**HAPPENINGS IN THE CHURCH**

*By Dr. Riley B. Case*

***OLD CROAKERS (part 1)***

“Old Croakers” was a term in Methodism given to retired preachers who gloried in the good old days and complained about the present. They were the circuit preachers in the 1850s who believed Methodism’s younger pastors had gotten cold and formal, read their sermons, and didn’t know how to shout. The old croakers were the ones who lamented the modern society’s tendencies in the 1870s to wear fashionable clothing, skip the class meetings, and put robes on their choirs.

One of the definitions in Webster’s unabridged dictionary of a croakers is: *one who croaks, murmurs, grumbles, or complains unreasonably, who habitually forbodes evil*.

Some of us admit to being the modern version of the old croakers. We are dismayed at the speed at which modern secular values have invaded American culture. The willingness of the culture to embrace, for example, same-sex “marriage” is only one of a number of trends that must be labeled alarming.

Indiana is considered a conservative state but one judge overturned the state’s ban on same-sex “marriage” in June. Instead of a public outcry, especially on the part of Christians, there was, at least if one were reading the secular media, rejoicing. The *Bloomington Herald*, on June 26, filled the whole front page with banners and articles affirming the decision as if World War II had just ended. Altogether the paper carried 187 column inches of giddy news about the decision. Not a single comment in any of the 187 column inches raised a question about whether this was good for the state, for the country, or for society in general.

The state’s main paper, the *Indianapolis Star*, known as a conservative paper, was also pleased (generally) at the ruling. Republicans, as well as Democrats, affirmed the overturning of the ban. The country club Republicans were pretty sure that banning of same-sex “marriage” would discourage skilled professionals from moving to the state.

One major columnist put it this way:

*Are we going to be a progressive state that values diversity and tolerance in all of its forms? Or will we be a state that clings to the past and refuses to accept the values of a new generation of Americans?*

A good question, especially the part about the values of a new generation of Americans. The very next day the same columnist wrote deploring violence in the city, indicating the epidemic of violence was not because of the lack of police presence, but because people don’t care about each other. The combination of guns and alcohol and unchecked aggressiveness and stupidity and cruelty and brutality and selfishness added up to problems not known in the past. She did not link any of this with her comment the day before about *progressive times that accept the values of a new generation of Americans.*

Along the way the columnist threw in the word “damn.” For Christians the increasing use of profanity and curse words is offensive, offensive because the word “damn” by implication is the short form of “God damn.” Cursing should be considered a form of hate speech, because if is meant to degrade, either another person, or a situation. But cursing is commonplace now on radio and in movies and on TV. It is a common form of speech among progressive commentators, although conservative commentators are also guilty. But we should be accepting, I suppose, because these are the *values of a new generation of Americans*.

AlterNet is one website that celebrates these progressive values of a new generation of Americans. The headlines of several stories that last few months reveal the trends.

“Ground-Breaking Study--19% of Americans Don’t Consider Themselves Heterosexual.” Many human beings, it seems, up to 19%, from time to time are attracted to all kinds of genders and fetishes and ages and types and persons and do not consider themselves totally heterosexual (and thus should be free to express their sexuality however they would like). Even animals get into the act: “Human on Dolphin Sex: Not as Weird as You Might Think.” (AlterNet) This is diversity taken to a new level. The *values of a new generation of Americans.*

More progressive values: “Long-time Sexual Monogamy Just Isn’t Normal: Here Are Some Options.” More: “Polygamist Family Cheers Ruling Barring Utah from Prosecuting Those with Multiple Spouses.” More: “Inequality Shapes the American Family.” More: “My Life in a Polyamorous Relationship.” More: “7 Tips for Having a Great One-Night Stand.” “”4 Myths that Prove It Is Time to Re-evaluate Marriage.” The progressive *values of a new generation of Americans.*

The breakdown of sexual taboos, an issue supported by progressives, has serious side effects. Rape, trafficking, suicide, and abuse are consequences. And pornography. Presently 12% of all websites contain pornography; 25% of all search engines are porn related; 85% of those who watch child pornography also engage in it. Studies show a relationship between pornography and aggression toward women. Rape is now a major problem on college campuses. In the midst of this AlterNet carries articles like” “How Do I Become a Male Porn Star?” But these are the *progressive values of a new generation of Americans*.

Numbers of studies have been conducted linking problems in schools, and problems with violence, crime, drugs, and poverty with lack of a stable home. Numbers of progressives write about poverty and argue the solution is for more “equitable” income distribution or more expensive government programs. But the thinking is flawed. 71% of low-income families are headed by single parents. The first step toward financial stability is home and marriage stability. In California, one of the wealthiest and most progressive states in America, 34% of children live in single-parent households. This is the result of the *values of a new generation of Americans*.

Several months ago I spent a week in Turkey. I was pleased to find on the TVs usually three English-speaking stations. However, the English-speaking movie fare, especially the American movies, was discouraging and embarrassing: violence, cursing, torture, brutality, immorality, illicit sex (though “illicit” is not in the movie-makers vocabulary), drugs, and alcohol. Hollywood, that is, the culture featured in places like *People* magazine, is known for its liberal and progressive values. Movie and TV fare these days is committed to diversity: persons of all races and genders and ages find creative ways to commit adultery, rape, kill, cheat, and degrade. James Ponieqozik writes in the March 11 issue of *Time*: “How TV Dramas, Good and Bad, Have Become Addicted to Blood.” The progressive studios belittle Christian faith and “superstition” but offer up werewolves, vampires, aliens, monsters, demons, and zombies.

AlterNet has the answer: in a July 16 article by Frank Joyce entitled “Why Do People Hate?”: *“I am convinced that sooner than we might think , breakthroughs in neuroscience, psychology, cultural anthropology and other fields will give us dramatic new ways to understand where hate comes from and how to fix it.”*

Science to the rescue? The discovery of where hate comes from and the solution right around the corner? Oh yes, the *progressive values of a new generation of Americans*.

The Christian has a much better explanation: sin. The Christian also has the key to the solution: the triune God, who loves the world so much he sent his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Is there hope? Stay tuned for part 2.