurrection of Christ is possible because He is alive.

And since He lives I can believe that Christ will manifest Himself to you like He has to so many others who have reached out for Him.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21

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