



The Wonder Springs Chronicle

Cult Football 13 September 2010

The Wonder Springs Chronicle

Contact Information:

Jerry Bannon

Publisher

Wonder Springs

36 Merkel Road

Kettle Falls, Washington 99141

phone: 509.496.5855

blog: www.wondersprings.org email:

jerryb@wondersprings.org

chronicle@wondersprings.org

*©2010; non-commercial education
& forwarding encouraged, please
give a citation credit all other rights
reserved. This work is licensed under
a Creative Commons Attribution-
Noncommercial-No Derivative
Works 3.0 United States License.*

*For past Chronicle archives or to
subscribe to this weekly email please
visit our web site at:
www.wondersprings.org*

Great Awakenings of Mean Americans.

We continue our Cult Football religious series this week with a brief look at the history at religion in the United States and how those religious events have created a destiny with today. Americans are such a weird bunch of people. And being no exception to the rule, after I opened this week's recommendations email from Amazon.com, I just had to muse, "What a strange dude would get a list like that? There were two books on the unique nature of American Christianity, a book on old Airstream trailers and what looked to be hanging lights for your RV, two books on business management, a book on BBQ focusing on "Ribs, Chops, Steaks, and Wings," and to fill out the list, a package of reciprocating saw blades.

One book I clicked on was the latest from Julia Duin, the author of "Quitting Church" which we review here. This latest book, "Days of Fire and Glory," recounts and

reports on her experiences in the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Houston, Texas. I read the book reviews, thinking that the book is just and appropriate individual view of what really, more than we would like to admit, is the essence of American Christianity. I placed the book on my Wish List.

Naturally, as well as in the human tradition, there are three nation states residing in North America, in many ways very similar, yet still culturally distinct. Our history of European settlers to these shores begins about 500 years ago, but there is strong evidence of other peoples that lived here, from somewhere, unrelated to the indigenous immigrants we call here Indians and Native Americans and in Canada, First Nations, that arrived in the Americas from Asia near the end of the Ice Age.

Canadians, both the English and the French, first came to these shores essentially for economic reasons. That reason was furs, to



provide the finest luxury to the British Empire's successful capitalists. What Christianity that came to Canada, came subservient to the Protestant work ethic.

Mexico on the other hand, was conquered by the Spanish, in a sense, a fine example of national imperialism. They too came for wealth, in this essence gold, but that gold was to serve the rich of the Spanish monarchy, not some individual capitalist mandate to get rich. Religion in Mexico was Roman Catholicism and their missionaries came not only to provide religion to the conquerors, but also to convert the heathen to true religion and true civilization.

The, to be United States, on the other hand, was settled by religious misfits. Pilgrims and Puritans, Quakers and Shakers, Baptists, Congregationalists, Reformed and not so reformed; all came to America for religious freedom. As long as they could live in isolation the process worked rather well. However religion became much more complicated when they were forced to tolerate their neighbors. While those neighbors were known to be very religious, they really didn't get the truth all that well. After all, those neighbors had some really strange beliefs that were close to the edge of the pale of Christian orthodoxy, and some, well, only the grace of God could save them.

In this high view of religion there are essentially three views. First in our specific group, we are God's chosen, a Holy nation, a shining city on a hill that should be a beacon for all of humanity, if they, those sinners, would just listen to reason and accept Jesus.

To those outside our religious group, which includes the purely secular, we look down on all others as priggish self-righteous bigots. As a consequence comments such as primitive, uninformed, stupid, racists, are quite accurate, except I missed the biggest problem that is their hypocrisy.

Finally there is the view of God, which looks at everything through the reality of grace and the universal common plan to create unique individuals, and bring them together in diverse communities, reflecting the unity and diversity of the triune Godhead, as present in our triune universe.

What happens through all of these individual views, is to essentially create groups of mean people, who find their self worth in those who share a similar enlightenment, and while not necessarily outwardly confronting others, they do everything within the limits of their religious precepts to keep those other people from flourishing. They seek to limit God's grace to the realm of their own personal or group understanding. In other words they become inwardly mean, but not outwardly so, because that would not be the pious thing to do.

Probably one of the most enlightened sermon series I can recall, came from the mature pastor of a Pentecostal church I once attended. It dealt with how God brought persecution to the first church in Jerusalem, to get them to evangelize to the ends of the earth, and not just have church in their happy-clappy community. What God did was take this community of love and unity and make them unhappy, angry, or just mean. That would mean that they would move out of the comfort of the Jerusalem church, and not just evangelize, but more importantly to learn firsthand the miraculous provisions of God's grace to all of humanity.

There are a number of very good books on the history of Christianity in America. To get a picture of the whole scene I would recommend you find an opus work from a professor of history at a Protestant evangelical college or university. Those 400 or more pages will give you a basic understanding of truly the scope of God's grace in this most highly religious nation in history. From there you can continue to follow your interests, to help place you into God's scheme of things. Keep in mind books from Christian authors, may or may not be overtly biased in one particular view, but will generally give you contrasts and nuances relating to those differences. Books by secular authors tend to treat all Christians the same, and different in name only, so the diversity of the theological imperatives is absent.

Condensing 400 pages into a couple of paragraphs, the history of Roman Catholicism, especially as it relates to frontier missions is essentially consistent, with only local variations. That is to be expected because Roman Catholic theology has not really evolved with the times and is still basically consistent from the Council of Trent, which concluded in 1563. Priests founded missions, built a church, catechized and baptized the local population, and attempted to get

the indigenous people involved in self-sufficiency through agriculture. At Wonder Springs, we use the Catholic St. Paul's Mission at Kettle Falls as a catholic example, because the building is still standing in pretty much the way it was originally built, and St. Paul was the missionary to the gentiles.

When you move into the Protestant sphere is where things get really interesting. The overriding theme is itinerant revivalism, many or most of the time in contrast with the ministry of the local church. In that vision, large local churches are built upon that revivalist superstructure, generally without the ministry experts from out of town, but with the itinerant importation of popular contemporary Christian musicians.

Revivalism began, in the soon to be United States, with classic pre-Methodist preaching of George Whitefield and John and Charles Wesley. As Glenn Beck says, Whitefield was one of the preachers that helped create the religious tolerance that allowed for the nation's founding. This became part of the First Great Awakening, which is generally thought to be found in the theology of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" preached by Jonathan Edwards July 8, 1741. Both Edwards and Whitefield were described as Calvinists.

Glenn Beck, to the best of my knowledge, has yet to mention the impact of the Wesley brothers on the American religion. This is interesting because the essence of American evangelicalism through the frontier and until today is basically a little bit of Wesleyan holiness Arminianism, merged into a Baptist structure, much of which is led by the Spirit (of God) to provide emotional religious experiences for the people.

In the First Great Awakening, Edwards believed that the emotion was getting out of hand, but the Awakening died out as the American Revolution began to be a real reality.

The Second Great Awakening is more interesting because of the religious excesses it has produced. Those include Mormonism, Transcendentalism, Christian Science, Adventism, in its original form, as well as Charles Finney methods evangelism. Very interesting is all of the Founders of these movements, were born within a range of 150 miles from Boston and if you go

west of Boston into central Massachusetts and draw a circle with a 100 mile radius all of these religious founders will be born within or close to that circle. Furthermore all were born within a thirty-year period during the early years of the awakening, and all have had profound influences on the American religion unto this day.

All of this Great Awakening information is covered in a few more paragraphs in our "Why Me? Outside the Box," but to get a true understanding of the depth and breadth of revivalism, camp meetings, Christian evangelism and church planting, you need to slog your way through a couple of good history books.

After Beck's "Restoring Honor" rally at the end of August much of Beck's own discussions pointed to a Third Great Awakening. Before we get all emotional and run off to a mountaintop, the most important thing is not to look for events we can foresee or hope to foresee.

Over my life I have personally experienced pretty much everything that passes for what Christianity has to offer. Generally there is some good, matched almost equally with the bad, a tiny bit of ugly, and a whole lot of mediocre. This is true essentially because people don't realize and haven't been taught comprehensively, the gift of God's grace they have been given. Hence when their personal vision of what they think is appropriate for God, or Godliness does not work in the way they desire, they turn away from true grace and become mean. However because of that grace, meanness melts away quickly, but the priggishness legalism is much more difficult to overcome.

While I have not personally experienced Liberation Theology of the church of President Obama's Christian apprenticeship, I do consider it a definite heresy by design, because it falls so far beyond the pale of historic Christian orthodoxy. The whole concept of personal salvation linked to collective salvation probably shares more with Islam than Biblical Christianity, and there is a definite link with sort of a theistic Marxism, if that is possible.

My belief of what is happening currently is much more significant than just an awakening, but more akin to the Reformation, in that it will have significant repercussions throughout the whole world. At Wonder Springs we prefer the term Redux, for in our times, we cannot plead ignorance of both the good and the bad that has gone before. Sloppy agape and cheap grace

are examples of Christian slothfulness, not a Redux Rendezvous. Furthermore most of what I consider the bad and the ugly parts of Christianity, were and are associated with what is called the "Counterfeit Revival" and related to a similar "Christianity in Crisis" both in the current edition and the previous.

Both are books from Hank Hanegraaff, President of the Christian Research Institute and the "Bible Answer Man." I had the pleasure of meeting the original Bible Answer Man, Walter Martin, before he died and I knew Hank somewhat when we were associated with Calvary Chapel, before Hank moved CRI to North Carolina.

Picking up upon our Cult Football theme from last week, more Christian evangelicals have a theology, at best, more similar to Roman Catholicism without the Pope and the traditions, and with Mormons without the Book of

Mormon. In other words they are more Pelagian or semi-Pelagian, than would pass the Reformation muster, and even Wesleyan piety. The Wesley's learned piety from continental Lutherans, and would find the Methodism of a lack of strong Biblical Doctrines, an appalling crisis.

There is a funny thing about real natural law; it is a very effective weeding device. Things that are not based upon Absolute Truth, but instead the wishful thinking of our sinful human desires, will be eliminated from the eternal gene pool. Natural selection is a little natural law truth that was appropriated to give evolution an element of reality. Through the process God does not make converts, he makes disciples that gain a fresh understanding of the eternal gifts of God that still works when the emotional show goes away.

The inalienable rights given to mankind by God are common gifts of grace, given to humanity to provide for individual freedom and liberty. When people understand those God given rights, they are accompanied by the power to overcome self-righteousness and put away meanness. Natural law calls us to seek the gifts of common grace, which will provide the emphasis or empowerment to not only redux the nation, but to bring also a redux of historic Biblical Christianity, where the peace of God, overcomes our fears that so easily entwine our spirits, and allow us to move beyond our understanding of circumstance.

Last week we located near Spokane, a facility that will work very well for The Creation Leadership Center and have begun the diligence necessary for the purchase. Currently our financing options are quite flexible and the existing infrastructure of the property will allow it to pay for itself, less our proposed improvements. The long-term goal is to provide the center with an endowment of PREFER Ltd, stock to fund the center, as well as Wonder Springs on a sustainable basis. This business plan is essentially a modification of the program we spent a couple of years trying to put together in Montana some years ago, that just didn't work out. So presently grants, and donations, are being accepted, as well as the availability of common and preferred stock, to those who would seek to become part of this turbulent times opportunity.

PayPal is available for small donations on the Wonder Springs Chronicle Front Page, as well as specialized services for any heavy hitters that might be led to help us make this work. If you can only afford to pray, that is probably the most important donation. Pass your gift to others that might be able to help. When you forward this article please compose your individual message on why you think that this is a worthwhile adventure. Currently over half the emails I receive are caught in my spam filter. When the spam number reaches 500 the messages are deleted, with only a very cursory review. Spam emails are a reality we all live with, and to communicate our message we must understand the nature of this chaos.

Your individuality is what will change the world, but you have to make that commitment to be part of the solution, instead of part of the problem. Pass that uniqueness on to others. Now is the time in which the future is being created. You were put on this earth for just such a time as this, become part of the exciting pilgrimage, wherever you may have been planted.