



Random Thoughts, Vol. 7

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If this “Random Thoughts” column is new to you, then here is a quick introduction. Below is a collection of my own observations, thoughts, and insights which may or may not prove to be a blessing to others. Each of these is not long enough to warrant an entire article on its own, but begged to be written down nonetheless.

The Things I Used To Hate

9/10/2012

As we age, our tastes change. At least mine have. I have noticed this in my children as well. Food which they once did not like (but had to eat anyway) they now enjoy. There are things I once hated as a child which I now love.

I used to hate onions when I was a kid. I didn't like them on my burgers, or in any food. Now I think that onions make everything taste better. I didn't like salads. Who would want to eat a bunch of leaves? Now when my wife leaves town for a time, I buy lettuce and that is all I eat! Of course, I smother it with imitation crab meat and ranch dressing, but it is still salad.

I used to hate mushrooms, gravy on my potatoes, nuts, coffee, steak (I preferred my meat “pre-chewed” aka. “ground”), fish, seafood, wheat bread, bread crusts, pizza crust, and pie crusts, just to name a few.

My tastes for all of these things have changed.

Likewise, there are also a lot of things I used to love which I can now live without. Hard candy: I can take it or leave it. Chocolate bars are quickly approaching that same category. I find myself passing on cakes and pies with increasing frequency. Fudge could cease to exist and my life would not change one bit. When I was a kid, my mom used to have no taste for sweets at all. I thought she was nuts! I remember saying to her, “How can you not like candy bars? I'll never stop liking candy and desserts!”

All of this is a great illustration of how God changes us

in the spiritual realm. Over time, my spiritual tastes have changed as well.

Before I became a believer, I loved money, sensuality, lying, hating, swearing, and being coarse. I loved being with unbelievers and doing sinful things. No longer. When I became a follower of Christ, my affections changed. Those things which I had once loved I now hate. The thought of returning to some of those sins sickens me. That is evidence to me that God has wrought a deep and profound change within my nature. It is one of the fruits of genuine salvation.

The things I once hated I now enjoy. I want to be with Christians. I want to worship. I have a hunger for Scripture and an insatiable desire to know the truth of God. I long for fellowship and discussing spiritual things with spiritual people. I find myself growing in gratitude, kindness, and love. Today I have love toward people who had once been the objects of my scorn and hostility.

This type of change is not the product of aging and acquiring new tastes. These things are the effects of the new nature and the sanctifying grace of the Spirit of God. No Christian who understands the grace of God can boast of these new affections as if they were something of his own doing. We give God praise that we are continually being transformed into the image of His Son from one degree of glory to the next (**Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18**). That means that we now love what we once hated and hate what we once loved. Every true believer knows that experience. If your affections have not undergone a radical transformation, then you can be sure that your heart and nature have not either.

Boycotting Boycotts

11/1/12

It has long been fashionable in evangelicalism to propose and organize boycotts against any company, corporation, or business that does not promote Christian

values.

Every Christmas we are made aware of retailers that refuse to say “Merry Christmas” lest they offend some religious minority, and we are told by Christian leaders that Christians should not shop there. If a product is advertised on a television program or radio program that we find objectionable, we are to avoid those products. Home Depot supports the homosexual agenda, so we are not supposed to shop there. JCPenney hired an outspoken lesbian as their spokesperson. Lowe's advertises on a Muslim propaganda program. Best Buy supports the gay agenda. Disney, Target, Heinz, and Starbucks are all targets of the Christian boycott campaign for similar reasons.

Is this really what Christians should be about? Does it help us act as salt and light in the world? Participating in boycotts?

It seems to me that boycotting is a very selective strategy. I never hear Christian leaders calling for boycotts of small local businesses for the same reasons. Are we supposed to boycott the local grocer when we find out that he differs with us on the subject of same-sex marriage and he gives part of his income to support that cause? Or are only the big corporations are worthy of this organized effort?

Am I expected to interview every recipient of my shopping dollar to determine if they will use the money to support my values? It seems it is okay for me to buy coffee from the local hippie liberal earth worshiper who owns an espresso stand, just so long as I don't buy from Starbucks. This is a very selective moral indignation.

It is also inconsistent. What about buying things off Craigslist, Ebay, or through a classified ad? Am I only supposed to buy that table saw from someone who fully shares my values? Do we buy things from a garage sale only after interviewing the homeowners to make sure that don't support liberals, gays, or Muslims? What if they are atheists, then what? People who support national boycotts by socially conscious Christians never seem to ask these questions.

Further, boycotting communicates the wrong message. Is this really what Christians want to be known for? Do we want to be known as the people who will destroy your business, livelihood, and reputation if you don't adopt—or at least pretend to adopt—our values?

We are the gospel people! Does boycotting forward the gospel? No, it doesn't. It does nothing to communicate the message of the cross. It does nothing to forward righteousness.

How does a business executive who is the target of these protests and boycotts view Christians? As gracious people interested in his soul? Nope. He views them as a

noisy, clamorous bunch of moralists who have vowed to attack his business until he capitulates to their moral demands. What Muslims do through threat of physical violence, Christians seek to do through threat of financial coercion.

Do we really think that the gospel is advanced if we force department store employees to say “Merry Christmas” instead of “Happy Holidays”? Does that somehow save their soul? This activity does nothing to change the heart. All it does is force someone to say something they don't mean and enact a policy they don't support to make pretense of moralism in order to receive the reward of the Christian's shopping dollar. How did Jesus feel about pretenses of moralism?

There is no example of a boycott anywhere in Scripture. Paul, Peter, and John did not organize massive national boycotts, taking aim at industries that did not embrace and promote Christian values. Jesus never suggested that this was how His gospel was to be spread. We are never told that we should seek to maintain a façade of Christian moralism in a nation.

We are to preach the gospel, not threaten financial harm against those who are doing what unbelievers do (**John 8:44**). After all, what do we expect of unbelievers, if not behavior and values consistent with being children of the evil one? What good does it do for them to be forced to mimic our values? They need to hear the gospel, not feel the sting of a boycott.

Lastly, we are seeing this strategy begin to backfire on Christians, and I don't think we are going to like it. Recently, in response to a public statement in favor of traditional marriage, Dan Cathy, President and COO of Chick-fil-A Restaurants, came under fire from the radical left. They quickly organized a boycott designed to financially punish Chick-fil-A and the Cathy family. Also in the news we have heard about bakeries and photography studios that have been boycotted by homosexuals and leftists because they refuse to provide services to homosexual couples seeking to marry.

Christians get upset over these actions, but what should we expect? The Religious Right has been organizing boycotts of companies for at least three decades. Now those on the other side are returning the favor, and we don't like it.

Evangelical Christians who actually stand for the gospel in this country number less than 10% of the population—a generous estimate. Public sentiment toward Christians is rapidly changing. How are we going to feel when 90% of our customers boycott our businesses because of our religious or moral views? Turnabout is fair play, but we aren't going to like it when the goose begins to act like the gander.

Boycotting is not gospel activity. It is not the message we are called to proclaim. It is counterproductive. It is offensive, and not even for the sake of the cross. It is not going to bode well for believers who are caught in the crosshairs of those who use our own unbiblical tactics against us.

If an unbeliever hates a Christian, let it be because we shared the offensive message of the good news of the cross with them, not because we tried to destroy their business, livelihood, and reputation merely because they did not share our values.

They are unbelievers! What do we expect? Let's just get back to the gospel!

Borrowing Worldviews

1/4/12

A recent tragedy serves to illustrate the moral bankruptcy of a secularist worldview. On December 14, 2012, Adam Lanza, age 20, entered Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and fatally shot twenty children and six adult staff. This is truly a stunning tragedy. Only the hardest heart is not vexed and deeply grieved by that loss of life.

Politicians and media personalities attempted to make sense of the event. They tried to offer condolences to the families of the victims. They expressed shock, outrage, and deep sadness at these horrible actions. Ironically, this public outpouring shows just how morally bankrupt the secular worldview of our culture really is. Would you like some examples?

President Obama appeared on TV on December 16th to deliver a speech from Newtown. He began with a quotation from Scripture, **2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1**: **"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."**

That was not the President's only reference to Scripture in connection to the shooting. On the day of the shooting, he quoted from **Psalms 147:3**, **"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."**

I am going to set aside for the moment his complete abuse of Scripture. The passage he quotes has nothing to do with a context like this. Paul was describing the rewards

that await God's faithful who endure physical persecution for their faith.

However, far more revealing than the president's abuse of Scripture is his **use** of Scripture. Why did he quote the Bible? Why does he begin with a Scripture quote? And to do so in the context of a shooting in a school! As I watched the speech that night (it pre-empted Sunday Night Football, so I could not avoid it) I said to the TV: "Hey, Mr. President, you should not be quoting the Bible in a school. We have laws against that. Where is the ACLU? What about separation of church and state?"

The president has no right or ground to quote Scripture in the wake of such a tragedy. As a humanist, he is borrowing from our book, from our worldview. We Christians are the ones who can offer real hope and comfort in the midst of tragedy. We can propose a solution. We have a worldview that can make sense of evil. The secularist does not. That becomes painfully obvious when they are forced to face evil and try to comfort people in its aftermath. The secularist has to use our truths, our principles, our hope, our theology to try to offer comfort.

If the Bible is a great source of comfort to those who have passed through a tragedy like this, then don't you think it might have something to say about how we can *prevent* tragedies like this? Why does the secularist think it is acceptable to quote Scripture in a school after a killer has swept through, but they will work feverishly to prevent any reference to it prior?

Secularists want to legislate a society, a culture, and public policies which are completely opposed to scriptural truth. Then they are shocked when they get the culture they have worked so hard to establish.

The fact that they have to borrow from our worldview to comfort people in the wake of a tragedy is a tacit admission that their own worldview is completely bereft of anything meaningful and useful. What would an atheistic evolutionist have to say about those events?

Why didn't the president just come out and offer comfort from his own worldview? He could have said something like this:

"Look, this event is not truly evil. There is no real evil. What we call 'evil' is nothing more than arbitrary standards that we as a culture agree to for the furtherance of our species. There is no God to turn to. There is nothing after this life. We are just worm food in the making, anyway. You may have been personally attached to those children you lost, but you really shouldn't have been. They were nothing more than organized protoplasm, the result of chance and natural processes. They are just the product of the random collision of molecules. That is, after all, what we teach them

here at this school. Nothing is truly 'right' or 'wrong' in an objectively moral sense. We each determine that for ourselves. We teach your children that they can determine their own morality. That is all that Adam Lanza did.”

That sounds harsh, doesn't it? Yet that is all that a secular worldview can offer. That is why the secularist likes to borrow from ours, because he can't consistently live in his own.

This president does not want the Bible to inform any public policy issues. He does not care what the Bible says about homosexuality or justice. He does not care that the Bible speaks to the issue of marriage and family. He does not let the Bible inform him about when life begins. He does not want religious employers to be exempt from funding or promoting the sexual ethics that he wants to force on our nation. He wants a culture, a government, and a political process that is completely devoid of any reference to God or His Word. But lo! We find that living in such a world consistently is impossible. He can't do it. Inconsistency is the sign of a failed worldview.

When the fruit of secularist policies begins to ripen, secularists want to come and live in our world. They are unable to consistently live in a world that is absent hope, purpose, meaning, justice, love, honor, peace, objective truth and morals. Nothing reveals that more quickly than unspeakable evil.

Oh, and one more hypocrisy: This same president unflinchingly supports the right of a woman to tear her unborn child limb from limb within the womb. Yet he says that a school should be a safe place. Shouldn't the womb be a safe place, too?

Twenty children died in Newtown. That **is** horrible evil. But it should not escape our notice that every day 3,000 children are murdered in the womb through legalized abortion in this country. That is 125 every hour, 2 every minute. Every 10 minutes, in this country, around the clock, a Sandy Hook-scale infanticide is committed. Does the president shed any tears? Does he do anything to stop it? No. He is committed to defending that infanticide, protecting those who commit it, and funding it with tax dollars.

The inconsistency and hypocrisy is inexcusable.

From now on, Mr. President, please just live and speak consistently within your own worldview. Stop pretending like you ever think ours has anything of value to offer. Stop being shocked when the chicks of your own worldview come home to roost.

Lame Arguments Against Capital Punishment

4/6/13

By the time you read this, Maryland will have become

the 18th state to outlaw capital punishment. The House of Delegates voted 82-56 in favor of the bill, which Democratic Gov. Martin O'Malley signed. The governor has pushed for the repeal of the death penalty since he took office in 2007, offering the following reasoning: “Evidence shows the death penalty is not a deterrent, it cannot be administered without racial bias, and it costs three times as much as life in prison.”¹

The governor offers three claims. Let's examine each one.

Evidence shows the death penalty is not a deterrent. That is an outright fabrication. There is no such evidence. We know for certain that the death penalty is 100% effective in deterring repeat offenses. Further, if the death penalty is not a deterrent, then why apply any punishment at all? Why do we give parking fines? Why jail time or community service? Does the governor believe that these penalties act as a deterrent to crime? Why then should we believe that a \$100 ticket deters speeding, but execution does not deter anything? That's nonsense, and obviously so.

The Bible tells us that capital punishment deters crime (**Ecc. 8:11**). Common sense tells us that capital punishment deters crime. But, **even if** it could be shown that capital punishment does not deter crime, the argument is completely irrelevant. It still does not answer the question, “What is the just punishment that someone who commits a capital crime should receive? What is our obligation to the criminal, the victims, society and the principle of justice?”

It cannot be administered without racial bias. Says who? Are we to believe that executioners refuse to do their job when white people are to be executed, but take special delight when blacks or Hispanics are executed? If someone commits a crime worthy of capital punishment, what does race matter? How can an electric chair or lethal injection be racially biased? Does poison or electricity kill black people more thoroughly than whites? Nobody is as racist as liberals who only see race wherever they look.

It costs three times as much as life in prison. Really? Does anyone believe that? According to a fact sheet published by VERA, an institute of justice, it costs \$38,383 per year to incarcerate an inmate in the state of Maryland.² Let's assume that someone commits murder at the age of 25 and goes to prison for life. Let's further assume that he dies at 75, living 50 years in prison.³ In this scenario, a

1 “The U.S. At A Glance,” *THE WEEK*, 29 March 2013, pg5.

2 <http://www.vera.org/files/price-of-prisons-maryland-fact-sheet.pdf>

3 I think this is a generous assumption considering that many will commit crimes earlier and many will live much longer given the free top notch medical care provided for the nation's capital offenders.

lifetime cost of incarceration is \$1,919,150. Let's round that up to \$2 million for the sake of the math. An execution costs three times that much? \$6 million?

How much does it cost to buy rope, a bullet, or a syringe of poison in Maryland? I would be willing to sell them all the supplies for only HALF of what it costs to incarcerate an inmate for life! This is just nonsense.

Liberal policies are responsible for tying up appeals process in courts for decades and add layer upon layer of complexity and regulation to the penal system. Then when they have made capital punishment such a hash, such an expensive, tedious, task - they propose that we abolish it because it is fraught with problems. It is only fraught with problems because they have tampered with it.

None of the reasons that the governor has offered make any sense. Nor does this reasoning give us any logical rational or credible reason for abolishing capital punishment for capital crimes.

And here is a touch of further inconsistency. According to NBC news, the governor told reporters that the ban on capital punishment validates a "core belief that we share in the dignity of every human being."⁴

The truth of the matter is this, by refusing to execute criminals, those who oppose capital punishment actually **devalue** human life. It is my belief that life is precious that makes me a proponent of capital punishment. If someone takes the life of someone else, the life that is taken is **so valuable** that the only appropriate punishment is that the offender forfeit his own life. That is a punishment that reflects the value of human life and truly demonstrates the dignity of every human being.

Oh, and the governor believes that abortion should remain legal.⁵ Would that be part of your believe in the dignity of every human being, Governor?

Murderers should live. Babies should die. That is life in America in 2013.

Without Wax-



4 http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/03/15/17328301-maryland-to-become-18th-state-to-outlaw-death-penalty?lite

5 <http://catholicreview.org/article/life/omalley-touts-progressive-agenda-for-state>