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And then?

Well an evolving big financial bailout plan is still lumbering along through the American Congress. Most people would have forecast it would and should have been done by now. But after decades of neglect and wishful thinking the impossible takes a little longer, especially when none of them have a clue in what the outcome will truly become. We must all ask the question.

And then?

That is the big question facing the western world as the dust again settles after another New York based disaster, this one more of the metaphysical rather than the bricks and mortar happening on 9 11. Uptown in the financial district, people, with few exceptions, didn't lose their actual lives, but their livelihood may be more stupendously changed for the long term, than what happened with the terrorist attack.

Stupendous change articles are not unknown in the

Chronicle; we began 2007 with a series of articles that continued through the month of March. Therefore the recent realization that we live in a fallen world and actions have consequences is not to be dismissed lightly in the rush to find a material solution to these complex monetary problems.

Historians may one day trace the beginning of this financial crisis back to the foundation of capitalism, or probably to the Enlightenment itself, but needless to say, the happenings of the last few weeks and the short term future, measured in years, has been greatly altered. Virtually no one alive today has a distinct memory of the adult responsibilities that came to light during the Great Depression, so we must rely on training and abilities of the so called experts.

The evolving bailout plan is very loosely constructed not to repeat the tight money problems that greatly exacerbated that era,



but no one surely likes the concept of having the American people forced to provide the final defense for the greed and malfeasance of a few, but that is the real world. The real questions are this going to be enough, or will it work at all? To answer these real world issues, time will tell. Needless to say, we all need to take stock of the present and readjust our plans for the future.

As I have been ruminating on what has just happened, the Bible construct of Revelation 18 comes to mind, especially verse eight concerning a financial Babylon: Therefore her plagues will come in one day death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

The only difference from what just happened seems to be the concept of a literal reference fire rather than a metaphysical reference, but it would be quite difficult to describe what has just happened to all our financial situations metaphorically, especially in just one word, collapse, or failure just are not quite up to the task, fire seems to fit much better.

Now the same can be said for the concept of God's judgment. We live in an age when most people say they believe in God, but they really don't believe in a God expressed in the specific revelation of the Bible. They believe in a God who serves the individual to make us each healthy, wealthy, and wise in our own eyes. But looking at that God outside of our own vanity, He is not God at all, but a figment of our own sick narcissistic self image.

Furthermore, you really don't need to even be a theist, or a deist to understand that what has been happening in the American world is not kosher, in respect of observable Natural Law. If you read much of the foreign journalism leading up to and through this melt down and the bailout, you will find pretty much a total unbelief of our current American material religion and lack of true restraint in any form on depraved humanity.

True, in most of these countries that restraint now comes from government, which the American right likes to claim as socialism. What they are really saying is that socialism leads to communism Soviet style and the only model

that will work is pure libertarian anarchy and Social Darwinism. But what we have now found out is a new spin on the Golden Rule. It used to be: "He who has the gold, makes the rules." Now it means: "He who has the gold, steals the rest, and then makes the case why he should not go to jail."

But only in America, will you find those on the left, with the response: "So what is wrong with this new Golden Rule, it worked for me." Of course that is a true vision of Social Darwinism also, and one only need look at the current oligarchic states of Russia and China to verify that truth.

The American republican experiment was founded upon the principle of separation of church and state. In that construct, brought about through the application of Natural Law and Nature's God, extremes of the state were to be controlled by the Absolutes of both Natural and Specific religion.

To put this in some type of context using a construct of a friend of mine, "The American church got all upset when they took the 10 Commandments out of the schools, but said or did little when the American church had previously downgraded the Commandments to just ten good suggestions."

If the church had just been the church, as called and constructed by God, the tension with immoral society would have been sufficient to stem the rise of atheistic progressives. However once the church renounced the true gospel of Jesus Christ and replaced it with a social gospel of man centered works, the distinction between church and state disappeared, and with it not only the church's authority, but also its power.

So for the rest of this week's verbosity, let us do a little spin on the eschatology of the Book of Revelation. Since the 1980's we have been treated by the rise of the preeminence of prophetic teaching as main street Christian teaching. The "Late Great Planet Earth" is only "The Rapture" away.

Without going into detail, this Dispensationalist eschatology became the ascendant eschatology in the church during the rise of Darwinian evolution in the secular world. Looking at it somewhat in that context, we see that not the church but the individual Christian does not have to go through the "Great Tribulation" because he or she has trusted in Jesus to save them from the soon coming judgment on earth. I suppose it depends upon your religious

presuppositions, if you see a metaphysical link or contrast between this teaching and evolutionary paradigms.

Somewhat at the same time you also see the rise of a Postmillennial eschatology which brings about the church triumphant so that Jesus can return and set up a millennial kingdom on earth. That same linkage between evolution and the teaching again depends upon your religious affections.

This pretty much leaves Amillennialism, which is the dominant historic teaching of Christianity. Amillennialists see in the six references of a thousand year reign of Christ on earth in Revelation 20 as only a metaphor for the current age, since it is mentioned or referenced nowhere else in scripture. Perhaps that could be because it applies nowhere else in the Holy Writ, but then again, that brings us back to religious affections.

Let us look at the general revelation of the Book of Revelation in just a slightly different way than you will hear or read in traditional Dispensational teaching.

Generally speaking all eschatologies look at the first three chapters of Revelation as referring to the church age. That applies in most cases in a historic linear context as well as within a specific time era. Therefore pastors always refer to their specific church as modeled after the church in Philadelphia, even though it is generally recognized that in the historical context we live in the age of the church in Laodicea.

Classic Dispensationalism however looks at Revelation chapter 4 differently than the others. In verse one a voice from heaven says, "Come up here, and I will show you things that must take place after this." This is generally portrayed as the literal time of The Rapture, in that those Christians who have accepted Christ will be removed from the earth to go to the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb," while the rest of the church, the Jews, and the world in general will be judged by God during the "Great Tribulation." From that point onward the Revelation generally follows a linear progression over a period of seven years when the Second Coming of Christ will occur at the end of Chapter 19.

Other teachings along that line have The Rapture taking place at the middle of the Great Tribulation, somewhere before things get really difficult in the Bowl Judgments in Chapter 15. Others see The Rapture at the end of Chapter 19, which coincides with the Second Coming of all of Christendom.

Now let us just say that continuing somewhat literal flow of Revelation historically, that there is a break as the Dispensationalists say between the church age in chapters 1-3 and the Great Tribulation chapters 4-19, however the "come up here" is also quite literal, means using only a heavenly metaphysical view, but remaining physically on the earth as John actually experienced. Then just as The Rapture teaches, the church remaining on earth, is no longer a force for spreading the historic Christian gospel of what Jesus did in time and space, but instead asks what would Jesus do to help you achieve your goals for your life.

Are we there yet?

From my vantage point up here in Nowhere I see a lot of evidence of questioning what the church is currently doing in the world, but literally no meaningful application that goes to the heart of the problem of the historic gospel as the sole, and soul remedy for what ails man and also society.

Some churches use the true gospel to save the individual and provide a community for believers, but are quite weak in any application beyond the church walls to the larger community. They point to Augustine, as his two kingdom principles of the separate Cities of God and Man. We have God's grace, but really no law, and definitely not any church voice in Natural Law, that witness is up to the individual Christian exercising his calling alone.

On the other hand other churches on both the religious left and right promote a church that hopes to bring that shining eternal Jerusalem into present reality, through social and personal action. In order for that to happen not only does the church have to walk according to God's law, but so must civil society. Again, Augustine's two cities do not apply in this instance. We have here only a reference to the specific revelation of God's law, but no general application of either Natural Law or Common Grace.

A recent well publicized publication of Willow Creek Church, found that the most fervent believers are most disgusted with the current church, its practices and its programs. Rather than attempting to suggest a return of their and other evangelical churches to the historic Christian gospel, they basically said that these Christians are on their own to work out their Christianity, and should expect or receive little if any support from the established church.

Willow Creek fulfilling its role in fulfilling this self prophesy, turned from their traditional ineffectual programs towards what has become known as the "Emerging Church Movement." Just what they are emerging from and developing towards, is definitely not the historic Christian gospel.

So to put this in some context, could we be entering into a true Great Tribulation period on earth, where the church is still here, really being part of the worldly systems that classic Dispensationalism teaches, but at the same time The Rapture is yet to happen, or may not happen in a pretribulation scenario? Individual Christians will be saved by the grace of God alone, not just spiritually, but also physically.

That saving grace means that eternal judgment, or even temporal judgment does not apply to true Christians. Hence while times may be tough, the grace of God is and will be sufficient to overcome whatever happens. Furthermore we have the historic and current witness of Christian martyrs verifying that truth.

From that basis however, a new church will form, because as has been said, there are no atheists in foxholes, or in true survival situations. God will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. A major tribulation period will help us all to focus upon that hellacious reality. The church will be reformed not by an outward program, but by understanding that Jesus saves, and Jesus is also a specific revelation of the fulfillment of God's law as expressed in the Bible, but also God's creator of both Natural Law and Common Grace upon the earth.

Therefore, no person who has ever lived will stand before God's judgment throne and say they did not have enough evidence. The only truth they will then see is that the evidence was overwhelming; they just refused to accept that truth and therefore brought condemnation upon themselves. When that time is fulfilled, then will the end of this age be ushered in by the second coming of Jesus Christ, Messiah to the whole world.