

What's Happening? John R. Gavazzoni

"History repeats itself." "There's nothing new under the sun." "Those who will not learn from history, are bound to repeat it."

These are not sayings that encapsulate wisdom in the absolute, but there is much in them that ought to give us pause to consider how they, at least relatively, address issues very pertinent to discerning the spirits abroad in our day.

Someone very observantly summed up the onward sweep of Christianity westward over the last two centuries in the following analysis, and I give you my version of his perspective: The Jews tried to keep Christ contained within their law, while the Greeks sought to turn Him into a philosophy; the Romans made of Him an empire; the Europeans reduced Him to a culture, and we Americans have made a business of Him.

Though that, in very general, yet, nevertheless, quite accurate terms, describes a historical movement, of course, all those elements have converged together at certain times in history, and certainly in our day. Admitting that convergence or overlap, I must point out a certain perverse form of what has been called "the law of circularity." It seems we've come full circle back to that point when the overt legalism of the Jewish form of Christianity was fading in its more blatant form as Greek philosophical sophistry was on the rise.

My, how men love a good idea. They much prefer it to intimacy with the Logos who became flesh and lived and lives among us. To know Christ intimately can seem so messy, so chaotic, and so resistant to our need to be in control. With a good idea, you can trim it down to fit your pea-brained explanations of what is true; polish it up and make it attractive to the ego (in extremely subtle ways), and wow folks with your superior insights.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is the wisdom and power of God, and that, especially as the crucified One, mocks such packaging of His majesty. I have become profoundly convicted that much of what is being peddled today as revelation-explanation of the nature of truth,

actually belongs in the Greek category---a good idea, with a dash of Jesus thrown in.

It's a situation where biblical, scientific and psychological facts are woven together in just one more version of vain philosophy.

Can these religious peddlers show certain---at some level, what could be called---positive results in the lives of those who listen in awe at their snake oil pitch and take a bottle home as the answer to all ills? Why, yes, I'll admit that. But hear me dear brethren, you can drink case after case of the stuff and it will leave you short of glory, and glory is THE divine imperative, and there ain't no glory without a cross, without, that is, the very cross in the heart of God. I've quoted him before in this regard, but it deserves repeating; E. Stanley Jones wrote, "The historical cross of Christ, lights up the cross in the heart of God."

The vanity I've described above, in so many subtle ways, gives lip service to the cross while inventing ways to avoid the cross. The latest fashionable take---really as old as the hills, you morons---is peddled as "The Secret;" the secret of attracting to yourself all that you desire by an elite mental discipline.

Has anyone thought to consider the stark contrast between that seductive thesis, and the supreme moment when the Son of God expressed perfect alignment with His Father and our Father, perfect alignment with the Divine disposition in the words, "If it be possible, Father, let this cup pass from me, but nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Not so attractive, eh? Not so alluring.

St. John speaks to us powerfully once again: "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal (aeonian) life. Little children, guard yourselves from idols." (1Jn. 5: 20, 21, NAS)

He IS what is true, and true understanding is given that we might know Him who is true. I wonder if you've caught the connection between verse 20 and verse 21? John, in His first epistle, was bringing believers back to the centrality of Christ Himself in order to show the sharp contrast between the Gnosticism that was creeping in

among the saints, and "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life....;" that Word of fellowship with the Father and the Son (read the first three verses of chapter one) so that what was beginning to seduce them amounted to idol worship.

We have this propensity to try to control our lives, to come up with a formula that will keep Christ from being so seemingly capricious, that is, according to our perception. He just keeps doing things we hadn't planned for. He keeps showing up when we least expect Him to, and then disappearing from sight just about the time we're really beginning to appreciate Him. Think the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

So we attempt to put a chain around his ankle and keep him handy as our personal sugar daddy. Dear God, saints, think! Did Jesus, just prior to His final ascension, give Peter some esoteric instruction on how he could attract to himself all the things he wanted? Most certainly not.

He told him that the day was coming when "someone.....will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." (Jn. 21: 18)

You see, we're all wired for glory, but we're very vulnerable to being suckered into believing that that we can do an end run around the cross on the way to the throne. Sorry; that's not the Way.

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