



# *The* Wonder Springs Chronicle

Cult Football 20 September 2010

## The Wonder Springs Chronicle

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## *Progressive Christianity*

Since this is our third Cult Football Category undertaking, it would be nice to remember why this category was selected, simply because football at all levels is in a way the most popular religion in the nation. That is American and Canadian smash mouth football, not that boring football that dominates the rest of the world. The cult football premise used here signified something you definitely wouldn't learn at a football game. The original title before football being, "Things they won't teach you in church!" That statement made every church part of the inclusive, which is not the case, but still is a general rule.

This week's game however, does make this article a Kantian general law, probably without exception. Hopefully it will be short on words long on homework, which pretty much seals the case. This week we begin with some insights about the Second Great Awakening, the leaders all born within 150 miles of Boston, but who's religious

influences began slightly farther to the west in upstate New York in an area described to this day as religiously "burned over."

This week we will confine our look at Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS – Mormons) and Charles Finney essentially the patron saint of American evangelical revivalism. Before we get into specifics, the implied worldview of this article states nothing happens in this world without the specific will of God. There is no such thing as luck or karma. You can choose to believe that or not, but just try to understand the concept and attempt to follow it through, not only the words herein, but also as you do your homework.

What this worldview means, is God is in active control and everything happens for a purpose. In that light why were Smith, and Finney along with Mary Baker Eddy – Christian Science, William Miller – Adventists,



Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau  
– Transcendentalism, born so close together?

People who move beyond the status quo, by definition are not comfortable with the circumstances in which they were at one time associated. As diverse as all of our six people seem outwardly, all seem to have a strong desire to pursue a transcendent God, which by simple deduction they did not find in both the church and the community in which they were born. New England at that time was highly pious, dominantly Calvinist, with a strong community structure of Pilgrims, Puritans, and Congregationalists. Most of them coming from the old world to find religious freedom, which again sort of requires a desire for a “Shining City on a Hill,” the “Earthly New Jerusalem” of John’s Biblical Apocalypse. A century earlier this even exiled a Baptist preacher named Roger Williams out of the Massachusetts colony to form Rhode Island.

Piety in the extreme gives way to legalism, legalism essentially demands that God and Jesus come down from heaven and provide legal guidance on how not only to establish this community, but also how to maintain that community structure, when it must associate with the heathen, not only externally, but also internally. Cutting to the chase, legalism demands that transcendent God become essentially in theological terms, a non-transcendent special revelation.

What we find in each of our six leaders is the reality, that in contrast to the local church, they sought successfully to create an alternative special theological revelation of God, in which God again became transcendent. The problem however is that transcendence, did not move beyond the early community to the transcendent special revelation of God contained in the historic orthodox Christian gospel. When you look at much of evangelicalism today you find that same reasoning.

Except for Mormonism, those common transcendent specific revelations are still with us today under different names. Transcendentalism has become environmentalism, and the others from the mainstream evangelical semi-Pelagian Pentecostalism generally form a continuum from the Emerging church through prophetic, wealth, and healing ministries. The latest revivalism fad

being a reincarnation of previous excitements that have gone before, but hyped in contemporary spin and marketing.

Before we go any farther, let us look at the Christian specific revelations of God we have on this earth. First of all there is the common revelation of God revealed in creation, not only in what we call nature, or even Mother Earth, but also in the soul of each an every human. That human common revelation is the source of morality and how we at least attempt to treat each other with respect and foster goodness.

Specific names for these revelations are common grace and natural law. The founding documents of the United States deal with the common or natural context of this reality when in the Declaration of Independence says, “Nature’s God and Nature’s Law.” What is not generally understood is that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” are manifestations of God’s common grace.

For the orthodox Christian, the Bible is the specific revelation of God to mankind. The Bible forms a specific exclusivity of Christianity and is the basis for specific laws, such as in the Law of Moses given by God in Exodus and refined in the Pentateuch, but also in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5.

The Bible is God’s Absolute specific revelation of himself, hence there is no additional Christian revelation from God to man that specifies a means to achieve God’s transcendent specific grace, which is generally known as the Gospel, The Good News. No, ya buts, or bits, or wishful thinking allowed. In other words the Gospel is the one and only antidote for sin, or breaking of not only God specific laws in the Bible, but include the breaking of God’s natural laws as well. Other books may try to explain that reality, but none have been accepted by historic orthodox Christianity, but have never passed a true God breathed unity in diversity test that can be found within the pages of the Scriptures.

That specific gospel states that God’s only son, Jesus Christ, became the righteousness that is required to satisfy both God’s specific biblical laws, but also the common laws. Through his death on the cross of Calvary he did rightfully become not only the propitiation for our sins, but his imputed righteousness to us sinners, becomes our justification before God forever. Put in absolute terms, here on earth there is no such thing as saints and sinners, but only sinners, and

sinner saved by the grace of God. God's free gift is given to all those who believe that gospel as Good News, not just Good Advice. Other religions do not possess this revelation of law fulfilled by amazing supernatural grace, hence are not paths to God and to eternal heaven.

### *Now for the homework:*

"Good News vs. Good Advice" is the title of this week's podcast from the White Horse Inn. This presentation will put the specific revelation of the Bible in the proper context of the Reformation concept of "Law and Gospel." It will further provide insights into the proper usage of the Greek language terms for indicatives and imperatives. Hopefully from that you may gain the proper context, how as times we try to do the indicative (statements of absolute truth and reality) and give up on the imperatives simply because we find the possible - impossible. That is simply because we have lost the concepts of "God's costly grace" contrasted with our sinful human desires for "cheap grace."

As for Mormonism and Joseph Smith, we have for homework: *Pinning Down Mormon Doctrine* (Part 1) and (Part 2). These two articles come to us from the Christian Research Institute.

For a little more comprehensive understanding of the revivalist ministry of Charles Finney, your homework is: "The Disturbing Legacy of Charles Finney" by Dr. Michael Horton, host of the White Horse Inn, among other duties.

This week's whole Cult Football game plan developed over an email I received for my thoughts of the theology of the German Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was martyred by the Nazis at the close of World War II. Bonhoeffer is the author of one of the finest books on Christian Discipleship to come out of the twentieth century. "The Cost of Discipleship" is where the terms cheap grace and costly grace, that were used earlier, find both their imperative and their indicative.

Through the discussion, one of the terms that Bonhoeffer used in his letters from prison before he was killed was something called "Religionless Christianity." The context of what Bonhoeffer really meant are no longer in this present world, because

even though it was the title of an outline of a book Dietrich was preparing before his death, the outline was never found subsequent to his martyrdom.

The general consensus from the specific Religionless Christianity quotations in his letters and his answers; somewhat explained the term. He was basically writing about the antithesis of what he saw in the church in Germany that led to the German acceptance of Hitler and the Nazis, as well as the churches' acquiescence to the treatment of the Jews.

We have long implied that many of the problems that brought about our current economic troubles find their root not so much in the Fat Cats, the evil Global Capitalists, self serving politicians and lazy bureaucrats, after all sinners-sin. The problems really find their substance, in the reality where cheap grace, is all we know. Those who seem to have a different gospel, a different Jesus, than the Jesus of the cross, treat discussions of anything but warm-fuzzy sloppy-agape Christianity, like heresy.

As one of his other duties, Dr. Horton is the author of "Christless Christianity." It seems that is not all that different of a concept from Bonhoeffer's Religionless Christianity. That is especially true if you define religion as a man-centered attempt to either become God, or to understand God solely in human terms. That definitely defines our times, not only in the United States, but also around the world.

Very few people outside liberal politics knew or understood the term progressivism before the election of Barak Obama. Now thanks to Glen Beck, the Mormon, we all know and understand it much better than we hoped we ever would. What I have noticed recently however, is that even though he states that Divine Providence of God is what truthfully will redux the nation back to a individual and a state centered republic, that organizational and energy is much beyond anything our personal piety can construct. Here lies our great stumbling block to do God's work; God's way, not the way we want to think is God's will.

As you do, or did, your homework I hoped you realize, that my previous discussions as to a great many Americans being Mormon's, without anything written down, is absolutely true. Put in the context of the absolute grace of God, Mormonism and this evangelicalism, which most of us have experienced most of our lives, is really a man centered religion seeking to find the transcendent; by all means we can

creatively design and implement. In the process by the grace of God alone, his elect were saved and positionally sanctified by Jesus Christ. In the meantime we did our religious things on our timetable, simply because that is the part and parcel of the created common grace of God infected by the cancer of sin.

As good as “Good News vs. Good Advice” really explained Absolute Truth, it failed to touch on the greatest gift of specific grace as outlined in the Bible and that is the imperative application of the reality of the gospel. That is a concept known as Sabbath Rest. That is an Old Testament term that basically means, “God has done it all, now rest in that reality.” God has accomplished it all through Jesus Christ. In John’s gospel, (19:30) when Jesus says just before he dies for our sins, “It is finished!” properly interpreted means that “his human imperative has become God’s indicative.’

What that means is that what you do for God, is only going to frustrate and grind you to dust. What your Heavenly Father is capable of doing through you, because of his specific gospel grace; will change the world, because only God can bring it about. Jeremiah in his Lamentations said in 3:23 that the faithfulness of God is new every morning. For the true New Testament Christian, the time component has passed away and the eternal has arrived. What that means is God’s Sabbath Rest is available instantaneously, when you need it, all you need to do is ask.

*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*

*Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.*

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:4-7*