

Bush to China: Register Underground churches

Interviewed by NBC sportscaster Bob Costas while attending the Beijing 2008 Olympics in China, President Bush was asked if China's president, Hu Jintao was receptive to Bush's concerns about personal liberty and other matters. "It's hard to tell," replied President Bush. "I mean, all I can tell you is that it is best to be in a position where a leader will listen to you. Hey, I went to church here, and I'm sure the cynics say, 'Well, you know, it's just a state-sponsored church,' and that's true. On the other hand, it gave me a chance to say to the Chinese people, 'Religion won't hurt you; you ought to welcome religious people.' And it gave me a chance to say to the government, 'Why don't you register the underground churches and give them a chance to flourish?'"

"And he listened politely, and, I don't know, I can't read his mind, but I do know that every time I met with him I pressed the point."

COMMENTARY

I do not doubt President Bush's good intentions, but the worst thing China could do to the underground assemblies is register them, which would bring them under government control. The true Gospel is greatly hampered in registered churches.

True believers in Jesus are rightfully concerned about the treatment of our brethren in the underground assemblies. We hear about the harassment, beatings, and even killings they endure. Yet we also hear how dedicated they are. Yes, they are poor in this world's material goods, but they are rich in the things of God. Scripture tells us not to fear persecution:

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse testing, knowing this: that the testing of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work so that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. (Jas. 1:2-4)

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, so that when His glory shall be revealed you may be glad also with exceeding joy.

If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is evilly spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begins at us, what shall the end be of them that do not obey the Gospel of God?

And if the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Therefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him through well doing as unto a faithful Creator. (1 Peter 4:12-19)

We in the West should consider our own spiritual condition and not assume that because our brethren in China and elsewhere are suffering they are worse off than we are. They may be worse off in temporal matters, but they are far better off spiritually.

Were the underground assemblies to become registered, there are a number of problems that would certainly arise. First, the true brethren would become known by the government. This could lead to

further persecution, especially for those who remain true to God's Word. Second, the leaders in the assemblies would be required to abide by the government's religious mandates in order to continue to meet. Third, what happened to the church at Rome under Constantine would happen to the underground assemblies in China. They would become centralized and hierarchical in structure. Fourth, the testing of their faith would be transferred from persecution to a diluting of the truth. Eventually the fire that burns in the hearts of the true believers there would be quenched.

Please, President Bush. Back off from trying to help. With all respect, the Body of Christ will do far better without government interference or "help." ❖

Todd Bentley, wife separate Stress of Lakeland Outpouring blamed

Todd Bentley, apostle of the "Lakeland Outpouring," has separated from his wife Shonnah citing marital difficulties. An August 12 announcement from the board of directors of Fresh Fire Ministries stated in part:

The Lord's blessings and abundance have been so evident on the ministry during this season of intense activity and we rejoice in seeing and being able to participate in what we believe is only the beginning of a worldwide awakening. It is with considerable sadness then, that we must temper the jubilation we know you all feel with the sobering news that Todd and Shonnah Bentley are presently experiencing significant friction in their relationship and are currently separated. We want to affirm that there has been no sexual immorality on the part of either Todd or Shonnah, nor has there ever been. Undoubtedly the pressures and the burden of the Outpouring, which approaches 144 days on August 23rd, have helped to create an atmosphere of fatigue and stress that has exacer-

bated existing issues in their relationship. We wish to stress however, that the Outpouring is not “to blame” for the current chain of events and that in effect we have no interest in blaming anyone, but rather we deeply covet your prayers for Todd and Shonnah and for Fresh Fire Ministries during this time.

We know that many of you will have questions, for most of which we presently have no answers. We cannot see far down the path ahead of us, but we have quiet confidence in the One who sees the end from the beginning and promises to provide grace and strength for whatever lies ahead. We are hopeful that the outcome will include restoration, but we can make neither promise nor guarantee. We intend to take each day as it comes and look intently for the new mercies promised us each morning. We will watch and pray and ask each of you to do the same, knowing that you will pray as you are led by the Holy Spirit.

GOD TV, which has carried the “Outpouring,” also issued a statement:

It is with great regret that we as Founders and our Board call you to urgent prayer.

As you may have already heard, Todd and Shonnah Bentley are experiencing some current marital difficulties and have separated.

GOD TV is anxious that our viewers and partners will first of all respond to these unfortunate circumstances with an attitude of Christ-like maturity and pray fervently for Todd, Shonnah and their children as a family who are precious to the Lord. While we have learned today that immorality was not an issue, no doubt the enemy has exploited vulnerabilities in their marriage.

What the devil has not counted on is the Christ-like maturity and intercession that is currently being raised up all across the earth in response. We hope you will join us as a part of this prayer covering.

It is GOD TV's position that marriage is a foundational cornerstone to those families called to ministry and would believe that those who

have spiritual oversight for Todd and Shonnah's ministry will recommend a time of sabbatical for the family in order to seek reconciliation within their marriage should these reports be accurate.

Lee Grady, editor of *Charisma*, stated outright that Bentley's marriage “is ending.” He expressed dismay and disappointment at the leaders who, at the request of C. Peter Wagner, laid hands on Bentley and “anointed” him for his ministry. These include Bill Johnson (“Brownsville Revival”), and Bill Arnott and Che Ahn (both of the “Toronto Blessing”).

Grady wonders how and why these men either didn't know of Bentley's personal problems, or didn't exercise proper oversight. He also wonders why no one in Lakeland denounced Bentley's favorable comments about William Branham. Said Grady:

This one baffles me. Branham embraced horrible deception near the end of his ministry, before he died in 1965. He claimed that he was the reincarnation of Elijah—and his strange doctrines are still embraced by a cult-like following today. When Bentley announced to the world that the same angel that ushered in the 1950s healing revival had come to Lakeland, the entire audience should have run for the exits.

Why didn't anyone correct this error from the pulpit? Godly leaders are supposed to protect the sheep from heresy, not spoon feed deception to them. Only God knows how far this poison traveled from Lakeland to take root elsewhere. May God forgive us for allowing His Word to be so flipantly contaminated.

Grady suggests that the men assigned to oversee Bentley should offer loving but firm correction so that, hopefully, “we could witness a healthy case of church discipline play out the way it is supposed to.”

In a recent meeting Bentley called his family onto the stage at Lakeland. He said they were there as a prophetic sign that God is going to heal marriages and bring a great breakthrough in families. “Get ready for a breakthrough in your family. Tonight is a night of miracles in your family!” he said.

C. Peter Wagner, who appeared on the stage at Lakeland while Che Ahn “knighted” Bentley, and who had endorsed the Lakeland Revival, now says that he never endorsed the more controversial aspects of the movement, nor has he any direct link with Bentley.

COMMENTARY

Wagner's waffling is obviously an attempt to shield himself and his “apostolic” authority from this latest scandal within the hyper-charismatic movement. Talk about disingenuous! Wagner is one of the most culpable purveyors of spiritual error within this movement. He's happy to take part, but runs like a scared rabbit at the first sign of trouble.

As far as Lee Grady is concerned, his pointing of the finger at the “apostles” of the Lakeland Outpouring also lacks credibility. Why has he continually promoted and allowed these errors to be advertised in *Charisma*. And not these errors only. All the excesses of the charismatic and Pentecostal movements have been pushed by *Charisma* over the years, from Oral Roberts to TBN and beyond. The Lakeland Outpouring is the latest fad to find favorable support in *Charisma*. Bentley's admiration for Branham was never a secret; it was stated by Bentley from the beginning. Grady's statement that Branham had “embraced horrible deception near the end of his ministry” is also disingenuous. Branham was a false teacher from the get-go. And many of *Charisma's* favorite Christian leaders over the years embraced Branham's errors.

Frankly, Grady's charismatic movement never had credibility among discerning believers in Jesus. Those who believe in and recognize the true gifts of the Spirit are very adept at spotting the false move of man's spirit masquerading as the real thing. These things should come as no surprise to Grady who certainly moves within the inner circle of these deceptions.

They come as no surprise to us or others who have reported on Todd Bentley's unscriptural teachings and practices. We were quick to point out that he claimed the angel he credits for Lakeland's alleged healings is the same one that healed through Branham. Where was *Charisma's* condemnation then? How can Grady

blame Bentley's overseers for failing to do something he failed to do as editor of the largest magazine targeted to charismatics.

No, this comes as no surprise to us. But lest we who recognize the errors in this movement find ourselves secretly rejoicing at the failure of its most prominent figure, I suggest we sorrow for him.

It's very easy to point the finger at those with whom we disagree on these important biblical issues, but such failures are found even among those whose doctrinal position is very biblical. This tells us that it isn't merely truth and error with which we must be concerned, but we must allow the Holy Spirit to develop within us His fruit according to Galatians 5:22-23. The Holy Spirit does not rejoice over the failures of false teachers; He desires that all be conformed to the image of Christ through conversion and surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we grow in knowledge and wisdom according to His Word.

What is most telling in this news is the statement from Fresh Fire Ministries suggesting that the Bentleys' problems stem from the fatigue and stress created by the burden of the Lakeland Outpouring. If this is true then Todd Bentley and/or his wife are not the only ones to blame. Those who would guide what they believe is a work of God, such as those in charge of the "Outpouring," should have the maturity to know that no one should be placed in such a position that he would suffer fatigue and stress. Unfortunately, too many people think the Lord can't accomplish His will unless they work like slaves to serve Him. And it isn't a matter of right or wrong doctrine or practice; this error is found even among those whose ministries are very biblical.

God is not a slave driver. He cares about our personal welfare; His Holy Spirit will not lead us to fatigue and stress. Those who come to that point demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is not in their work.

It may be argued that Paul worked tirelessly even to the point of exhaustion. True. But not to the point of fatigue and stress that would cause him to sin or scandalize the Body of Christ through personal failure.

The board of directors for Fresh Fire Ministries denies that the "Outpouring" is to blame for the exacerbation of the Bentleys' marital problems. Yet they say it

was brought on by the stress and fatigue associated with the intensity and duration of the "Outpouring." They cannot have it both ways.

I don't know the personal details of Bentley's marital problems and, frankly, I don't want to know them. But I do know that by the board's own words those problems are the fruit of their "Outpouring".

If this is true, then the fruit of the "Outpouring" is not the fruit of the Spirit. This sad news merely affirms that this movement is not of God in the first place.

I agree with the proponents of the Lakeland Outpouring that we should pray for Todd and Shonnah Bentley. But not just for their marriage. We should pray that they will learn from this that their movement is in error and that they must repent of their involvement. ❖

Victoria Osteen found not guilty in assault charge

The long-running trial pitting Christian celebrity Joel Osteen's wife Victoria against a flight attendant who accused her of assault has ended with a verdict of not guilty.

Continental Airlines flight attendant Sharon Brown accused Mrs. Osteen of assaulting her before the start of a flight from Houston to Vail, Colorado, in 2005. Brown alleges that Osteen elbowed her in the left breast and threw her against a bathroom door during an angry tirade over a spill stain on her first-class seat.

Flight attendant Maria Johnson testified that she and Brown remained calm and professional as Victoria Osteen grew increasingly agitated because they had not immediately cleaned up the stain. Johnson stated that Osteen kept saying, "This is ridiculous. I'm a first-class passenger."

Johnson also confirmed Brown's allegations that Victoria Osteen tried to get into the cockpit of the airplane and had to be restrained. Said Johnson, "She took

Sharon by the shoulders and pushed her out of the way. Sharon stumbled."

Without admitting guilt, Mrs. Osteen paid a \$3,000 fine to the Federal Aviation Administration over the incident.

The basis for Sharon Brown's lawsuit was that Brown, who had undergone reconstructive breast surgery prior to the incident, was injured when Osteen elbowed her on the chest. Brown claimed that as a result of the attack she now suffers from hemorrhoids and anxiety, and has lost her faith in God. Brown's lawsuit asked for a public apology, medical expenses for counseling, and punitive damages of 10 percent of Victoria Osteen's net worth, which could be in the millions of dollars.

Osteen's attorney, Rusty Hardin, had called the lawsuit "a very silly case," and "a money grab," claiming that Brown's charges were false, and that the whole occurrence was a "minor incident."

Brown's case was severely hampered by the testimony of Barbara Snedden, a passenger on the plane, who said Osteen pointed at Brown but never touched her. Snedden was called as the final witness in Brown's favor. Brown's attorney, Reginald McKamie, accused Snedden of changing her testimony, having initially corroborated Brown's allegations. As Brown's witness, Snedden's testimony in favor of Osteen came as a surprise to both sides.

Mrs. Osteen expressed her gratefulness for the verdict and thanked everyone who had supported her. "I'm just glad it's over," she said.

Joel Osteen stated after the trial that they had from the start tried to take the high road. "But it's unfortunate because, for Victoria and myself – Victoria more than me – that she seemed guilty for three years," he said.

Brown's attorney had said that the trial would show that "celebrity status doesn't take precedence."

However, several potential jurors admitted during questioning that they were "star-stuck" by the Osteens and that their judgment might be affected by their admiration for them. Many in the 130-member jury pool said they had attended Lakewood Church and had read Joel Osteen's books. One woman in the jury pool stated, "He has gotten me through a lot of tough times. I would believe what he has to say. I have a lot of respect for him."

Others said they did not like preachers or televangelists, and that ministers can lie.

COMMENTARY

It would be nice to believe that celebrity status doesn't take precedence in the justice system, but the reality of life in this fallen world is that such status does, indeed, take precedence. Although some judges and juries do mete out justice regardless of one's status, cases abound where celebrities have been handed the proverbial "slap-on-the-wrist" relative to the average person's sentence in similar cases.

In this case, I am hard-pressed to understand how someone would lose their faith in God because of a Christian celebrity's actions, then sue that celebrity for the loss. If it's a loss that can be regained through seeking God again, how can anyone be held monetarily responsible? That aspect of the lawsuit never made any sense.

But no matter which way this thing had gone, the reputation most at stake was not that of Victoria or Joel Osteen, but of the Lord Jesus Christ. The world is at enmity against God, and particularly against His only-begotten Son. It is difficult enough to witness of faith in Him to an unbelieving world; that difficulty is compounded many times over by Christians who insist upon their "rights" or "privileges" in the world.

We have no rights except the right to suffer for Christ. And we certainly have no privileges. Victoria Osteen has been acquitted, but something happened to give the enemy a foothold. And there are Christians who would assert their assumed "rights" in such a case. So what if we can afford preferential treatment? Does that give us freedom to act out our frustration? Even if our claim is legitimate the Lord demands that we maintain an attitude of humility and deference toward others. Particularly if our testimony of faith in Jesus Christ is known to the person with whom we find ourselves in contention. More than anyone, Christian "celebrities" must guard their words and actions.

The current fad in Christianity is to push for self-assertion. The psychologizing of the faith and the feel-good, "I'm-a-King's-kid" mentality have given many Christians a sense of entitlement. They have forgotten the words of the one they call "Lord":

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am meek and broken-hearted, and you shall find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:29)

"You have heard that it has been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, that you not resist evil, but whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue you at law and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go a mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who would borrow from you.

"You have heard that it has been said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies; bless them who curse you; do good to them who hate you; and pray for them who slander you and persecute you, so that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven. For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

"For if you love them who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the publicans do the same?

"And if you salute your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the publicans do so?

"Therefore, you be perfect even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:38-48)

These are difficult words, especially for someone in Victoria Osteen's position. Ten percent of her net worth is a lot of money. Perhaps she would have been wise to take this counsel from the Lord:

"As you are on your way when you go with your adversary to the magistrate, give diligence so that you may be delivered from him lest he take you to the judge, and the judge delivers you to the officer, and the officer casts you into prison. I tell you, you will not leave there until you have paid the very last mite." (Matthew 5:58-59)

Perhaps we would all be wise to heed these words while we strive to present the Gospel to this perverse age. ❖

India media charmed by Obama

The news media in India have seized upon an incident at a town hall meeting in Albuquerque, NM, to champion presidential hopeful Barack Obama as a Hindu devotee or, at least, a sympathizer with the religion. When asked by a woman what keeps him grounded in his race for the presidency Obama pulled from his pocket a handful of trinkets which he calls "good luck charms" given to him by several people. "People are so generous to me, investing their hopes in me," he said. "This I usually don't show in these town hall meetings. I have all these things that people give me - all these different little good luck charms."

One of the charms is a tiny figurine of Hanuman - the Hindu monkey god. News of Obama carrying the idol has swept into East Indian homes in America via Indian



The Hindu Monkey-God Hanuman

newspaper and television networks. East Indians in the United States are taking more note of Obama since he is reported to be a devotee of Hanuman.

A group of well-wishers in New Dehli have presented Obama with a statue of Hanuman to help him emerge victorious. Obama's representative Carolyn Sauvage acknowledged the gold-plated idol on behalf of Obama, but she said he cannot accept it because U.S. law forbids sitting

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India media charmed by Obama

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senators from receiving gifts of such value. Brij Mohan Bhama, who headed the committee to present Obama with the idol said that Obama will receive it somehow.

COMMENTARY

Senator Obama has not yet spoken publicly about this. He is no doubt wary of publicity that might call into question his professed Christianity. News of his Muslim familial ties has endeared him to Muslims. Now he is endeared to Hindus. After having somewhat besmirched the Bible as a guide to government, one wonders what Obama really believes.

Would he have the nerve to distance himself from Hindus by repudiating belief in Hanuman? Would he brave the ire of Muslims by disavowing belief in Allah?

That said, there is a bit of hysteria circulating among Christians that Obama is actively seeking Hanuman's blessings to achieve the White House. This may be overstating the issue. The trinket was given to him by a follower and he carries it, among other charms, in his pocket. I don't believe Obama is any true devotee of Hanuman. But he does evidently believe in the luck of charms, Hanuman being among them.

It isn't news that a politician might carry lucky charms in his pockets. Senator McCain is said to have a few himself, as do the Clintons. Nancy Reagan consulted astrologers for her husband when he was president.

What makes this important news is that people can be swayed to vote for someone just because that someone has a loose tie to their religion. For that matter, do Christians not sometimes vote for someone for no other reason than they believe that someone to be a fellow Christian?

We are increasingly made aware that biblical faith and politics just don't mix. Not because those with biblical faith could not govern righteously if given the chance, but because the world is a different kingdom than the one in which true believers live. ❖

Publisher fears Islamic reprisals

Random House, one of the largest national publishers in America, pulled the plug on a book about Muhammad's seventh wife, fearing violence from Islamic extremists. *The Jewel of Medina*, authored by Spokane Washington resident Sherry Jones, is about Aisha, child bride of Muhammad.

Random House stated that it first decided to merely postpone the publication date, but decided to terminate publication after reaching an agreement with Jones who will still receive the \$100,000 promised her for publication rights. Reasons given were "...cautionary advice not only that the publication of this book might be offensive to some in the Muslim community, but also that it could incite acts of violence by a small, radical segment."

The decision to halt publication of the book came at the instigation of Denise Spellberg, an associate professor of history and Middle Eastern studies, who had been cited by Jones as a source of historical accuracy in her list of reference materials. Jones had hoped to get an endorsement from Spellberg. "Instead, Spellberg went ballistic," stated a *Seattle Times* report by Eric Lacitus.

"Denise says it is 'declaration of war ... explosive stuff ... a national security issue.' She thinks there is a very real possibility of major danger for the buildings and staff and widespread violence. Thinks it will be far more controversial than the satanic verses and the Danish cartoons ... thinks the book should be withdrawn ASAP," an editor at Knopf wrote in an e-mail that made the rounds at Random House.

Knopf is a publishing subsidiary of Random House.

Spellberg called the book "soft pornography," apparently based on a passage describing the night in which Muhammad consummated his marriage to Aisha.

Said Spellberg, "My book doesn't have sex scenes. I deliberately wrote the book

very sensitively. But now I get hate mail, and it's all because of her word, 'pornography.'"

COMMENTARY

Since when in the past fifty years have pornographic elements stopped anyone from publishing a book?

Judging from descriptions *The Jewel of Medina* is anything but pornographic or anti-Islamic. It is strange that a book written by a non-Muslim would be met with such alarm by another non-Muslim when the Muslim community itself has not expressed any dismay over it as yet.

This demonstrates the hysteria and fear that extremist Muslims have been able to instill in the consciousness of people who would otherwise scream protests of "censorship." Perhaps Spellberg was expressing fear for her own personal safety for having been cited by Jones in her list of historic references. As a professor of Middle Eastern studies, she is no doubt familiar with Islam's violent history, and would certainly want no part in the receiving end of it.

The whole world quivers in fear of Islam, but has no qualms about bashing Christianity on a consistent basis. That must tell us something:

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'The servant is not greater than his lord.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates Me hates My Father also. (John 15:18-23)

It tells us that a world so perverse it fears for its own survival is evidence that God's Word is true. For only Scripture dares indict the entire unbelieving world of its sins. Yet only Scripture offers to

that same world God's love and forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice for those sins.

Sadly, the world will continue to placcate evil and rail against its only hope. ❖

Religious convictions subordinated to law

The California Supreme Court has ruled against doctors and others in the medical profession who exercise their consciences in deciding whether or not to provide fertility drugs to homosexuals. The ruling, which came on August 18, invoked state law prohibiting sexual orientation as a basis for denying medical treatment. It is the result of a lawsuit brought by Guadalupe Benitez, 36, of Oceanside, who said, "It was an awful thing to go through. It was very painful - the fact that you have someone telling you they will not help you because of who you are, that they will deny your right to be a mother and have a family."

She acknowledged that doctors at North Coast Women's Care Medical Group gave her the insemination materials and instructed her on how to use them herself. One of the doctors referred her to another fertility specialist who did not have the same moral convictions. But because they said their beliefs kept them from inseminating her Benitez sued the medical group. Since then Benitez has given birth to three children through artificial insemination.

Robert Tyler, one of the lawyers for the clinic, said this latest ruling would help the November ballot initiative for a constitutional amendment to ban homosexual marriages in California.

COMMENTARY

In reality this case has nothing to do with providing medical care; it has to do with providing a service that is elective. Few if any doctors would deny true medical care to anyone in need regardless of sexual orientation. Refusal to administer

fertility drugs is not denial of "medical care" that could cause adverse consequences. But the leftist agenda of the California Supreme Court, which has been manifested on many occasions in the past, doesn't like it, so there!

The homosexual lobby is more powerful in that state than perhaps in any other. Its success in lobbying for homosexual marriages demonstrates that power.

Truthfully, I don't give the initiative to ban homosexual marriages much hope. The citizens of this nation, particularly in states that consistently vote the leftist agenda, have largely turned from God's Word. The fact that abortion has been able to continue with little opposition from the mainstream, and that leftist politicians enjoy such strong support in the most populated areas, is evidence that America has lost its soul. Even if the initiative passed and a constitutional amendment were adopted, the California Supreme Court would most likely declare it "unconstitutional" because it doesn't agree with the court's ungodly leftist conscience.

Some might argue that just because a political base is leftist doesn't mean it's ungodly. I can agree that some people who vote for leftist candidates may do so out of ignorance, but those involved in pushing the leftist agenda *are* ungodly. Their passionate promotion of homosexual privileges and their defense of killing babies in the womb (and even if born alive during a botched abortion) reveal a seared conscience at enmity against God's Word.

Of course, those who promote abortion see it differently. They claim their motive is "compassion" for the suffering. They believe their sense of morality is superior to that of God as revealed in His Word.

This court ruling, unless somehow overturned, will drive many good medical personnel out of California. Then those who have killed the proverbial "goose that lays the golden egg" will wonder why the medical profession is in crisis. They have failed to realize that those with consciences (especially consciences in line with God's Word) are the backbone of society. And most in the medical profession do have consciences. For the blind and ignorant courts to ignore these truths is to plunge society into further regression from sanity. ❖

Bush plan protects pro-life doctors

Even as the California Supreme Court has ruled that doctors cannot withhold elective fertility services to homosexuals, the Bush administration is upholding the pro-life position for medical personnel. The administration announced on August 21, plans to protect doctors and other health-care workers who object to abortion from being forced to provide services that violate their consciences. According to Rob Stein, writing for the *Washington Post*:

The rule empowers federal health officials to pull funding from more than 584,000 hospitals, clinics, health plans, doctors offices and other entities if they do not accommodate employees who refuse to participate in care they find objectionable on personal, moral or religious grounds.

"People should not be forced to say or do things they believe are morally wrong," Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt said.

Some women's health advocates, family planning advocates, abortion-rights activists and others, however, condemned the regulation, saying it could create sweeping obstacles to a variety of health services, including abortion, family planning, end-of-life care and possibly a wide range of scientific research.

COMMENTARY

The bloody baby killers are squealing about their "right" to force doctors to perform abortions and other procedures that are contrary to those doctors' consciences. They don't care about individual rights of conscience. They care only about supplying more babies for their lucrative abortion mills. They are terrified that this ruling could include contraception and other means of birth prevention. But that's just a smoke screen to protect their billion-dollar industry built upon the killing of babies.

Who is naïve enough to really believe that anyone who is callous to the lives of babies torturously destroyed in the womb has the moral credibility to stand up for any genuine rights? The Constitution of the United States of America acknowledges it is God who gives man the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” The first right above all others is the right to life, and it is God, not government, that grants it. This happens to be a truth consistent with Scripture. God gives life; therefore God grants the right to life for all who are conceived in the womb. God may take that life, but man has no “right” to do so.

It is the godless (often masquerading as religious) who would deny that right to babies in the womb. The fact that the federal government and all state governments recognize that killing a baby in the womb at any stage of development is either murder or manslaughter is evidence that life begins at conception and that it is sacred, being given by God.

Because some quisling politicians have been cowed by the abortion industry to allow for doctors to kill those children does not negate that it is human life being taken. But that’s not enough; they want to force all medical personnel to take part in their ungodly deeds.

Perhaps the Bush administration may be accused of many wrongs; perhaps President Bush himself is merely a nominal Christian who doesn’t understand many things from a biblical perspective. But this plan to grant freedom of conscience to medical personnel is at least a small step in the right direction.

Even at that, it also allows those who believe in abortion to exercise their consciences to perform them. But this is a conundrum. How can anyone in good conscience believe in abortion? One may in good conscience believe in a woman’s right to choose whether or not to have an abortion (although that is obviously a seared conscience). But by no means can anyone have a good conscience about taking the life of an innocent babe, particularly through such monstrous tactics as those used by the abortion industry.

God designed our consciences to acknowledge His existence and righteousness. Those who insist on believing and/or acting contrary to His righteousness do not have a conscience. ❖

Beijing 2008 masks China’s persecution

Having swept its streets clean from all appearances of poverty or dirt (the air is another thing entirely) the Chinese government put on a good face for its hosting of the 2008 Olympiad in its capitol city, Beijing. The rule over billions by the communist elite managed to rack up points with the world even as it racked up gold medals for its state-developed participants. Discrepancies in the stated ages of many in China’s Olympic squad were ignored by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). But that’s not the most important of the false faces put forth by the government.

In a show of “tolerance” for opposing views, the Chinese government established what it called “protest zones” in which those with grievances could express themselves. In order to demonstrate in these protest zones one needed to get a permit. Out of some 77 permits applied for, none were granted. As it turns out, those who applied for permits were sentenced to “re-education through labor.” This included two women, 77 and 79 in age. The mere act of applying for a permit, it seems, constituted civil disobedience. As Ron Judd, a columnist for the *Seattle Times* said:

The Chinese government clearly never meant to allow dissent in its midst: It simply viewed the permits as a way to get gullible troublemakers to step forward. Another small step in the “March of the Volunteers,” if you will.

Judd also reports that a group of pro-Tibetan protesters was arrested by Chinese paramilitary police on Wednesday. The group, including two Americans, has not been seen or heard from since. Wire service photographers who recorded the event were detained and the memory cards for their digital cameras were confiscated.

COMMENTARY

Ron Judd does tend to lean left, as do most in the mainstream media. But I sense from this and other of his writings that he isn’t a blind follower of the blind. He often points out the foibles of leftists. His report on China’s oppression of dissent is further evidence that true believers in Jesus cannot trust Commies. They always have been, and they always will be, liars and deceivers. Those who doubt this haven’t a clue about the ideology of Marx, Lenin and Stalin, all of whom advocated lying for the “better good” of the cause.

President Bush’s suggestion that the Chinese government register the underground assemblies is proven even more dangerous by this report which came days later. The hypocrisy of the IOC and of other governments who are turning a blind eye to China’s repression even in their midst demonstrates the cowardice that rules in the hearts of these leaders.

The proper thing would have been to confront the Chinese government on its abuses and pull the games if it didn’t shape up. But fat chance that would ever happen. It just wouldn’t be in keeping with the Olympic theme of “One World.”

That has been the underlying theme of the modern Olympics from the start. This is why the IOC makes no distinction between despotic governments and those that allow for relative freedom. The Olympics favored Hitler’s Nazi Germany in 1936 and the U.S.S.R. In 1980. Now they favored China in 2008.

In each case the host country used the games to tout their belief in national superiority. In each case genocide and eugenics played a part in those beliefs. The medals meant nothing more to those governments’ leaders than “proof” of their superiority. In each case cheating was overlooked by the IOC for the sake of decorum.

So much for the Olympiad claims to sportsmanship and fair play. ❖

ERRATA

In our Editorial entitled “Indoctrination into Islam upheld by federal courts” (Vol. 31 - No. 1, p. 20), we referenced Excelsior Middle School in “Byron County,” California. We should have said, “Byron, Contra Costa County, California.”